

Crowd Management at Public Events of Hotel Industry in Anambra State

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Abstract

The aim of the study was to ascertain the effect of crowd management and control at public events in hotels in Anambra State. The study was a descriptive survey, with a population of 250 respondents that were purposively selected from the hotels under study. Structured questionnaire was used to collect information from the respondents, while simple descriptive statistical technique was used to analyze the data. The decision rule of a mean = or > 3.00 was regarded as agreed and < 3.00 was disregarded. Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 had grand mean of 3.00, indicating that the respondents agreed to the variables in the set objectives. The study concluded that the benefits of properly managed and controlled crowd far outweigh the consequences that may result from poor crowd management and control both on customers and the hotel industry. Therefore, proper measures including effective planning should be taken in order to host trouble-free events.

Key words: Effect, Crowd Management, Control, Events, Hotels, Anambra State

Introduction

Many a time, stories have been told of collapsed events; either described as unsuccessful or that the crowd was too much and became unmanageable. All these point at the fact that such event had crowd management shortfalls. For instance, the success or otherwise of any political campaign, which is often a very good crowd puller, highly depends on how the organizers plan and manage such event. Okoli, (2012), no matter the scope, an event need to be properly planned, organized and executed for it to be successful. The image of the host is at stake and therefore, he cannot afford to fail in terms of poor turnout of the invitees and unsatisfactory entertainment of guests. As an event manager, you are to ensure the smooth running of the event, to minimize the risks and to maximize the enjoyment of the event audience.

In the hotel industry, many events take place on daily basis, including weddings, seminars, conferences, rallies, banquets, and workshops. The hotels on many occasions falter while handling some events to the detriment of the celebrants, the host; and the hotels' reputation. Alcohol is often seen as a symbol of enjoyment in any celebration and has also become a major part of festivities at any event. Invariably, the same alcohol which seems to be the main item in the entertainment list is often the tool that drives a poor event outing through intoxication. Event planners seem not to have given a thought to this perennial problem. There has not been any proper evaluation of alcohol effect on public events. Overcrowding is another major factor that destroys public events. Overcrowding here relates to those who came into the event uninvited, otherwise known as gate crashers. Event managers focus

their attention on invitation cards that were distributed, without taking cognizance of the fact that public events in Nigeria generally have no barrier. This issue stands to be part of the major problems in managing crowd. Wali, & Asuqud, (2022), said in their conclusion that the level of satisfaction and perceived efficiency of Okomu National Park and Obudu Mountain Resort is poor. They said that Tourists were not satisfied with the accommodation and food services of the two destinations. This a major gap in service delivery."

The result of this is that the hotel will face serious criticisms which may lead to lower patronage. Crowd management is a serious business and, therefore, professional planners need to be engaged to exhibit their dexterity and skills. This is because even a small event has the likelihood of becoming crowded depending on the venue where such an event is to be held compared to the number of guests expected to attend, Premier & Cabinet, (2011). The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of crowd management and control at public events in hotels in Anambra State, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to: (1) examine the reasons for overcrowding at public events, (2) identify the main attractions that necessitate overcrowding at public events, (3) ascertain the problems associated with crowd management and control at public events, (4) ascertain solutions of crowd management and control at public events, and (5) identify the benefits of crowd management and control in the hotel industry.

Literature Review

Queue Management and Crowd Control

Queue management and crowd control **are as** important as any other method leading to customer satisfaction and increased sales, www.q-manager.com retrieved on 16/4/21. **The following are some of the wide range of queue management and crowd control products:**

- **Belt Posts** - This is often used at Banks, Institutes, Malls, Cash Counters or any other location where the primary concern is to direct the people or cordon off certain areas.
- **Double Belt Post** - This is used at the places where children are part of the visiting group and these queue posts helps in preventing them from ducking underneath.
- **Rope Post** - Handling the **crowd at red carpet events**, VIP entries, any upscale business or some formal event is one of the specialties of these **rope posts**.
- **Chain Post** - When sturdiness is a need along with control, these outdoor usage chain posts are the best choice that one can choose from these options.
- **Stand Alone Units - Full Frame** Sign Holders installed on these stand-alone units delivers information in an interactive way where

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the message can be updated time to time by just inserting the new sheet, giving you complete control of your content.

