

BRAND REPUTATION AND HOTEL COMPETITIVENESS: AN EVALUATION OF SELECTED HOTELS IN PORT HARCOURT, RIVERS STATE NIGERIA

Uboegbulam, Gideon Chukwunwem (Ph.D)

Bessie Charles Obei

Department of Hospitality Management and Tourism University of Port Harcourt

Correspondence E-Mail: gideon.uoegbulam@uniport.edu.ng

Cellphone: 08036665762

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6127-5866>

Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between brand reputation and hotel competitiveness. The study adopted the quasi-experimental research design and simple random sampling technique in selection of research participants. A closed ended questionnaire was designed in a four-point Likert scale and administered to 126 guests of the selected hotels. Analysis was conducted using Pearson's product moment correlation and the findings of the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between service quality and Guest Satisfaction, service quality and increased patronage, corporate social responsibility and Guest Satisfaction, corporate social responsibility and increased customer patronage. The study recommended that hotels should make sure that their services are of quality and it matches guests expectations as doing this will cause the guests to say good thing about them and ultimately bring them more businesses and also that hotels should also consider to interact with their host communities by engaging in some social works that will improve the lives of their host communities.

Keywords: Brand Reputation, Hotel Competitiveness, Service Quality, Corporate Social Responsibility, Increased Customer Growth, Guest Satisfaction.

Introduction

Competitiveness is a measure of comparative advantage between firms within an industry or their external environment (Lewin & Lean, 2000). As a result, competitive advantage is a multifaceted term having national, industry, and business dimensions (Anca, 2012). The competitive posture of a company is critical to its long-term success (Porter, 1990). A firm's positioning refers to a company's ability to strategically organize internal and external aspects in order to serve present and future clients. Creating and maintaining a competitive advantage consequently necessitates continuous innovation (Hofeter, 2001). The hotel industry which is part of the hospitality industry benefits greatly from competitive positioning (Hofeter, 2001). Given the present global hospitality trends of industrialization, competitiveness, technology, and management, the demand for hotels to maintain good public image/reputation so as to be competitive has never been higher (Mugera, 2012)

Thus, reputation focuses on the distinctiveness of a focal organization from others in its peer group and its attractiveness to external stakeholders (Bitektine 2011). Further, by focusing on reputation attributes to stakeholders, it then implies that reputation is something which organizations project from within, but which is judged from the outside. Brand reputation is a socio-cognitive concept based on peer group perceptions, or what is called a social fact (Rindova et al 2010) and the signals that an

organization sends are important for managing reputation among external stakeholders (Bergh et al 2010). Reputation develops over time, reflecting past behaviors or outcomes that are salient to stakeholders. In other words, in judging a firm's reputation, stakeholders are selective in the information they use and the inferences they make about that information.

According to Jonge (2007), reputation is important, and hotels must be prepared to either protect their reputation or perform costly damage repairs in a competitive market. A company's reputation cannot be purchased. It is constructed over time (for the better or for the worse) and hotels are free to do whatever they want, but hotels must accept responsibility if something illegal occurs. Hotels attempt to differentiate themselves from their competition and develop positive reputation with their stakeholders in today's highly competitive, dynamic, and volatile business climate. Miglontait-Petkevien (2019) argues that for rural firms to remain competitive, they must create and manage their corporate reputation.

According to Elena et al. (2017), hotels that are competitive have a history of providing excellent service and products, as well as interacting positively with their surroundings and community. The researchers also said that the capacity to meet customer wants efficiently, outperform competitors in consumer features of services, and provide services at the lowest cost ensures the economic success of hospitality firms, which influence the hotel rating.

