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SHORT-TERM RENTAL PROPERTY MARKET IN FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY ABUJA, NIGERIA: AN ASSESSMENT OF GUEST SATISFACTION WITH INTERIOR DECORATION

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Abstract

Abuja's dynamic real estate milieu has witnessed a palpable surge in short-term rental properties, underscoring the burgeoning market potential. However, even in this expanding field, there is a noticeable lack of academic research on the effects of interior design on the functionality and marketability of short-term rental houses. Therefore, this paper uses appropriate standard procedures to assess Guest Satisfaction with Interior Decoration in Short Term Rental Property Market in the Federal Capital Territory Abuja Nigeria with a view to understand how does how interior decoration influence the satisfaction overall contentment with the stay after collecting data from 258 respondents through a structured questionnaire administration. The data collected was analyzed using SPSS Software and the results were presented in charts and graphs. The findings indicated that; guests are actively seeking properties with visually appealing and well-designed interior spaces, emphasizing the critical role of interior decoration in attracting guests and influencing their booking decisions; the guests' satisfaction can be attributed to the attractiveness and quality of the interior decorating, highlighting the role that it plays in improving the whole guest experience and creating pleasant recollections of the stay; guests who are satisfied with the interior decoration are more inclined to return for future stays, indicating the important role of interior design in fostering guest loyalty and retention; property owners frequently struggle to allocate enough funds to attain the ideal interior design results, which could jeopardize the standard and attraction of their lodgings; property owners can make use of Abuja's rich cultural legacy by using locally produced materials and hiring local craftspeople, which would help to create a sense of genuineness and connection with visitors. Therefore, the study concluded that interior decoration enhances guest satisfaction in short-term rental properties in the study area. The study further recommends that to attract the rich short-term rental market, property owners in luxurious areas like Maitama should emphasise elegance and contemporary aesthetics in their interiors.

Key Words: Short-term rental property: Guest satisfaction: Interior decoration

1.1 Introduction

the short-term rental accommodation market has experienced exponential expansion, largely due to the influence of sites like Booking.com and Airbnb in recent times (Aguilera, Artioli, & Colomb, 2019). According to Semi and Tonetta (2020) this phenomenon can be attributed to a combination of factors such as changing travel preferences, a growing desire for unique experiences during stays, and the perceived convenience and affordability of short-term rentals as compared to traditional hotel accommodations. Recent studies highlights how important interior design is for drawing guests and improving their experience completely. For example, Han, Lee, and Lee (2019) posited that visually appealing interiors significantly influence guests' decisions to book and, consequently, their levels of satisfaction. Similarly, Kim and Lee (2018) explained the critical significance that design components like color palettes, lighting, and furniture placements play in creating unique and engaging visitor experiences in short-term rentals. Within the African context, the real estate industry is experiencing a significant paradigm shift propelled by urbanization, burgeoning economic growth, and a growing influx of tourists (Fick, 2021). With its growing middle class and tourism industry, Nigeria, a major economic force on the continent, presents itself as a promising environment for the growth of short-term rental properties, especially in urban centers like Abuja (Omodero, 2019). Still, there is a dearth of academic literature that expressly discusses how interior design impacts client satisfaction in short-term rentals in the African context, even in spite of the growing demand. Furthermore, in the context of African real estate, it is critical to recognize the possible influence of cultural preferences and native aesthetics in determining how visitors view interior spaces (Hofäcker, & Gebauer, 2021).

Nigeria's real estate sector confronts multifaceted challenges ranging from infrastructural inadequacies to security concerns (Auwalu & Bello, 2023). However, Abuja, as the epicentre of

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Nigeria's political and administrative machinery, emerges as a magnet for a diverse array of travelers, encompassing business professionals, governmental dignitaries, and leisure tourists alike (Qurix,, Edomwonyi-Otu, & Jise, 2020). Abuja's dynamic real estate milieu has witnessed a palpable surge in short-term rental properties, underscoring the burgeoning market potential (Abubakar, 2021). However, even in this expanding field, there is a noticeable lack of academic research on the effects of interior design on the functionality and marketability of short-term rental houses. By examining the complex relationship between design features, color schemes, and facilities in relation to visitors' booking decisions and subsequent satisfaction levels within Abuja's growing short-term rental market, this study aims to bridge this gap. Property owners and managers must have a thorough awareness of the guests' changing expectations and subtle preferences within this particular setting in order to correctly adjust their interior design methods. Ultimately, interior decoration plays a vital role in shaping the success trajectory of short-term rental properties (Hofäcker, & Gebauer, 2021), and urgently requiring specific empirical investigations designed for the Nigerian context, especially in developing cities such as Abuja.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Interior design is crucial to a short-term property's success since it includes aesthetics, utility, and atmosphere. (Ajala, 2023). Although interior decoration's significance in real estate contexts has been extensively studied worldwide, little is known about how it specifically affects short-term rentals in Nigeria, especially in cities like Abuja. Shabrina, Arcaute, and Batty (2022) noted that the emergence of websites like Airbnb, Booking.com, and VRBO has transformed the real estate market leading to the rapid expansion of short-term rentals across the globe. This trend

