

Users' Preferences for Office Spaces in Akure Metropolis

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Abstract: The paper examines the Users' Preferences for Office Spaces in Akure metropolis. Data was collected through questionnaires from the occupants/tenants of office properties in Akure, Nigeria, estate surveying and valuation firms' management portfolio. A total of 50 offices (representing the total of selected 2 offices from each of the 25-estate surveying and valuation firms in the study area) were sampled for ease of coverage. In the questionnaire administration, 2 office properties were purposively sampled from the portfolio of each sampled estate surveying and valuation firm. In each selected office property, 2 tenants were purposively selected from each sampled office property. Therefore, a total of 100 tenants in 50 office properties were selected for sampling. The paper adopts a quantitative method of data analysis. Descriptive techniques were adopted; it includes the tabular analysis of data using percentages and frequencies. The relative Preference Indexes were also determined. From the empirical studies, it was discovered that most of the respondents have the highest preference for Executive suites type of office space (50.0%), even though a larger percentage of them are occupying Traditional office spaces due to the fact that they cannot afford Executive suites as it is always more expensive as compared to other categories. They, however, have the lowest preference for the Contiguous office category of office space.

Keywords: Users' Preferences, Office Spaces, Akure, Relative Preference Index, Executive suites, Traditional office spaces, Contiguous office.

1. Introduction

Currently, the world is experiencing an extreme growth in building sector. The building or space development targets the improvement of various commercial activities as well as enhancing the availability of public facilities [1-2]. According to [3], what usually lead to an organization seeking for more optimal use of facilities and space, positive image, better use of resources, improved performance, increased flexibility, and increased users' satisfaction is the allocation of different categories of space for various type of office activities.

However, in office space studies, we have two major points agreed upon by most researchers, which are cost and the utilization of space. [4] said effective utilization of office space can help in reducing an organizational cost apart from the daily work activities support. However, there is difference between the government sector office space utilization and that the private sector. In some instances, there can be overutilization of space or underutilization of space due to the present working environment changing pattern [5].

Office space has a direct response to a person's relationship with work and his involvement in work processes. Several authors [6-7] have noted how the physical properties of work setting and environment has brought about better organizational performance. The office space can be used to increase the productivity of the employees. As stated by [8], a tool that can help to achieve a corporation's goals and can be used to improve business outcomes is an office space.

The development of new kinds of office properties have been as a result of several market changes. Some of these new developments includes; more use of public spaces as work spaces [9], new working ways [10], more need for flexibility [11]; [12], the economy sharing [13]. more number

of self-employed workers, development in technology use, and the decreasing and changing request for office space [14]; [12].

More research on users' preferences for office space is required so that office property owners or managers can effectively attend to these preferences by creating office spaces in an increasingly competitive development market that will attract more tenants. Therefore, this study is aimed towards analyzing the users' preferences for office spaces with a view to providing office property owners or managers with tools, skills and competencies to improve their competitive position.

2. Review of Relevant Literature

Studies that majorly focus on office space users mostly examine what motivate the users to occupy and work in different office spaces. For example, [15] found that the main factors users consider in making the choice of their office spaces are related to location. The report gave by [16] shows that rental costs are the most crucial factors that determine the users' preference for office space for about 47% of the respondents. In addition, other important motivations that determine the users' preference for office space were the amazing and nice environment found in the particular spaces [17], and the fact that they felt part of an environment [18].

However, there are still limited research on users' preferences for office spaces. One of the limited studies which is related to user preferences by [19] is on the features of multi-tenanted office properties, and it's generally based on users' satisfaction. Several physical features of multi-tenanted office properties were grouped into ten essential multi-tenanted office properties factors, which includes: office exterior and division, location, office decoration, services and facilities, office leisure, seclusion rooms, information and communication technology (ICT) and equipment, office climate and privacy. According to the results obtained, the multi-tenanted office properties users are the most satisfied with the availability of fixed workspaces and general accessibility and the least satisfied with the individual personal control of the indoor climate.

Besides the features of the office property spaces, past studies also revealed proof for the influence of individual features on users' preferences. For instance, [20] revealed that what majorly influence preferences for several parts of single-tenanted office property workspaces is the individual differences (i.e., gender, age, time spent working individually, time spent at the office). They revealed, for instance, that the category of people that prefer personal control of the indoor climate are the older workers while a workplace that induces teamwork are being preferred the younger workers. Also, they revealed that respondents who value most the ability of the work environment to support the values and image of their organization are those who spend most of their working hours at the office [20].

