

Hotel Security and Safety and Hotel Brand Choice in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract: *Hotel security and safety is of utmost concern to stakeholders in Nigeria, owing to growing incidents of violent crime, kidnapping, rape insurgency etc, with its attendant consequences in the tourism industry. The study examined the direct effect of hotel security and hotel safety on brand choice of hotels in four hypothesised relationships in the garden city of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. The descriptive study obtained data from 124 hotel guests in seven hotels in Port Harcourt using a well-structured questionnaire containing 15 items, with five demographic items. The result of the inferential statistical analysis using IBM SPSS Version 2.0 showed that hotel safety and hotel security were significant determinants of guest satisfaction and guest repurchase intention, respectively. Hoteliers and their managers operating in the hospitality industry are expected to build capabilities in hotel security and safety to enhance the satisfaction level of their guests and avoid cognitive dissonance and brands switching.*

Keywords: Security, Safety. Guest Satisfaction. Guest Repurchase Intention.

Introduction

Tourism is a global phenomenon which is involved in connecting tourists to diverse destinations across the world (Tan, Chong & Ho, 2017), with hospitality sector strategically positioned to offer a ‘home away from home’ environment and service to the tourists. The hospitality industry and other tourism service providers have the onerous responsibility and challenge of ensuring the safety and security of lives of their guests/visitors, employees as well as their properties (Alhaji, Adesogan & Abdulahi, 2017).

Consequent upon the foregoing, tourism destinations are expected to treat the safety and security of their domains as a top management priority as it enhances their service quality level (United Nations World Tourism Organisation-UNWTO 1997) as well as the promotion of the destination image (Holloway, 2006). This implies that a destination that is safe and well secured helps in destination marketing because of its influence on the decision making of tourists as regards destination choice (Pearce, 1988; Alhaji, et al 2017) and tourist satisfaction (Holloway, 2006).

The management of security and safety at hotels which provide accommodation services for tourists at destinations have been confirmed to be very “challenging since it is often difficult to distinguish among guests, legitimate visitors, and people who are potential threats. Moreover, hoteliers find it awkward to maintain the highest possible standards of safety while preserving a hotel’s hospitable and welcoming image” (Enz, 2009, p. 6). This is more of a concern to hoteliers and guests and other tourism stakeholders in Nigeria where terrorist organisations are causing havoc in greater dimensions in the mould of kidnapping, rape, and other violent crimes (Nwokorie, Akalazu & Ojo 2014; Akpan, 2017; Adebayo & Adebayo, 2015; Alhaji, et al 2016).

Extant literature has documented several studies in and outside Nigeria on how the security and safety challenges affects the tourism industry in several contexts. Examples include typology of insecurity affecting tourism in Nigeria (Alhaji, et al 2016), descriptive study on effect of security and safety challenges on tourism and hospitality in a local government area in Nigeria (Akpan, 2017), effect of Boko Haram activities on hospitality patronage in Nigeria (Adebayo & Adebayo, 2015), emerging security challenges facing tourism development and the Nigerian economy (Nwokorie, et al 2014). Others include, theoretical assessment of safety and security measures adopted by hotels and their effect on customer relationship management in India (Chauhan, Shukla & Negi, 2018), security and safety measures in hotels in Egypt (Ghazi, 2015), distribution of security and safety amenities in hotels in the United States of America (Enz, 2009) effect of insecurity on tourism growth in a region in Mexico (Andres-Rosales, Sanchez-Mitre and Cruz, 2018).

The foregoing suggest that no study to our knowledge has investigated the effect of hotel security and safety on guest satisfaction and guest behavioural intentions towards hotels. This current study attempts to fill the gap in literature by determining the effect of hotel security and safety on guest satisfaction and repurchase intention in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Hotel security and safety

Hotel security: The Oxford Dictionary (cited in Ghazi, 2015, p.2) defined security as “the state of being free from danger or threat”, and safety, as, “the condition of being protected from danger, risk or injury”. Despite being used interchangeably in tourism literature (Ghazi 2015), the two concepts are different in several perspectives (Wichasin&Dounghummes 2012).