- **Café Barriers** - This product is a subtle mix of queue management with endless branding opportunities in the outdoor spaces. The major points that need to be taken care in this case are-
- **Queue Structure** - Installation of queue posts in a way to form specific structure like linear, zigzag, circular or any other form.
- **Single/Multi Queue** - Choose the one that best suits the requirements of your venue.
- **Space Utilization**- Try to install queue control barriers in a way that can utilize the available space in most efficient way, www.q-manager.com, and retrieved 16/4/21.

Crowd Management at Events

Domestically and internationally as events grow in popularity, attendances also increase. Due to this rapid increase, crowd management at events is part of a booming industry that continues to grow. Crowd management and crowd control are two distinct but interrelated concepts. The former includes the facilitation, employment, and movement of crowds, while the latter comprises steps taken once a crowd or sections of it has begun to behave in a disorderly or dangerous manner.

Some Facts about Crowd Management

- Crowds contain a large number of faceless individuals that follow a certain lead without really contemplating the reasons why.
- Crowds can be furious and perform acts leading to possible destruction, hooliganism, and murder. However, individual members of a crowd generally would not perform any of these acts without the anonymity that the crowd provides. It is important to understand that no two crowds are the same.
- Crowds can behave violently, resulting in destruction of property, personal injury, and, in extreme cases, death.
- Crowd management plans should be adjusted to meet the needs of the event and the potential crowd.
- A crowd management plan involves consideration of a number of key matters, specifically reviewing.
- In reviewing seating arrangements, for example, event managers must consider seating capacity, assembly of seating, and location of seating. Unassigned seating should be avoided as people can be trampled trying to get a good seat. With respect to assigned seating, an event manager may want to ensure that rival teams' fans are not seated together, www.q-manager.com, retrieved on 16/4/21

Crowd Management Theory

Health safety executive (HSE), (2000), stated that events management should provide enough number of staff, to make sure that crowd management is carried out effectively, and with the following duties:

- Knowing the design of the events venue, assisting the public by giving them information about the available facilities and remembering those with special needs.
- Being aware of the locations of entrances and exits.
- Making sure that overcrowding does not occur in any part of the venue, by managing and directing the crowd, especially the visitors who are entering or leaving the venue.
- Keeping passageways and exits clear at all times. Controlling unruly behavior and immediate investigation of any disturbances or incidents.
- Instant communications with supervisors.
- Knowing the procedures of evacuating the venue.
- Monitoring the crowds at any points where overcrowding may occur.

The following factors should be considered during planning and preparation:

- i. Events type.
- ii. Events timing and location(s).
- iii. Techniques for directing the crowds at the event.
- iv. Stakeholders that are needed to be involved.
- v. Aims and objectives of the event,
- vi. Problems that could arise at the event.
- vii. The procedures that must be followed to deal with any events' problems.

Planning and preparing for the upcoming annual event is significant, even if the planning and preparing for previous events were successful. For an event that hosts different locations, planning and preparing will have different requirements from one location to another. For example, at hajj, pilgrims spend three days to complete their duties. Therefore, every location of the event should be planned equally and separately depending on the nature of each location. In addition, "what if?" scenarios are useful during the planning stage, as they could be used to test the plan at events' sites, to think what are the possible problems that could occur at these sites, and to develop an adequate plan that could help to manage the events problems, in addition, how information about these problems could be shared among the stakeholders of the event. Therefore, all stakeholders should participate in planning these scenarios as useful information could be gathered from different perspectives.

Assessing Risks

Health and Safety Executive, (2000), state that risk assessment is an important step in managing the crowd safely. It helps event's organizers or staff to plan

for any expected and unexpected risks that could occur at the event and to manage these risks. On the other hand, if something goes wrong and people are being harmed, who are involved at the event, this situation is called "hazard". Therefore, risk assessment is required to assess what level of precautions they need to take to prevent harm. This assessment should examine and evaluate all parts of the events' venues. In addition, events' organizers should think about incidents that could occur, such as visitors collapsing or large-scale emergency such as escaping from fire. At the planning stage, event's organizers should associate with experts and experienced people, who have the right capability and knowledge, to take part in the risk assessment process, HSE, (2000), developed a five-step approach to risk assessment as follows:

Understanding the crowds; there is a scheme that could be used to understand and categorize the crowds at different events. The factors to categorize crowd types are as follows:

- i. Purpose of the crowd.
- ii. Duration of the crowd.
- iii. Start time of the event.
- iv. Individuals' location at the event.
- v. Event atmosphere and level of conflict.
- vi. Level of interaction between events' organizers and the crowds.
- vii. Heterogeneity of crowd membership.
- viii. Size of group units within a large crowd.
- ix. Amount of luggage.

