
Ensuring Guest Safety: Legal Obligations and Security Standards in Ghana's Hospitality Sector

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Abstract

The study investigates security policies and legislations necessary for ensuring safety to guests in Ghana's hospitality sector and implementation by hospitality managers. The study adopted a qualitative research approach and descriptive study design. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews of security officers and hospitality facility managers. The study showed a varied degree of awareness of legal obligations and security standards in Ghana's hospitality sector. Specifically, it was evidenced that some hotel managers and employees were aware of legal obligations and security standards but others had little to no awareness. It was revealed that factors such as limited resources, infrastructure challenges, and sporadic enforcement by authorized agencies weaken complete compliance with the standards of guests' safety. Despite all these problems, most of the establishments have incorporated proactive safety measures into their daily operations, but others were primarily reactive in orientation. Further, the study observed that hospitality firms implement security technologies, coordinate with external security agencies such as police and fire department to enhance the safety of guests. The study concludes that although legal obligations and security standards for guests safety are in place, there is a short in its implementation by hospitality firms in Ghana. The study recommends the need to intensify training among hospitality staff, improve regulation enforcement, and build

proactive partnerships with external security organizations to enhance guest safety in Ghana's hospitality industry.

Keywords: Ghana Tourism Authority, Guest Safety, Hospitality Sector, Legal Obligations, Security Standards

Introduction

The hospitality industry comprises firms or businesses that provide services such as accommodation, food and beverage service, event and convention operations, travel, and tourism. According to Cohen and Michel (1999), the phrase hospitality covers a variety of service industries that receive a customer and provide them with services such as providing food and beverages, or provision of a room and bed to sleep. The hospitality industry contributes significantly to the economy of countries through the provision of employment, foreign exchange earnings, and tourism expansion (Thommandru et al., 2021). According to data from the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), Travel, hospitality and Tourism's contribution to global GDP totaled US\$ 10.9 trillion in 2024. This includes direct, indirect, and induced impacts of the sector. As a share, the section represented 10% of the global economy. Furthermore, the sector supported a total of 357 million jobs globally, which is approximately 1 in 10 jobs in 2024 (WTTC, 2025). In Ghana, the hospitality industry sector has expanded incrementally every year, and the hotels, resorts, guesthouses, and lodges accessing local and foreign customers are on the rise. In 2022, the Travel, hospitality, and Tourism industry in Ghana contributed around 3.4 billion U.S. dollars to the country's gross domestic product (Statista, 2024). This increased compared to the 3.1 billion U.S. dollars registered in the preceding year. In 2023, the share was forecast to reach over 3.6 billion U.S. dollars. These figures underscore the significance of the industry to the global economy and the economic development of Ghana (Statista, 2024).

Matviichuk and Smal (2022) noted that the increased competition in the hospitality industry has increased the concern of entities to enhance the quality of services provided to meet the satisfaction of customers and also to guarantee the security and safety of guests. Guest safety refers to the protection of hotel guests from harm, injury, theft, or emergencies when staying in an establishment (Binns and Kempf, 2021). The security and safety of guests have attracted the attention of stakeholders such as researchers and policymakers globally, particularly due to heightened global concern over terrorism, criminality, outbreaks of disease, and other risks that can jeopardize the well-being of visitors (Clifton, 2023; Tasci and Boylu, 2010; Chauhan, 2007). Notably, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has suggested that all nations should develop a national policy on tourist safety and risk prevention (WTO, 1991). In 2003, safety and security were included in the six determinant standards: hygiene, accessibility, transparency, authenticity, and harmony of quality tourist products (UNWTO, 2003). It is therefore necessary to appreciate the legal standards and security needs that underpin safety practices in Ghana's hospitality sector.