Omar and Gamal (2013) analyzed the influence of hotel reputation management on internal customer image in Egyptian hotels and concluded that if not properly managed, the dimensions of hotel reputation management will negatively impact the hotel's image and hence its competitiveness. Because of the study's geographical scope, these studies' findings may not be applicable in Port Harcourt, which is the gap in literature that this study seeks to fill. Based on this assumption, this study seeks to assess the impact of brand reputation management on hotel competitiveness in Port Harcourt

Problem Statement

Nowadays, one of the major issues service providers face especially the hospitality sector can be traced to increased rivalry and volatility of the service industry. This challenge is evidently glaring as most hotels are not meeting up with their financial objectives as patronage keeps nose diving. Hotels that are not conscious of this fact or failed to put in place measures that will keep them competitive will ultimately face out. As a result, hotel managers, operators, and investors are looking for the best ways to establish their brand image and reputation in order to outsmart their competitors. To remain competitive in the hotel industry the need to adopt a disruptive measure is vital. This brings our attention to the issue of innovation. Most hotels are offering identical services and given the rise in customer sophistication and awareness, a large chunk of industry players lack innovative skill.

The lack of innovation in service delivery can lead to customers been used to same old service and this can lead to boredom, dissatisfaction and negative Guest Satisfaction Hotels that do not accept modern or innovative approach risk drawing poor impressions and little or no customers, both of which will have a detrimental influence on their Guest Satisfaction. Another challenge that has negatively impacted the reputation and competitiveness of most hotels is the issue of insecurity. When customers feel insecure about their personal information, lives and security they develop cold feet towards the brand. Such is the case of the serial killer in Port Harcourt hotels in 2019, which did a great deal of damage to the reputation of the hotels where those incidents occurred. Negative reputation becomes the

consequence of such security breach and one can agree that it affected their competitiveness to a large. Another significant problem that a hotel with strong reviews and reputation can overcome is the multiplicity of option, which is the basis of the brand war seen in the hotel sector.

Given the challenges mentioned above, this study therefore intends to deploy the dimensions of brand reputation management such as product/service quality and corporate social responsibility to investigate if there is any correlation with the measures of competitiveness measured by Guest Satisfaction and Increased Patronage (Increased Patronage)

Literature Review

Brand Reputation Management

Brand reputation refers to the perception of a brand among its stakeholders, including customers, employees, shareholders, and the public. It is a crucial aspect of brand management, as it can influence consumers' purchasing decisions and affect the financial performance of a company (Kotler & Keller, 2016). A strong brand reputation can help a company build trust and loyalty among customers, attract and retain talented employees, and generate positive word-of-mouth marketing. On the other hand, a negative brand reputation can lead to customer defection, employee turnover, and decreased profitability (Lai, et al., 2021).

Brand reputation is shaped by various factors, including product quality, customer service, marketing communications, corporate social responsibility, and crisis management (Kapferer, 2019). For example, a company that consistently delivers high-quality products and exceptional customer service is likely to have a positive reputation among its customers. Similarly, a company that engages in socially responsible practices, such as environmental sustainability or community involvement, can enhance its reputation among the public (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2021). On the other hand, a company that experiences a product recall or public scandal may suffer reputational damage if it fails to respond appropriately (Lee & Park, 2020).

To manage brand reputation effectively, companies need to monitor and measure stakeholder perceptions regularly. This can be done through various methods, such as surveys, focus groups, social media listening, and online reputation management tools (Van Riel & Fombrun, 2019). By understanding the drivers of brand reputation and the factors that influence stakeholder perceptions, companies can develop strategies to enhance their reputation and mitigate reputational risks (Balmer, 2021).

Service Quality

Service quality is imperative not only for service oriented firms but also for tangible product oriented company. There is a great deal of vagueness found in text on the subject of service quality definition. Tangible products can be appraised through standards but service quality measurement is different according to various authors. Kotler and Keller (2006) defined service as “activities or benefits that are offered for sale, or that are offered for being related to a particular product”. Furthermore “Service is kind of performance that is offered by one party to another and in corporeality is a must part of it”. Beer (2003) pronounced them as a complete package which consists of all the activities that are essential for customer consummation. However for Mohamed & Shirley (2009) service quality is a source of competitive advantage for service oriented industry.

Services quality is defined as a measure of meet customer needs and expectations by the service. Therefore, services quality can be defined difference between customers' expectations of service and services received. In addition, services quality has been defined as "an attitude or general judgment of customers in relation to supremacy of a service" (Koozehchian & et al, 2011). Services quality in marketing literature is defined as: overall assessment of customers from company services. The concept of service quality includes service delivery process and also the results offered services (Prentice, 2013). Theoretically, there is a significant correlation between service quality and firm reputation. Corporate reputation is a key part of service excellence in the literature (Anderson and Sullivan 1993; Blancard and Galloway 1994).

