

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA-KUMASI

**AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE OF HOTEL FRONT DESK ON CUSTOMER
SATISFACTION: A CASE STUDY OF TWO SELECTED HOTELS IN TAMALE
METROPOLIS**



AUGUST, 2020



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SATISFACTION: A CASE STUDY OF TWO SELECTED HOTELS IN TAMALE
METROPOLIS**

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**A Thesis in the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Education, Faculty of
Technology Education, Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Award of the Degree of Master of
Philosophy (Catering and Hospitality) in the University of Education, Winneba-
Kumasi**

AUGUST, 2020

DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Shafawu Alhassan, declare that this thesis, with exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I / We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba-Kumasi.

.....(Principal Supervisor)

Signature.....

Date:

.....(Co-Supervisor)

Signature.....

Date:

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my children: Ibrahim Abdul Wahid, Ibrahim Dhakir and Ibrahim Adl



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CS	Customer Satisfaction
HFO	Hotel Front Office
SERVQUAL	Service Quality Model
FDOs	Front Desks Operations
SQ	Service Quality
WoM	Word of Mouth
FOS	Front Office Staff
GCCs	Guest Comments Cards



ABSTRACT

The study assesses the role of hotel front desk on customer satisfaction in two selected hotels in the Tamale Metropolis. Valid data were collected from 200 respondents, consisting of ten (10) Managers, 20 front office employees and 170 customers. Using embedded or concurrent nested Mixed-Method Research (MMR) approach, data were analyzed using a number of statistical techniques including mean, standard deviations and kurtosis. The study is anchored within the context of the SERVQUAL Model. The results of the study indicate that the responsiveness dimension of the Hotel Front Desk operations exerts the greatest influence on customers' satisfaction, followed by empathy, assurance, reliability and then tangibles. The practical implication of the study begins with the hotel managers and policymakers acknowledging that the implementation of the SERVQUAL model in hotels should be done with a guided thought; in a sense that the implementation and monitoring of each of the dimension should be implemented depending on the needs of the hotels. When this advice is heeded hotels will not end up wasting resources in implementing less-needed dimensions in their hotels. The study showed that respondents perceived safety and security as the service quality dimension. Performing services right from the first time ($M= 3.98$; $SD= 0.569$). The study also showed that front desk staff are always willing to help guests ($M= 4.98$) that was staff and managers identify as what satisfy the customers at Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis. The study recommends, among others, that hotel managers should pay attention to each sector of the hotel by monitoring the operational needs of each of these sectors. Hotel managers should also subject themselves to the observance of quality control protocols as this will automatically keep them on track in terms of their operational pursuits.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the Study

The hospitality industry is striving to evolve itself and enhance guests' experience. The Hotel Front Desk (HFD) is a vital part of the Hotel Front Office (HFO) because it creates the customers' first impression. In this era of competition, hotels have adopted new practices to improve their level of performance and at the same time delight their customer (Gumaste, Bhagwat & Thakkar, 2015). Each customer is treated with utmost consideration to make him or her feel special. As there is a lot of competition in the market every hotel distinguishes itself by adopting innovative practices to help attract more customers. Many researchers are of the view that the front desk employee needs to have at the back of his or her mind the satisfaction of the customer; to ensure the effective and efficient running of hotels (Gumaste, Bhagwat & Thakkar, 2015).

Customer satisfaction is a business philosophy which creates value for customers, anticipating and managing their expectations, and demonstrating ability and responsibility to satisfy their needs. Quality of service and customer satisfaction are critical factors for the success of any business (Gronoos, 1990; Parasuraman et al., 1988). As Valdani (2009) point out, enterprises exist because they have a customer to serve. The key to achieving sustainable advantage lies in delivering high-quality service that results in satisfied customers (Shemwell et al, 1998). Service Quality (SQ) and CS are key factors in the battle to obtain competitive advantage and customer retention. CS is the outcome of customer's perception of the value received in a transaction or relationship, where value equals perceived SQ, compared to the value expected from transactions or

relationships with competing vendors (Blanchard & Galloway, 1994; Heskett et al., 1990; Zeithaml et al., 1990). To achieve CS, it is important to recognize and to anticipate customers' needs and to be able to satisfy them. Enterprises which can rapidly understand and satisfy customers' needs make greater profits than those which fail to understand and satisfy them (Barsky & Nash, 2003). Since the cost of attracting new customers is higher than the cost of retaining the existing ones, to be successful managers must concentrate on retaining existing customers by adopting policies that are loyalty focus.