Hospitality operators in Ghana are required to meet regulatory and statutory requirements and security standards to legally and safely conduct their operations. The regulatory requirements for hospitality operators include licensing process, compliance with health and sanitation codes, structural safety, and fire and emergency preparedness measures (Kissi and Owusu-Mintah, 2015). The Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) in the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture is the principal regulatory agency ensuring compliance under the Ghana Tourism Act, 2011, Act 817 (Preko, 2020). It insists on safety measures before granting operating permits and does periodic checks (Preko, 2020). Security standards in the hospitality industry refer to the collection of procedures established, technology, and policies adopted by hospitality organizations to prevent injury, ensure order, and respond to emergencies (Clifton, 2023). Standards include physical, i.e., cameras, smoke detectors, and secure doors, and procedural standards such as employee safety training, incident reporting procedure, and guest verification procedure (Clifton, 2023). The Harmonized Standards for Accommodation and Catering Establishments in Ghana were developed in 2004 to make sure that hospitality operators and facilities in Ghana adhere to regulatory and statutory requirements and security standards. The L.I. 1205 (Accommodation and Catering Enterprises Regulations, 1979) general standards governing the operation of accommodation establishments were revised to take into account the newly introduced areas as well as suggestions from the pertinent trade associations. The New Harmonized Standards for Accommodation and Catering Establishments in Ghana, which hotels and similar establishments, including those that were under construction starting in 2005, are expected to comply with, are the result of the blending of the existing standards with the ECOWAS Standards (Boateng, 2019).

However, compliance and adherence to such legal obligations and security standards differ largely between hospitality operators—i.e., luxury hotels and budget hotels—leading to inconsistency in guest safety practices in the industry (Kissi and Owusu-Mintah, 2015). Despite the presence of legislation and regulatory authorities, Ghana's hospitality sector continues to be plagued by significant issues in ensuring uniform and sufficient guest safety. A majority of the facilities, particularly small-scale hotels, and guesthouses, lack the capacity or will to fully implement obligatory safety measures (Boakye, 2012; Preko, 2020). There are documented instances of theft of guests, accidents due to inadequate infrastructure, and poor management of emergencies (Poku and Boakye, 2019), and these suggest a disconnection between practice and law. Compounding the issue is low awareness by some operators and employees of what the law requires of them and what their potential liabilities will be in the event of negligence (Senya, 2017). Furthermore, there are lack of or poor security audits and enforcement, and unsafe practices. Segbedzi et al. (2023) revealed that the majority of the hotels did not comply with the FDA's code of standards on the provision of facilities. These constraints raise strong questions about the effectiveness of current regulatory measures, the preparedness of hospitality operators, and the on-the-ground situation of guest safety. It is therefore justifiable to conduct a focused investigation into how the legal obligations and security standards in Ghana's hospitality sector ensure the safety of guests. However, recent research in Ghana has not been conducted in this regard. Available studies, such as Senya (2017), have assessed the awareness of safety rules in the hospitality industry in Ghana. While the study focused on safety in the hospitality industry in

Ghana, it did not focus on guest safety. The study rather assessed the knowledge of management and employees concerning health and safety in the hotels and explored the existing rules and regulations regarding health and safety by management to protect employees. Thus, the main focus is on how employee safety rather than guest safety. Adjei (2020) also explored the awareness and compliance with hotel guest registration laws among hotels in Ghana. The study found that front office staff and managers had inadequate awareness of the hotel guest registration laws though there was some form of compliance concerning the registration of hotel guests. Segbedzi et al. (2023) assessed the compliance of restaurant facilities to standards by the Food and Drugs Authority's (FDA) code of standards, awareness, and training on the code and the workplace barriers to compliance. Results revealed that the majority of the hotels did not comply with the FDA's code of standards on the provision of facilities.

The review of existing literature shows that available studies have focused mainly on the safety of employees, laws of hotel registration, and compliance with food safety in hospitality industries but have not examined specifically the safety of guests concerning legal obligations and security standards in Ghana's hospitality sector. Faced with rising demand for a guarantee of guest safety as well as the reputational and legal danger of failure in safety, evidently, there is a need for a study that evaluates the extent to which Ghanaian hospitality operators are meeting legal and security standards. The current study therefore seeks to critically examine the legal rules, business operations, and control measures in Ghana's hospitality sector geared toward protecting guests. The findings of the study guide areas of failure in compliance, the extent of operators' knowledge, and the formulation of policy and training interventions toward improving guests' protection in the hospitality industry.