Corporate Social Responsibility

CSR has recently gained popularity among academics and business leaders because of its potential impact on corporate reputation and overall performance. With increased concern about how corporations harm communities and the environment, these crises have enhanced the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR). Corporate social responsibility is a vehicle that influences stakeholder's perception of an organization either to associate with or avoid. To build good stakeholder impressions, firms are increasingly investing in CSR. In order to win stakeholder confidence and promote a positive business image, CSR actions are usually coordinated.

Many empirical studies have demonstrated the CSR-corporate reputation link (for example, Gupta, and Pirsch, 2008; Hossain, Alamgir and Alam, 2016; Lau, Lee & Cheng, 2018.). Lai, Chiu, Yang and Pai (2010) claimed that corporate social responsibility can boost a company's reputation by enhancing stakeholder perceptions. Stakeholders' social and environmental beliefs and expectations influence how they perceive an organization's social responsibility (Beckerolsen, Cudmore & Hill, 2006). And so it became a key driver of commercial reputation. Corporate social responsibility measures may set companies apart from other "reputable" organizations, giving them a competitive advantage. While corporate social responsibility can improve an organization's reputation (business perception), it only works if stakeholders are aware of it. Stakeholders must be aware of and believe in CSR initiatives, according to Coombs and Holladay (2013). They agree that CSR enhances firm reputation, increases customer and employee satisfaction, and attracts foreign investment.

Hotel Competitiveness

Hotel competitiveness refers to the ability of a hotel to compete effectively with other hotels in its market segment. A hotel's competitiveness is influenced by several factors, including its location, brand reputation, pricing, marketing strategies, quality of service, and amenities. In this essay, I will discuss the various aspects of hotel competitiveness and their importance in the hospitality industry.

Location is one of the most critical factors that determine a hotel's competitiveness. Hotels located in prime locations such as city centers, tourist attractions, and business districts tend to have a competitive advantage over hotels located in remote or less attractive areas (Kim, Law & Lee, 2019). Proximity to major transportation hubs such as airports and train stations can also enhance a hotel's competitiveness by making it easily accessible to guests.

Brand reputation is another key factor that influences hotel competitiveness. A hotel's brand reputation is determined by its perceived quality, customer service, and value for money. Hotels with strong brand

reputations can attract more customers, charge higher prices, and enjoy higher occupancy rates than their competitors (Kim et al., 2019). Brand reputation is built over time through consistent delivery of high-quality services, positive guest experiences, and effective marketing.

Pricing is also an important factor that affects hotel competitiveness. Hotels must set competitive prices that are in line with the prevailing market rates while taking into consideration their costs, target market, and revenue objectives (Kwon, Kim & Lee, 2020). Hotels that charge significantly higher prices than their competitors may lose business, while those that under-price their rooms may not generate enough revenue to cover their costs.

Marketing strategies are crucial for a hotel's competitiveness in today's highly competitive hospitality industry. Effective marketing strategies help hotels to reach their target audience, build brand awareness, and differentiate themselves from their competitors (Kwon et al., 2020). Hotels can use various marketing channels such as social media, email marketing, search engine optimization, and content marketing to reach their target audience and promote their services.

Quality of service is another critical aspect of hotel competitiveness. Hotels must provide high-quality services to meet the expectations of their guests. Quality of service is determined by several factors, including staff competence, responsiveness, and attentiveness, room cleanliness, comfort, and amenities, and overall guest experience (Kim et al., 2019). Hotels that consistently provide high-quality services can build a loyal customer base and enjoy positive reviews and recommendations.

Amenities are also an essential factor that influences hotel competitiveness. Hotels that offer a range of amenities such as restaurants, bars, swimming pools, gyms, and spa facilities can attract more guests and charge higher prices than hotels that do not offer such amenities (Kwon et al., 2020). Hotels must ensure that their amenities are well-maintained, safe, and meet the needs and preferences of their target market.