Nowadays one of the biggest challenges for managers in the hotel industry is how to provide services that are satisfying to customers. Customer requirements for quality products and services in the tourism industry have become increasingly evident to professionals (Lam & Zhang, 1999; Yen & Su, 2004). Customer relationships are a strategic asset of the organization (Gruen et al., 2000) and CS is the starting point to define business objectives. In this context, positive relationships can create customers' higher commitment and increase their return rate. Long-term and reciprocally-advantageous relationships between customers and the hotel are becoming increasingly important because of the highly-positive correlation between customers' overall satisfaction levels and the probability of their return to the same hotel (Choi & Chu, 2001). Hotels are increasing their investments to improve SQ and the perceived value for customers to achieve better CS and loyalty, thus resulting in better relationships with each customer (Jones et al., 2007). Relationship quality has a remarkable positive effect on hotel customers' behaviour: it creates positive Word of Mouth (WoM) and increases repeated customer rates (Kim et al., 2001).

Shamsudin (2012), states that Customer satisfaction is a differentiator and a critical success factor for a hotel. The hotel performance is impacted because of the attitude and the motivational levels of the employees. Asad (2010), assesses customer perception on SQ of the hotels, the findings of which facilitated the identification of areas that need improvement for better performance and improved customers' experience. The results indicate that there is a significant difference between the expectations of the customers and the actual experiences. Melia, (2010), suggests that the satisfaction of the customer is an important success factor for a hotel's survival. Customer satisfaction plays an important role and it helps a hotel to improve their standards as well as imparts knowledge about the competitors. Alin (2010), the study suggests that if the Front Office Staff (FOS) is efficient and cooperative it will lead to CS in the hotel. Kong Hai -Yan, (2006), focuses on the FOS in the four and five-star hotels in China. The findings suggest that work in this department of a hotel is challenging, demanding and communication is an important skill required of the staff of a hotel front office. The study also reveal that high-quality human resources are lacking in the hospitality sector and emphasizes on professional development and training to improve the skills of staff in the front office. Minghetti Valeria, (2003), the article proposed that to increase hotels occupancy levels, consecutively the revenue levels and the customer experience, the hoteliers must understand the needs and preferences of the customer. It states that it will create value for the customers and help in the retention of the guests. The study has developed a methodological framework to analyze the customer-hotel relationship.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Primarily, the function of front office is to directly get in touch with customers; and the relationship between the front office staff and the customers of a hotel is like the relationship between teachers and their students. They are always in touch. The front office can discover more information about the customer by asking them questions and giving answers to questions asked by them. However, as customers began to get complex in their taste and preferences, the functions of the HFO have been expanded to include gathering and distributing information from customers to other departments (and the vice versa) in a hotel. From the foregoing paragraphs, it is obvious that the key to the success of a hotel business is service which starts with the first contact between the customer and the hotel personnel of the front office (Ma, Minnie, Daisy Blesilda C., & Reside, 2009). If guest receive the brand of hospitality at the onset, this can mean repeated patronage in the future (Roldan, 2004 cited in Ma et al., 2009).

The role of the HFO is, therefore, very vital to the success of hotel business as reiterated earlier; but it is the less talked about in the hotel business literature. Moreover, in Ghana, most of the research in the hotel industry (Poku, Zakaria, & Soali, 2013; Amissah & Amenumey, 2015; Hagan, 2015; Ackah & Ackah, 2016; Oppong & Boasiako, 2017) seem to focus on other variables such as hotel accommodation quality, hotel service quality, and so on; but little research effort has been documented in the literature with respect to the influence of HFO on customers' satisfaction. Besides, the few studies (Ansah, Blankson, & Kontoh, 2012; Spio-Kwofie, Danso, & Edzii, 2016; Mensah-Kufuor & Doku, 2017) that have been conducted on the HFO turned to be skewed towards the southern sector but not in the northern sector of the country. In view

of the above, this study is conducted in the Tamale Metropolis of the Northern Region to assess the influence of the HFO on customers' satisfaction using Modern City, and Mariam Hotels as case study.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study was the assessment of CS of hotel front desk operation using Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis as a Case study. Under this broad objective, the specific objectives of the study are to:

1. determine the most influential factor among the Service Quality Model (SERVQUAL) dimensions on CS of the HFD at Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis
2. examine Guests' Perceptions of Service Quality (SQ) Dimensions of the Front Desk Staff at Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis
3. access the level of Customer Satisfaction (CS) with the Hotel Front Desk (HFD) at Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis.
4. outline strategies to improve CS with the HFD at Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide the study:

1. Which of the SERVQUAL dimensions is the most influential factor on CS of the HFD at Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis?

