



THE IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION ON THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT IN AN EMERGING MARKET: A CONCEPTUAL EXPLORATION

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Abstract

Generally, studies on globalization have accumulated with respect to its varying degree of impact on economic growth and development in underdeveloped, developing and developed economies. Nevertheless, the impact of globalization on specific socio-economic sectors' growth has not been adequately reported in the literature. This paper, therefore, addresses a critical gap by exploring how globalization affects hospitality industry development and growth in developing economies. The paper also explores factors driving globalization in the hospitality industry, challenges as well as strategies for managing impact of globalization in the hospitality. The paper adopts the globalization theory, as articulated by Giddens (1990) and Robertson (1992) as its anchor. Drawing from a review of relevant literature, the paper highlights how forces such as technological integration, cultural exchange, and economic interdependence have shaped the growth and influenced the strategies of hospitality firms internationally. It also stresses the dual nature of this phenomenon (globalization and glocalization) where global brands must strike a balance between maintaining global standard and adapting to local market needs, especially in diverse, rapidly developing economies. The paper concludes that while hospitality organizations from developed economies have leveraged on globalization due to their huge economic capital base, professionalism and deployment of advanced technology in service delivery, many of their counterparts in developing countries, including Nigeria, have not benefitted much from globalization. The paper recommends investment incentives, provisions of adequate tourism infrastructures, increased financial capital base, hospitality product/service standardization and professionalism for indigenous hospitality organizations in emerging markets to compete in the global hospitality market.

Key words: Globalization, hospitality industry development



1. Introduction

The term, 'globalization' has made the world a global village through interdependence and interconnection of countries through financial inflows from trade and investments, cultural exchanges, advancements in technology, communication, transportation, ideas, etc. This force has had a tremendous impact on the travel and tourism industry resulting in the growth, redefinition of service delivery and strategic positioning of the hospitality organizations for competitive advantage (Akpan & Onyejizu, 2019; Rossidis, et al., 2021). Today, the hospitality industry is unarguably, one of the fast-growing sub-sectors of the tourism industry contributing 10.4% to global GDP and generating over 319 million jobs in 2019 (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2020). As travel and tourism grows worldwide, many hospitality firms are adopting global business models to optimize operational efficiencies while localizing service offerings to appeal to diverse consumer bases for hospitality business development and expansion (Diamantis, 2022; Jones, et al., 2014).

Accordingly, hospitality industry development encompasses the progressive expansion and enhancement of aspects such as service quality, operational efficiency, and the strategic positioning of firms within the market. Hospitality development can be measured by factors like hotel occupancy rates, revenue per available room (RevPAR), and the overall economic contribution of the sector (Chattopadhyay & Mitra, 2019). Over the years the industry has recorded a consistent trend of rapid growth and development. For instance, despite disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the global hospitality industry was valued at approximately USD 4.5 trillion in 2021 and is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.2% from 2021 to 2028 (The Business Research Company, 2023).

The hospitality industry's development is pivotal for economic growth and social progress. However, the rapid expansion of the sector has been stymied by several challenges, such as fluctuating customer satisfaction, low profitability, and uneven service quality across different markets (Luther, 2024). According to Statista (2021), global hotel occupancy rates indeed fell significantly from around 66.5% in 2018 to approximately 43.2% in 2020 due to the pandemic. If left unaddressed, these challenges can result in reduced market share, diminished revenue, and a loss of competitiveness, particularly for local and regional hospitality firms struggling to compete with international giants (Ali, et al., 2021; Luther, 2024).

The intensity of the problem is exacerbated by the increasing expectations of global travelers for high service quality, cultural sensitivity, and technology-enabled experiences. Hospitality firms that fail to meet these standards risk being relegated to lower-tier market segments, as guests opt for brands that offer a seamless blend of international standards and localized service offerings. Furthermore, the proliferation of online travel agencies (OTAs) and peer-to-peer platforms like Airbnb has intensified competition, making it seemingly difficult for traditional hospitality firms to sustain long-term profitability and market presence (Fang & Li, 2022; Golja & Paulišić, 2021).