Research Methodology

A qualitative approach was employed in this study in attempting to gain a deep understanding of hospitality facility managers' guest safety practices, guest safety perceptions and experiences, compliance with the law, and security practices. A qualitative approach was appropriate in this study since it provides a mechanism for researching sophisticated issues that were conceivable to be explored through rich descriptions, stories, and contextual analysis rather than quantitative information (Austin and Sutton, 2014). Descriptive research design was used in the systematic description of legal compliance level and safety practice among selected hospitality enterprises. The design enabled the researcher to obtain rich and detailed information on the extent of application of safety measures and difficulties faced in attaining legal and regulatory compliance for guest safety (Siedlecki, 2020).

The study sample comprised supervisors and managers of registered hospitality establishments in Ghana such as hotels, guesthouses, and lodges. They were chosen because they have a big role to play in implementing the legal obligations and security standards in Ghana's Hospitality Sector to ensure guest safety. Purposive sampling was employed with anticipation that the participants would be individuals who possess good knowledge and hospitality safety management experience. The researcher targeted hospitality premises accredited by Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) and operated more than three years. The research was conducted among 10 hospitality

firms in the Accra and Kumasi. The sample comprised 32 participants which included operations managers, facility managers, security officers, front-desk officers and general managers working in the chosen hospitality outlets within Tamale, Accra and Kumasi. The sample population was sufficient enough to achieve data saturation as well as a range of opinions in the industry. The details of the study's population is shown in Figure 1.

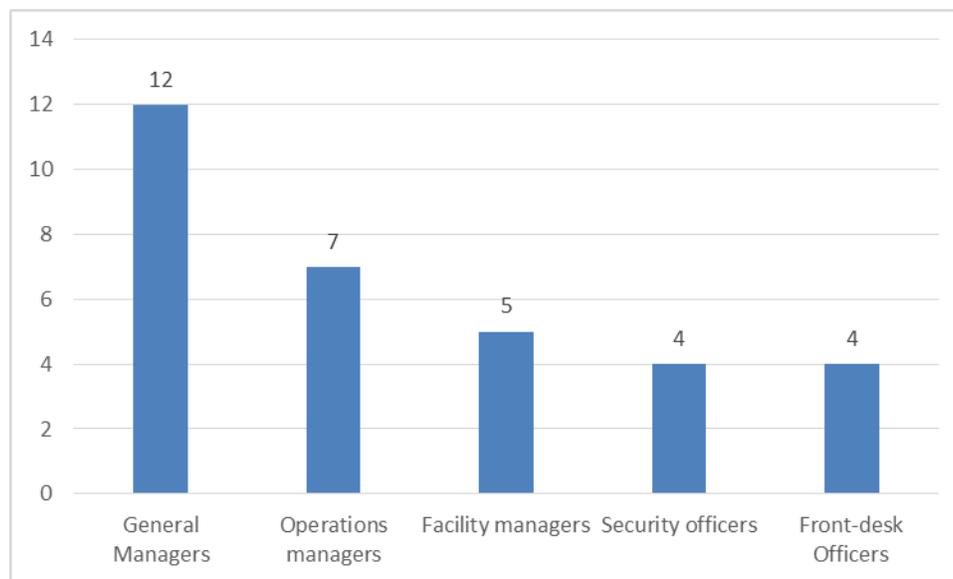


Figure 1: Details of sampled population
Source: Author's construct (2025)

The study used an interview guide as the primary research tool. The guide contained open-ended questions which were utilized in order to prompt information about the legal obligations of the hospitality operators, security provisions in place, challenges of maintaining the provisions in place, and the seemingly intuitive effectiveness of the same measures within a bid to ensure guest security. Data were gathered using face-to-face and online semi-structured interviews, as necessary, based on participant convenience and availability. Interviews took 30-45 minutes and were tape-recorded—with the permission of the participants—for transcription and analysis. Ethical data collection practices of informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were used.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze qualitative data. The researcher transcribed the audio-recorded interviews verbatim. The researcher then read through the transcribed data several times to familiarize himself with the data. The researcher then identified, coded, and categorized the codes into broader themes which were linked with the research objectives. A detailed report of the outcome of the analysis were then presented by the researcher which were supported with direct quotes from the research participants.

Presentation of Findings

The emerging themes from the qualitative data have been categorized under two broad themes; compliance with legal and regulatory frameworks, and security standards and operational practices.