2. what are Guests' Perceptions of SQ Dimensions of Front Desk Staff at Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis?
3. What is the level of CS with the HFD at Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis?
4. what are strategies to improve front desk operations to ensure SQ at Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis?

1.5 Significance of the Study

A thorough understanding and knowledge of the factors that influence CS through providing clear information concerning customers' expectation, perception and SQ dimension are useful in guiding hotel stakeholders and owners to design and deliver the right hospitality services and strategies in the current competitive market. This study is important to policymakers in the hospitality industry both in the private and public sector as they gain significant insights from the findings of this study. The information on SQ, customer perceptions and expectations toward their influence on CS enables them to formulate policies that relate to the hotel industry in Tamale and Ghana in general.

The findings of the study will also assist in formulating an action plan for future improvements in the Front Office Operations. The study will help those aspiring to join the hotel industry to understand the kind of practices existing in the Hotel Front Office, the customer expectations and their preferences. The study will help the researcher in better understanding of the concept of guest satisfaction and guest retention. It will also lead to a lot of learning about the Front Office Practices in the hotel.

This study will facilitate service providers to know the importance of care to their customers. In the academic circles, this research will serve as a literature to facilitate the work of other researchers.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

There is the potential for bias responses from respondents because of the fear of divulging vital information about the operation of their institutions. To resolve these limitations and limit its effects on the validity of the study, random sampling is employed to ensure that respondents are Ghanaians from different backgrounds and ethnicities. The study also assures respondents of anonymity and confidentiality in their provision of responses so that they do not feel restrained or afraid to provide necessary data.

1.7 Delimitation of the Study

This research work focused on the assessment of CS of hotel front desk operations. A case of Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis. The study covers workers and customers of the two selected hotels in the Tamale Metropolis. However, the findings is expected to be generalized to cover the entire metropolis.

1.8 Operational Definitions

Customer Satisfaction: Customer Satisfaction **refers** to the level at which a product's perceived performance equals to the buyer's expectations (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017).

Front desk operation

The front office staffs play the roles as the facilitator between the guest and other departments of the hotel.

Service Quality

SQ refers to what the customer acquires and is ready to pay towards it in place of what the seller puts in to sell. Consequently, SQ can be considered as the breach between the anticipated service and the concrete perceived service (Al Ababneh, 2017).

Customer Perceived

Customer perceived value refers to the evaluation of the customer on the difference in all the benefits and all the costs of a market offer comparative to those of the competitor's offers (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017).

Customer Expectation

Customer expectations refer to the views about service delivery that serve as principles or opinions in contrast with which performance is judged (Zeithalm, Bitner, & Gremler, 2013).

1.9 Organization of the Study

The thesis is structured into five chapters. Chapter one provides an overview of the study including the general background about the research topic, problem statement, objectives, the scope of the study, limitation and delimitation of the study, and the structure of the thesis.

The second chapter contains review of relevant literature on CS and the SERVQUAL dimensions. The third chapter sets out the study methodology. It describes the research methods and the approaches by which data were collected. The selection of the case study design as an appropriate strategy for this study is defended in this chapter. Data analysis techniques and the validity and reliability of the data are explained in this chapter. The chapter also provides a brief background of the study area. Chapter four reports on how the data gathered from the field were analyzed. It also presents the findings and its discussion. Chapter five concludes the study and summarizes the research findings. The chapter put forward a number of suggestions for improving the operations of the HFO. The chapter also contains a recommendation for further research work in the context of CS on HFO and their operations.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Concepts of Customer Satisfaction

Satisfaction may be defined as “overall evaluation of performance based on all prior experiences with a firm” (Skogland & Siguaw, 2004). A customer who receives what she or he expected in a hotel stay is most likely to be satisfied (Bowen & Shoemaker, 2004). CS with the hotels involves many elements, such as the ambience of the hotel and hospitality of the service provided to the customer (Choi & Chu, 2001).

High quality service and enhancing CS are widely recognized as important factors leading to the success of companies in the hotel, catering and tourism industries (Barsky & Labagh, 1992; Legoherele, 1998; Choi & Chu, 2001). The existence of many companies on the market is conditioned with a number of satisfied customers. Customers are the key factor of the existence and company development on the market. It is obvious then, that firms, which want to face the competition, need to provide valuable and unique terms to their customers, that will satisfy their needs. This satisfaction includes not only the feelings associated with the purchasing process, but also the atmosphere before and after the execution of purchases. According to Jana & Chandra (2016), CS has become an important aspect of the hotel industry. Unlike other industries, the hotel industry prospers due to customers’ retention. It is only through CS that a hotel can retain its customers. Basically, customers’ loyalty is dependent on the quality of the services that they get in a hotel. Moreover, the hospitality industry has experienced the entrance of many investors who are willing to meet all the needs of their customers. Therefore, if customers are not

satisfied by the services they receive in one hotel, they will look for better services elsewhere (Jana & Chandra, 2016).

