

Compensation and Benefits in the Hospitality Industry in Nigeria: A Review of Employees' Job Satisfaction and Retention

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ABSTRACT

Hospitality industry plays a significant role in contributing to a nation's gross domestic product by stimulating economic growth, revenue generation and jobs creation. This study review the impact of compensation and benefits on employees' job satisfaction and retention within the Nigerian hospitality industry. Compensation and benefits are critical in employees' job satisfaction and retention. In addition to utilizing equity theory as a framework, the study reviewed existing literature on compensation and employee well-being in the hospitality settings using a non-systematic search and scoping review. Findings suggest a positive correlation between comprehensive compensation packages and employee job satisfaction, potentially leading to increased retention. The study recommends the importance of offering competitive salaries, health insurance, paid leave, employee feedback and other benefits to attract and retain talent in the competitive hospitality industry in Nigeria.

Keywords: Benefits, Compensation, Employees, Hospitality Industry, Salary.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Hospitality industry is one of the major contributors to a nation's gross domestic product (GDP) especially for countries with well-developed tourism sectors. The contribution of the sector includes revenue generation, job creation, infrastructure development, the promotion of economic growth, attracting foreign direct investment and stimulating growth in related sectors. According to World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) (2020), the travel and tourism sector which include hospitality, contributed 10.4% to the world GDP in 2019. Also, UNWTO (2018) showed that international tourism receipts reached USD 1.3 trillion for various nations contributing significantly to their GDPs. In many countries for instance Spain and Thailand, hospitality and tourism account for robust percentage of total economic output.

Similarly, in Africa, hospitality and tourism industries have contributed significantly to economies in the continent. According to WTTC (2021) Economic Impact Reports for Africa, the WTTC showed that travel and tourism contributed 6.9% to Africa's total GDP in 2019. Also, AfDB (2019) reported that the tourism sector in Africa supports 24.6 million jobs, making it a major source of employment on the continent. Foreign exchange earnings for the continent in 2017 was very substantial, as over 62 million international tourists were received (UNWTO, 2017).

The hospitality industry in Nigeria plays critical role to the country's emerging economy accounting for substantial foreign exchange earnings (CBN, 2018), promoting economic growth and development (NBS, 2020), attracting foreign direct investment, employment (AfDB, 2019) and supporting related multiple sectors. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2020), the hospitality and tourism sector has contributed immensely to the GDP, with the service sector accounting for about 53% of Nigeria's GDP as of 2020.

Business organizations anywhere have the primary objective of making profit and this depends on the availability of people who are motivated to contribute their quota to such organisation. The hospitality industry has as one of its business goals, the provision of accommodation and relaxation spots for tourists and travelers. The achievement of this goal will depend on the availability of talented employees who are ready to work satisfactorily for the organisations that make up the industry. These employees will only be ready to work satisfactorily if they are satisfied with their compensation and benefits (Hassard, Teoh & Cox, 2018; Adefulu & Adebowale, 2019).

Many organisations in Nigeria experience decline in customer patronage because of lack of satisfied employees that would have provided the specialized services (Okpara, 2017; Kumar, 2017). Okpara (2017) identifies the inability of organisation management to retain skilled and quality employees as a major problem in the hospitality industry in Nigeria. The problems could have arisen from poor compensation packages which the organisation management provides for their employees. The inability of organisation management to address compensation issues tend to affect the job satisfaction of some hardworking employees in the industry.

Some organisations have moved from the adoption of rigid compensation practice that emphasises the payment of only salary to more flexible and effective compensation packages (Adeoye, & Fields, 2014; Onuorah, et al., 2019). Such organisations seek for stimulating compensation packages that go beyond salary, whereas other organisations have been left behind (Ebere, Ibanichuka & Ogbonna, 2016). The hospitality in Nigeria is arguably among those industries that have been left behind in the implementation of adequate compensation packages for their employees. This is informed by the perceived fall in job satisfaction, which makes many of the organisation employees to exit their job. It appears that the compensation of employees in this sector is not effective. The lack of fair and adequate compensation may affect the development of the sector which has the

potential of contributing significantly to the national economy and the development of critical infrastructure. Emerging economy like Nigeria cannot afford to miss the potential huge benefits of hospitality industry. Examining the problems associated with the sector in Nigeria that has the potential of contributing substantially to the growth and development of the economy is not out of place.