Compliance with legal and regulatory frameworks

The first objective of the study was to explore hospitality operators' compliance with legal and regulatory frameworks. The themes that emerged from the analysis of the data include, Understanding and awareness of legal obligations, Compliance monitoring and enforcement, Challenges in ensuring guest safety, and Internal policies and institutional culture.

Understanding and awareness of legal obligations

The study revealed varying degrees of awareness and understanding among hospitality operators of the legal requirement for guest safety in Ghana. Whereas some of the participants had a clear understanding of the policies and laws in place, others had no idea what their legislation required. One of the participants had this to say;

"We know that we require fire extinguishers and CCTV cameras because it is among what GTA reviews before giving us the license. But other than that, we don't normally receive updates or training on new safety provisions." [Hotel General Manager, Kumasi]

One of the interviewees indicated the initiative of institutions toward awareness generation:

"We have our own rules, and we concentrate on the Tourism Act, and we get along with the local legislation. But I must say that not all the staff know what the law says as far as guest protection is concerned." [Operations Manager, Hotel, Accra].

Some of the interviewees made their limited familiarity with some legal demands or provisions known openly:

"Honestly, beyond the basic checks, we do not know all the legislations that regulate. We sometimes just do what we think is right or what others in the business line do." [Security officer, Guest House Tamale].

Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA), the Environmental Health Department, and the Ghana National Fire Service were cited most frequently as the main regulatory bodies responsible for implementing compliance. Disparities in enforcement and lack of continuous education in the current safety act were seen to be a source of concern.

Compliance monitoring and enforcement

The interview with the participants revealed that regulatory agencies such as the Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA), the Ghana National Fire Service, and the municipal authorities provide active intervention to uphold safety conformity in the hotel industry. However, the provision of these interventions was intermittent. Most of the participants concurred that inspections took place as part of the licensure process and sporadically through spot checks. The inspection frequency, intensity, and follow-ups were nonetheless highly unequal in hospitality firms and operators. One of the hotel supervisors said:

"They visit occasionally when the license needs to be reissued. They inspect minor issues such as fire extinguishers and standards of hygiene. But once you have reissued the license, you don't even notice them again for a year." [Hotel General Manager, Accra].

One of the respondents recalled the following incident with several agencies:

"We have had the fire people, GTA, and sometimes even the environmental health. But they do not always liaise, so sometimes we're asked the same questions by different people. Sometimes it gets confusing." [Hotel General Manager, Tamale].

Some of the interviewees thought enforcement actions would be notable where there was non-compliance in the industry:

"There are a couple of hotels who don't have safety procedures going at all, but they somehow get by. If the authorities were stricter or more regular, then possibly people would notice the safety rules more." [Manager, Guest House, Accra].

These findings suggest that while regulatory activity oversight by regulatory bodies is appreciated and acknowledged, in most cases they are largely not effective to a large extent due to the absence of regularity, coordination, and inconsistency of enforcement in the hospitality industry.

Challenges in ensuring guest safety

The study revealed that the operators in the hospitality sector have numerous financial, infrastructural, and operational limitations in attempting to provide guest safety. The respondents indicated that there is a need to attain levels of safety of guests but practical limitations hinder their ability to achieve comprehensive guest safety. Such limitations were prevalent in low-budget or small hotels with fewer finances and limited resources. The majority of the interviewees accounted for the installation and maintenance expense of security equipment such as CCTV cameras, fire alarms, emergency doors, and sophisticated security locks as being too costly. Budget constraints primarily implied that safety aspects had to be sacrificed at the expense of short-term working priorities such as staff, utilities, and accommodation. One of the hotel managers had this to say;

"We know that it is our responsibility to ensure the safety of our guests. We even attract more customers when they realize that we care for their safety. But the provision of security gadgets such as CCTV and smoke detectors are very expensive, and our earnings do not always take care of such security facilities." [Hotel Operations Manager, Accra].

There were also challenges of infrastructure, particularly with the older buildings not being built at the same degree of safety that is required currently. It was reported to be costly and bothersome to update old buildings to current building requirements for safety.