For a hotel to remain competitive in terms of customers' satisfaction, it must track the levels of customers' satisfaction. This is where technology comes in. Technology has been growing over the years and it has helped the management of hotels to track statistics regarding CS. For instance, online surveys are a popular way of monitoring customers' satisfaction.

One of the main strategies used by hotels to enhance CS is bench-marking. Benchmarking enables hotels to learn from other players in the industry and learn what makes their competitors competitive. In some cases, some hotels may not reveal their secrets to their competitors. However, the hotel industry does not involve sensitive information. For this reason, most hotels are willing to share the secrets behind their success. Nonetheless, the only thing that makes some hotels prosper as compared to others is *hotel innovativeness*. **Hotel innovation** enables prosperous hotels to create new strategies that enhance a competitive advantage over their rivals.

Benchmarking is easier for chain hotels in that all hotels under the chain are able to borrow the traditions of the chain and offer similar services irrespective of their geographical locations. *For example, Lake Kivu Serena Hotel* inherits the strategies used by other hotels under the Serena chain and implements them such that a customer may feel the same environment, services, and goods as that of any other hotel operating under the Serena chain.

A few studies uncovered that customer loyalty is the main reason as to why some brands of hotels prosper while others lag behind. One key factor in customer retention is to

guarantee quality services. In hotel industry customer loyalty is an element that shows the effectiveness of the management and all the stakeholders. A management approach focused on customer loyalty can improve the competitiveness of the hotel (Tsiotsou & Goldsmith, 2012).

To achieve greater heights of CS and loyalty, the management of a hotel must show the willingness to adapt to the needs of customers. Hotels put a lot effort in understanding customer needs and fulfilling them end up learning many factors that contribute to CS. CS should be given utmost consideration by the management, because it would be more expensive to draw in new customers than retaining the existing ones. In order to be fruitful, managers must focus on holding existing customers actualizing compelling arrangements of customer loyalty and steadfastness. This is particularly valid in the hotel business (Tsiotsou & Goldsmith, 2012).

In the hotel industry, customer loyalty is mostly enhanced by combined efforts of all the stakeholders. Therefore, a hotel can only prosper in terms of CS by involving all stakeholders in improving the quality of its services and products. Consequently, investigating the significance for customers of hotel traits in hotel choice is fundamental. In most cases, this is achieved by also involving customers in improving the quality of services by showing them that their suggestions are welcomed (Singh & Dewan, 2009).

Keeping in mind the end goal to be fruitful in the business sector it is not adequate to draw in new customers. For this reason, managers must focus on holding existing customers executing successful arrangements of customer loyalty and commitment. From eateries to hotels and everything in the middle of, your employment as a cordiality management supplier is to keep up customer bliss and satisfaction (Overby, 2007).

Consumer loyalty assumes a critical part inside of your business. It is not just the main yardstick for determining client dependability, it is additionally a key purpose of separation that helps you to draw in new clients in aggressive business situations. Consumer loyalty is vital to any business. If your clients are satisfied they will probably buy more from you (Morrison & O'Mahoney, 2002). Clients are the reason we are good to go and consumer loyalty is the thing that holds them returning. It requires a gigantic push to pick up another client and just seconds to lose one. Management must be model if the business needs to maintain and develop our client base and eventually their business.

The nature of management and customer loyalty are basic elements for accomplishment of any business. From being steady to ensuring they get the same wonderful management to doing what you say you will do, hotel management should not fail in regards to what they offer. Customer loyalty has been a center of analysts and advertisers as an imperative forerunner of customer unwaveringness. Some late studies suggest that customer charm conceivably creates more noteworthy customer steadfastness than satisfaction.

The motivation behind why faithful customers are so critical is on the grounds that it costs more to draw in new customers than to hold existing ones. In addition, past customers unequivocally impact others by listening in on others' comments and suggestions. In this setting, managers ought to make it a point to be on the road to success for staying aware of patterns that their customers take after. This can be accomplished by building individual help management for travelling customers or making extraordinary concessions for ardent rehash shoppers (Porter, 1985).