The purpose of this paper therefore is to examine the nature of compensation and benefit packages that are available in the hospitality industry in Nigeria. Specifically, the paper examines the nature of compensation and benefits, the various compensation packages that are available, the challenges faced by the industry in compensating employees, and the way forward. Addressing these issues will provide robust contribution to extant literature and policy direction needed to improve the hospitality industry in Nigeria. The hospitality industry was chosen because of the enormous potential benefits and contributions to national economy by driving economic growth, employment, foreign direct investment, huge foreign exchange earnings and other related sectors.

2. Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Compensation

Compensation of employees denotes payment provided by their employer for contributing their effort, skill and time to work (Pepra-Mensah, Ajei, & Agyei, 2017; Mabaso, & Dlamini, 2017; Sotty, 2019). Dessler (2015) describes compensation as all forms of payment that employees should get from their employment. It is the payment provided to those who have rendered a service or done a job (Obi, & Idun, 2011). Since compensation arises from employees' employment, the employees expect that their organization would be remunerated adequately as long as they are continuously contributing their efforts, skills and attitude to work processes.

For compensation to be adequate, it needs to be systematic or properly structured to include packages which the employees deserve. According to Zaraket, Garious and Malek (2018:289), "compensation is a systematic approach of offering monetary value for individuals in exchange for work they had performed". This implies that compensation should be adequately designed and implemented in order to achieve its goal.

Compensation and Benefits Packages

Compensation packages are the various payment alternatives, which organisations may adopt in remunerating their employees (Rupai, 2017). The compensation packages fall into direct and/or indirect compensation (Rupai, 2017). The direct compensation packages include cash payments, which are proportionate to employees' effort and usually takes the form of salary and incentives (Adelabu, 2005; Hoare, 2015). The indirect compensation on the other hand includes the payments, which are not related to the employees' productivity, but are traced to job description (Akinmayowa, 2006;

Muguongo, Mugana, & Murithi, 2015). The payments include allowance and worker benefits (Akinmayowa, 2006; Mighty recruiter, 2019).

Salary

Employees' salary is a component of direct compensation in which monthly pay is based on contribution of a worker's effort to work process (Obi, & Iduh, 2011; Fatima, & Ali, 2016). Some organisations have progressive salary level like the grade level of public service (Cai, Bi, Wang, Cravens, 2018). Such progressive salary level states the salary of employees at different entry levels and annual percentage increment. As one progresses with respect to increasing responsibility, position, experience salary is expected to increase (Cai, *et al.*, 2018). The organisations' salary plays an important role in attracting potential and retaining existing employees (Adelabu, 2005; Obi, & Iduh, 2011). It provides a fair, equitable and predictable way of determining what the employees are expecting to receive (Adeoye, 2014; Cai, *et al.*, 2018). The organisation administrators are expected to maintain a flexible pay structure that balances between underpaying and overpaying. The salary can also assist the organisation administrators to convince potential employees to accept job offer.

Incentives

Incentives are used to supplement pay. The aim of introducing incentives as part of the compensation packages is to get the employees to become more motivated at work. The incentives act as extrinsic motivators and reward actions for desirable results (Sotty, 2019). They are usually paid in addition to the worker's salary (Daniel, 2009; Sotty, 2019). Sotty (2019) defines incentives as additional pay that is meant to improve worker performance and takes the form of bonuses and share of ownership.

For an incentive programme to be implemented in the organisations, certain conditions need to be established (Stolovich, 2010, Sotty, 2019). It is argued that the conditions for effective incentive package should include: i) The realisation that current performance is not enough; ii) The reason for the prevailing poor performance is known; iii) The desired level of performance is stated in quantifiable terms; iv) Challenging and achievable goals are defined and; v) The plan to compensate a given behaviour does not conflict with the overall goals of the organization (Daniel, 2009; Softy, 2019). It follows that a well-developed and implemented incentive package can help organisations to provide adequate motivation and support for their employees (Daniel, 2009; Stolovich, 2010, Softy, 2019). Stolovich (2010) is also of the opinion that an adequate incentive package can be based on performance measure such as piece rate system. This implies that incentive in private organisations should depend on employees' productivity.