One of the interviewees characterized:

"Some of our buildings are very old and quite expensive to renovate them or install something like fire sprinklers or emergency exits. It's not like you're building from scratch where you can design for those." [Security officer, Hotel, Kumasi].

Operational, training, and staff were noted as being significant but under-prioritized areas of guest safety. A number of the guests conceded that sometimes it had not been easy to train their employees on safety precautions due to limited time, financial constraints, and lack of motivation from employees. One of the supervisors of operations stated:

"Sometimes the staff don't understand the importance of safety drills or emergency plans. We're usually focused on customer service, so safety training doesn't happen as often as it should." [Hotel Operations Manager, Accra].

These findings emphasize the persistent practical challenges that hospitality managers encounter in their pursuit of effective guest safety. Though many are aware of what is required, limited financial capacity, infrastructural rigidity, and operational demands often hinder full compliance.

Internal policies and institutional culture

The study discovered that the extent to which guest safety becomes part of the internal policies and institutional culture within hospitality establishments varies significantly between the organizations. Whereas some establishments possessed documented safety practices and proactively promoted a culture of safety within their employees, others applied non-formalized practices with either no or little formalized system of safety.

Participants at more established hotels indicated that safety policies were included in standard operating procedures and staff were regularly reminded of safety expectations through meetings or orientations. Safety was considered part of the institution's core values and not a regulatory necessity in these environments. One of the participants said:

"We have explicit safety policies, and all staff members are aware of their responsibilities in the event of an emergency. Checking safety devices is part of our routine daily work and recording it in the logbook." [Hotel Front-desk Officer, Accra].

On the other hand, the smaller or independently owned establishments recognized that despite their understanding of the importance of guest safety, there are no formal written policies or systems in place to enable its integration into day-to-day operation. Safety, in such cases, is reactive rather than proactive. A guest house operator explained:

"We don't write anything down, but we do our best to make things secure. If we notice something that is not right, we repair it in a hurry. We simply apply common sense the majority of the time." [Facility manager, Guest House, Tamale]

The attitudes of leadership and management also emerged as important in determining institutional culture. Where the management had been highly committed to guest safety, staff members were reported to model them. But where safety was not prioritized from the top, staff members did not prioritize it in their work practices. As one of the supervisors in the hotel had noted:

"Our boss always tells us that the safety of the guest is most important. If you are employed here, you know that safety matters, and we are to report anything that seems unsafe immediately." [Front Desk Officer, Hotel, Accra].

These findings reflect the different levels to which safety is embedded, depending on whether or not there are clear internal policies, leadership effects, and how much organizational effort there is towards embedding safety in everyday practices.

Security standards and operational practices

This section presents the actual security and operational practices of hospitality firms in Ghana to protect the safety of guests. The themes that emerged from the data include physical and procedural security systems, integration of technology into guest safety, improvement in guest safety and customer trust and collaboration with external security agencies.

Physical and procedural security systems

Some of the participants also recounted that physical and procedural security measures were adopted for guest protection in hospitality facilities. Monitoring, fire protection, and access control were cited by participants as the most significant components of their overall security system, designed to safeguard guests. Surveillance systems involved the placement of security staff at key locations and the use of traditional monitoring techniques to keep close tabs on entry and exit points. Visible security staff were emphasized by hotel managers as producing a more secure environment and deterring potential crime. According to a hotel manager:

"We have positioned security guards at all the entry points and they make random stops. It's not everything about the cameras; it's the sight of the staff that makes guests feel secure." [Hotel Operations Manager, Accra].

Fire safety was also a major concern. Hotels also ensured rigorous adherence to fire safety precautions, including the availability of fire extinguishers, and fire exits, and conducting routine

fire drills. Those facilities that adhered to fire safety precautions were inspected on a routine basis by local fire authorities to ensure that all fire risks were addressed in compliance with the law. A safety officer explained:

"We organize fire training twice a year, and all our employees are instructed in fire evacuation practices. The fire exits are well-marked, and we place fire extinguishers in every accessible location. This is very important in making our guests have confidence that we can manage any emergency." [Operations Manager, Resort, Kumasi].