Communication and Information

Communicating with the events' crowd and providing information to them is important for the success of the event, in addition, information used for the whole crowd should be accurate, comprehensive, timely, updated and presented as visual and audio. Moreover, information that is presented to the crowd should be clear. For example, describing how to arrive at the event by public transportation, describing the events locations (avenues, toilets and others) and how to get their directions. However, in providing signs, the native language of the events host is not suitable for international nationalities. Therefore, these signs should use multi-languages or event use pictograms, which are symbols that are, should be gathered and shared to all multiple agencies that are involved, to organize the crowds.

Observing and Monitoring

One of the important steps in crowd management is to observe continually and monitor the crowds because it would help to identify any sign of problems, danger or any possibility of crowd disorder. It is significant to use various types of crowd monitoring during the event. For example, officers on the ground, uncover officers in crowd, closed circuit televisions (CCTVs),

helicopters for an overall view etc. if using CCTVs, using alternative monitoring tools would be ideal, as sometimes CCTVs could give false images. For example, some CCTV pictures could show crowds density is high at a specific area, whereas in reality the crowd density is normal. HSE, (2000), stated that jostling, trampling and suffocating are all potential hazards that could occur at crowded events. Therefore, to avoid these harms, crowd management should ensure that crowd behavior and movements are monitored efficiently such as, placing stewards and CCTV's at suitable points. In addition, all events' staff should know their roles in crowd monitoring, and to take actions immediately if the people are at risk. In addition, CCTV's could provide information on the distribution in many areas. They are useful for directing and monitoring crowd operations. However, it is useful to use a selection of systems to monitor the events. For example, CCTV's could be used at key locations supported by staff watching the crowd from vantage points at these locations. HSE, (2000), illustrated some areas that event's staff should closely monitor, such as the following:

- Entrances and exits.
- Standing areas where crowd surges or pushing could occur.
- Popular skills, attractions and refreshments.
- Bottlenecks (example: stairs and escalators)
- Areas where people queue and enclosed areas.

Prevention of Crowd Disasters

Crowd managers must determine a wide range of information about a venue and the people occupying it before a group assembly occurs. Included is an assessment of the nature of the group, experience with similar groups, potential behavior patterns, projected occupancy, facility processing rates, staffing, and means of communication between staff and with the crowd. Crowds can attract participants who come to observe and to peacefully enjoy the event, predators in search of victims, and people with other psychological or social agenda. This is the part of the event that creates undue crowd. If reasonable care is not taken, crowd could become unmanageable, constant monitoring of crowd behavior is necessary for good crowd management. A proactive type of management is required, anticipating and resolving problems before they occur, rather than reacting when it could be too late, Goldaba, (2003)

Crowd Management Routines

A crowd management routine is a predetermined way to manage various phenomena around crowd flow and gatherings of people, (fruin@crowdsafe.com). A crowd management routine in contrast to an emergency plan, for example, is rarely initiated by a dramatic event. The purpose of routine is, instead, to prevent dramatic events from happening - that is, before something serious happens.

