Service tangibility on repeat visits in two-five star rated hotels in Nairobi County

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluated the influence of service tangibility on repeat visits in two-five star rated Hotels in Nairobi County. The significance of service quality cannot be over emphasized it is generally accepted that the interplay of service quality, customer satisfaction, and repeat visitation represents an attractive, cost-effective approach to gain competitive advantage for most companies though the hotel industry is a very important sector in Kenya as it has many contributions to the economy. The tourism industry in Kenya is currently facing slow progress and the hotels are losing a lot of revenue due to poor services. The main objective of the study was to determine influence of service tangibility on repeat visits in two-five star rated hotels in Nairobi County. The specific objectives were to examine Quality and Cleanliness, influence of Good Menu and impact of Comfortable Beds on repeat visits in two-five star rated hotels in Nairobi. Mixed methods research design was applied based on cross sectional survey. The target population of comprised of customers in 2-5 star rated hotels in Nairobi County. A questionnaire was use to collect primary data and the researcher conducted a pre-test of the research instruments to establish their validity. The study showed that there is a positive effect of quality attributes on customer satisfaction and customers' repeat visits to hotels. The study concluded that majorly, the individual service quality attributes and the level of customer satisfaction influence repeat visits in star rated hotels in Nairobi County.

Introduction

Hospitality and tourism have emerged as some of the largest and most rapidly growing sectors in the world economy. These sectors are characterized with high competition forcing companies to be customer-centric especially in a bid to increase market share, revenues, and profitability. One of the generally recognized marketing principles is that retaining customers to enhance repeat visits is more profitable than winning prospective customers (Ashworth & Goodall, 2012). To ensure repeat visits, customer satisfaction and service quality have become two instrumental elements.

According to a World Bank (2017) report, although international tourists were most satisfied with beautiful architectural buildings and historical sites, shopping opportunities and cultural sight-seeing in Bangkok, 60% were reluctant to return due to poor quality of services. Further, the World Travel & Tourism Council (2017). study on tourism in Spanish hotel sector found that approximately 71% of tourists had previously visited Mallorca at least once. This trend is especially clear in the tourism source markets in western and northern Europe. Incidentally, 68% of the Asian millennial would make a repeat visit if the destinations would cater to their specific needs and preferences.

World Tourism Organization (2016). While tourism in Africa was rising steadily until 2015, myriad challenges including lack of high airline prices, convenient transport, security concerns, threats to wildlife and lack of cooperation between nations, may be

holding it back from even greater growth. The overall decline of arrivals on the continent was fuelled by a drop of eight per cent in North Africa, which accounts for about one third of all arrivals, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (WTO ,2016).

Although there are few success stories of repeat visits because of good customer care and quality service, majority of the countries record dismal repeat visits. The dismal performance in repeat visits may be undermining efforts by African countries and hospitality sectors from realizing their hospitality and tourism development objectives. For example, a UNTWO&ILO (2016) report shows that unemployment is because of non-performing tourism in South Africa due to declining repeat visits because of poor service and customer satisfaction especially with security. Therefore, there is need for strategies that aim to enhance both service quality and security in order to improve repeat visits and business performance.

Kenya has the best developed hotels in sub-Saharan Africa offering an average of 37711 beds per night (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2017). Internationally, the classification of hotels and restaurants creates uniformity in the industry providing common elements in every class of hotel and restaurant that clients should expect. Hotel business is regulated by two Acts of Parliament namely: Hotels and Restaurants Act (Cap 494) and the Tourist Licencing Act (Cap 381). This is done through hotels and restaurants authority aiming to impose a levy for training persons to be employed in the hotels and restaurants. Vacation hotels, Town hotels and Lodges are classified into five classes denoted by stars, five being the highest and one being the lowest. These stars rated hotels enable customers to understand the value of the service they are paying for. Those which are rated as five-star hotels are expected to offer highest standards of facilities and services compared to those rated as one-star hotel.