In the tourism and hospitality industry, issues regarding security and safety of tourism affects the decision-making process (Sonmez 1998) of both the tourism suppliers and tourists. Singh (2015) identified the typology of security as consisting of physical aspect, security of persons and security of systems. The physical aspect of security is made up of internal security (securing the environment against theft, fire, unwanted guests) and external security (preventing external attack through fencing, lightening, manning service gates, installation of Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) etc.

The security of persons connotes safeguarding people (staff and guests) while in the hotel environment. This could be achieved through proper recruitment and selection exercise for all staff, Red Tag system, staff identification, appropriate training programmes etc. On the other hand, the security of the hotel guests may involve appropriate guest room security measures such as chains on doors, night touch, dead bolt locks etc. The security aspect of systems in a typical hotel setting consist of appropriate inventory control mechanism, consistent auditing, secured cash receipt and disbursement mechanism, etc (Singh 2015)

Hotel Safety: Enz (as cited in Ghazi 2015, p.2) defined hotel safety as, “protecting employees and customers within hotel property from potential injury or death”. The implication of this definition is that safety is concerned with human life while security takes care of the hotels and guests’ assets. A good safety mechanism in a hotel will therefore mitigate the effects of hazardous materials, fire, accidents etc. (Ritticharnurwat 2013).

Brand Choice

Emari, Jafari and Mogaddam (2012, p.5692) described a brand as, “any label that carries meaning and associations”. It provides products and services with an identity with which they could be distinguished from other competing offers in the marketplace (Kotler, 2003). However, a great brand provides more unique benefits to organisations such as reducing risk perception, confers trust and satisfaction (Hosani, Ekinci, & Uysal, 2007), adds colouration and resonance to a service/product (Kotler, 2003), greater customer loyalty, profit making, brand extension and licencing opportunities and gain competitive advantage (Kim, Kim, Kim, Kim & Kang, 2008), etc.

The foregoing functions ascribed to a brand suggest that brand has considerable effect on consumer behaviour in the marketplace. This is because brand affects customer decision making process since competing brands are available in each market segment, with noticeable differences in the eyes of each consumer. This explain why Kotler (2003) argues that brands acts as an organisational attribute that influences consumer perception of its products/services by serving as an agent that develops strong emotions in the consumers’ mind. Most marketing activities are directed towards presenting the brand to the target market to enable them to make a choice.

Consumers form bonds with brands that satisfies them. This grows into brand loyalty overtime which is a sustained commitment to constantly repurchase a product (Oliver, 1999) as well as spreading positive word of mouth about such product or service. For this current study, the measures of brand choice used are guest satisfaction and guests repurchase intentions.

Guest Satisfaction: Javanmard and Hosseini (2013) described customer satisfaction as a feeling/attitude a customer develops towards a brand (product or service) which is a result of comparing between the reality of the offer (product/service) or social expectations and norms with respect to the product. McCarthy and Perrault, (2002) describes the concept as the extent to which a marketer /service provider or an organisation fulfils customers’ needs and desires in accordance with his expectations, prior to consuming the product or service. Consequently, customer satisfaction defines the difference between the expectations of the target market or customers before consumption of the product/service and the perceptions of the target market/customers after consumption (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, Berry, 1988). Customer satisfaction depends essentially on the perceived value which the

customers have about a brand such as product or service (Kotler & Armstrong, 2009). This implies that customers' satisfaction could reflect an individual's feeling of pleasure or disappointment which is a result of the comparison of a brand's perceived performance or outcome relative to the expectations (DilPazir1, & Amin, 2015).

Guests' Repurchase Intention: In the context of a restaurant, Young, Clark, and McIntyre (2007, p.92) defined return patronage intention as, "the likelihood that a current customer of a restaurant expects to return in the future for a dining experience". Ebrahim, Ghoneim, Irani and Fan (2016, p.1244), defined the concept as, "consumers' decision about repeating the action of purchasing the brand". Pharm and Train (2014) noted that repurchase intention of customers is one behavioural outcome of consumers that is considered very important in marketing by marketers as it shows the determination of customers to buy the brand repeatedly while Odor and Ekeke (2020) are of the view that repeat purchase by customers, accounts for organisational profitability.