One proposed solution to these developmental challenges is leveraging the advantages of globalization to drive strategic expansion and service innovation within the hospitality sector (Brelík & Lacka, 2024). Research reports show that globalization can positively impact the hospitality industry's growth by



enabling firms to access new markets, diversify revenue streams, and adopt global best practices (Aksoy, et al., 2022; Diamantis, 2022). This tends to suggest that hospitality industry in developing economies might also have benefited from globalization.

While previous studies have examined the individual impact of globalization on some markets in developed economies (Khan, et al., 2020), there appears to be limited focus on impact of globalization on hospitality industry development in developing economies, unique challenges of hospitality firms in emerging markets and strategies for managing globalization in the industry. This paper, therefore, explores the impact of globalization on the hospitality industry development in developing economies, factors driving globalization in the sector, challenges as well as strategies for managing the impact of globalization in the hospitality industry.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Foundation

Globalization Theory: This paper adopts the globalization theory as its anchor. Globalization Theory is a conceptual framework that examines the intricate processes by which economies, societies, and cultures integrate and interact on a global scale. Originating from the works of scholars like Giddens (1990) and Robertson (1992), globalization is understood as a multi-dimensional phenomenon that encompasses economic, political, cultural, and technological dynamics, which collectively shape interactions between nations and organizations. According to Giddens (1990), globalization is the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa. Robertson (1992) expanded on this view by introducing the notion of “glocalization,” which highlights the simultaneity of global and local influences, suggesting that while globalization homogenizes markets and cultures, it also encourages localization of products and services to suit specific contexts.

Globalization theory has since been widely applied in exploring how global processes influence industries by altering competitive landscapes, driving cross-border collaborations, and reshaping consumer behavior (Ghemawat, 2017; Mandal, 2021). Globalization theory is a particularly relevant theory in the hospitality industry because it offers a comprehensive lens through which the various dimensions of globalization—economic, social, technological and cultural—can be analyzed in relation to hospitality development. In the context of this study, the economic aspect of globalization is evident through increased foreign direct investments (FDIs), cross-border mergers, and the global expansion of hospitality brands, which have allowed firms to scale their operations and achieve greater market reach (Lukianenko, et al., 2019). For example, it can be observed that global hospitality giants like Marriott and Hilton have successfully tapped into emerging markets by leveraging global best practices while localizing their offerings to cater to the preferences of customers.

The application of Globalization Theory in hospitality research has followed various trends, ranging from examining globalization’s impact on service standardization and localization (Nguyen, 2016) to exploring its role in shaping consumer expectations and preferences (Ghemawat, 2017). A key focus has been on understanding how global hospitality firms manage the tension between maintaining



standardized service quality and adapting to local cultural norms. For instance, drawing from the work of Robertson (1992), Svensson (2001) emphasized the role of “glocalization” in balancing these competing demands, arguing that firms that successfully implement both global and local strategies are better positioned to achieve sustained growth and customer satisfaction.

The current study builds on these insights by conceptually examining the multi-dimensional impact of globalization—through its economic, social, technological and cultural dimensions—on the development of hospitality firms in Nigeria, an emerging market. Despite the growing body of research on globalization’s influence on the hospitality sector, studies focusing specifically on how Nigerian firms can harness these global forces to overcome industry challenges remain scarce.

2.2 Conceptual Clarification

Globalization

Globalization, in its simplest form, refers to the process of integration and interdependence among countries, facilitated by the movement of goods, services, information and people across borders (Lytvynenko & Lytvynenko, 2021). Globalization, as conceptualized by Ghemawat (2017), is the integration and interdependence of national economies facilitated by trade, investment, and technology. Earlier, Bartlett and Ghoshal (1998) cited in Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert (1998) referred to globalization as a ‘transnational management practice of spreading an organization’s operations across many nations’.

Drawn from the above-stated conceptualizations, we can safely state that globalization, in the context of the hospitality industry, refers to the increasing integration of hospitality firms and markets across national boundaries, leading to the cross-border flow of capital, technology, labor, and cultural practices.