Allowance

Allowance refers to additional amount of money that can be used to boost salary (Muguongo *et al.*, 2015). Unlike incentive, it does not depend on productivity or profit but allows employees to adjust to cost-of-living (Kurzawska, 2018). Kurzawska (2018) describes allowance as resource allocation or spending that is often difficult to predict, hence employers estimate it and pay the employees certain amount of money to help them reduce certain expenses. The allowance system may be traced to British poor relief system in 19th century in which employees were given some amount of cash to boost their wages (Farmbrough, 2019). Over the years organisations have provided various forms of support to their employees as supplement to their salaries. Allowance include: housing, leave, vacation, conveyance, maternity or paternity leave and worker special allowance such as overtime, meals, clothing, furniture and reimbursements to employees. Employees' allowance takes the form of paid vacation, leave and special allowance (such as housing, transportation, meal, exam supervision, science employees, rural-posting, peculiar and extra-curricular allowance) (Adedigba, 2020; Okeke, 2020).

Worker Benefits

Benefits are financial compensation other than salary, allowance and incentive (Oluato, 2019). Benefits include various ways employers compensate employees outside agreed salary and incentives, hence they are often referred to as benefits-in-kind or fringe benefits (Oluato, 2019). Niles (2013) categorises benefits as mandatory and voluntary benefits. Mandatory benefits are stipulated by law and employers are expected to comply with them. The mandatory benefits include social security, unemployment insurance, employees' compensation for injury and medical leave (Niles, 2013). The voluntary benefits are not required by the law and employers are at their discretion to provide them to employees. The voluntary benefits are health insurance, retirement plans, paid leave and various forms of family care (Niles, 2013).

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the equity theory Equity theory was introduced by Adams (1965) in an attempt to explain the perception of employees on the fairness in the distribution of remuneration in the organisation. The equity theory, proposes that an organisation that wants to maximise worker compensation and benefits should create a system in which organisation resources are paid to the employees on a fair ground (Guerrero *et al.*, 2014). This is because many employees place a lot of value on fair treatment, which makes them motivated to perform their jobs, an worker who perceives that he/she is unfairly rewarded, that is inequity, will reduce his/her effort in the organisation. It demonstrates that employees' inputs should be balanced by their compensation, and if such fairness in payment is achieved, the employees will be satisfied. The equity theory therefore finds application in this study as it provides the

ground for social comparison in terms of the input-to-output of the employees in the organisation. With the aid of this theory, it is clear that employees will withdraw their effort on the job when it is perceived that there is inequity in the system.

The study used the non-systematic and scoping review techniques. The non-systematic review which is also known as the Narrative (Traditional) Review provides a broad overview of the issue to topic summarizing the findings from selection of relevant studies. The method is flexible, broad in scope and allowed for in-depth discussion hence why it was adopted by the study. The scoping review method maps out the concepts, evidence and research gaps in broad area without focusing on specific research question. The method is used to explore broad or emerging area and provide framework for future research. This explains the choice of this method.

Empirical Review

Batt, and Appelbaum (1995) explored how employee participation in decision-making processes, including those related to compensation and benefits, affects workplace productivity of hotels in USA. The study suggests that hotels with greater employee voice in shaping compensation and benefits packages experience higher employee morale and improved productivity. The research highlights the potential benefits of involving employees in discussions about compensation and benefits, fostering a sense of ownership and leading to a more positive work environment.

Hornig, Tse, and Yu. (2014) investigated the relationship between fluctuations in international tourism and hotel employee compensation levels in Taiwan. The study identified a positive correlation, suggesting that periods with higher tourist arrivals lead to increased hotel revenue and subsequent upward adjustments in employee compensation. The research underscores the importance of a thriving tourism sector for sustaining competitive compensation packages in the hotel industry.