Access control measures were implemented to track the movement of guests and employees within the building. Physical barriers in the form of security gates or front desk check-ins were used by most firms to monitor guest flow. This kept unwanted individuals from entering or exiting the building and ensured that there was restricted entry to sensitive areas, particularly during off-peak hours or when there were events. A security manager supplemented:

"We have rigorous access control procedures in operation. Every visitor must report to reception and receive visible identity badges. We also check the identity of anyone arriving on our premises after midnight to make sure they're cleared. It keeps everyone secure." [Security officer, Hotel, Kumasi].

These procedural and physical security systems were considered to be the most important for the development of a secure environment both for the guests and employees so as to facilitate appropriate responses in case of potential emergencies.

Integration of technology into guest safety

The incorporation of technology into guest security management was mentioned a number of times as the most important security feature of hospitality facilities. The installation of CCTV cameras, intelligent locking systems, and alarm systems are being implemented by firms to enhance guest security. There were reports of CCTV monitoring as being the most common technology equipment used to provide real-time information security information of hospitality firms. The analysis revealed that large hospitality firms in Ghana use huge, integrated systems that enable monitoring around the clock, while small ones have more modest and less elaborate ones. One of the participants had this to say;

"CCTV is our main way of keeping an eye on the premises. All of the corridors, floors, and entrances are being watched. It provides us with real-time data if there is something out of place, like unauthorized entrance or suspicious activity. It has reduced thefts and been able to better handle guest complaints." [Operations Manager, Hotel Accra].

Smart locks were utilized on a big scale, as well, but for the most part, it was for mid-to-luxury hotels. It was revealed that smart locks provide guests with key cards or phone access, which is

more convenient and secure. These systems also provide hotel staff with the means to monitor and control remotely. As explained by a guest service manager:

"We changed locks to smart locks last year. The guests now use stay duration valid key cards. They will never lose a key, and it's safer than a regular lock. Our staff are also able to cancel cards in case of emergency remotely" [Hotel General Manager, Kumasi].

Finally, alarm systems were mentioned to be included in emergency response, such as fire or security breaches. Some contained alarm systems tied to staff members for instant response, while others contained basic, standalone alarms.

"We installed a fire alarm system a year back and it's linked to the fire service. They're notified the moment we ever have a fire. It's had a huge impact on emergency response. We're still however installing other alarms in corridors and guest rooms." [Security Officer, Resort, Tamale].

All these technologies combined are significant for providing a new security experience for visitors with increased monitoring, control, and rapid response to emergency conditions.

Improvement in guest safety and customer trust

Most of the participants revealed that guest safety is commonly linked with customer satisfaction, trust, and customer loyalty. The majority of the respondents mentioned that strict safety protocols not only protect the guests but also directly affect their overall experience and return visit to the facility. Some of the hotel managers felt that highly visible security in the form of CCTV cameras, trained security personnel, and emergency procedures made guests feel secure and enhanced their experiences in the hotel. Guests feel safe and are more willing to trust the hotel when they witness safety systems being implemented positively. One of the hotel managers commented:

"We have a strong security detail, and our visitors always comment that they feel safe. We've had return visitors stop by and say to us that they stayed at our hotel the second time only because they feel safe here. With poor security arrangements, I am sure they won't come back." [Facility Manager, Hotel, Accra].

The guests' trust in the hotel was also related to the openness the hotel had in relation to its safety procedures. Guests, upon being informed of the security procedures being put into place within the hotel, for example, fire safety or access control, felt safer staying inside the building. A participant had this to say;

"Some of the guests always ask about security when they book. Some report that they have been to hotels where they told them very little, but here, we tell them that the building is secure. It makes them feel better knowing they have CCTV and

regular checks and I am sure they will be coming back." [Facility manager, Hotel, Kumasi].

These findings suggest that safety measures are not just functional but also a key element in fostering guest trust, enhancing their overall experience, and encouraging return visits.

Collaboration with external security agencies

Collaboration with external security agencies such as the police, fire department, and private security firms was seen as part of measures implemented to guarantee safety for the visitors. Most of the facilities agreed that collaboration with these agencies made their security operations more effective, allowing them to respond faster in case of emergencies and remain within legal boundaries of safety adherence. Hotels that were already in good relations with the police mentioned the value of having the authority to call for assistance in cases of security violations. Some opined that having police officers on standby, either at the hotel or when they called them, deterred crime. A manager in one of the hotels said:

"We have an arrangement with the local police. Whenever we need additional security, particularly in the evening, they come on time. It is comforting for our staff and clients to know that we have such an association." [Hotel General Manager, Accra].