In the hotel marketing context, hotel guests who return to a particular hotel brand for lodging are expected to have been satisfied from the previous experience. In the view of Mohsan, Nawaz, Khan, Shaukat, and Aslam(2011) returning customers who are evidently satisfied tend to spend more money through purchases, remain loyal by being committed to the brand and resist brand switching behaviours as well as spreading positive word of mouth about the brand. Consequent upon the foregoing, hotel owners/managers are expected to enhance avenues of guest satisfaction so as to improve the rate of return patronage (Darley, Luethge, & Thatte, 2008).

CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

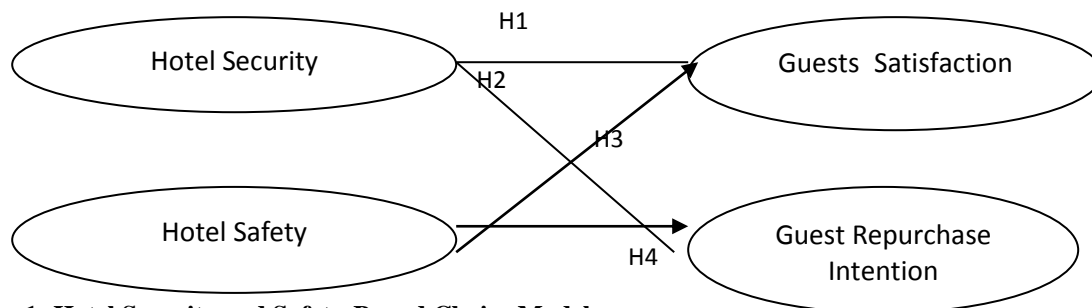


Figure 1: Hotel Security and Safety-Brand Choice Model

The research model demonstrates that hotel security and safety have both direct influence on guest satisfaction and guest repurchase intention respectively.

Empirical Review and Hypotheses Development

Even though tourism literature lacks "clear and concise definition of the concepts of safety and security' in the hotel sector", (Ghazi, p.2) the main essence of security and safety is the protection of both hotel staff and guests from injures from accidents and criminal activities (Enz 2009). In the context of five star hotels in Egypt, Ghazi (2015) examined security and safety measures from the view point of hotel guests, by assessing the importance and usage levels of measures. Also, the gap between the importance level and usage of measures was tested. The result showed that medical preparedness, guest room security and emergency preparedness are the three dimensions that are highly important though rarely usage measures. A statistically significant gap existed between the importance level and the usage level of measures.

In Jos, the Plateau state capital in north central Nigeria, Adebayo and Adebayo (2015) investigated the effect of Boko Haram insurgency on hospitality patronage and on health care of displaced persons. The descriptive study utilised a sample size of 140 respondents who were part of tourism stakeholders in Jos metropolitan. The findings showed that the insurgency had negative effect on hotel patronage and the tourists could get access to healthcare services.

Akpan (2017) examined how security issues affected the hospitality industry in Kogi state, Nigeria. The descriptive study used a sample of 60 tourists from 3 hotels and 3 recreational centres at the Idah local government area of the state. The findings of the study revealed that security challenges such as armed robbery, kidnappings and killing of tourists led to reduction in hospitality and tourism patronage.

Enz (2009) examined the physical attributes that signal security and safety among 2487 hotels in the United States of America in the context of size, age, location, and hotel price segment. The results showed the existence of differences in the attributes among hotels of various sizes, age and location. It was discovered that luxury and upscale hotels, urban and airport hotels, large hotels, new hotels maintained a high level of security and safety amenities unlike old, small and budget hotels.

In Mexico, Andres-Rosales, et al (2018), investigated the effect of insecurity on tourism development in the municipality of Acapulco Guerrero using secondary information from the National Institute of Geography and Statistics and tourism income for a period spanning 1999-2014. The statistical analysis of the economic model approach used in the statistical analysis revealed that insecurity had negative impact on the growth of the region based on its significant effect on tourism.