The Kenya Tourism Board (2017) annual hospitality and tourism performance analysis, reports of a very low Kenya's national repeat visits of 0.2%. This is unfortunate because repeat visits are considered one of the key factors in maintaining market shares and ensuring profitability in operations. If this trend continues, the country is likely to lose the much-needed foreign currency, which boosts Kenya's economy. Further, there has been an increase in the number of new international hotel and restaurant chains entering the Kenyan local market. As a result, there is increasing struggle by local hotels to retain their existing clients and to fend off competition. The stiff competition faced within the hotel industry has brought pressure on managers to provide continuous service improvement towards customer satisfaction than before (Musembi, 2014).

The main objective of this study was to determine the influence of service tangibility on repeat visits in two-five star rated Hotels in Nairobi County.To determine the influence of quality and cleanliness on repeat visits in 2- 5 star rated hotels in Nairobi County. To examine influence of good menu and ambiance on repeat visits in2- 5 star rated hotels in Nairobi County. To determine impact of comfortable beds on repeat visits in 2- 5 star rated hotels in Nairobi County.

Organization strives for effectiveness towards its stated goals; there is no consensus in either the meaning or measurement of organizational effectiveness. Further, although the antecedents of organizational effectiveness in hospitality industries are often explored in customer service models, in hotel organisational approach puts the customer's interest first, while not excluding those of all other stakeholders such as owners, managers, and employees, in order to develop a long-term profitable enterprise. The innovation behavior of Organization in hotels positively influences financial performance, customer retention, and reputation (Musembi, 2014)

Literature Review

Conceptual background

Service tangibility Attributes and Customer Satisfaction

Service tangibility is an approach to manage business in order to ensure full satisfaction of the customers which will help to increase competeness and effectiveness of the industry. Hosany, Prayag, Deesilatham, Causevic and Odeh, (2015) defined service quality as the ability of a firm to meet or exceed customer expectations or the difference between customer perceptions and expectations of service. Service Quality is very important especially for the growth and development of service sector business enterprise, resulting into customer satisfaction (Rauch, 2015) noted that the key strategy for the success and survival of any business institution is the deliverance of quality services to customers. Customers will prefer service quality holding price and costs as constant (Tefera, Africa, Govender and Africa, 2017). The quality of service offered will determine customer's satisfaction and attitudinal loyalty. Therefore, service quality is measured in terms of customer satisfaction. As such, given their significance, scholars and researchers have continued to seek understanding of aspects of both service quality and customer satisfaction and, their relationship. As a result, several models have been developed. The most notable among these include SERVQUAL and LODGSERV

Lodgserv is a very important model, which was created and designed to measure service quality on satisfaction of customers in hotels. Keith & Simmers (2013)found that hotel comment cards using   the model's attributes had a greater assessment of tangible services and employee empathy and assessment of reliability, responsiveness, and assurance. According to Odunga, Belsoy, Nthinga &Maingi (2013), the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction leads to repeat visits by loyal customers in Nairobi hotels. Previous studies indicate that customer loyalty and repeat visits are important issue for marketing managers, particularly those in services industries, including pay TV market (Morrison ,2013). However, little is known of the key service quality attributes that influence customer satisfaction and or repeat visits. In addition, the mediating influence of customer satisfaction on the influence of

service quality on repeat visits is not well understood. Therefore, there is need for further studies to explore the model's attributes with regard to the relationship between service attributes, customer satisfaction and repeat visits.

Nawijn and Fricke (2015) in their study argued that customers try to compare the service they receive with the kind of service they expected. Customers thus decide their level of satisfaction by looking at the kind of service delivery and the outcomes and finally make the relevant judgment on the level of service quality. They concluded that by improving the performance on service quality in an organization, customer satisfaction is also expected to increase hence the hotel would be able to retain loyal customers likely to do repeat visits.

