

claiming the lives of four of his friends and colleagues.

When Friday Ndidi, an auto mechanic and his friends embarked on the journey from Abeokuta to Ifo, little did they know that the journey would end up in monumental tragedy. Though Ndidi was lucky to have survived the accident, none of his four friends in the car was as fortunate. They died instantly when the car in which they were travelling lost control and ran into an abandoned trailer at Vesper, Ifo, along the Abeokuta Expressway.

Shortly after the crash, there were conflicting reports on the real cause of the accident. Many people said the accident occurred because the man on the wheel was driving way above the speed limit and that the five occupants of the

rumours that Ajelara might have employed some diabolical powers to cause the crash and use the victims for money rituals. The accident, the reporter gathered, occurred exactly two weeks after five people lost their lives in similar circumstances along the Ewekoro Abeokuta Expressway, shortly after they had celebrated the birthday of one of their colleagues, known as Muri, at the same restaurant.

But narrating the story, Ndidi, the only survivor of the accident, told the reporter that the occupants of the car were all drunk even before they got to 214 Bar where they spent about thirty minutes, adding that they were all in a festive mood since the day was Wednesday, December 23, 2015 just two days before Christmas.

the speed because we might lose our lives. But the driver ignored our warning until we ran into an abandoned trailer."

Ndidi, the reporter learnt, survived the accident but sustained severe injuries. He managed to call his wife on the spot and told her about the accident. That was how he was rushed to a nearby hospital where he has since been receiving treatment.

The victim admitted that the cause of the accident was as a result of over-speeding, adding that Ajelara had no hand in the incident. "It was clearly a case of over-speeding and we were also drunk by the time we left 214 Bar. There was no diabolical or fetish power by the owner of the bar because we were already drunk by the time we got to

the place. People should stop spreading rumours. Was he the one that forced the driver to be over-speeding even after we had warned him? Such allegations are funny. But I thank God that I am alive to tell the story," Ndidi said.

Another version of the story stated that one of those that died in the accident took the car without the consent of the owner, who had allegedly abandoned the car for over five months.

"A pastor had warned the owner of the car not to drive it at all, that he risked being killed by the car. That was why the owner abandoned the car. His plan was to sell it off. Unfortunately, one of those boys took the car and left for Abeokuta. We have now seen the outcome," an eyewitness who pleaded anonymity told the reporter.

Reacting to the story, Managing director of 214 Global Bar and Hospitality, Mr. Mustapha Ajelara said that the stories making the round that he used the accident victims for money rituals were callous, regretting that the peddlers of such tales were out to tarnish his image and that of his outfit. He told the reporter that the bar in question had, since it was opened in February last year, been enjoying tremendous patronage because of its customer-friendly approach and business strategies.

"It is sad that some people have been making fruitless efforts just to tarnish my image and that of my company. It is regrettable and sad that those people lost their lives, but we thank God that the only survivor of that accident had told the world that they were all drunk, and that they also warned

the driver against over speeding which eventually caused the fatal crash that claimed their lives.

"For us here, customers' safety is a priority. We value lives and we ensure the safety of our customers. We provide enough facility that takes good care of our customers and we also monitor their activities while they use our facility. But it is sad that such a tragedy could hit us," Ajelara explained.

Also speaking, Mr. Joseph Oluseyi, manager of the bar, said it was disheartening and heartbreaking that some of the customers that had been patronising the bar since it opened in February last year were involved in road accidents, even as he noted that the bar would continue to improve on its safety strategies for its customers.

"Most of the time when people come here to have fun and enjoy themselves, we do our best to watch them and monitor their activities. We do all these because of their safety and also to avoid loss of lives by ensuring that whoever gets drunk is not allowed to drive. It doesn't make sense to get drunk and drive at the same time. More importantly, after those two incidents, we have held several meetings with the police authorities who came here on routine checks. We have also held meetings with our security team, the bouncers and everybody that is involved in the management of the bar and restaurants. I believe we are on top of the situation and such sad occurrence will not happen again as we continue to offer the best bar and hospitality services to our customers," he assured.



• The bar where Ndidi and others had been drinking before the accident