According to [21], another thing that influences users' preferences is the sector of the organization. They revealed, for instance, that the creative industry workers prefer shared areas with flexible layout, representative interior and meeting spaces for the organizations they work for.

Studies by [22] reveal that higher environmental satisfaction and higher privacy ratings is associated with increased enclosure. Users seem to prioritize a private office work space over a non-private office work space. One of the most frequently mentioned problems in open office spaces is lack of privacy. Due to the close proximity in which employees are seated, they can become over-stimulated. It is more difficult for employees to maintain a desired level of privacy and avoid contact with one another under these circumstances.

In office design, an important factor to be noted is the ability to work individually without distractions. More than 50% of the workers in open-plan office spaces report that during work, they are usually disturbed by noise from conversations between others, from telephones, office automation and air conditioning systems. Disturbance among colleagues and subsequently increased communication can cause workers to find it difficult to concentrate in open plan offices [23].

What seems to lead to higher levels of job satisfaction is the ability to choose an office space based on personal preferences [24]. According to [25], people experience a considerable amount of control as it is possible to sit anywhere in an office with flexible workspaces.

This paper is very important for two main reasons. First, it covers how owners/managers of office properties can create office spaces that attract more tenants in an increasingly competitive growth market and optimally respond to these users' preferences for office spaces. Second, in order to provide owners/managers of office properties with tools, skills and competencies to improve their competitive position, it analyzes the users' preferences for office spaces and the influence of users' characteristics on these preferences.

3. Methodology

In order to investigate the users' preferences for office spaces, data was collected through questionnaires from the occupants/tenants of office properties in Akure, Nigeria, estate surveying and valuation firms' management portfolio. A total of 50 offices (representing the total of selected 2 offices from each of the 25-estate surveying and valuation firms in the study area) were sampled for ease of coverage. In the questionnaire administration, 2 office properties were purposively sampled from the portfolio of each sampled estate surveying and valuation firms. Purposive method of sample selection was adopted to select offices from the portfolio of estate surveying and valuation firms in order to cover different locations and gather data about users' preferences for office spaces. In each selected office space, 2 tenants were purposively selected from each sampled office space. Therefore, a total of 100 tenants in 50 office spaces were selected for sampling.

In the Section A of the questionnaire, questions on the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and the reasons for their choice of office space were asked. The respondents were asked further in Section B of the questionnaire to rate the level of their preferences for office spaces using Likert's scale.

For the data analysis, descriptive technique was adopted to assess users' preferences for office spaces. It involves the tabular analysis of data using percentages and frequencies and Relative Preference Index (RPI).

4. Analysis and Results

One-hundred (100) questionnaires were administered to the tenants of office properties in Akure Metropolis. Fifty-Four (94) questionnaires were collected and found useful, which represents 94% rate of response, 6 questionnaires were not returned which represent 6% of the response rate. Tables 1-3 below presented the socio-economic characteristics of respondents who are tenants of office properties in Akure Metropolis. In this section, they supplied the data needed for this survey in terms of; Age of respondent, academic qualification of respondent, Type of Office Space etc. This was done so as to ascertain the reliability and validity of the data collected for the study and also for the researcher to familiarise himself with the respondents for the study.

Table 1: Ages of Tenants of Office Properties in Akure Metropolis

Age	Frequency	Percentage
20 – 30	19	20.2
31 – 40	22	23.4
41 – 50	35	37.2
51 – 60	15	15.9
61 – 70	3	3.2
70 and above	0	0
Total	94	100.0

Source: Authors' field survey, 2021

With respect to ages of the respondents in the study area, most of the office properties tenants are between the ages of 41 and 50 (i.e., 37.2%). This is followed by those within the ages of 31 and 40 (i.e., 23.4%). 16.7% of the tenants are between the ages of 20 and 30. Some are between 51 and 60 years of age (i.e., 15.9%) while we only have one of the respondents which is between 61 and 70 years of age (i.e., 3.2%) and none of the respondents are 70 years and above. Most of the respondents are in

their mid-adulthood. So, they are matured enough to take office spaces and also to respond adequately to the questions provided in the questionnaires.

