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Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction in Selected Hotels in Rwanda

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to assess the effect of service quality on customer satisfaction in selected hotels in Rwanda, a case study of Park Inn and Retreat Hotel. The study is guided by the following specific objectives: To determine the effect of responsiveness on customer satisfaction in Park Inn and Retreat Hotel, to identify the effect of tangibility on customer satisfaction in Park Inn and Retreat Hotel, to assess the effect of reliability on customer satisfaction in Park Inn and Retreat Hotel and to examine effect of empathy on customer satisfaction in Park Inn and Retreat Hotel.

Methodology: This study adopted descriptive research design to get results related to the study, the target population was 346 while sample size was 186. Researcher applied stratified random and convenience sampling.

Findings: The findings showed that responsiveness influence customer satisfaction at strong positive correlation $r = .845$; tangibility influence customer satisfaction at Park Inn and Retreat Hotel at Pearson Coefficient correlation $r = .823$; the results showed that reliability influences customer satisfaction at Coefficient correlation $r = .812$, the empathy influence customer satisfaction in Park Inn and Retreat Hotel Pearson Correlation Coefficient $r = .811$; The study concluded that responsiveness, tangibility, reliability, and empathy enhance customer satisfaction in the hotel industry.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: Finally, the research recommended that hotels need to invest in comprehensive training programs for staff to enhance their service skills, product knowledge, and interpersonal communication leading to the maximization of quality service.

Keywords: *Service Quality, Customer, Customer Satisfaction, Hotels, Rwanda*

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INTRODUCTION

Globally, many companies and service providers are struggling to satisfy their customers due to a lack of knowledge and skills, poor employees' performance as well as different customer expectation with different background. The effect of service quality on customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry is profound and well-documented. According to Kotler in Laksana (2018) service is any action or activity that can be offered by one party to another, which is essentially intangible and does not result in any ownership. While Gronroos in Tjiptono (2017) states that the service is a process that consists of a series of activities intangible commonly (but not always) occurs in the interaction between customers and employees, services and resources, physical or goods, and system service providers, provided as the solution to the customer's problem.

Service quality refers to the level of excellence or adequacy of service provided by an organization compared to customer expectations. In the hospitality industry, where services are intangible and highly personalized, service quality plays a crucial role in shaping customer perceptions and satisfaction levels. Grönroos (2019) pointed out that in some developed countries such as U.S.A, China and British, customer satisfaction reflects the extent to which a customer's expectations are met or exceeded by a company's products or services. High service quality often leads to increased customer satisfaction, as customers perceive greater value in their interactions with the company beyond just the product itself.

Kandampully and Suhartanto (2021) investigated service quality and customer satisfaction in the context of fast-food restaurants in Cameroun. The study revealed that service quality dimensions such as responsiveness of staff, order accuracy, cleanliness, and overall atmosphere significantly influenced customer satisfaction and repeat patronage in fast-food outlets.

In Kenya, service quality in manufacturing companies can be assessed through dimensions such as responsiveness, reliability, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. Responsiveness relates to promptness in addressing customer inquiries or issues.

In the context of Rwanda's hospitality industry, these dimensions play a crucial role in shaping customer perceptions and satisfaction levels. service quality is a key differentiator. Businesses consistently deliver exceptional service command higher prices, attract more customers, and outperform competitors. Razak, Nirwanto & Triatmanto (2016), customer satisfaction is estimated by utilizing the customer expectations with the presentation of the goods or services that can address the needs and expectations of the Customers. A satisfied customer indicates that there is a similarity between the performance of the product and service with the expectation of the customer, where it will attract them to repurchase the items. Simultaneously, a disappointed customer would persuade different customers to not re-buy and subsequently they will move to another service providers.

Park Inn and Retreat Hotel are well-regarded establishments in the hospitality industry, recognized for their commitment to providing high-quality service and unique guest experiences. Park Inn, a part of the Radisson Hotel Group, focuses on delivering a vibrant and friendly atmosphere that appeals to both business and leisure travellers.

Problem Statement

The hospitality industry, particularly in emerging economies, faces significant challenges in ensuring consistent service quality that meets or exceeds customer expectations. While various service quality dimensions such as tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and

empathy are well-established as critical factors influencing customer satisfaction and loyalty impact direct the performance of hotel. According to a study by Deloitte (2019), 62% of hotel managers globally cite staffing shortages as the primary reason for declining service quality, directly impacting performance indicators like customer satisfaction and RevPAR.