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction refers to the overall level of contentment a customer has with a product or service they have purchased. It is a crucial element in measuring the success of any business, as it indicates the extent to which customers are pleased with the quality of products or services, and their experience with the company as a whole. Customer satisfaction can be assessed through various methods, including surveys, feedback forms, and social media reviews.

There are several factors that influence customer satisfaction, including product quality, customer service, pricing, and brand reputation. Studies have shown that product quality is the most significant factor affecting customer satisfaction (Chen, Chen, & Huang, 2020; Hwang & Koo, 2020). In addition, good customer service is critical in ensuring high levels of customer satisfaction (Wong & Sohal, 2020). Providing prompt and efficient customer service can positively impact customer satisfaction, while poor customer service can result in negative reviews and lost business.

Pricing also plays a significant role in customer satisfaction. Customers want to feel that they are receiving good value for their money, and competitive pricing can positively influence customer satisfaction (Voorhees, Brady, Calantone, & Ramirez, 2016). Conversely, high prices or unexpected fees can lead to dissatisfaction and a negative perception of the company.

Brand reputation also affects customer satisfaction, as customers often associate the quality of a brand with its reputation (Rai & Medha, 2020). A positive reputation can create customer loyalty and satisfaction, while a negative reputation can damage a company's image and result in lost customers. Measuring customer satisfaction is essential for any business looking to improve its products or services. Surveys and feedback forms can provide valuable insights into customer satisfaction levels, which can then be used to identify areas for improvement. Social media reviews can also be a useful tool for measuring customer satisfaction, as they provide real-time feedback and can be a valuable source of information for potential customers.

Again, customer satisfaction is a critical element in the success of any business. Product quality, customer service, pricing, and brand reputation are all factors that influence customer satisfaction, and measuring customer satisfaction is essential for identifying areas for improvement. By prioritizing customer satisfaction, businesses can build customer loyalty and improve their overall reputation, leading to increased revenue and growth.

Increasing Customer Patronage.

Increased customer patronage refers to the growth in the number of customers who frequently visit a business or purchase its products or services. In today's highly competitive business environment, increasing customer patronage has become a top priority for most businesses, as it is a key factor that drives revenue growth, profitability, and customer loyalty. Therefore, businesses need to understand the key drivers of customer patronage and implement strategies to attract and retain customers.

One of the key drivers of customer patronage is customer satisfaction, which refers to a customer's overall feeling of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product or service's perceived performance to his or her expectations (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Research has shown that satisfied customers are more likely to be loyal and recommend the business to others, which can lead to increased customer patronage (Homburg, Kuester, & Krohmer, 2013). Therefore, businesses should focus on improving customer satisfaction by providing high-quality products and services, ensuring timely delivery, and providing excellent customer service.

Another important driver of customer patronage is the customer experience, which refers to the overall interaction between the customer and the business during the purchase process (Verhoef et al., 2015). A positive customer experience can lead to increased customer satisfaction and patronage. Therefore, businesses should focus on creating a positive customer experience by providing a seamless and personalized buying journey, offering convenience, and ensuring that customers have a positive emotional connection with the brand.

Moreover, businesses can increase customer patronage by implementing customer loyalty programs, which provide rewards and incentives to customers who frequently purchase from the business (Homburg et al., 2013). Research has shown that loyalty programs can significantly increase customer retention and patronage (Kim & Park, 2019). Therefore, businesses should consider implementing loyalty programs to incentivize customers to keep coming back.

In conclusion, businesses can increase customer patronage by focusing on customer satisfaction, creating a positive customer experience, and implementing loyalty programs. These strategies can help businesses attract and retain customers, increase revenue growth, and build customer loyalty.