The fire department was also most commonly mentioned as being prepared for safety. Many facilities regularly held fire drills and remained in contact with the local fire department, with the aim of having personnel trained on fire response procedures. One participant stated:

"We work very closely with the fire service. They come to us once a year to inspect and provide our staff with regular fire drills. We also have a direct link with the fire service in case of emergency. This collaboration has improved our response times significantly." [Security officer, Hotel, Kumasi].

In sum, such partnerships such as bringing in additional specialized skills, and providing fast, unified responses to crises were thought to be most important to filling many of the security gaps in the hospitality industry in Ghana.

Discussion

The findings reflected variation in awareness of legal obligations and security standards, where there were clear perceptions among certain managers and low awareness among some managers especially those of smaller hospitality establishments. The study showed that compliance with existing legal obligations and security standards in Ghana's hospitality sector varied among firms and was influenced by factors including insufficient funds, inadequate infrastructure, and irregular enforcement. Despite the situation, the majority of firms had attempted to

institutionalize minimum safety practices into standard activities, albeit driven by internal policies.

The study identified that Ghanaian hospitality firms rely more on physical and procedural security technologies such as surveillance by security officers, fire precautionary measures, and access controls as main ways of ensuring guest safety. This is in accordance with the literature that highlights the dominance of visible and active safety approaches in the quest to build confidence among guests as well as deter security threats (Chan and Lam, 2013). The use of stationary guards and physical screening at main entry points, as reported by respondents, is also in keeping with international hospitality safety standards' recommendations regarding the utilization of human surveillance in environments where there is scarce technological potential (Malumfashi et al., 2024). Fire safety procedures including trained personnel and signed emergency exits also reflect best practices in emergency response planning. While highly technically advanced equipment was not a feature of this theme, human-oriented and procedure-based character exemplified a very reassuring safety net in mid-range and locally owned establishments, where cost considerations may not justify investment in state-of-the-art systems. Legal awareness and understanding emerged as a significant theme in this study. The respondents varied in terms of familiarity with legal requirements that inform safety in the hospitality sector, as provided by the Ghana Tourism Authority and other government agencies. This variation supports the opinion by Naeeni (2024) that a lack of regulatory literacy can hinder not just compliance but also implementation. Some of the managers demonstrated a good awareness and understanding of legal obligations and security standards, indicating a high institutional commitment to compliance. The others demonstrated confusion, which indicated the necessity for more intensive training and dissemination of legal information. The findings also agree with Peráček and Kaššaj (2023) argument that managerial knowledge of the law increases responsibility and preparedness for operations, especially where external channels of compliance are rare or not to be relied upon.

Compliance monitoring and enforcement were also emerged. The study revealed that while such inspections by the Ghana Tourism Authority and other regulatory bodies are conducted, they do not always occur with frequency and regularity. Some participants embraced these inspections positively as a blessing in disguise for correction and improvement. Others were doubtful about the frequency and efficacy of such visits and demanded more formalized enforcement actions. These findings are supplemented by Short (2021) who argue that weak enforcement of regulation undermines the effectiveness of policy and can additionally generate complacency. Randomness in the scheduling of compliance inspections by the mandated bodies can be a source of the differences in awareness and implementation of safety laws across facilities in the hospitality industry.

The common fear among most participants was that there were operational, infrastructural, and budgetary issues hindering proper roll-out of measures to provide safety for guests. These are findings in tandem with the argument by Clifton (2023) that high cost of possessing top-class safety in hospitality establishments as an obstacle. A number of the participants indicated that it

is difficult to invest in improving facilities, employees' training, or a satisfactory number of security officers due to limited funds. This situation will likely result in reliance on bare-bones but essential safety precautions. Most importantly, these barriers represent structural inequalities in the industry, primarily between multinational firms with substantial fund and locally owned businesses operating with limited income margins. This is supported by a study by Guo et al. (2019) which asserts that without economic incentives or state subsidy, it can be a challenging endeavor for small and medium enterprises to achieve international standards of safety.