Event Safety

A lot of crowd management work revolves around different crowd management routines. Because these are in their essence a predetermined way to handle crowds, most of the actual work of responding to crowd movement took place in the form of one of these routines. While the work at the entrances to the event and the camp site can be said to be a form of crowd management routine as well, the purpose of crowd management routine is to in a structured way, handle large crowds and reduce the risks if the crowd gets too large for the area in question. Crowd management routine (CMR) existed for most event stages. The CMR for each stage was divided into four different levels dubbed with code names, corresponding to how full the stage was at the moment. The first level was escalated when the stage was about 70% full and the last was escalated when the stage was completely full, effectively closing off the stage. One or several persons were detailed alarm - functions or decision-makers in charge of escalating or deescalating the CMR. Each level detailed how to act at a particular crowd density, as well as who was involved in the work, what necessary communication had to take place and what material, for example in a form of sign, was required. These routines involved several people in different roles and where in the form of role-specific step-by-step instructions, so that each person involved just had a look at what their actions should be and follow the instructions. They were written out in the form of laminated A6- papers with instructions on one side and a map and overview on the other. These were handed out to all the safety managers (SMs) involved in the CMR, so that they could be carried around and consulted in the field, Goldaba, (2003).

Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of those parties involved in an event should be specified in writing and known to all prior to an event. There must be a clear understanding of the chain of command and the duties that each person is to perform. An important aid to this is an event management plan produced by the facility or promoter with the cooperation of the celebrants that specifies names, duties and location of the people at the event; lines of communication, contingency plans, door opening, method of plan implementation, a checklist of personnel; equipment and procedures, expected crowd size and characteristics. Those with a role in planning, organizing and controlling events cooperatively must find ways to;

1. Anticipate potential sources of danger in public gatherings.
2. Take steps to prevent trouble when and where possible, and
3. Be prepared to respond to trouble quickly and effectively when, and if, necessary.

Facility Management

Facility management has the most influence on crowd safety and on the activities of promoters and entertainment. No matter how a contract between a facility and promoter is written, local facility management must acknowledge and accept its obligation for the safety of the community that it serves. Facility management has the responsibility for assuring safe conditions in compliance with applicable status and reasonable standards. That responsibility also requires cooperative efforts with law enforcement and other event managers. But that cooperation should not relieve facility management of its accountability for providing resources for safe and successful events; of course law enforcement officials can take over direction and control in emergencies, but that should not dilute management responsibility for taking all reasonable steps to assure that emergencies do not happen, Goldaba, (1983).

Ushers: In addition to seating patrons, ushers' duty include enforcing of house rules, maintaining order, reporting security problems, keeping people out of aisles, and enforcing open flame and smoking regulations. Ushers should remain at their post until the event is completed, according to Goldaba, (1983).

Method

The research design adopted for this study was a descriptive survey, with a population of 250 respondents purposively chosen from the contact hotels that formed the sample of the study. The four hotels and respondents' distribution are shown on the table below.

S/N	Destination	Population	Address
1.	Finotel classy restaurant	10	18 Nwauzu junction
2.	Cosmila hotels and suite	10	Old INEC Road
3.	Crescent Spring Hotel	10	No 33 Honorable Uche Ekwunife Street, Awka
4.	Trig Point Hotel	10	Close proximity to Governors lodge Anambra
5.	Customers	210	
TOT		250	
AL			

The instrument used was a structured questionnaire to facilitate choice of responses by the respondents. The questionnaire was divided into two parts, the first of which deals with the demographic data. The second part deals with response items in line with objectives of the study.

The researcher administered 250 copies of the questionnaire by hand to the respondents, which were returned to both the researcher and his research

assistant after administration. Simple descriptive statistics was used to analyze the information obtained from the instrument.

Results

Research Objective 1: To examine the reasons for overcrowding at public events

At what point do you consider an event overcrowded?

Table 1: Mean responses on the reasons for overcrowding at events

S/N	Item	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	When there is no sufficient space	4.24	0.56	SA
2	When there is no access to event site	2.89	0.39	D
3	When the facilities provided are not enough	3.78	0.29	A
4	When there is no space for non-invited persons	3.66	0.45	A
Benchmark Mean		3.00		

\bar{X} = Mean, SD= standard deviation, SA= strongly Agreed, A= Agreed and D= disagreed.

The result presented on table 1 showed that item 1, which attributed overcrowding to lack of space at event center, scored a mean of 4.24 and considered as strongly agreed by the respondents. Lack of access to the event site was not considered as a reason for overcrowding by the respondents with a mean score of 2.89, which is lower than the benchmark mean. A mean score of 3.78 was shown for inadequate facilities in an event, and finally, unavailability of space for the uninvited had a mean score of 3.66. Objective one showed that items 1, 3, and 4 were among the major issues in overcrowding in public events organized by hotels.