The Relationship between Brand Reputation Management and Hotel Competitiveness

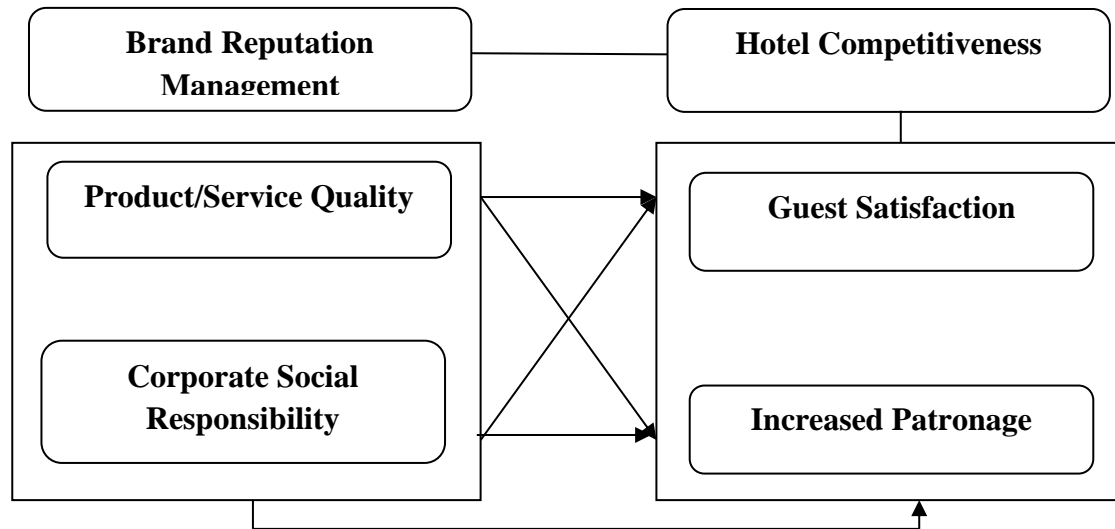


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Sources: Variables of brand reputation were adapted from the works of Omar and Gamal (2013) while measures of competitiveness were coined from Mombang, Ernie, Yudi and Umi (2016)

Service Quality and Guest Satisfaction

Skogland and Siguaw, (2004) in their study of customer satisfaction found that there is a great relationship with service quality delivery and customer satisfaction as customers like fast, reliable and responsive service delivery. The delivery of Quality service delivery should be giving maximum attention in the management of front office (Skogland & Siguaw, 2004). Sureshchandar, Rajendran and Anantharaman, (2002) findings in an earlier study on service quality and guest revisit intention clearly stated that customer satisfaction is a good predictor of customers’ willingness to return to and recommend a hotel to other people.

Nantikarn, Chompu and Kitikorn (2020) investigated the effects of service quality that leads to Guest Satisfaction (WOM) a case study of coffee shop in Bangkok, Thailand. The purpose of the research was to determine how Guest Satisfaction (WOM) is influenced base on service quality. The data was collected from customers who go to the coffee shop and consume coffee. A questionnaire was constructed to collect 400 respondents and those data were analyzed by a descriptive statistic in term of frequency and percentage, simple linear regression, and multiple linear regressions to determine the relationship of each variable. The result shows that all of the variables of SQ were significant with Guest Satisfaction (WOM).

Service Quality and Increased Patronage

Jeong (2010) thesis on the link between service quality, corporate reputation and customer responses found a strong relationship between corporate reputation factors and customer commitment. The study further revealed that customers commitment can aid industry dominance and competitive advantage. A number of hypotheses were proposed from the literature to predict such relationships. Those were combined into a single model which was tested using Structural Equation Modelling and data from a

survey of 642 customers of four retailers. The validity of the proposed model and of specific hypotheses were further examined by testing alternative models to arrive at the above findings.

CSR and Guest Satisfaction

Indah and Nizar (2020) conducted a study on building customer base and trust through corporate social responsibility: The effects of corporate reputation and Guest Satisfaction. The main purpose of the study was to analyze the relationship between customer perception of CSR and their willingness to recommend and trust in the brand. The model of the study considered two mediating variables, i.e., company reputation and Guest Satisfaction to link CSR to influence willingness to recommend and trust. The study employed a causal survey design. The respondents were 160 consumers who had purchased products and knew about CSR programs of a global food company. Data analysis was using structural equation modeling (SEM) to test the hypotheses. The results of the study revealed that CSR can positively and negatively impacts customer Guest Satisfaction. Furthermore, CSR positively impacts corporate reputation and Guest Satisfaction.