In Rwanda, the study done by Boneventure (2023) showed that 3 out of 7 customers decided to leave the service provider due to unresponsive customer service, long wait times, and ineffective problem resolution. Banking services often involve complex terms, fees, and policies. Poorly communicated policies, hidden fees, and complicated processes can frustrate customers and contribute to dissatisfaction (Lemon and Verhoef, 2021). Based on the background of the study, numerous researches were conducted, however, none of the research was conducted to show the effect of service quality on customer satisfaction in selected hotels in Rwanda. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by conducting research about the effect of service quality on customer satisfaction in Park Inn and Retreat Hotel in Rwanda using responsiveness, tangibility, reliability and empathy as specific objectives.

Objective of the Study

- i. To determine the influence of responsiveness on customer satisfaction in Park Inn and Retreat Hotel
- ii. To identify the influence of tangibility on customer satisfaction in Park Inn and Retreat Hotel
- iii. To assess the influence of reliability on customer satisfaction in Park Inn and Retreat Hotel
- iv. To examine influence of empathy on customer satisfaction in Park Inn and Retreat Hotel

Research Hypothesis

Based on the specific objectives of the study, the researcher formulated the following hypothesis,

H₀₁: There is no significant influence of responsiveness on customer satisfaction in Park Inn and Retreat Hotel

H₀₂: Tangibility does not influence customer satisfaction in Park Inn and Retreat Hotel

H₀₃: Reliability does not influence customer satisfaction in Park Inn and Retreat Hotel

H₀₄: There is no significant influence of empathy on customer satisfaction in Park Inn and Retreat Hotel

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature review provides a detailed information about the researchable topic to make it more understandable. The literature review is formulated based on the existing literature provided by previous researchers and authors.

Influence of Responsiveness on Service Quality in the Hospitality Industry

Responsiveness plays a crucial role in shaping guest perceptions of service quality and overall satisfaction in the hospitality industry. By prioritizing timely responses, effective communication, problem resolution, personalized experiences, feedback management, and staff training, hospitality businesses can create positive guest experiences, build loyalty, and maintain a competitive advantage in the market (Brady and Hult, 2019).

Guests expect quick responses to their requests, whether it's room service, maintenance issues, or inquiries about amenities. Promptness in addressing these needs contributes to positive guest experiences and satisfaction. Smooth and expedited check-in/check-out processes without unnecessary delays or errors enhance guest satisfaction and reflect responsiveness on the part of the hotel staff (Kandampully, Hu, 2017). Providing clear and accurate information regarding hotel services, policies, local attractions, and events helps guests make informed decisions and reduces confusion or misunderstandings. Anticipating guests' needs and communicating relevant information or offerings in advance (e.g., restaurant recommendations, shuttle services, spa appointments) demonstrates proactive responsiveness and enhances guest satisfaction.

Influence of Tangibility on Service Quality in the Hospitality Industry

The tangibility of services in the hospitality industry refers to the physical elements that guests can see, touch, or experience during their interactions with a hotel or resort. This includes tangible aspects such as hotel facilities, room amenities, cleanliness, aesthetics, and overall ambiance. The influence of tangibility on customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry is significant and can greatly impact guests' overall experiences (Zhang, Cattani and Donna, 2021). The physical appearance of a hotel, including its exterior, lobby, room decor, furnishings, and landscaping, contributes to guests' first impressions and perceived quality of the establishment. Well-maintained facilities, clean rooms, public areas, and amenities create a positive impression and enhance guests' perceptions of the hotel's attention to detail and quality standards.

Empirical Review

This section details the specific objectives based on various researchers and scholars wrote about the effect of responsiveness. Tangibility, reliability, and empathy on the quality service as well as customers satisfaction. The empirical literature is structured as follows:

The Influence of Responsiveness on Customer Satisfaction in Hospitality Industry

Choi and Chu (2017) examined factors influencing guest satisfaction and repeat patronage in the Hong Kong Hotel Industry. Objective was to examine whether responsiveness contribute to the customer satisfaction in hotel industry. The research used quantitative and qualitative design to get the sufficient information. The sample size was 130 participants selected using stratified random sampling. The questionnaires and interview guide were used to collect necessary information requires to achieve on the study objective.

The findings showed that 45% strongly agreed and 49% agreed that timely and attentive responsiveness by hotel staff contributes significantly to guest satisfaction and increases the likelihood of repeat business. The study concluded that prompt handling of guest requests, quick resolution of complaints, and attentive service positively impacted overall satisfaction and the likelihood of guests returning to the hotel. Brady and Hult, (2019). Investigated the influence of banking Service Quality on Perceived Value, Satisfaction, and Loyalty in Tanzanian banks. The objectives were to assess how responsiveness influences customer satisfaction in the banking sector. To examine the influence of employee commitment on customer satisfaction. The study used descriptive and case study design; the sample size was 63 respondents obtained using purposive sampling techniques. The data was analysed using quantitative and qualitative methods.