Ngoc & Tran, (2015), notice that technical quality is what the customer receives during their stay. Basically, technical quality is usually related to material measures and technologies, the features of which are established by the usual evaluation methods of the quality of the goods,Muala (2016)did a research with the goal to investigate the effect of banking on Service Quality Dimensions on customers' satisfaction, and customers' loyalty in Islamic Bank customers in Jordan. The attributes included tangibility, reliability, empathy, responsiveness, and assurance. The researcher used a questionnaire survey to elicit data from the participants. The findings of the study showed that there is a positive effect of tangibility, reliability, empathy, responsiveness, assurance on customer satisfaction toward customers' loyalty in the banking sector.

Suki, Campus, Pagar, & Labuan (2013) conducted a study to examine the correlation of hotel service quality (i.e. assurance, reliability, responsiveness, tangibles and empathy) with customer satisfaction. Results via correlation analysis revealed that service quality is significantly correlated with empathy, reliability, responsiveness and tangibles. The study also concluded that hotel providers should strategically leverage on these factors in its pursuit of customers satisfaction and repeat visits.

Rao (2014) studied customer satisfaction among four-star hotels in Spain, Germany and England. The results revealed that many customers were satisfied with the ability of staff to speak a foreign language, friendliness of staff, and condition of premise, room comfort and the ease of obtaining information. Areas of dissatisfaction included respect shown by staff, ease of contacting a staff member, extra personal attention, multilingual magazines, international newspaper and TV programs in own language. On overall, customer satisfaction was high in all the hotels (Srivastava, 2015). explored an empirical study on the impact of service quality on customer loyalty in the hotel industry in Ghana. The study which sampled 50 customers randomly and 5 staff members purposively, investigated how service quality impacts customer loyalty in a 4-star, a 3-star hotel and a 2-star hotel in Kumasi, in Ghana. By use of the SERVQUAL model through survey questionnaire and interviews, the study revealed that customer satisfaction and repeat visits are not based solely on hotel rankings but on service quality that gives value for money which in turn produces customer loyalty and yields repeat visits.

LODGSERV Model

Since the development of the SERVQUAL model, a number of researchers have developed alternative service quality measurement models for specific service contexts. Following the shortcomings and criticism concerning convergent and discriminant validity of SERVQUAL instrument, alternative measurement scales such as HOLSERV, DINESERV and LODGSERV have been developed for service quality evaluation purposes in the hotel and tourism industry. LODGSERV is a 26-item model designed to measure consumers' expectations for service quality in the hotel experience Parasuraman, 1991. (Govender,2016). The original LODGSERV model was developed in the year 1990 by four pioneers "Knutson, Wullaert, Patton and Yokoyama. The index confirms the five generic attributes of service quality namely: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy (Keith & Simmers, 2013)

Conceptual Framework

Independent variables   **Dependent variable**

Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Research and Methodology

Mixed methods research design was applied based on cross sectional survey A mixed method approach capitalizes on the advantages of the quantitative and qualitative methods while offsetting the drawbacks of each. Cross sectional surveys have been ascertained to be robust in relationship studies given their ability to capture the population characteristics in their free and natural occurrence. The

target population of this study was customers in 2-5 star rated hotel,. Nairobi County has ten 5-star hotels, twelve 4-star hotels, ten 3-star hotels and eight 2-star hotels with a total bed capacity of 10030 beds. According to the report, 2-5-star hotels in Nairobi have an average bed occupancy 51% in the year 2019 hence, a projection of 5115 guests per day were considered as target population. To obtain a study sample, this study adapted Glenn (2009) formula to determine the sample size based on 51% bed capacity. From the sample frame table above, a 51% bed occupancy (5115) gave a sample size of 357. The researcher conducted a pre-test of the research instruments to establish their validity. Any ambiguities in the questions was identified and corrected to ensure that correct data was obtained. The response in the questionnaires was tabulated, coded and processed by use of computer program. Collected data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 21 for both descriptive and inferential statistics and generation of tabulations. Thematic analysis was adopted for the qualitative data. The aim was to find out the common patterns across data. After the response of the raw data in the questionnaires, analyzed frequency tables were generated and statistical inference was drawn. The quantitative data was accompanied with tabulations and percentages.