Shaist, Mariam and Qasim Ali (2016) conducted an enquiry on if corporate social responsibility and electronic word-of-mouth influence the perceived quality: Mediating role of brand image. The objective of the study was to examine the relationship between corporate social responsibilities, electronic words of mouth and perceived quality by considering the mediating role of brand image. For collecting data, quantitative study was adopted, in which 450 questionnaire were distributed in various universities. Every student belonged to business department. Data was tested through SPSS (Statistical Packages for the Social Science) as well as AMOS (Analysis Movement of Structure).

The study showed that there is positive and significant relationship between corporate social responsibility and electronic Guest Satisfaction

CRS and Increased Patronage

Raza/ et al (2020) conducted a study on linking corporate social responsibility to customer loyalty through co-creation and customer company identification: Exploring sequential mediation mechanism. The research empirically investigates how banks' CSR activities increase their customer base. The research reported that banks adopt CSR to attract new customers. The study sampled 280 bank customers in Pakistan, partial least square based structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) is employed to test the conceptual model. CSR is a multidimensional formative construct that affects customer increase both directly and indirectly.

Asmaa et al (2018) studied the impact of reputation management on achieving competitive advantage for travel agencies. The aim of the paper was to investigate and examine the role of reputation management on achieving competitive advantage and it also sought to assess the problem of stakeholder heterogeneous perceptions of corporate reputation and identifying key dimensions of supporting a high corporate reputation, look at the importance of stakeholders' perceptions management.

The paper using two scales for measuring both reputation management and competitive advantage in travel agencies, data were collected through a questionnaire distributed to a sample of 450 employees of travel agencies category (A) in Cairo and Alex. A total of 398 responses of travel agencies' employees were collected and analyzed by statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) for Windows v.16.0.

Results showed that there is a statistically significant correlation between corporate reputation management factors (organizational culture, strategic communication, CRS, service quality etc) and competitive advantage dimensions, (PWOM, loyalty, Increased Patronage, revenue, customer satisfaction etc) also confirming the positive relationship between corporate reputation management and achieving competitive advantage.

Methodology

This paper adopted the quasi-experimental research design as propagated by Baridam, (2001) as the research design and this design was adopted because control of the research variables and respondents were not under the researcher. To collect primary data for the study, questionnaire was designed and distributed to 154 guest of 5 selected hotels. The study adopted a simple random sampling technique so that all members of the population will have the same chance of being chosen.

A total of 126 responses from guest of hotels was determined and the research instrument retrieved from them were numerically converted and statistically analyzed. The responses of the respondents were measured using a four point Likert scale. To analyze the data, the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) for Windows v.22.0 was used, with statistical processing including the Cronbach alpha coefficient to determine the reliability of the study tool. To describe the characteristics of the study sample and to determine the response to the study dimensions, frequencies, means, standard deviations, and percentages was used. Pearson product Correlation coefficient was adopted to show the relationships between study variables and validates hypohese

Results and Discussion of Findings

Table 1: Correlations between Service Quality and Guest Satisfaction

		Service Quality	Guest Satisfaction
Service Quality	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.792*
	Sig. (2tailed)	.	.003
	N	126	126
Guest Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.792*	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.
	N	126	126

Source: SPSS Computation Output 2023

Since the p-value or “r” calculated (0.003) is less than the level of significance or “r” tabulated (0.05), we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative thereby concluding that there is a significant relationship between service quality and guest satisfaction. However, the result showed a strong positive relationship with an r² value of 0.792 which indicates that Guest Satisfaction can be predicted by service quality by 63% leaving 37% to other determining factors. This finding is in line with the finding of Skogland and Siguwaw, (2004) who in their study asserted that there is a great relationship with service quality delivery and customer satisfaction as customers like fast, reliable and responsive

service delivery and that satisfaction is a good measure of positive Guest Satisfaction. This finding of this study also concurs with the finding of Nantikarn, Chompu and Kitikorn (2020) who opined that all of the variables of SQ are significant with Guest Satisfaction (WOM)

Table 2: Correlations between Service Quality and Increased Patronage

		Service Quality	Increased Patronage
Service Quality	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.857**
	Sig. (2tailed)	.	.001
	N	126	126
Increased Patronage	Pearson Correlation	.857**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.
	N	126	126

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Computation Output 2023

Since the p-value or “r” calculated (0.001) is less than the level of significance or “r” tabulated (0.05), we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative thereby concluding that there is a significant relationship between service quality and increased patronage. However, the result showed a strong positive relationship with an r^2 value 0.852 predicting that 73% of increased patronage can be determined by service quality leaving out 27% to other factors. This finding agreed with the earliest finding by Jeong (2010) who found a strong relationship between corporate reputation factors and customer commitment. The study further revealed that Guest Satisfaction driven by quality service delivery can aid industry dominance and competitive advantage.