Implicit in the above definitions is the idea that globalization is a multifaceted phenomenon characterized by the growing interdependence and interconnectivity among nations, economies, and cultures, driven by advances in communication, transportation, and technology. It therefore, encompasses the processes through which national and regional economies, societies, and cultures become integrated into a global network of political ideas, economic exchanges, and cultural interactions (Mandal, 2021). This interconnectivity has led to the creation of a global marketplace where goods, services, information, and labor flow across borders, thereby transforming various industries, including hospitality, through increased competition, innovation, and diversification.

3. Development in the Hospitality Industry

As globalization has facilitated the exchange of ideas, people, and technology across borders, the hospitality industry has experienced profound growth. This global interconnectedness has not only expanded markets but also spurred advancements that have shaped the industry's development over time. The hospitality industry, which encompasses various sectors such as lodging, food and beverage services, travel and tourism, and event planning, has seen tremendous growth and transformation over the centuries (Ionel, 2016). As the industry continues to expand, it has diversified to cater to the varying



preferences of modern consumers. The constant drive for innovation has pushed hospitality businesses to adopt new practices that enhance guest experience and operational efficiency, making the sector one of the most dynamic in the global economy (Hassanien & Dale, 2019; Pawluski & Kubal, 2016). The roots of the hospitality industry trace back to ancient civilizations, where providing food, shelter, and comfort to travelers was not just a service, but a social obligation. The term "hospitality" originates from the Latin word "hospes," meaning a visitor or stranger, reflecting the industry's focus on welcoming and accommodating guests. Early examples include inns and taverns in ancient Greece and Rome, which functioned as rest stops for weary travelers. Over time, these establishments evolved from basic accommodations to more sophisticated venues, laying the groundwork for what would eventually become modern hospitality establishments (Kunwar, 2017).

4. Impact of Globalization on the Hospitality Industry

Globalization has significantly reshaped the hospitality industry, influencing its economic, cultural, and technological aspects. The interconnectedness of global markets has created new opportunities for growth while also introducing complexities in managing diverse customer needs and operational challenges.

Its drivers include technological advancements, international trade agreements, and global investments, which have collectively led to the convergence of markets, cultures, and industries. In the context of hospitality, globalization has brought about increased market competition, elevated consumer expectations, and the expansion of multinational hotel chains (Sufi, 2008; Zaitseva, et al., 2016).

Economic Impact

Globalization has redefined the economic landscape of the hospitality industry by enabling the free flow of capital, labor, and technology across borders (Dzwigol-Barosz et al., 2019). It has expanded business reach, allowing companies to access new markets, achieve economies of scale, and enhance competitiveness. Increased foreign direct investment (FDI) has spurred infrastructure development in emerging tourism destinations, creating jobs and stimulating local economies (Gössling & Peeters, 2015). However, these benefits come with heightened competition and the need to navigate varied regulations and consumer expectations.

The presence of foreign multinational hotel chains like De Renaissance, Sheraton, Legend, Marriott, Hilton, Novotel, Accor, Best Western, etc represents the global integration of hospitality services, setting international service standards and enhancing global brand consistency (Whitla, et al., 2007). Such enterprises benefit from cross-border knowledge transfer and streamlined operations, contributing to the overall standardization of the industry (Aksoy et al., 2022). But just how far have indigenous hospitality business organizations in Nigeria and other developing countries been involved in this integration? Their assimilation in catching up with the big global brands from other countries has been asymmetric as only transcorp and a few others are operating outside Nigeria. This implies that many indigenous hospitality businesses have not been able to break into the international market,



with a few making only slow progress. Their inability to compete on the global scene has been blame on low capital, low service standard and limited knowledge about foreign market (Kenzua and Udensi, 2018).

Cultural Impact

Globalization has also brought about cultural convergence within the hospitality sector, transforming it into a platform for cultural exchange (Pieterse, 2019). With a growing demand for unique and culturally immersive experiences, businesses have adapted to offer services that blend global and local elements, such as traditional cuisine and region-specific décor (Dzwigol-Barosz et al., 2019). This shift has given rise to the concept of "glocalization," where hospitality firms maintain a global brand identity while tailoring their offerings to reflect local cultures.