Rapia (2017) conducted a study on compensation and job satisfaction in the hotels. The study was carried out in Zimbabwe. The purpose of the study was to examine factors that were responsible for the dissatisfaction of employees in Flamboyant Hotel. The study adopted an explanatory research design. Compensation was proxied by direct, indirect financial and non-financial components. The population of the study was made up of 120 employees. The questionnaire was the main research instrument. Data analyse revealed that the employees at Flamboyant Hotel were dissatisfied with their jobs. A large proportion of the employees indicated that their satisfaction with their compensation was poor. The employees however identified high levels of satisfaction in terms of indirect financial compensation that included housing allowance, social security and health insurance.

Adiegwu, and Ogbonna, (2017) investigated the relationship between human resource practices, including compensation and benefits, and employee performance in Nigerian hotels. They found that a positive correlation between competitive

compensation and benefits packages and employee performance. It concludes that implementing attractive compensation and benefit packages can significantly improve employee motivation and performance in the Nigerian hotel industry.

Adeola, and Oni (2018) examined how employee benefits influence job satisfaction and retention rates in Nigerian hotels. It revealed that hotel with a more comprehensive benefits package reported higher employee satisfaction and lower turnover rates. Hence offering a diverse range of benefits, beyond just basic salary, is crucial for retaining talent in the competitive Nigerian hospitality industry.

Akpan and Ukpog, (2020) explored the prevalence of gender pay gaps in compensation practices within the Nigerian hotel industry. The study identified a significant gender pay gap, with women consistently receiving lower salaries than men for equivalent positions. The research highlights the need for stricter regulations and enforcement to promote equal pay for equal work in the Nigerian hotel sector.

Onyemelukwe, Agbo, and Ogbonna (2021) investigated the combined effects of compensation and training opportunities on employee motivation and satisfaction in the Nigerian hotel industry. The study revealed that while compensation plays a key role, access to training and development programs further enhances employee motivation and satisfaction, leading to a more engaged workforce. Hence hotels that invest in both competitive compensation and employee development programs can foster a more positive work environment and attract top talent.

Chukwuemeka, and Nwankwo (2023) examined how the increasing digitalisation of hotel operations is impacting compensation structures and employee expectations. They found that digitalisation is leading to a demand for new skills and increased responsibilities for some hotel employees, necessitating adjustments to compensation packages to reflect these evolving requirements. Hence Nigerian hotels need to adapt their compensation structures to remain competitive in the digital age, attracting and retaining employees with the necessary skills for technology-driven operations.

3. Discussion

Compensation and benefits play a crucial role in attracting, motivating, and retaining skilled employees in the Nigerian hotel industry. The findings of Adiegwu and Ogbonna (2017) and Adeola and Oni (2018) highlight a clear connection between competitive compensation packages and benefits with positive employee performance, satisfaction, and lower turnover rates. This aligns with the study objective of examining the nature of these elements, as it reveals their significant impact on the hotel workforce. However, research also points to challenges faced by Nigerian hotels in offering competitive compensation and benefits. Rapia (2017) study in Zimbabwe, while geographically distinct, offers valuable insights. It found that employees expressed dissatisfaction with direct financial compensation, which aligns with the objective of examining the challenges faced by hotels. This suggests similar potential issues might exist in Nigeria.

Beyond basic salary, the research emphasises the importance of a diverse benefits package. Studies by Adeola and Oni (2018) and Onyemelukwe et al. (2021) showcase how hotels with more comprehensive benefit packages experience higher employee satisfaction and motivation. This aligns with the objective of examining the various compensation packages available, as it highlights the effectiveness of expanding beyond just salary. Looking towards the future, Chukwuemeka & Nwankwo's (2023) study offers valuable insights. They found that digitalisation is impacting compensation structures due to the demand for new skillsets. This aligns with the objective of examining the nature of compensation and benefits, as it suggests a need for adaptation. Hotels need to consider adjusting compensation packages to reflect these evolving requirements and remain competitive in the digital age.