is driven by shifting consumer preferences, the pursuit of authentic experiences, and the affordability and flexibility offered by short-term rentals (Hoffman & Heisler, 2022). Scholars have extensively explored the impact of interior decoration on guests' experiences and satisfaction levels in various contexts. Notably, studies by Han, Lee, and Lee (2019) emphasize how important it is for visually appealing interiors to have an impact on visitors' decisions to book and their level of satisfaction in general.. In Africa, the real estate sector is undergoing rapid transformation, propelled by urbanization, economic development, and increased tourism (Hofäcker, & Gebauer, 2021). Nigeria, a major participant in the area, offers a favorable environment for the real estate industry, especially in big cities like Abuja. Research that is specifically relevant to the African environment is still scarce, despite the growing demand for short-term rental housing. Empirical research, however, indicates that African tourists place a high value on well-constructed and culturally appropriate accommodation (Henama, 2018). Additionally, cultural preferences and local aesthetics shape guests' perceptions of interior spaces in African short-term rental homes (Visser, Erasmus, & Miller, 2017). According to Abubakar (2021) Nigeria's capital, Abuja, is a center for business, government, and tourism, drawing a wide range of visitors. The city's real estate sector has seen a rise in short-term rental homes, indicating the growing desire for alternate lodging options. Even so, there is still a dearth of empirical study on the impact of interior design on the effectiveness and competitiveness of short-term rentals in Abuja. A crucial gap exists about the specific implications of interior decoration for short-term rental houses in Nigeria, especially in Abuja, despite the fact that existing literature offers insightful information about the significance of interior decoration in short-term rental settings globally and in Africa. Although scholarly investigations have clarified the importance of interior design aesthetics and functionality in

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augmenting visitors' experiences and satisfaction levels, there is a deficiency of empirical research that specifically addresses the Nigerian environment.

1.3 The Study Area

1.3.1 Location and size

The Federal Capital Territory (FCT) is located at the geographical centre of Nigeria, it was established in 1991 to serve as the country's capital and political centre (Alao, 2009). The FCT is situated within the North-Central geopolitical zone and is surrounded by the states of Nasarawa to the north, Niger to the west, Kogi to the southwest, and Kaduna to the northwest. It lies between Lat 8^0 27' 8.38'' and Longitude 6^0 45' 47.7'' (Abubakar, 2021). The city of Abuja, which is the capital of Nigeria, is within the FCT. The size of the Federal Capital Territory is approximately 8000 square kilometers (2,824 square miles), making it a relatively compact administrative region (Ishaya & Abaje, 2009).