Badiora,& Bako, (2020) investigated the perceptions of foreign tourists in Nigeria as a travel destination, with particular emphasis on safety and how it influences their future travel intentions. The research effort had a total of 232 international tourists who attended the 2019 Olojo and Osun festivals as study sample. The statistical results revealed that generally, the tourists' perception was positive as regards their safety. However, several respondents remarked that they felt unsafe while going out in the night and using public transport. The result also showed that socio-demographic factors (such as gender, length of stay, country of origin, number and purpose of visits) affected the perceived personal safety of tourists, while safety concerns did not adversely affect their positive word of mouth (recommending the country as a travel destination to others) future travel intentions to return to Nigeria.

Poon, and Low, (2005) investigated the factors that measured different satisfaction levels in Malaysian hotels. The comparative study between Asian and Western travellers studied the importance hotel guests attached to both tangible and intangible hotel attributes. The result of the statistical analysis showed a significant difference between how Asian and Western guests evaluate hotel attributes with clear indication that satisfaction levels of Malaysian hotels were higher among Western travellers than with Asian travellers. Both groups perceived hospitality as an influential factor in determining the overall satisfaction level. Also, Western hotel guests had more regard for hotel security and safety and food and beverage, while Asian travellers had more regard for value for money services.

The hotel remains the most conspicuous component of the hospitality industry, because of its responsibility in the provision of accommodation for tourists while in transit and at destinations across the world. It is expected that owners/managers of hotels should ensure that security and safety measures are put in place to enhance the perception of a particular hotel as being safe and secured for the hotel guests as well as employees. From the foregoing, security and safety issues in contemporary hospitality marketing is very important to the guests regarding hotel choice at destinations and should therefore be of utmost concern to hotel owners/managers. Thus, we hypothesise the following.

H1: Hotel security is a significant determinant of guests' satisfaction.

H2: Hotel security is a significant determinant of guests' repurchase intention.

H3: Hotel safety is a significant determinant of guests' satisfaction

H4: Hotel safety is a significant determinant of guests' repurchase intention.

Research Methodology

Research Design, Sample and Sampling Technique: This current study adopted a descriptive survey research while adopting a convenient sampling technique which was useful in identifying, selecting and distributing the questionnaires to the hotel guests. The population chosen for the study were all the hotel guests who were lodging at the hotels during the period of questionnaire administration. A sample size of 124 guests was participated in the study based on convenient sampling technique and presumed to be large enough for adequate representation when viewed in the light of the time and cost constraints for this study. The 124 questionnaires retrieved were found useful and therefore subjected to data analysis.

Demographic Profile of Respondents: The analysis of the respondents' profile showed that (62) respondents (50%) were male while (62) respondents (50%) female. Information on age brackets showed that 6 respondents (4.8%), were less than 20 years, 56 respondents (45.2%) were within 20–29 years, 43 respondents (34.7%) were within 30–39 years while 19 respondents (15.3%)

were greater than 40 years. Regarding the level of education, the following were obtained; M.Sc/MBA/MA (34) (27.4%), B.Sc/HND (60) (48.4%), Ph.D (6) (4.8%), Senior Secondary School Certificate SSCE (24) (19.4%). Analysis of the number of years the guests had patronised the hotel brand revealed the following; 39 respondents (31.4%) had patronised for less than two years (<2yrs), 72 respondents (58.1%) have patronised for two to four years (2 – 4 years), 12 respondents (9.7%) have patronised for five to eight years (5 – 8 years), 1 respondent (0.8) had been a loyal guest for more than 9 years.

Measurement Instrument and Questionnaire design

The major instrument for data collection was a well-structured questionnaire. The source of the items were from extant literature. However, as expected they were readjusted in order to conform with the research purpose and context of the current study. The items for hotel security (5) and hotel safety (4) were measured using items adapted from Ghazi (2015). The three items used for guest satisfaction were adapted from Ryu, Lee and Kim, 2012 and Lim (2010), while the three items for repurchase intention were adapted from Namkung and Jung (2007). To enable the guests to express their degree of agreement with the items or otherwise, all the measurement items were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale anchored by: Strongly Disagree [SD](1), Disagree [D](2), Agree [A](3), Agree fairly strongly(4) and Strongly Agree [SA](5)

Statistical Research Results

Reliability Analysis: The essence of reliability analysis is to ascertain whether the variable measures what it intended in the study. The Table 1 below shows the result of reliability analysis on the two dimensions and two measures through the use of Cronbach’s Alpha with a value of .984. The value is an indication that the measurement scales were reliable and the data suitable for analysis.