Research Objective 2: To identify the main attractions that necessitate overcrowding at public events

What do you consider to be the main attraction for overcrowding in public events?

Table 2: Mean responses on the main attractions that necessitate overcrowding at events

S/N	Item	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	Weddings that offer food, drinks and gift items	4.54	0.08	SA

2	Rallies that have incentives for the participants	4.98	0.05	SA
3	Music festivals that offer gift items	3.67	0.24	SA
4	Public demonstrations without security agents	4.85	0.08	SA
5	Concert carnivals that are open for all	3.89	0.45	SA
	Benchmark Mean	3.00		

\bar{X} = Mean, SD= standard deviation, SA= strongly Agreed

The result on table 2 showed that all the variables encourage overcrowding. Weddings scored a mean of 4.54, rallies had a mean of 4.98, music festivals had a mean of 3.67, public demonstrations had a mean of 4.85 and concert carnivals had a mean of 3.89. From the mean responses, we see that weddings, public demonstrations and rallies scored the highest mean of 4.54, 4.85 and 4.98 respectively with low standard deviations of 0.08, 0.08 and 0.05 respectively. This implies that these three types of events are usually overcrowded during hotel event functions. The reason is that the events provide drinks, foods, gift items and other attractions. Participants' stimuli respond positively to the above attractions irrespective of invitation notices.

Research Objective 3: To ascertain the problems associated with crowd management and Control at public events

What are the problems associated with overcrowding?

Table 3: Mean response on the problems associated with overcrowding in public events

S/N	Item	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	Excess number of people which leads to reduction in patronage	3.78	0.45	A
2	Unmanageable uninvited guests	4.05	0.36	SA
3	Unforeseen circumstances	3.69	0.98	A
4	Intoxication	3.49	0.93	A
	Benchmark Mean	3.00		

\bar{X} =Mean, SD= standard deviation, SA= strongly Agreed, A= Agreed.

The result for question 3, presented in table 3 showed that among the problems associated with overcrowding at public events, excess number of people had a mean score of 3.78, unmanageable uninvited guests had a mean score of 4.05, unforeseen circumstances scored a mean of 3.69 and intoxication scored a mean of 3.49. All the items had mean score above the benchmark, implying that respondents agreed with variables associated with the problems of overcrowding at events organized by hotel industry.

Research Objective 4: To ascertain solutions of crowd management and control at public events

What do you consider to be the solution for proper crowd management and control?

Table 4: Mean responses on proper crowd management and control

S/N	Item	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	Create additional canopies for uninvited guests	4.78	0.19	SA
2	Event influencers	3.45	0.41	A
3	Sufficient and effective planning of safe environment	4.89	0.08	SA
Benchmark Mean		3.00		

\bar{X} =Mean, SD= standard deviation, SA= strongly Agreed, A= Agreed.

The result on table 4 showed that creation of additional canopies for uninvited guests with a mean of 4.78 would assist in proper crowd management and control at events. The essence of this canopy was to take adequate control and management of the crashers at the event. Result also revealed that event influencers, with a mean of 3.45 would help immensely in the proper organization of attendees at events. The influencers would help to place invitees and non-invitees in their proper receptacles for proper crowd management and control. Thus, unnecessary struggle for food and drinks would have been minimised. Sufficient and effective planning which stands as the bedrock of all the other strategies scored a mean of 4.89. This goes to show that proper event planning would reduce drastically the crowd issues if planning took cognizance of all the other variables.

Research Objective 5: To identify the benefits of crowd management and control in public events

What are the benefits of crowd management and control to the hotel industry?

Table 5: Mean response on the benefits of crowd management and control to the hotels

S/N	Item	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	Increased patronage and sustainability	3.92	0.32	A
2	Profit maximization	3.85	0.49	A
3	Creating a lasting impression	4.67	0.09	SA
4	Branding	4.89	0.12	SA

5	Customer satisfaction	4.90	0.07	SA
	Benchmark Mean	3.00		

\bar{X} =Mean, SD= standard deviation, SA= strongly Agreed, A= Agreed

The mean responses presented in table 5 showed that increased patronage and sustainability, profit maximization, creating a lasting impression, branding and customer satisfaction were among the benefits of crowd management and control with mean scores of 3.92, 3.85, 4.67, 4.89 and 4.90 respectively.