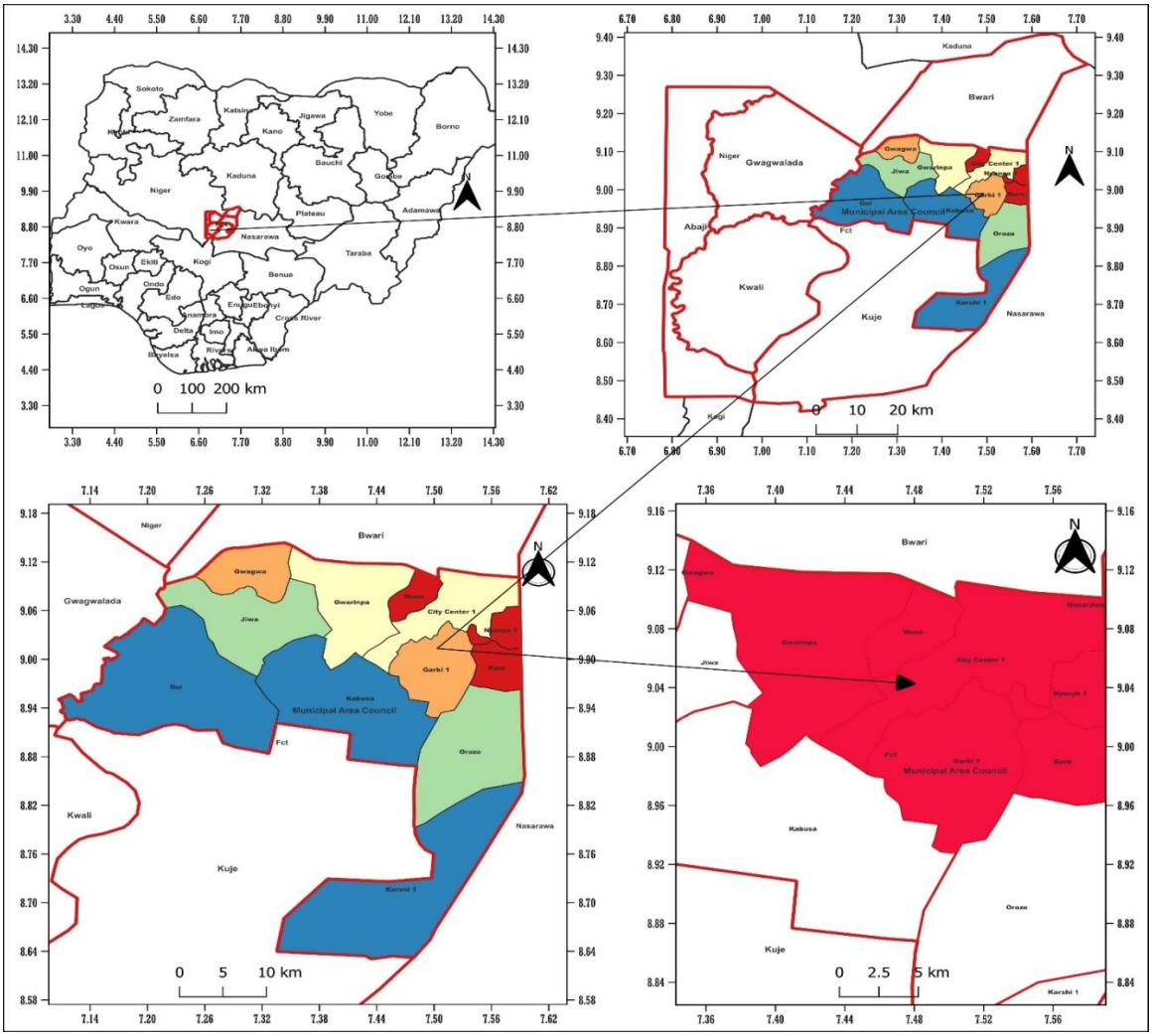


Figure 1.1: Nigeria Showing FCT

Source: ***Adapted from administrative map of FCT. (2023)***.

1.3.2 Land Use Morphology and Settlement

The land use morphology in the FCT is characterized by a mix of residential, commercial, administrative, and green spaces, the central business district (CBD) in Abuja is marked by high-rise buildings and government offices, while residential areas extend outward (Abubakar, 2021). The city is designed with well-planned districts, including diplomatic zones, industrial areas, and recreational spaces (Oguche, Akanbi, Eti, Odewumi, & Christopher., 2019)

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1.3.3 Population and Economic Characteristics

As of the latest available data, the population of the Federal Capital Territory, particularly the city of Abuja, has experienced significant growth. The population is diverse, reflecting the cosmopolitan nature of the capital city, with people from various ethnicities and backgrounds (Oguche et al, 2019). Abuja serves as the economic hub of Nigeria, hosting various government institutions, diplomatic missions, and businesses. The city's economy is diverse, with sectors such as finance, real estate, information technology, and telecommunications playing significant roles. The presence of government offices contributes to the service sector's prominence, while ongoing urban development projects contribute to economic growth. The FCT's economic landscape reflects its role as the administrative and political center of Nigeria (Alao, 2009).

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Interior Decoration and Guest Satisfaction

Researchers have focused a lot of emphasis on interior decoration in the real estate sector, especially in short-term rental apartments, because it has a big impact on overall competitiveness, business performance, and guest satisfaction (Adeyemi, 2020). Within the housing industry, research has continuously shown how important interior design is in determining guest satisfaction. Scholars like Han, Lee, and Lee (2019) have identified a direct correlation between visually appealing interiors and guests' booking decisions, as well as their overall satisfaction levels during their stay. Moreover, Kim and Lee (2018) emphasized how crucial design components like color palettes, lighting, and furniture are to creating experiences that visitors will remember. These results demonstrate how important interior design is for raising guest satisfaction, cultivating favorable opinions, and encouraging return visits.