Data Analysis and Findings

Response Rate

The response rate of the respondents is shown in Table .1 this study had a sample size of 357 respondents out of which only 250 questionnaires were received back. The response rate was 70% and according to Creswell, (2014), any response of 50% and above is acceptable for analysis.

Table 1: Response Rate

	Frequency	Percent
Responded	250	70
Not Responded	107	30
Total	357	100

Source: Author (2020)

Socio Demographic and Economic Characteristics of Respondents

The age of the respondents is shown in Table 2 Different age groups hold different opinions on various issues. To accommodate such opinions, the study collected a wide range of opinions from different age brackets. The respondents were asked to indicate their age as shown in table (2). In a total of 250 respondents 40% were aged above 55 years, 28% in the age bracket 46-55 years, 12% aged between 36-45 years while 4% were from age bracket of 26-35,16% were between 18-25 years as shown in table below. This implies that majority of respondents were quite old since they were aged above 55 years. The study therefore reveals that majority of the respondents were mature people with enough experience and knowledge in the hotel industry. These findings in table 2 therefore indicate that there is a difference between age variable in the perception of repeat intention. More precisely, the study showed that respondents, who belong to an older category, take any quality of service aspect in a positive way and hence repeat visits. This study agrees with Cheung and Fok (2014) who found out in their study that the consumption of service during repeat visitation at certain destination is narrowed in elder respondents and that they are more conscious of their health.

Table 2: Age of respondents

Years	Frequency	Percent
18-25	40	16
26-35	10	4
36-45	30	12
46-55	70	28
Above 55	100	40
Total	250	100

Source: Author (2020)

Level of Education

The Level of Education of the respondents is shown in Table 3 the study sought to find out the level of education of the respondents in hotel industry. Analysis on education level attained in the table 3 showed that 12% of respondents were Diploma holders, 26% had Undergraduate degrees, 12% of the respondents had Post Graduate degrees and that 50% of respondents were holders of other lower qualifications. The findings implied that majority of the respondents who made repeat visits in the hotels had other lower

qualifications. This study corroborates well with Lee, Lee and Lee (2014) whose findings revealed that higher level of education was associated with lower levels of the customer loyalty. The study found out that highly educated consumers have greater awareness regarding alternative businesses and tended to be associated with lower levels of loyalty. It can therefore be assumed that respondents with lower level of education are less concerned about quality than respondents with a higher level of education

Table 2: Level of Education

Level of Education	Frequency	Percent
Diploma	30	12
Bachelor's Degree	65	26
Post graduate	30	12
Any other	125	50
Total	250	100

Source: Author (2020)

Country of Citizenship

The country of citizenship of the respondents is shown in Table 4 the study sought to know the citizenship of the visitors as to know which country the visitors originate. The respondents gave the results as shown in the table above. The results show that majority of visitors 31.6% came from Europe, 24% from USA, 14.4% from the Rest of Africa, 12.4% from Asia, 12% from Kenya, while the remaining 5.2% came from Middle East. This reveals that majority of hotel visitors in 2-5 rated hotels in Nairobi come from Europe. These findings imply that hotel industry in Kenya attracts visitors from all over the world.

Table 3: Country of Citizenship

Country of Citizenship	Frequency	Percent
Kenya	30	12
Rest of Africa	36	14.4
Europe	79	31.6
USA	60	24
Middle East	14	5.2
Asia	31	12.4
Total	250	100

Source: Author (2020)

Type of occupation

The type of occupation of the respondents is shown in Table 5 the study in table 4.5 indicates that 42.8% of visitors were retired, 34.4% were self-employed while 22.8% were employed. This showed that majority of visitors who visit Kenya are retired. This implies therefore that the various occupations of visitors who come to Kenya and who are accommodated in our hotels are not those who are in active employment but are retired and would like to tour the world.