To meet the diverse expectations of international clientele, hospitality companies are increasingly focusing on cultural sensitivity, such as providing multilingual staff and accommodating specific dietary and cultural needs. Globalization has also facilitated the distribution of unique food items and beverages, whereby tourists experience local flavours with an international touch. Consequently, culinary tourism has made possible the exchange of regional specialties which have become part of the travel experience. Deekor (2017) reports that restaurants and eateries have leveraged on globalization by introducing diverse menus that appeal to a broad audience. In this regard, Nigerian jollof rice, abacha, fisherman soup, afang and edikang ikong soup, ofe oweere, tuwo and ewedu, bole and fish and other local delicacies can be packaged and promoted in the international culinary market. Perhaps, it is for this reason that Diamantis .(2022) opined that by establishing cultural trade linkages through globalization, regions become known for specific gastronomic delights, further enhancing their appeal tourist destinations. While this fosters inclusivity and cultural appreciation, it also presents challenges for multinational firms in balancing global standards with local nuances (El Archi & Benbba, 2024; Pieterse, 2019).

Technological Impact

Technological advancements, driven by globalization, have transformed the hospitality industry by enhancing efficiency and expanding market reach (Ip, et al., 2011). Online booking platforms, AI-powered customer service tools, and digital property management systems have made hospitality services more accessible and streamlined across borders. The integration of social media and review platforms like TripAdvisor and Yelp has empowered customers to share experiences and shape global brand reputations, making online presence management a critical aspect of hospitality operations (Sukach, et al., 2021).

Additionally, innovations such as smart rooms, mobile apps, and virtual tours have enabled personalized guest experiences, catering to the preferences of tech-savvy traveler. The adoption of AI and automation in routine operations has further optimized service delivery, reducing costs while maintaining high service standards Sukach, et al., 2021).



Sustainability

Besides technological advancements, such as online booking platforms and smart hotel rooms, which have transformed the way services are delivered, improving convenience and efficiency, there is also a growing emphasis on sustainability, with many businesses adopting eco-friendly practices like waste reduction and energy conservation to meet the demands of environmentally conscious consumers (Sukach, et al., 2021). This is because of the fact that today, globally, travellers are becoming more eco-conscious, influencing hospitality business organizations to adopt and implement green initiatives, such as using energy-efficient lighting, sourcing local organic ingredients for restaurants, or implementing digital solution to reduce paper use. Therefore, adaptation of sustainability initiatives can give a hospitality organization a competitive advantage in the global market place.

5. Strategic Development in Hospitality

Globalization has indeed significantly transformed strategic development practices within the hospitality industry, primarily by fostering strategic alliances, mergers, acquisitions, and international partnerships. These activities have been driven by the need to achieve global competitiveness, expand market reach, and leverage economies of scale. As hospitality firms aim to tap into emerging markets and diversify their portfolios, strategic alliances have become a key tool for accessing local knowledge and navigating regulatory environments. According to Whitla, et al. (2007), global strategies in the international hotel industry often include partnerships with local firms, joint ventures, and franchising models that facilitate market entry while maintaining brand identity and service quality standards.

A prominent example of successful strategic alliances in the hospitality industry is the merger between Marriott International and Starwood Hotels & Resorts. This strategic move, driven by globalization dynamics, created the world's largest hotel chain, providing Marriott with a more extensive global presence and access to new customer segments. Such mergers are not merely financial transactions but are also aimed at integrating diverse operational models and service cultures, thereby enriching the value proposition offered to guests across varied regions (Lockyer, 2013). Additionally, multinational firms such as Accor Hotels have leveraged globalization through acquisitions, such as the acquisition of Fairmont, Raffles, and Swissôtel, to bolster their presence in luxury markets and enhance their brand portfolio. These examples illustrate how globalization drives the strategic development of hospitality firms by enabling them to achieve greater scale, brand diversity, and market penetration (Lytvynenko & Lytvynenko, 2021).

However, global expansion through such strategic ventures is not without its challenges. Managing mergers and acquisitions often involves reconciling differences in organizational culture, adapting to diverse regulatory frameworks, and aligning business practices across multiple jurisdictions (Dunning & Lundan, 2008). Successful integration thus requires a nuanced understanding of cultural and market dynamics, as well as a strategic approach to maintaining operational consistency and quality standards globally.