Table 1 Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.984	15

TEST OF HYPOTHESES

DECISION RULE

If $PV < 0.05$ = Reject H_0
 $PV > 0.05$ = Accept H_0

Hypothesis 1: Relationship between hotel security and guest satisfaction

H1: Hotel security is a significant determinant of guests’ satisfaction.

Table 2 Correlation Analysis showing the relationship between hotel security and guest satisfaction

Correlations			Hotel Security	Guest Satisfaction
Spearman's rho	Hotel Security	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.576**
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.000
	Guest Satisfaction	N	124	124
		Correlation Coefficient	.576**	1.000

	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.
	N	124	124

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Table 2 above shows the result of the Spearman Rank Correlation analysis which indicates that there is a strong and positive correlation between hotel security and guest satisfaction in hotels in Port Harcourt Rivers State, Nigeria with $r=.576$. The p value $=.000$ which is less than 0.05, meaning that the correlation is significant. Consequently, the hypothesis is supported.

Hypothesis 2: Relationship between hotel security and guest repurchase intention.

H2: Hotel security is a significant determinant of guests’ repurchases intention.

Table 3 Correlation Analysis showing the relationship between hotel security and guest repurchase intention.

Correlations			Hotel Security	Guest Revisit Intention
Spearman's rho	Hotel Security	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.651**
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.000
		N	124	124
	Guest Repurchase Intention	Correlation Coefficient	.651**	1.000
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.
		N	124	124

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Table 3 above shows the result of the Spearman Rank Correlation analysis which indicates that there is a strong and positive correlation between hotel security and guest repurchase intention in hotels in Port Harcourt, Rivers State of Nigeria with $r=.651$. The p value $=.000$ which is less than 0.05, meaning that the correlation is significant. Consequently, hypothesis two is supported.

Hypothesis 3: Relationship between hotel safety and guest satisfaction

H3: Hotel safety is a significant determinant of guests’ satisfaction

Table 4 Correlation Analysis showing the relationship between hotel safety and guest satisfaction.

Correlations			Hotel Safety	Guest Satisfaction
Spearman's rho	Hotel Safety	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.862**
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.000
		N	124	124
	Guest Satisfaction	Correlation Coefficient	.862**	1.000
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.
		N	124	124

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Table 4 above shows the result of the Spearman Rank Correlation analysis which indicates that there is a very strong and positive correlation between hotel safety and guest satisfaction in selected hotels in Port Harcourt, Rivers State of Nigeria with $r=.862$.

The p value =.000 which is less than 0.05, is an indication that the correlation is significant. Consequently, hypothesis three is supported.

Hypothesis 4: Relationship between hotel safety and guest repurchase intention

H4: Hotel safety is a significant determinant of guests’ repurchases intention.

Table 5 Correlation Analysis showing the relationship between hotel safety and guest repurchase intention.

Correlations			Hotel Safety	Guest Revisit Intention
Spearman's rho	Hotel Safety	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.888**
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.000
	Guest Repurchase Intention	N	124	124
		Correlation Coefficient	.888**	1.000
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.
		N	124	124

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Table 5 above shows the result of the Spearman Rank Correlation analysis which indicates that there is a very strong and positive correlation between hotel safety and guest repurchase intention in hotels in Port Harcourt, Rivers State of Nigeria with $r=.888$. The p value =.000 which is less than 0.05 is an indication that the correlation is significant. Consequently, hypothesis four is supported.

Discussion of Findings

The statistical results shown in Table 2 confirms a significant positive relationship between hotel security and guest satisfaction. This finding is consistent with the argument of Chauhan, Shukla and Negi (2018) that a well secured hotel environment will engender guest satisfaction. The foregoing implies that guests’ expectations are met with the assurance of adequate security measures within the hotel premises. This is understandable because every guest will prefer to lodge in a hotel that is well secured especially in Port Harcourt where the incidents of armed robbery and kidnapping is rampant.