Beyond its impact on guest satisfaction, interior decoration also significantly contributes to the business performance and profitability of short-term rental properties. Chen and Li (2019) did study and found that spending money on nice interior design can result in higher occupancy rates, higher rental rates, and positive reviews—all of which can improve profits. Similarly, Smith (2018) noted that homes with cutting-edge interior design elements—like smart house technology and environmentally friendly practices—usually draw in well-travelled visitors and fetch high prices. These results highlight the value of making calculated investments in interior design to improve guest satisfaction, boost productivity, and optimize return on investment. Adeyemi (2020) found a number of best practices and implementation strategies for maximizing interior decoration in short-term rental properties; these include putting a high priority on areas that need improvement, purchasing furniture that is both adaptable and durable, and using technology to improve guest satisfaction while remaining within a limited budget. Moreover, Wang and Liu (2021) highlighted how important it is to localize design aspects and make cultural adjustments in order to accommodate the varied tastes of visitors from various ethnic backgrounds. Property managers and owners may design warm, practical, and culturally inclusive interiors that appeal to visitors and produce profitable results by adopting these tactics. While interior design has several advantages for short-term rental residences, property managers and owners face both opportunities and obstacles in this regard. Interior space upkeep, restoration, and maintenance can be expensive and time-consuming, especially for facilities with high occupancy rates (Shabrina, *et al*, 2022). For properties operating in multiple markets, managing cultural sensitivity and regulatory obligations also presents hurdles. On the other hand, cutting-edge methods of interior design, like customized experiences, interactive design projects, and sustainable practices, offer chances for distinction and a competitive advantage (Hoffman & Heisler, 2020). The review of related

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literature underscores the significant impact of interior decoration on guest satisfaction, business performance, and overall success of short-term rental properties. Hofäcker and Gebauer (2021) noted that property owners and managers may build appealing, practical, and culturally inclusive places that improve the visitor experience and spur economic success by investing in high-quality interior design elements, utilizing technology, and embracing cultural adjustments. Despite challenges such as budgetary constraints and regulatory compliance, interior decoration presents opportunities for innovation, differentiation, and competitive advantage in the dynamic real estate industry (Shabrina, *et al*, 2022).

2.2 Studies on the Influence of Interior Decoration on Guest Satisfaction

The real estate sector's research continuously shows how important interior design is to visitors' satisfaction while they stay in short-term rentals (Ho *et al*, 2020). For example, a study conducted by Han, Lee, and Lee (2019) investigated how room design affects guest's satisfaction. The results showed that aesthetically pleasing interiors greatly raised guest satisfaction and affected their propensity to tell others about the short-term rental properties. Similarly, research by Kim and Lee (2018) investigated the connection between visitors' opinions of the quality of short-term rentals and design aesthetics. According to the study, guest satisfaction surveys gave better ratings to well-designed interiors that included fashionable furnishings, cogent color schemes, and meticulous attention to detail. Moreover, studies have highlighted the importance of incorporating cultural and contextual considerations into interior decoration to enhance guest satisfaction. In a cross-cultural study conducted by Chen and Lin (2019), Examining variations in guest preferences for the aesthetics of short-term rental properties from various cultural backgrounds, the results highlighted the necessity for short-term rental properties to customize their interior decoration

approaches to meet the expectations and cultural values of their varied guest populations. Similarly, research by Pan and Sparks (2018) highlighted how a brand's personality affects how visitors view its interior design. It was discovered that short-term rental properties with interior design that effectively communicated their brand identity had greater levels of guest satisfaction and loyalty.

Craven (2020) said that the impact of interior design on short-term rental booking decisions and satisfaction is a crucial feature of the contemporary real estate market, influencing visitors' impressions, inclinations, and overall experiences. A key factor in drawing visitors, influencing their choice of accommodations, and eventually raising their levels of satisfaction is interior design (Hoffman & Heisler, 2020). Combs, Kerrigan and Wachsmuth (2020) highlighted that visitors' first impressions and perceptions of the property are greatly influenced by the interior spaces' visual attractiveness, design aesthetics, and functionality, which in turn influences their likelihood of making a reservation. Additionally, the degree to which visitors are satisfied with the interior design of the lodging directly affects their level of satisfaction with the accommodations overall, which influences their propensity to return and refer others to the property. (Machado *et al.,* 2021). According to Guo, Wang, and Wang, (2019) In order to maximize their design strategies and improve the guest satisfaction, property owners and managers must comprehend the impact that interior decoration has on booking decisions and satisfaction. Short-term properties may become more competitive, draw in more reservations, and create a pleasant guest experience by designing aesthetically pleasing, cozy, and useful interior spaces that match the tastes and expectations of their visitors. (Ntongani, 2024).