They discussed the results of a questionnaire survey conducted within the Tanzania banking Industry and 97% of the participants revealed that responsiveness, along with other service quality dimensions, positively influenced guest satisfaction and perceived value, which in turn enhanced guest loyalty to the banks. The research concluded that effective responsiveness within both internal and external enhance quality service as well as satisfaction in banking sectors.

The Influence of Tangibility on Customer Satisfaction in Hospitality Industry

Herington (2019) carried out the study called the influence of tangibility on the customer satisfaction in Zimbabwean hotels. The objective was to examine how timely service delivery influence customer satisfaction in hotel. To determine the influence of effective communication on the customer satisfaction in hotels. The descriptive research design was adopted to test the relationship between variables. The data was collected using both Researcher through questionnaires and secondary data through documentary review.

The findings revealed that 56% strongly agreed and 43% agreed that timely service delivery promotes customer satisfaction. Furthermore, 39% strongly agreed and 57% agreed that problem resolution reduces customer complaint as well as enhancing customer satisfaction. The study concluded that tangibility influences customer perceptions of service quality as well as affecting their satisfaction levels. The study done by Zeleke (2020). Carried out the study about the relationship between tangibility and customer satisfaction in luxury hotels in Tanzania. The study used quantitative and qualitative method. The stratified random sampling technique was used to select respondents. The data collected through questionnaires and interview guide on sample size of 64 respondents. The SPSS version 2016 was used to analyse collected data. The results showed that there is a significant positive relationship between tangibility and customer satisfaction in luxury hotels. He added that tangible elements like room aesthetics, facilities, and ambiance play a crucial role in shaping guest satisfaction. The research showed that luxury hotels should invest in maintaining high-quality tangible attributes to meet guest expectations and enhance satisfaction levels.

Johnston and Clark (2020) analysed the impact of service failure on the customer perception in public institutions in Egypt. The study used non-probability sampling in selection of respondents. The data was collected using questionnaires for 46 respondents. Data was analysed using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation and correlation.

The Influence of Reliability on Customer Satisfaction in Hospitality Industry

Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (2018) examined the influence of reliability on the customer satisfaction in hospitality industry in developing countries. The study adopted purposive sampling method where 57 respondents participated in responding questionnaires. The findings revealed that SERVQUAL model identified reliability as a critical dimension of service quality at significance statistic of 79%. Consistency in service delivery, accuracy in promises made, and dependability are key factors influencing customer perceptions of service reliability. However, the study recommended that hospitality businesses should focus on setting realistic service promises and consistently meeting or exceeding customer expectations to enhance reliability perceptions and overall satisfaction.

The Influence of Empathy on Customer Satisfaction in Hospitality Industry

Research done by Cha (2020) about the impact of service empathy on customer satisfaction in the hotel industry. The purpose of research was to know how service empathy influence

customer satisfaction in hospitality industry with a case of three-star hotels in Senegal and Cameroun. Descriptive design was adopted during carrying out his research while sample size of 62 respondents were selected using purposive sampling. Data was collected through questionnaires instrument. The study concluded that hotel enhances its competitive through realization of empathy during service delivery. The study recommended that Hotels should prioritize empathy training for employees, encourage genuine interactions, and empower staff to understand and respond to guest needs empathetically to enhance satisfaction.

Araújo, Ribeiro, and Ganga (2018) Investigated service quality perceptions and customer satisfaction in the textile manufacturing industry. Researchers gathered necessary data and the study used descriptive design and correlational analysis. The study found that service quality factors such as order accuracy, on-time delivery, and responsiveness of customer service significantly influenced customer satisfaction levels among textile manufacturing customers.

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a grouping of connected components and factors that helps in recognizing and addressing a practical problem. It is an analytical tool for examining a problem's deductive solution. The conceptual framework for this study's direction is shown in Figure 1.

Independent Variables Service Quality

Dependent variables



Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Research, 2024

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive research approach and case study was used to meet the objectives of the study. The descriptive research design helped the researcher to identify, analyse and interpret the researchable topic. Frequencies, percentages, mean, standard deviation and multiple linear regression analysis was good techniques to examine the effect of service quality on customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry in Rwanda. This study, the target population composed

top management, middle and low employees due to all employees regardless their levels get customers feedback about customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction, number of employees are 120 from Park Inn, 56 from Retreat hotel and 170 customers, therefore total target population is 346 participants; the study used two hotels as the means of getting adequate and accurate information required to meet the research purpose. While sample size is 186 respondents. Data was collected using questionnaires for primary and documentary review for secondary. Data was statistically analysed using SPSS version 23.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Influence of Responsiveness on Customer Satisfaction in Park Inn and Retreat Hotel

This part provides responses related to the influence of responsiveness on customer satisfaction in Park Inn and Retreat Hotel, responses were analyzed using Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagreed to strongly Agreed, mean and standard deviations were also used.