Table 3: Correlations between Corporate Social Responsibility and Guest Satisfaction

		Corporate Social Responsibility	Guest Satisfaction
Corporate Social Responsibility	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.788**
	Sig. (2tailed)	.	.001
	N	126	126
Guest Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.788**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.
	N	126	126

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Computation Output 2023

Since the p-value or “r” calculated (0.001) is less than the level of significance or “r” tabulated (0.05), we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative thereby concluding that there is a significant relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility and Word Guest Satisfaction. However, the result showed a strong positive relationship with r^2 value of 0.788 which connotes that 62% of Guest Satisfaction can be evaluated through CSR activities leaving 38% to other industry factors. This is in line with the arguments of Indah and Nizar (2020) who posited that that CSR can positively and negatively impacts customer Guest Satisfaction. Furthermore, CSR positively impacts corporate reputation and Guest Satisfaction. The study also accepted the findings of Shaist, Mariam and Qasim Ali (2016) who stated that there is positive and significant relationship between corporate social responsibility and electronic Guest Satisfaction

Table 4: Correlations between Corporate Social Responsibility and Increased Patronage

		Corporate Social Responsibility	Increased Patronage
Corporate Social Responsibility	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.883**
	Sig. (2tailed)	.	.001
	N	126	126
Increased Patronage	Pearson Correlation	.883**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.
	N	126	126

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Computation Output 2023

Since the p-value or “r” calculated (0.001) is less than the level of significance or “r” tabulated (0.05), we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative thereby concluding that there is a significant relationship between corporate social responsibility and increased patronage. However, the result showed a strong positive relationship with r^2 value of 0.883 which translate that 78% of increased patronage can be determined by CSR leaving 22 % to other study elements. This finding is in line with the finding of Raza et al (2020) who posited that CSR is a multidimensional formative construct that affects customer increase both directly and indirectly. The study findings also collaborates the finding of Asmaa et al (2018) who confirmed the positive relationship between corporate reputation management and achieving competitive advantage through increased patronage/Increased Patronage.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study evaluated the relationship between brand reputation management and competitiveness of selected hotels in Port Harcourt. Through the digest of earlier studies, it is understood that reputation is a vital component of any organization. Reputation borders on issues ranging from credibility, service quality, image and interaction with host communities. To be competitive, organizations must carefully protect itself from bad reputation and managers of hotels must be aware of the consequences that comes with bad perception and reputation and as such put in place necessary conditions to mitigate it occurrence or act quickly to to clear any if it does happen. Failure to be on top of this issue, will cost the

hotel hugely in terms of revenue, patronage, satisfaction, Guest Satisfaction and hence the performance of such a hotel.

In conclusion, hotel competitiveness is a complex and multifaceted concept that encompasses various factors such as location, brand reputation, pricing, marketing strategies, quality of service, and amenities. Hotels that can effectively manage these factors can enhance their competitiveness and gain a competitive advantage in their market segment. The hospitality industry is highly competitive, and hotels must continually innovate and adapt to changing market dynamics to remain competitive and succeed in the long run.

To avert this from happening; the following recommendations are advised

- i. Hotels should make sure that their services are of quality and it matches guests expectations as doing this will cause the guests to say good thing about them and ultimately bring them more businesses
- ii. Hotels should also consider to interact with their host communities by engaging in some social works that will improve the lives of their host communities. Doing this will give them a good relationship with the host community which in turn provide them with the serenity of environment needed to conduct their business. When there is a hostile environment, customers will most likely not patronize the hotel and the reputation of the hotel will be ruined. E.g are hotels in Omuoku

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