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3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study approach outlines the all-encompassing approach used to look into guest satisfaction with Interior Decoration on Short-Term Rental in Abuja, Nigeria. A structured questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data in order to properly address the research aim. Only primary data were used to address the research topic. First hand information was sourced from visitors and owners/managers of short-term rental properties in Abuja, Nigeria. The main instrument used to collect data was the questionnaire, which offered a structured method for compiling quantitative data.

The population of interest comprises guests who have stayed in short-term rental accommodations in Abuja, as well as property owners/managers operating such properties. To establish an effective sample size, stratified random sampling was employed, ensuring representation from various demographic groups and types of short-term rental properties. Sample selection was guided by factors such as location, property size, and guest demographics. A total of 258 questionnaires was used for the study with the following breakdown. Descriptive statistics, such as measures of central tendency and dispersion, was employed to summarize and present quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires. Graphical representations, such as charts and graphs, will complement textual summaries to facilitate data interpretation.

4.0 Data Analysis on Interior Decoration and Satisfaction

4.1 Have you ever chosen a short-term rental accommodation based on its interior decoration? (Response from guest)

The response to the question of whether or not guests have selected a short-term rental property based on its interior design indicate that interior design has a big impact on reservations.

The high majority of responders responding "yes" underscores the importance of interior decoration as a determining factor in visitors' decision-making process while selecting accommodations. This suggests that guests are actively seeking properties with visually appealing and well-designed interior spaces, emphasizing the critical role of interior decoration in attracting guests and influencing their booking decisions. Furthermore, the percentage of respondents indicating "no" highlights a segment of guests who may prioritize other factors, such as location, price, or amenities, over interior decoration when choosing accommodations. However, the relatively smaller percentage suggests that interior decoration still holds considerable importance for a majority of guests, indicating its influence as a key competitive advantage for short-term rental properties. Figure 1 presents a visual depiction of guests' preferences and priorities while choosing lodgings by displaying the distribution of answers to the question on how interior decoration affects booking decisions. In order to improve interior design strategies and meet guest expectations and preferences, property owners and managers can use this graph to better understand the importance of interior decoration in attracting guests. This will ultimately lead to an increase in bookings and guest satisfaction in the Abuja hospitality market.

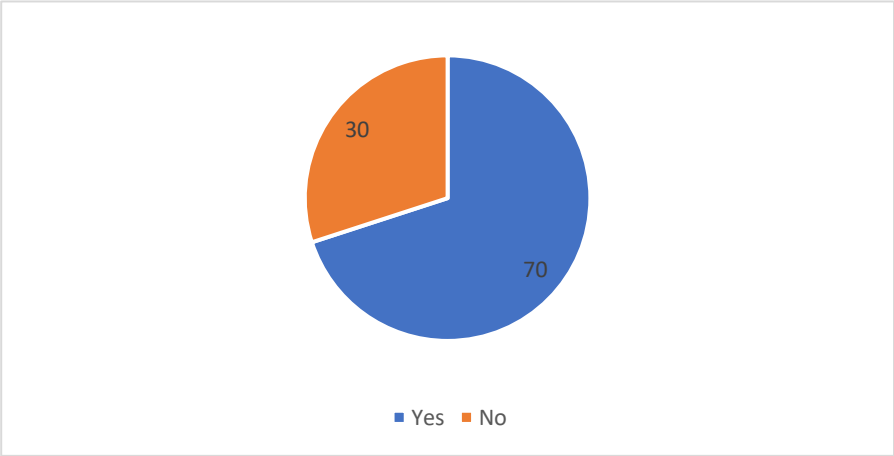


Figure 1: Respondent opinion on short-term rental accommodation based on its interior decoration?

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4.2 How does the interior decoration of a short-term rental property influence your overall satisfaction with your stay? (response from guest)

The major impact of interior design on visitors' overall experiences and satisfaction levels is evident from the responses to the question about how interior decorating affects overall contentment with the stay. The high proportion of respondents who said "significantly" highlights how important interior design is in determining how satisfied visitors are with their stay overall. This implies that a significant percentage of the guests' satisfaction can be attributed to the attractiveness and quality of the interior decorating, highlighting the role that it plays in improving the whole guest experience and creating pleasant recollections of the stay. Furthermore, the percentage of respondents indicating "moderately" suggests that interior decoration also plays a meaningful role in influencing guests' satisfaction levels, although to a lesser extent. This highlights the nuanced relationship between interior decoration and guest satisfaction, with guests recognizing the impact of interior design on their overall experience, even if it does not have as significant an effect as other factors such as service quality or location. Moreover, while the percentages for "minimally" and "not at all" are relatively smaller, they still indicate that interior decoration may have some influence on guest satisfaction, even though to a lesser degree. This underscores the importance of maintaining high standards of interior decoration to ensure that guests' expectations are met and that their overall satisfaction with their stay is maximized. The distribution of answers to the question on how interior decoration affected overall satisfaction with the stay is shown in Figure 2, which gives a visual depiction of the important influence interior design has on visitor experiences and satisfaction levels. In order to optimize visitor happiness and loyalty in the cutthroat hospitality industry, property owners and managers can use this graph to

better understand how important interior decoration is in influencing guests' opinions and to direct their efforts toward improving interior design techniques.