With regard to the relationship between hotel security and guests’ repurchase intentions, the statistical result showed a significant positive relationship. This finding is consistent with Andres-Rosales, et al (2018) who found that insecurity negatively impacted the growth of tourism in Mexico. With hotels offering accommodation services away from home for tourists, it is normal to expect hotel guests to plan to lodge again in a particular hotel they perceive to have a well secured hotel environment. This is because such a traveller may be spared the time of going in search of a well secured hotel which may likely result in waste of precious time.

For hypothesis 3, the results (see Table 4), the statistical analysis, shows a significant positive relationship between hotel safety and guest satisfaction. This finding is consistent with Ghazi (2015) and Poon and Low (2005). Safety of tourists/visitors is critical in the determination of a destination and when selecting a hotel to lodge. Hotel guests should be protected from potential risks and hazards such as accidents, hazardous materials, and fire.

In terms of the relationship between hotel safety and customers repurchase intention in hotels the result is significant positive relationship. This finding is consistent with Chauhan, et al(2018).Hotel guests are expected to be more safety conscious; a situation that affects their level of satisfaction in a hotel setting. This implies that any hotel with demonstrable safety measures will provide a home away from home where guests would like to revisit anytime they are in the destination for touristic purposes.

Conclusion

This study was conducted to ascertain the effect of security and safety challenges on hotel patronage. This research effort has fulfilled its objectives by determining the relationship that exists between hotel security and safety and two measures of hotel patronage: guest satisfaction and repurchase intention respectively. The result of the statistical analysis, showed that hotel security and hotel safety independently had positive significant relationship with guest satisfaction and repurchase intention in the context of hotels operating within a university town in the city of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.

The outcome of the research indicates that hotel safety is the most important factor that influenced hotel patronage. Thus, this study provides information for those who may want to investigate more on the factors influencing urban security challenges on guest satisfaction and repurchase intention towards hotels. It is therefore of strategic relevance for owners/managers of hotels to adopt security and safety measures irrespective of their size or level of service, as security is considered to be an important and prime concern for the guests who come to the hotel for lodging purposes.

Study Implications

This current study examines the effect of hotel security and safety as predictors of brand choice in the context of hotels operating in an oil city in a developing country, Nigeria. To a large extent, the study findings will provide very fruitful and useful academic and practitioners' implications.

On the academic side, this current study makes important and significant contribution to the hotel attributes literature by systematically investigating the effect of hotel security and safety on brand choice. The findings of this study provides tentative support to the proposition that hotel security and safety should be recognised and treated as significant antecedents for influencing brand choice in the hospitality industry with emphasis on hotels in Nigeria.

On the practitioners' side, the significant effect of hotel security and safety on brand choice is highlighted. Certainly, hotel owners/marketers are able to benefit from the implications of these findings. For instance, given the robust relationship (adjusted R squared) between hotel security and safety and guest satisfaction and repeat patronage in order to enhance brand choice by tourists/visitors, hotel owners/managers ought to pay attention to security and safety measures in their hotels. For example, by providing modern security equipment/gadgets and employing well trained security personnel, hotel owners/managers could effectively secure the hotel environment from external attackers. In the same vein, the hotel owners/managers are expected to put in place safety measures to safeguard hotel guests. By so doing, hotel guests will be satisfied. Also, the owners/managers could enhance the safety of hotel guests through educating them as precautions for accidents while lodging at the hotels.

Limitations and Further Research Directions

This current study is still limited in some areas despite its high level of significance. Firstly, data collection was generated from Nigerians only who lodged at the various hotels operating within the oil rich city of Port Harcourt. Therefore, the generalizability of the study findings could be improved upon if the study is replicated using the same research model in other geo-political zones of the country. To enhance further results comparison future research effort should be conducted in Ghana, Benin Republic, Kenya and South Africa. Further research effort should also be directed towards investigating the effect of urban security challenges on customer satisfaction and revisit intention in the visitor attraction markets in several tourism destinations of the world.

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