Discussion of findings

The findings of objective 1 showed that one of the reasons for overcrowding included lack of sufficient space at event centers. Sufficient space is the beginning of a good event outing. It gives enough traffic for invitees and non-invitees as well as walking space at the event area. Therefore, insufficient space leads to overcrowding which results in horrible service and unsatisfactory business outing. Furthermore, no matter how small the population may be, once there are insufficient facilities to go round, overcrowding ensues. Uninvited guests are most times not budgeted for neither are they catered for and therefore constitute more of a nuisance at the event, and it is one of the leading causes of overcrowding at events in the study area. This is in consonance with the views of Avery and Soo, (2003), who opined that lack of adequate space and enough facilities in an event may lead to sharing of facilities and as such cause overcrowding.

The study as shown in objective 2 revealed that events that necessitate overcrowding include weddings, rallies, music festivals, public demonstrations and concert carnivals, all these variables provide the incentives which form the main attraction at events. Weddings, public demonstration and rallies ranked high mean responses of 4.5, 4.85 and 4.98 respectively. Rallies are mostly political in nature and are often not coordinated or organized because of the level of publicity involved and as such are good sources of overcrowding and most times create traffic problems. Public demonstrations are also often unorganized public events that lead to overcrowding. Weddings are a good source of overcrowding in the area because weddings are attached social significance and people tend to come even without invitation and as such lead to overcrowding. The findings are supported by Adebisi, (2008), who listed demonstrations, party rallies, and carnivals among the causes of overcrowding in public events.

Results from objective 3 revealed that the problems of associated with overcrowding include excess number of people, unmanageable uninvited guests, unforeseen circumstances, and intoxication. When a hospitality industry is known for their lack of ingenuity in crowd management and control, it leads to reduction in patronage, Eniola, (2007). Overcrowding has been shown to cause serious injuries from stampeding or rivalry among

convening groups and in extreme cases unprecedented deaths particularly in very large events. Suffice it to say that crowded events are targets of crime, pick pocketing, and murder and so forth. The perpetrators seem to go free most times because it is difficult to trace who did what, Eniola, (2007).

The findings from objective 4 revealed that some of the ways for proper crowd management include creation of additional canopies for un-invited guests, majority of these uninvited guests are often miscreants. Some can attend events with dangerous weapons. To avert this potential ugly situation, Sanders, (2005), argues that security dogs can be useful in sieving out unwanted guests in events as they can detect drugs, weapons and sometimes even bombs that are targeted at crowded events, and lots more. The finding of this study is supported by Avery and Soo, (2003) who also revealed that the major means of averting danger in large events is proper advanced planning.

The findings on objective 5 showed that the benefits of crowd management and control include increased patronage and sustainability, profit maximization, creating a lasting impression on the participants which is the sole aim of the hotel industry, branding and customer satisfaction. When crowd are managed properly, and all the troubles associated with mismanagement of crowd avoided to the barest minimum, customers are satisfied and they continue to patronize the hotels. The findings are in line with the opinion of Frederick, (2013), who noted that proper crowd control and adequate crowd management measures furnish the image of a hospitality industry and attract good returns.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study revealed that properly managed and controlled crowd had far-reaching benefits for both customers and the hotel industry. It is therefore expedient that proper planning should be the hallmark of events management and control in hotels in Anambra State.

Consequently, the study recommended that: (1) adequate measures for managing and controlling crowd during huge events should be put in place to mitigate such problems as insufficient spacing and overcrowding, (2) advanced planning techniques must be employed to address unprecedented issues or stampede that could thwart the plans by management of hospitality industry and events since free food and free items stimulate overcrowding, (3) hotel ushers and guards should adopt effective procedures and measures for detecting uninvited guests at events as they have been shown to be the major causes of overcrowding, (4) event planners should have contingency plans and also make use of influencers to cater to unforeseen circumstances, and (5) hotel planners should have proper control of events since proper crowd management and control promote profit maximization, creates lasting impression, customer satisfaction and a model for branding.

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