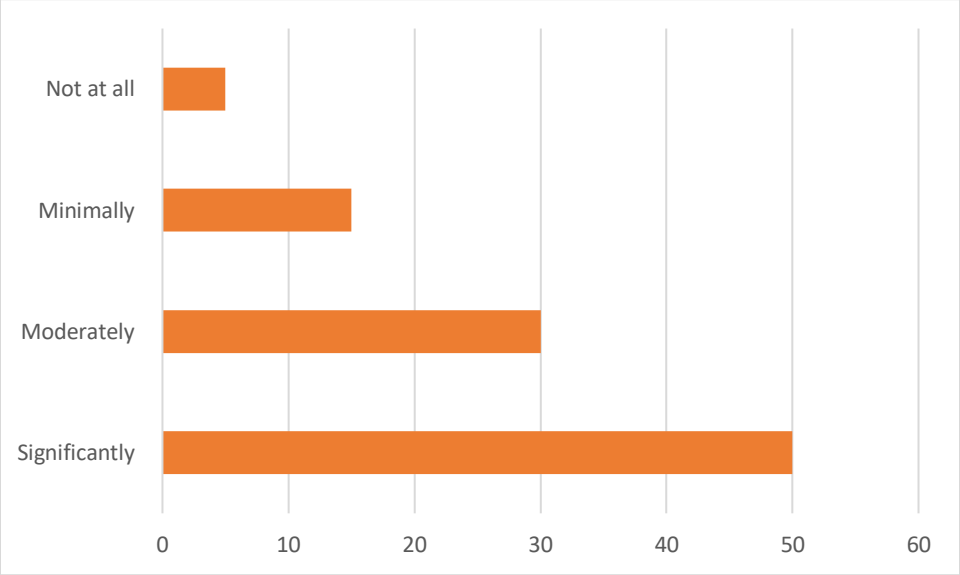


Figure 2: Interior decoration of a short-term rental property influence on overall satisfaction of respondent.

4.3 Respondent Likelihood to Book Short Term Rental Again if they were Satisfied with the Interior Decoration (response from guest)

The answers to the question about whether or not a guest would be satisfied with the interior decoration of a short-term rental home before reserving it again demonstrate the important role that interior design plays in fostering repeat business and guest loyalty. The significant proportion of respondents who said "yes" highlights the close connection between visitors' satisfaction with the interior design and their propensity to make additional reservations at the hotel. This suggests that guests who are satisfied with the interior decoration are more inclined to return for future stays, indicating the important role of interior design in fostering guest loyalty and retention. Furthermore, the percentage of respondents indicating "maybe" suggests that interior decoration

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may influence guests' booking decisions to some extent, but other factors such as price, location, or amenities may also play a role in their decision-making process. This explains the importance of maintaining high standards of interior decoration to enhance guest satisfaction and increase the likelihood of repeat bookings. Moreover, while the percentage of respondents indicating "no" is relatively small, it still highlights the potential impact of unsatisfactory interior decoration on guest loyalty and repeat bookings. Property owners and managers should recognize the importance of interior design in shaping guest perceptions and prioritize efforts to maintain or improve interior decoration standards to encourage repeat business and foster long-term guest relationships. Figure 3 provides a visual representation of the strong relationship between guest loyalty and interior design satisfaction by showing the distribution of responses to the question about the likelihood of booking a short-term rental property again based on satisfaction with its interior decoration. In order to increase customer happiness and loyalty in the cutthroat hospitality industry, property owners and managers can use this graph to better understand the role that interior decoration plays in retaining guests.