6. The Challenges and Opportunities of Globalization in the Hospitality Industry in Emerging, Developing Markets

The globalization of the hospitality industry brings a unique set of challenges, particularly in maintaining quality and standardization across geographically dispersed outlets. As hospitality firms expand into new markets, ensuring consistent service delivery and aligning local operations with global brand values become increasingly complex. One major challenge is adapting to diverse consumer expectations and preferences while maintaining a unified brand identity. For example, Zaitseva et al. (2016) note that as international hotel chains grow, they must develop mechanisms to ensure that the quality of services remains consistent across their various locations, often requiring rigorous training programs and the adoption of standardized operating procedures.

Amidst the significant impacts of globalization on the hospitality industry, recent literature has emphasized the need to understand globalization's dual role as both an enabler and a disruptor in the hospitality industry (Folinas, et al., 2020). Some studies focus on the positive impacts of globalization, such as increased market access, improved service standards, and the introduction of best practices (Aksoy, et al., 2022; Khan, et al., 2020). Conversely, others highlight challenges like cultural homogenization, labor market issues, and the threat to local businesses (Pieterse, 2019). Zhang, et al. (2023) argue that while globalization has accelerated the growth of the hospitality industry, it has also intensified environmental and social challenges.

Despite these challenges, globalization also presents substantial opportunities for innovation and growth. The adoption of advanced technology has been a pivotal response to globalization pressures, enabling hospitality firms to enhance operational efficiency and improve the guest experience. According to Ip, et al. (2011), information and communication technologies (ICT) have been integral to the success of global hospitality enterprises, particularly in areas such as online bookings, guest management, and personalized service offerings. Furthermore, globalization has led to an increase in diverse guest profiles, prompting hospitality firms to innovate in the areas of customer engagement and service customization. Aksoy et al. (2022) argue that the rise of global travelers with varied cultural backgrounds has encouraged the development of unique guest experiences that cater to different cultural tastes and preferences.

Another opportunity arises from the growing emphasis on sustainability within the global hospitality landscape. With increasing awareness of environmental issues and the impact of tourism on local ecosystems, hospitality firms are investing in eco-friendly initiatives and sustainable practices. Jones, et al. (2014) argue that many global hotel chains have incorporated sustainability into their core strategies. This includes measures such as energy-efficient technologies, waste reduction programs, and local community engagement. This focus on sustainability aligns with the preferences of environmentally conscious consumers, thereby creating new avenues for competitive advantage in a globalized market.

Globalization is not a static phenomenon; it continues to evolve in response to emerging trends. As digitalization accelerates, consumer preferences shift towards sustainability, and the demand for personalized services grows, the hospitality industry must remain agile. This continuous process of



globalization ensures that the industry will face new challenges and opportunities in the future (Zhang, et al., 2023).

7: Strategies for Managing Globalization in the Hospitality Industry

Given the dynamics and intensity of competition in the globalization of hospitality industry, Nkanta and Elendu (2022) have suggested certain strategies such as employee training and development, service assortments, cultural exchange programme, strategic collaboration and intentional adaptation to local peculiarities for managing the impact of globalization in the context of hospitality industry. Elaborating on those strategies, they argued that organization of regular staff training programmes was crucial in rapidly-changing global hospitality market landscape for improved service quality delivery and foreign language proficiency (multicultural communication skills) to cope with the shifting preferences and expectations of global travelers. Introduction and management of diverse cuisines to reflect cultural heterogeneous culinary preferences of international guests is another strategy that hospitality organizations can use to manage globalization. They authors further opined that networking with local and foreign partners for exchange of ideas through professional experience can improve business operations and service quality for customer satisfaction. Cultural exchange programme can be expressed by a hotel chain implementing employee exchange programs between branches in different countries can improve cultural awareness and enrich the service experience with diverse perspectives to gain competitive advantage (Deekor, 2021).