Table 1: The Influence of Responsiveness on Customer Satisfaction in Park Inn and Retreat Hotel

Responses	SD	D	A	SA	Mean	St. Dev
Effective communication influences service quality leading to the customer satisfaction Park Inn and Retreat Hotel	3.8	6.7	49.5	40.0	3.25	.74
Quick problem resolution enhances service quality as well as customer satisfaction in Park Inn and Retreat Hotel	2.9	4.8	53.3	39.0	3.71	.59
Suitable feedback management promotes service quality leading to customer satisfaction in in Park Inn and Retreat Hotel	1.9	8.6	52.4	37.1	3.24	.69
Effective handling customer complaints stimulate service quality leading to customer satisfaction in Park Inn and Retreat Hotel	4.8	9.5	50.5	35.2	3.16	.78
Timely service delivery contributes to service quality reflecting customer satisfaction in Park Inn and Retreat Hotel	1.0	12.4	48.6	38.1	3.23	.70
Overall average					3.32	.70

Source: Researcher (2024)

In Table 1, the study was interested in knowing whether effective communication influences service quality leading to the customer satisfaction Park Inn and Retreat Hotel. The findings showed that 40.0% strongly agreed and 49.5% agreed the statement. However, 6.7% disagreed and 3.8% strongly disagreed the statement, the respondents agreed the statement at strong mean of 3.25 and standard deviation of 0.74, this result confirmed that respondents agreed the statement. Researcher asked the respondents whether quick problem resolution enhances service quality as well as customer satisfaction in Park Inn and Retreat Hotel, the results showed that majority of respondents agreed at 53.3% and 39.0% strongly agreed. Even though majority of respondents agreed, few of them disagreed at 4.8% and 2.9% strongly disagreed,

furthermore results showed that respondents agreed at mean of 3.71 and standard deviation of 0.59.

The researcher asked the respondents whether suitable feedback management promotes service quality leading to customer satisfaction in in Park Inn and Retreat Hotel. The findings revealed that 37.1% strongly agreed and 52.4% agreed. Contrary, 8.6% disagreed and 1.9% strongly disagreed the statement while respondents agreed at mean of 3.24 and standard deviation of .69 Concerning to the effective handling customer complaints stimulate service quality leading to customer satisfaction in Park Inn and Retreat Hotel, the following responses were obtained 35.2% strongly agreed and 50.5% agreed. However, some respondents refused the statement, 9.5% disagreed and 4.8% strongly disagreed the statement, meanwhile statement was confirmed at mean of 3.16 and standard deviation of .78.

The study established that timely service delivery contributes to service quality reflecting customer satisfaction in Park Inn and Retreat Hotel at agreement of 38.1% strongly agreed and 48.6% agreed. Contrary, 12.4% disagreed and 1.0% strongly disagreed the statement. On the other hand, respondents agreed at mean of 3.23 and low standard deviation of .70.

The results were in agreement of research done Choi and Chu (2017) examined factors influencing guest satisfaction and repeat patronage in the Hong Kong Hotel Industry. The study concluded that prompt handling of guest requests, quick resolution of complaints, and attentive service positively impacted overall satisfaction and the likelihood of guests returning to the hotel. Responsiveness significantly influences customer satisfaction in the hotel industry, as it reflects how quickly and efficiently hotel staff address guest needs, inquiries, and concerns

Correlational Analysis between the Influence of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction in Park Inn and Retreat hotel

Researcher applied correlational analysis to measure the relationship between independent variables and dependent variable. Independent variables were constituted by responsiveness, tangibility, reliability and empathy while dependent variable is the customer satisfaction.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Matrix

		Responsiveness	Tangibility	Reliability	Empathy	Customer satisfaction
Responsiveness	Pearson	1				
	Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)					
Tangibility	N	186				
	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.937**	1			
Reliability	N	186	186			
	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.811**	.814**	1		
Empathy	N	186	186	186		
	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.930**	.978**	.824**	1	
Customer Satisfaction	N	186	186	186	186	
	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.845**	.823**	.812**	.814**	1
	N	186	186	186	186	186

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Researcher (2024)

Responsiveness contributes to the customer satisfaction at Park Inn and Retreat hotel at high positive correlation of 0.845 (84.5%). Responsiveness enhances customer satisfaction by ensuring that guest needs are met quickly and efficiently, creating a sense of attentiveness and care. Further, the finding indicated that tangibility contributes to the customer satisfaction at high positive correlation of .823 (82.3%). Tangibility influences satisfaction through the quality and cleanliness of physical facilities, offering guests a comfortable and visually appealing environment.