Table 2: Academic Qualification of Tenants of Office Properties in Akure Metropolis

Academic Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
OND	21	22.3
HND	33	35.1
B. Sc.	18	19.1
M. Sc.	14	14.9
Others	8	8.5
Total	94	100.0

Source: Authors' field survey, 2021

From the table, it can be inferred that with respect to their academic qualification, 35.1% of the study population are HND holders, 22.3% are OND holders, and 19.1% are B. Sc. holders while 14.9% are M.Sc. holders. Holders of other certificate of education such as the SSCE are 8.5%. This revealed that the most of the respondents are well educated and academically qualified to respond adequately to the questionnaires. This response revealed that the data gathered for this study could be reliable as per the respondents' educational levels

Table 3: Types of Office Spaces Occupied by Tenants in Akure metropolis

Type of Office Spaces	Frequency	Percentage
Traditional Office Space	26	27.7
Creative Office Space	8	8.5
Co-working Space	17	18.1
Executive suites	9	9.6
Flex Space	6	6.4
Contiguous Office Space	12	12.8
Other Types of Office Space	16	17.0
Total	94	100.0

Source: Authors' field survey, 2021

The table reveals that most of the Office Spaces occupied by tenants in the study area are Traditional Office Spaces (i.e., 27.7%). 18.1% are Co-working Spaces. 8.5% are Creative Office Spaces. 9.6% are Executive suites. 12.8% are for Contiguous Office Spaces, while 17.0% are for other categories of office spaces that are not on the questionnaire. The lowest percentage of Office Spaces occupied by respondents in the study area is Flex Space with 6.4%. This indicates that Traditional Office Spaces dominates the study area.

4.1 Users' Preferences for Office Spaces in Akure metropolis

The following Likert scale was used in the questionnaire to measure the level of users' preferences for office spaces in Akure metropolis: 1 as Not prefer (NP), 2 as Indifferent (I), 3 as Prefer (P), 4 as More prefer (MP₁), and 5 as Most prefer (MP₂). Their frequency and percentages of responses are as presented in the table below. The responses were subsequently analysed using descriptive statistical techniques (frequency percentage) and the results were ranked accordingly in ascending order using Relative Preference Index (RPI).

Table 4: Relative Preference Index (RPI) of the Users' Preferences for Office Spaces in Akure metropolis

Users' Preferences for Office Spaces	NP (1) Freq. (%)	I (2) Freq. (%)	P (3) Freq. (%)	MP1 (4) Freq. (%)	MP2 (5) Freq. (%)	RPI	RANK
Traditional Office Space	13 (13.8)	17 (18.1)	21 (22.3)	20 (21.3)	23 (24.5)	0.65	3rd
Creative Office Space	20 (21.3)	16 (17.0)	19 (20.2)	22 (23.4)	17 (18.1)	0.60	6th
Co-working Space	15 (15.9)	18 (19.1)	14 (14.9)	23 (24.5)	24 (25.5)	0.65	3rd
Executive suites	2 (2.1)	13 (13.8)	12 (12.8)	20 (21.3)	47 (50.0)	0.81	1st
Flex Space	11 (11.7)	21 (22.3)	23 (24.5)	18 (19.1)	21 (22.3)	0.64	5th
Contiguous Office Space	17 (12.9)	25 (27.8)	18 (5.6)	15 (27.8)	19 (25.9)	0.58	7th
Other Types of Office Space	10 (11.1)	14 (14.9)	26 (29.6)	24 (25.5)	20 (21.3)	0.66	2nd

Source: Authors' field survey, 2021

In order to better understand the Users' Preferences for Office Space in Akure metropolis, the various responses obtained were analysed and ranked. Relative Preference Index (RPI) (see Table 4) pointed to the fact that Executive Office Space with RPI of 0.81 has the highest level of most prefer with 50.0%. It is followed by Co-working Space with 25.5%. With a RPI of 0.58, Contiguous Office Space has the lowest level of preference by office space users. Traditional Office Space and Co-working Space have the same RPI of 0.65, which means that the Users preferences for these categories of office spaces are relatively the same. These were the rank of users' preferences for different categories of office spaces. Therefore, tenants prefer office spaces in this order with the Executive suites as the greatest or most prefer office space.

5. Conclusion

The paper examined the users' preferences for office space in Akure. The users of office spaces in Akure, Nigeria have given their preferences for office space in this area. Through questionnaires served on these respondents and personal interviews, it was discovered that most of the respondents have the highest preference for Executive suites type of office space, even though larger percentage of them are occupying Traditional office spaces due to the fact that they cannot afford Executive suites as it is always more expensive as compared to other categories. They however have the lowest preference for the Contiguous office space category of office space. It can therefore be concluded that most of the office space users in Akure are occupying Traditional type of office space, they however desired to take and give highest preference for Executive Suite type of office space but most of them are majorly hindered by financial commitment to take and occupy this type of office space.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests.

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