Table 4: Type of occupation

Type of occupation	Frequency	Percent
Employed	57	22.8
Self Employed	86	34.4
Retired	107	42.8
Total	250	100

Source: Author (2020)

Tangibility

The service attribute findings on tangibility is shown in Table 6 From the research findings in table 6 shows that 58.8% of respondents strongly agreed with statements that the hotel provides detailed information on products and services , 62.4% indicated

that hotel has good environmental conditions, 55.6% that employees in the hotel are neat and presentable and 56.4% indicated that hotel has clean and comfortable rooms .At the same time, 42.4% of respondents agreed with the statement that physical facilities and décor are visually appealing and 46.4% agreed that the hotel has hygienic bathrooms and toilets.

The mean values for this attribute are ranging from 4.56 which is the highest to 3.98 which is the lowest and thereby indicates difference in the significance level towards indicating effects of the attributes on the extent to which repeat visits can be enhanced. A statement on hotels having good environmental conditions was indicated by a mean value of 4.56. This is an indication that the environmental condition of a hotel determines the frequency of repeat visits made by the visitors within the 2-5 star rated hotels within Nairobi County. A statement on the hotel providing detailed information on products and services was denoted by a mean value of 4.47. Thus, high mean value is a justification of how important it is for the visitors to have detailed information on the products and service offered by the hotel. On the other hand, a statement on hotels having clean and comfortable rooms was represented by a mean value of 4.46. It is worth noting that the recorded mean value gives a highlight on the importance of having clean rooms that have been made comfortable for the visitors. This therefore creates a great influence towards increasing the number of visits, length of visits and the average amount of time spent by the visitors in the hotels. A statement on hotels having hygienic bathrooms and toilets was indicated by a mean value of 4.11. This is an implication that the level of hygiene within the washrooms of the hotels is a factor that is greatly considered by the visitors. Therefore, for increased number of repeated visits, it is important to have well cleaned bathrooms and toilets within the 2-5 star rated hotels.

These findings give an implication that tangibility as a variable of service quality in hotels has great influence on repeat visits. This study affirms that due to hotels providing detailed information on products and services, having good environmental conditions and employees in the hotel being neat and presentable customers are able to make repeat visits. The results of this findings agree with Muala, (2016) who researched on the effect of service quality dimensions on customers' loyalty through customer satisfaction in Jordanian Islamic Bank. The study found out that there is a positive effect of tangibility, reliability, empathy, responsiveness, assurance on customer satisfaction toward customers' loyalty in the banking sector

Table 5: Tangibility

Statement	SD	D	N S	A	SA	M	SD
	%	%	%	%	%		
a) The hotel provides detailed information on products and services	2	1.6	2.4	35.2	58.8	4.47	0.797
b) Hotel has good environmental conditions	0.8	0.8	2.4	33.6	62.4	4.56	0.663
c) Employees in the hotel are neat and presentable	0.8	0.8	1.6	41.2	55.6	4.5	0.654
d) Physical facilities and décor are visually appealing	1.2	17.2	1.6	42.4	37.6	3.98	1.092
e) Hotel has modern equipment	2	8	10.8	35.2	44	4.11	1.02
f) Hotel has hygienic bathrooms and toilets	3.2	2.4	3.2	46.4	44.8	4.27	0.891
g) Hotel has clean and comfortable rooms	0.8	3.2	2	37.6	56.4	4.46	0.761

Source: Author (2020)

Regression Analysis

The results of multiple regression analysis were presented and interpreted in the table below. The study findings in table 7 below gives the summary of the model in which R square (.754) indicate that 75.4% of the variation in the repeat visits in hotels are due to Comfortable Beds, Quality and Cleanliness, Good Menu and Ambiance, while 24.6% accounts for other variables not in the study.