Further, the findings indicate that there is strong correlation between reliability and customer satisfaction where the results showed that reliability contributes to the customer satisfaction at .812(81.2%). Finally, the findings showed that empathy influence customer satisfaction at strong positive correlation of .814 (81.4%).

All results showed that there is statistically significance due to p-value is 0.000 which is less than 0.01 as suggested by SPSS program. The study were in agreement of Baron and Harris (2021) who indicated that service quality influence customer satisfaction and loyalty within the food processing industry at $r=.83$; The findings confirmed that all variables under service quality dimensions influences highly customer satisfaction due to all responsiveness, tangibility, reliability and empathy influence customer satisfaction at significant level.

Regression Analysis

This section illustrates the relationship between independent variable (service quality) and dependent variable which is customer satisfaction.

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.942 ^a	.888	.885	.30515

Source: Researcher (2024)

a. Predictors: (Constant), responsiveness, tangibility, reliability and empathy.

Table 3 shows that regression analysis revealed ($R = .942$) which is a favorable connection while the R square of 0.888 indicated that the model's predictors, responsiveness, tangibility, reliability and empathy accounted 88.8% correlation with the dependent variable as customer satisfaction. The study was in line of Taylor (2018) affirmed that responsiveness and reliability contribute to the customer satisfaction in hotel industry in Ethiopia at regression analysis of 84.6%. Further, the research concluded that combination of all components of independent variable contributes positively to the customer satisfaction

Table 4: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	107.359	4	26.840	288.246	.000 ^b
	Residual	13.501	182	.093		
	Total	120.860	186			

Source: Researcher (2024)

a. Predictors: (Constant), responsiveness, tangibility, reliability and Empathy

b. Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction

Table 4 shows that the model indicates that 88.8% of the difference's customer satisfaction (107.359 out of 120.860), while other variables not captured by the model where it can explain 11.2% percent (13.501 out of 120.860). F value of the model is 288.246, where significantly different from zero. P-value of 0.000 is below predetermined level which indicates statistical significance of independent variables to the dependent variable. In recommendation, the model is good to indicate the customer satisfaction.

Table 5: Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	.193	.180		.019	.000
Responsiveness	.190	.108	.245	.828	.000
Tangibility	.588	.130	.231	4.511	.000
Reliability	.227	.097	.212	2.350	.000
Empathy	.287	.153	.211	1.875	.001

Source: Researcher (2024)

Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction

Table 5 shows the responses of the regression coefficients. The customer satisfaction was established through determination of Standardized coefficients (B). In reference to the T-statistics, the influence of responsiveness, tangibility, reliability and empathy have direct

influence to the customer satisfaction where the results indicated that responsiveness, tangibility, reliability and empathy contributes to the customer satisfaction , the results showed that responsiveness (=0.245), tangibility (= 0.242), reliability (=0.212), empathy (=0.211).

In addition to, a unit change in responsiveness would lead to the customer satisfaction at multiple of .245, the greatest predatory of the study, any factor change in tangibility from service quality contribute to the customer satisfaction at 0.242 times, and a section change in reliability leads to the customer satisfaction at the rate of .212 times , the unit modified in empathy from service quality influences customer satisfaction at 0.211 times. The findings were concurred by Cha (2020) about the impact of service quality on customer satisfaction in the hotel industry. The study concluded that empathy, tangibility, reliability and responsiveness contribute to the customer satisfaction at 83.9%. All p-values in the research were less than 0.05, it explains that variables are statistically confirming independent variables influence customer satisfaction as dependent variables significantly.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The study concluded that the physical elements of the hotel, such as cleanliness, the quality of facilities, and the appearance of staff, well-maintained environments and visually appealing spaces contribute significantly to a guest's overall impression of the hotel, enhancing their sense of comfort and satisfaction. Furthermore, responsiveness, tangibility, reliability, and empathy is crucial in enhancing customer satisfaction in the hotel industry. Hotels that excel in these areas create a well-rounded and satisfying guest experience, leading to greater customer retention, positive reviews, and a strong competitive advantage in the market.

Recommendations

The study advised hotels to implement standardized service protocols and regular staff training to ensure consistent and dependable service delivery for all guests.

The hotel managers and owners need to invest in ongoing staff training to foster professionalism and confidence, enabling employees to instill trust and security in guests during their stay

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