Applying a global perspective, Okeisima (2019) views adaptation in the hospitality industry refers to the ability of hospitality businesses to adjust their strategies and operations to meet evolving trends and challenges brought about by globalization. These adaptation practices ensure that hospitality entities remain relevant and attractive to a diverse, global audience. (Nkanta & Elendu, 2022) opined that adaptation to globalization in tourism requires industry players to embrace flexibility and innovation. This is because the globalization terrain is ever-changing, thus necessitating a synthesis of innovative products/services and ideas.

Other strategies suggested in the hospitality marketing literature to manage the influence of globalization in the hospitality include market research to analyze global travel trends and customer demographics to frame marketing strategies and service offerings. Technology adoption which involves the utilization of emerging technologies such as virtual reality (VR) for virtual tours and artificial intelligence (AI) for personalized marketing. Local and Global Balance which is the blending of local cultural elements with international standards to create unique and memorable guest experiences. This is what Svenson (2001) refers to as glocalization,

8. Implications and Conclusion

Theoretical Implications

Globalization Theory, originating from scholars like Giddens (1990) and Robertson (1992), offers a powerful lens through which to understand the sweeping influence of globalization on the hospitality industry. The theory illustrates how globalization is not merely an economic or technological force but



a multifaceted process that affects cultures, industries, and individual experiences worldwide. In the context of hospitality, this means that globalization drives both standardization and local adaptation, as hotels and tourism businesses strive to provide globally recognizable services while catering to the unique needs of local markets.

Looking forward, future research could delve deeper into how global-local dynamics (or "glocalization") shape customer preferences. As the theory suggests, the blending of global and local elements is fluid and ongoing. Researchers could explore the role of identity—both for brands and consumers—where global travelers may seek experiences that are at once cosmopolitan but deeply rooted in local traditions. This duality presents an exciting area for further theoretical development.

Practical Implications for Hospitality Practitioners and Policymakers:

Globalization is not just an abstract force—it's a strategic tool that can be harnessed by hospitality practitioners. Hoteliers and tourism operators should leverage global connectivity to enhance their competitive positioning. This includes adopting cross-cultural management practices to foster a workforce that understands and respects diverse cultural norms, which is critical in delivering personalized yet globally recognizable service. Additionally, businesses should focus on digital globalization by investing in technology that not only improves operational efficiency but also enhances the guest experience. Digital platforms and data-driven personalization are all tools that enable companies to tap into a global market while still delivering local charm. But beyond this, globalization also necessitates a deep commitment to sustainability, as globally aware consumers are increasingly seeking eco-friendly travel options.

Policymakers play a crucial role in shaping the regulatory environment that allows hospitality firms to thrive on a global scale. By facilitating international cooperation—whether through trade agreements, tourism-friendly policies, or supporting infrastructure development—governments can create an environment conducive to the growth of the global hospitality sector. Moreover, it's important for policymakers to consider the social and environmental impacts of globalization. By encouraging businesses to adopt sustainable practices—through incentives, regulations, or educational programs—they can ensure that the benefits of globalization are distributed more evenly and responsibly across society.

Furthermore, governments in developing countries, such as Nigeria has to put in place adequate and functional infrastructure (good roads, electricity, telecommunications, airports facilities and rail lines) to support and reduce operational costs of local hospitality businesses. Access to loan at favorable rate, tourism business incentives, including tax holiday should be available to local investors to build strong capital base for investment in other parts of the globe. In addition, local hospitality business owners should embrace professionalism and upgrade their service offerings through training and development before considering going international.



Conclusion

Globalization is like a two-edged sword. On one hand, it opens doors to new markets, innovation, and growth. On the other, it poses challenges such as cultural homogenization and competition from international players. Hospitality firms must strike a balance between maintaining global standards and adapting to the specific needs of local markets. This tension creates opportunities for innovation—from embracing local cuisines in hotel menus to offering culturally tailored services. The challenge, however, lies in managing global consistency while remaining agile enough to respond to local shifts. Firms that can navigate this complex terrain will not only survive but thrive in an increasingly interconnected world.

If the hospitality industry in Nigeria and other developing countries do not have strong financial capital base and professionalism to operate beyond their national boundaries, advanced technologies and adequate functional infrastructural facilities to welcome a large number of international tourists, they will lose out in the global hospitality market.

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