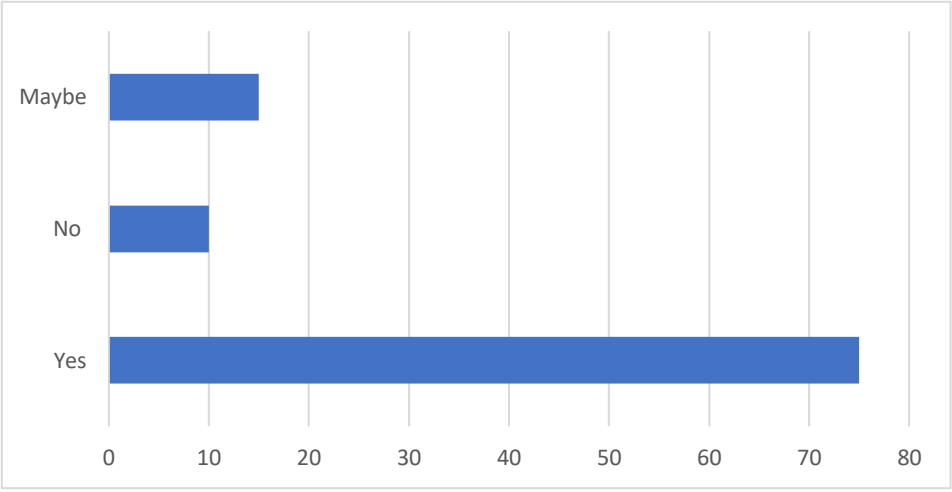


Figure 3: Respondent Likelihood to Book Short Term Rental Again if they were Satisfied with the Interior Decoration

4.4 Perception on the biggest challenges in implementing effective interior decoration strategies in short-term rental properties in Abuja (response from property managers/Landlords)

The answers to the question about the perceived biggest challenges to putting into practice successful interior design ideas in Abuja's short-term rental properties illuminated the wide range of difficulties experienced by managers and owners in the hotel industry. The significant proportion of participants who identified "budget constraints" as the most significant obstacle highlights the widespread occurrence of financial restraints when carrying out interior design projects. This implies that property owners frequently struggle to allocate enough funds to attain the ideal interior design results, which could jeopardize the standard and attraction of their lodgings. Furthermore, the percentages for "cultural sensitivity" and "market competition" indicate that property owners also grapple with navigating cultural nuances and staying competitive in the market. Cultural sensitivity is particularly crucial in Abuja's diverse landscape, where accommodations must cater to a range of cultural preferences and sensitivities. Meanwhile, market competition underscores the need for property owners to differentiate their offerings through innovative interior design strategies to stand out in a crowded marketplace. Moreover, the percentage of respondents indicating "lack of skilled professionals" highlights the importance of having access to qualified interior designers and decorators proficient in meeting the unique requirements of short-term rental properties. Addressing this challenge may require investments in training and development programs to enhance the skillset of existing professionals or collaborating with external experts to augment in-house capabilities. The distribution of answers to the question about the perceived largest hurdles in putting effective interior decoration plans into practice is shown in Figure 4.4, which gives a visual depiction of the main roadblocks that

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managers and property owners in Abuja's hotel business confront. This graph facilitates comprehension of the relative importance of various problems and directs efforts toward the development of focused solutions to successfully overcome these barriers.

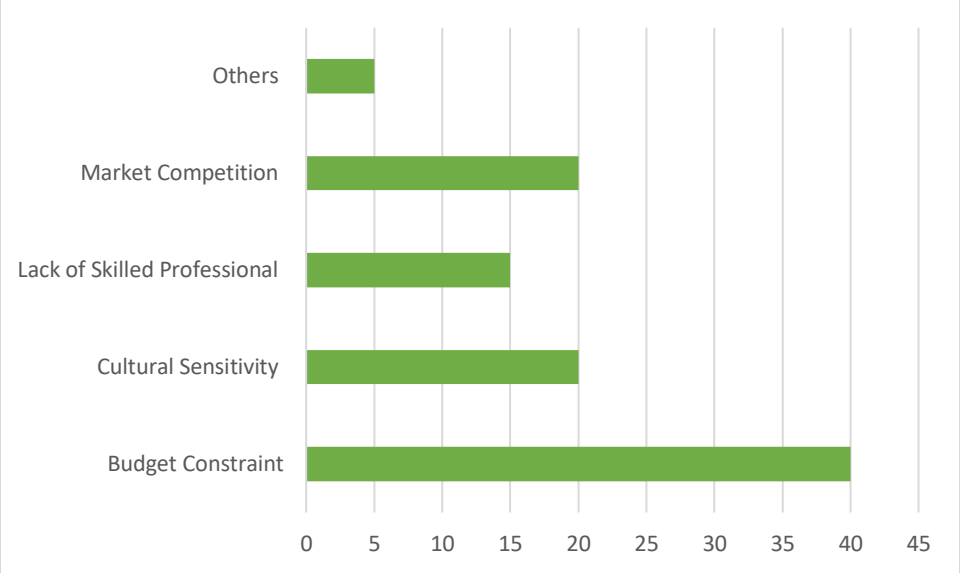


Figure 41: Perception to the Biggest Challenges in Effective Interior Decoration Strategies