Internal institutional culture and policy are also key determinants of safety outcomes. Many institutions declared the embedding of safety in daily practice, not as mere legality, but as organizational culture. Embedding it does help validate Geller's (1994) "total safety culture" theory based on mutual accountability and positive employee conduct. In environments where safety become institutionalized within the organizational culture, there is visibility of greater preparedness and tighter application of procedures. This is contrary to environments where safety become a second-order concern with consequent reactive and overall poor responses. The institutional culture focus demands the primacy of commitment by management and routine reinforcement of safety norms through instruction and daily practices.

Whereas the question of technological integration was discussed individually, its relevance to procedural and physical standards is noteworthy. Some of the respondents added that even with the need for technology such as CCTV, smart locks, and alarms, its cost deterred some of the facilities from acquiring them. Partially embracing the technology when it is available tends to lean towards a hybrid safety management system in which the traditional physical controls are augmented by the new technologies where there is a provision of funds. This adheres to Anichiti et al. (2021), who describe that effectiveness may be enhanced through technology but should be fitted to resource realities at the local level. The problem is that the core safety functions must not be compromised in those factories that cannot manage sophisticated systems.

The dynamic between customer trust and guest safety was a unifying thread throughout the study. Majority of the participants indicated that safety programs positively influenced return of guest, business, word-of-mouth recommendations, and guest satisfaction. Confirmation of these findings is provided by Maroco and Maroco (2013) who present hypotheses of safety perceptions as being one of the strongest predictors of hospitality service quality and loyalty. A safe site, apart from addressing the visitor's needs, still adds to his level of safety and chances of repeated visitation. In very competitive environments, security therefore becomes thus a sales point, one with consequences regarding brand authenticity and financial viability.

Finally, collaboration with external security agencies was the strongest among the findings of this study. Those organizations with effective collaboration with external security agencies, local police force units, and local fire force units had high responses to incidents and effective crisis management. Such collaboration is consistent with best practices according to Sienkiewicz-Małyjurek, (2022) and inter-agency collaboration is a compelling case as a part of overall risk management for the hospitality and tourism sectors. Where internal capabilities are lacking,

outside help lends various layers of assurance and reliability. Yet at the same time, the study sees inconsistency within the magnitude of such partnerships as well as instituting and legitimating the partnership to ensure its lasting impact.

In sum, the findings of this study affirm the extent of guest safety in Ghanaian hospitality. The findings revealed strengths and weaknesses, and they require overall strategies that include compliance with the law, internal commitment, external partnership, and creative improvisation in constructing safe spaces for visitors and employees of firms in Ghana's hospitality industry.

Conclusion

This research explored the implementation of legal obligations and security standards in Ghana's hospitality sector to ensuring guest safety. The study employed a descriptive design and a qualitative study approach. A structured interview guide was used to gather data through a face-to-face interviews with security officers and managers within purposively sampled hospitality firms. The findings reflected variation in awareness of legal requirements, where there were clear perceptions among certain managers and low awareness among some managers especially those of smaller hospitality establishments. The study showed that compliance with existing Legal obligations and security standards in Ghana's hospitality sector varied among firms and was influenced by factors including insufficient funds, inadequate infrastructure, and irregular enforcement. Despite the situation, the majority of institutions had attempted to institutionalize minimum safety practices into standard activities, albeit driven by internal policies. Yet occasionally, these endeavors have been reactive more than proactive in nature. There was a recognition of the perceived necessity for collaboration with outside agencies such as police and the fire service for security concerns. It is clear, however, from the nature of the enquiry, that although systems exist by which guest safety might be achieved, they remain improperly implemented because of a combination of operational and systemic issues. Increased concerted and sustained effort must be initiated to bridge the gap between policy and practice. This research contributes to the limited literature available on safety in Ghana's hospitality industry. Based on the findings, the study recommends that more awareness and training in legal obligations should be made available to hospitality staff, more rigorous inspection efforts being carried out by regulatory authorities and technical or financial support offered to under-resourced venues. Formalized and regularized liaison with external security partners should also be encouraged to contribute to the development of the preventive rather than responsive safety culture of the hospitality industry.

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