Table 6: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.868ᵃ	.754	.751	.258

a. Predictors: (Constant), Comfortable Beds, Quality and Cleanliness, Good Menu and Ambiance

Source: Author (2020)

Regression Coefficients

Table 8 below shows regression coefficients of variables investigated by the study. Y (Repeat Visits) = 0.877 +0.047 (Quality and Cleanliness) +0.588 (Good Menu and Ambiance) + 0.130 (Comfortable Beds). Regression equation was further used to evaluate the contribution of each and every independent variable on the study and their relation to the dependent variable. From the table showing values of the coefficients, value of the Y-intercept is represented by constant coefficients. The findings in table 8 show the regression

coefficients that reveal the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable as shown by the regression formula:

From the regression equation, it shows that Quality and Cleanliness had a positive correlation with the repeat visits made within the hotels produced by a B_1 coefficient of (0.047) at a significant level of 0.002>0.05. Good Menu and Ambiance had highest positive correlation with the repeat visits made within the hotels produced by a B_2 coefficient of (0.588) at a significant level of 0.000>0.05. This is an indication of the significance of reliability as a service delivery attribute towards its adverse effects on the repeat visits made. Holding at 95% confidence level to a constant zero, Repeat Visits at 0.877 and a unit increase in Reliability would lead to an increase in repeat visits in hotels by a factor of 0.026. Comfortable Beds had a positive correlation with the repeat visits made within the hotels produced by a B_3 coefficient of (0.130) at a significant level of 0.001>0.05.

Table 7: Regression Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.689	.136		12.379	.000
	QualityandCleanliness	.047	.055	.072	0.861	.002
	Good Menu and Ambiance	.588	.100	.779	5.861	.000
	Comfortable Beds	.130	.122	.159	1.067	.001

a. Dependent Variable: Repeat Visits
Source: Author (2020)

Conclusions

Based on the study findings, this section covers the conclusions of the study as explained below. According to the findings, the study revealed that Comfortable Beds, Quality and Cleanliness, Good Menu and Ambiance were responsible for customer repeat visits. The tangibility attributes all indicated that they have influence on customer's repeat visits. It is worth concluding from the study that majorly, the individual service quality attributes influence repeat visits in 2-5 star rated hotels in Nairobi County. Therefore, this study concludes that customer repeat visits, number of visits, length of repeated visits, average amount of time spent within the hotels and number of referrals made by the customers are dependent upon the nature of service provision attributes (Comfortable Beds, Quality and Cleanliness, Good Menu and Ambiance) that have a great influence towards customer satisfaction.

The study objective of this study was to determine the influence of service tangibility on repeat visits in two-five star rated Hotels in Nairobi County. The study finding indicates that Good Menu and Ambiance has the most significant influence on repeat visits in two-five star rated Hotels in Nairobi as indicate ($\beta2=0.588$, $p=0.000<0.05$).The study finding answered the study question, "what is the effect Good Menu and Ambiance on the repeat visits in 2-5 star rated hotels in Nairobi County. The study established that it is crucial to create an atmosphere in 2-5 star rated hotels that is conducive to the type of food that you serve, as well as the types of customers that you attract. Every detail in operation should contribute to the ambiance.

The study conclude that 2-5 star rated hotel services such as front office reception, bar service, room service, laundry service and housekeeping, reservation, beverage served in restaurants, security service and sauna services have a greater influence towards repeat visit significantly. Therefore, the level of customer satisfaction with hotel depended on various services offered in those hotels and hence determined repeat visits.

The study recommended that keeping the brand a streamlined theme throughout all guest-facing elements, including the menu design, will play a vital role in the success of the restaurant and greatly increase the chances of repeat customers. That A restaurant's menu is one of the most important internal advertising tools that can be used to educate a guest about the experience they are about to have. it is vital to create the proper ambiance of hotel establishment. Customers who feel comfortable dining with will want to keep coming back for more.

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