4.5 What opportunities exist for improving interior decoration practices in short-term rental properties in Abuja? (response from property managers/Landlords)

The responses to the question regarding opportunities for improving interior decoration practices in short-term rental properties in Abuja underscore the potential avenues for innovation and enhancement within the hospitality sector. The significant proportion of participants who support "leveraging local craftsmanship and materials" suggests that indigenous talent and resources are valued when designing genuine and culturally meaningful interior environments. According to this, property owners can take use of Abuja's rich cultural legacy by using locally produced materials and hiring local craftspeople, which would help to create a sense of

genuineness and connection with visitors. Furthermore, the percentages for "collaborating with interior designers" and "offering personalized design options" emphasize how crucial customisation and knowledge are in catering to the various tastes and demands of visitors. By providing tailored design solutions and partnering with skilled professionals, property owners can elevate the quality and appeal of their accommodations, enhancing guest satisfaction and loyalty. Moreover, the percentage of respondents advocating for "incorporating technology for smart homes" reflects the growing trend towards technological integration in hospitality settings. Embracing smart home technologies can enhance convenience, comfort, and efficiency for guests, while also differentiating properties in a competitive market landscape. Figure 5. illustrates the distribution of responses to the question regarding opportunities for improving interior decoration practices, providing a visual representation of the potential avenues for innovation and enhancement identified by respondents.

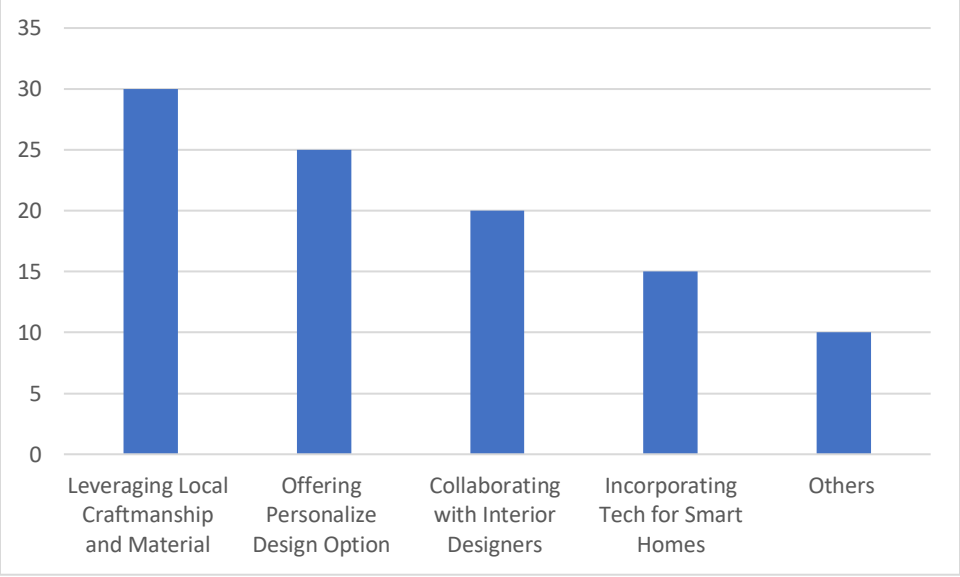


Figure 5: Opportunities for Improving Interior Decoration Practice in Short Term Rentals

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5.1 Conclusion

Property owners can create remarkable experiences that connect with guests and generate excellent business outcomes by recognizing their preferences for modern elegance, comfortable comfort, and cultural authenticity. The research's conclusions add to the body of knowledge about interior design, especially when it comes to short-term rentals and customer satisfaction. The study emphasizes the significance of interior decoration as a strategic instrument for differentiation and competitive advantage, underscoring the need for property owners and managers to give priority to design aesthetics and cultural authenticity which enhances tenants satisfaction. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are provided for property owners and managers of short-term rental properties in Abuja:

- To attract the rich short-term rental market, property owners in luxurious areas like Maitama should emphasize elegance and contemporary aesthetics in their interior decoration.
- The main goals of interior design should be practicality and efficient utilization of available space.
- In order to minimize wear and tear and eventually lessen maintenance expenses, property owners should consider the frequent turnover of guests in short-term rentals and utilize sturdy, premium materials for flooring, furnishings, and finishes.
- The goal of interior design should be to create a cozy, inviting space that makes visitors feel at home.

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