4. Implications for Nigerian Hotel Management

This review of compensation and benefits practices in the hotel industry holds significant implications for hotel management in Nigeria. Understanding these implications through the lens of equity theory, which posits that employees compare their inputs and outputs (effort and rewards) to those of others, can be particularly insightful.

Firstly, the studies by Adiegwu & Ogbonna (2017) and Adeola & Oni (2018) highlight the positive correlation between competitive compensation and benefits packages with employee performance, satisfaction, and retention. This aligns perfectly with equity theory. When employees perceive their compensation and benefits as fair compared to their efforts and the rewards received by colleagues, they are more likely to be motivated and satisfied. Conversely, a sense of inequity, where employees feel underpaid or under-benefited relative to their contributions, can lead to decreased motivation, lower performance, and increased turnover. Nigerian hotels that prioritize competitive compensation and benefits packages are more likely to foster a sense of fairness among their employees, leading to a more engaged and productive workforce.

Secondly, the research by Rapia (2017) suggests that dissatisfaction with direct financial compensation may be an issue for Nigerian hotel employees. This resonates with equity theory. If employees perceive a significant gap between their salary and the value they bring to the hotel, they may feel undervalued and demotivated. Nigerian hotel management needs to address any discrepancies between employee compensation and their perceived worth. This can involve conducting regular compensation reviews, benchmarking salaries against industry standards, and ensuring transparency in pay structures.

Thirdly, the emphasis on a diverse benefits package beyond just salary, highlighted by Adeola & Oni (2018) and Onyemelukwe et al. (2021), aligns with equity theory by broadening the concept of rewards. Employees value different aspects of a compensation package, and offering a variety of benefits can help ensure a sense of fairness for a wider range of workers. For instance, some employees may prioritize health insurance for their

families, while others may value training and development opportunities. By offering a comprehensive benefits package, Nigerian hotels can cater to diverse needs and ensure a greater sense of equity among their staff.

Finally, the need to adapt compensation structures to the demands of digitalization, as discussed by Chukwuemeka & Nwankwo (2023), aligns with equity theory's emphasis on fairness in the changing landscape. As new skills become crucial, employees who acquire them deserve to be compensated accordingly. Nigerian hotel management must be proactive in recognizing the evolving value proposition of different roles and adjust compensation packages to reflect the changing demands of the digital age. This will ensure that employees with the most critical skills feel valued and fairly compensated for their contributions.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Compensation and benefits are central to a successful hotel workforce in Nigeria. Studies consistently demonstrate a positive correlation between competitive packages and employee performance, satisfaction, and retention. Addressing challenges related to direct financial compensation and adapting to the changing demands of the digital age will be crucial for Nigerian hotels to attract and retain top talent. By understanding the nature of compensation and benefits, the various packages available, and the challenges faced, hotels can develop effective strategies to create a more motivated and engaged workforce.

Also, understanding the impact of compensation and benefits through the lens of equity theory is crucial for successful hotel management in Nigeria. By prioritising competitive compensation, addressing pay discrepancies, offering diverse benefits, and adapting to the digital landscape, Nigerian hotels can create a more equitable and motivating work environment, leading to a more engaged and productive workforce. Based on the reviewed research, the following are suggested:

1. **Conduct regular compensation reviews:** The hotel management should benchmark salaries against industry standards and competitor offerings. Ensure transparency in pay structures to address any perceived inequities and promote a sense of fairness among employees.
2. **Offer a comprehensive benefits package:** Hotel managers have to go beyond just basic salary to include benefits valued by a diverse workforce. Consider health insurance, training and development opportunities, housing allowances, or social security contributions.
3. **Invest in employee training and development:** They should equip staff with the skills needed for the digital age demonstrates value and justifies potential adjustments to compensation packages.

4. **Consider employee participation in shaping compensation and benefits:** They should give consideration to their employee voice in these decisions can foster a sense of ownership, leading to higher morale and improved productivity.
5. **Monitor employee satisfaction:** They should regularly assess employee sentiment regarding compensation and benefits to identify areas for improvement and maintain a competitive edge in attracting and retaining top talent.

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