Customers' experiences are seen all the more seriously and the desires tend to run somewhat higher than with different items and managements. Long haul and proportionally favorable connections between customers and the hotel are turning out to be logically essential as a result of the exceedingly positive relationship between customers' general satisfaction levels. Keeping in mind the end goal to be effective in providing quality services, a hotel should concentrate on the quality of services and products and CS and loyalty will follow (Sim, Mak & Jones, 2006).

Managers must make certain that they have side attraction (e.g. wifi past word, extra glossery, etc) close by so that they become accessible to the hotel's customers. That is to say that everything ought to be accessible. In this way, positive connections can make customer's higher duty and expansion their arrival rate. Guest connections are a vital resource of the Lake Kivu Serena Hotel and consumer loyalty is the main strategy of creating a large network of customer connections. A customer who needs to constantly sit tight for you to do your part might become tired, regardless of how steadfast, and endeavor off to your opposition. Keep customers steadfast by concentrating on them at all times. These days, many hotel managers are challenged by CS since some customers come but fail to return due to their preferences. Therefore, consistent advancement of hotel innovation and customer quality is the way to effective business technique, because of the requesting customers (Sim, Mak & Jones, 2006).

There are yet new viewpoints and defects to be enhanced in CS, notwithstanding the many researches about it. For this reason, innovativeness of hoteliers is the key factor that brings about success in the industry. In view of this, management has a major role to play in creating the unique techniques that can enhance CS (Sim, Mak & Jones, 2006).

The accommodation business must charge customers distinctive rates relying upon interest to stay profitable, in this way successful yield management is inside of the business critical. All things considered, giving astounding managements and enhancing consumer loyalty are generally perceived as basic variables boosting the exhibitions of organizations in the hotel and tourism industry (Nurminen, 2007).

Basically, high quality enables a principal part for hotels to make progress. It is vital for management of hotels to have a legitimate thought of what customers' necessities are. Charging customers more and giving less is not a triumphant blend from a guest satisfaction point of view, substantially less a triumphant business system (Peters & Pikkemaat, 2005).

Now and again, customers are once in a while unwittingly attempting to get however much information as could reasonably be expected through encounters of different customers to know everything about hotels. In this way, hoteliers ought to track the levels of consumer loyalty and make changes. Hoteliers must have the capacity to get large amounts of consumer loyalty by involving customers in developing a blueprint of what customers need (Peters & Pikkemaat, 2005).

CS has been a popular topic in marketing practice and academic research since Cardozo's (1965) initial study of customer effort, expectations and satisfaction. Despite many attempts to measure and explain CS, there still does not appear to be a consensus regarding its definition (Giese and Cote, 2000). CS is typically defined as a post consumption evaluative judgement concerning a specific product or service (Gundersen, Heide and Olsson, 1996). It is the result of an evaluative process that contrasts purchase

expectations with perceptions of performance during and after the consumption experience (Oliver, 1980).

The most widely accepted conceptualization of the CS concept is the expectancy disconfirmation theory (Barsky, 1992; Oh and Parks, 1997; McQuitty, Finn and Wiley, 2000). The theory was developed by Oliver (1980), who proposed that satisfaction level is a result of the difference between expected and perceived performance. Satisfaction (positive disconfirmation) occurs when product or service is better than expected. On the other hand, a performance worse than expected results to dissatisfaction (negative disconfirmation).

Studies show that CS may have direct and indirect impact on business results. Anderson et al. (1994), Yeung et al. (2002), and Luo and Homburg (2007) concluded that CS positively affects business profitability. The majority of studies have investigated the relationship with customer behaviour patterns (Söderlund, 1998; Kandampully and Suhartanto, 2000; Dimitriades, 2006; Olorunniwo et al., 2006; Chi and Qu, 2008; Faullant et al., 2008). According to these findings, CS increases customer loyalty, influences repurchase intentions and leads to positive word-of-mouth. Given the vital role of CS, it is not surprising that a variety of research has been devoted to investigating the determinants of satisfaction (Churchill & Surprenant, 1982; Oliver, 1980; Barsky, 1995; Zeithaml and Bitner, 2003). Satisfaction can be determined by subjective (e. g. customer needs, emotions) and objective factors (e. g. product and service features). Applying to the hospitality industry, there have been numerous studies that examine attributes that travellers may find important regarding their satisfaction.

Atkinson (1988) found out that cleanliness, security, value for money and courtesy of staff determine CS. Knutson (1988) revealed that room cleanliness and comfort, convenience of location, prompt service, safety and security, and friendliness of employees are important. Barsky and Labagh (1992) stated that employee attitude, location and rooms are likely to influence travellers' satisfaction. A study conducted by Akan (1995) showed that the main determinants of hotel customer satisfaction are the behaviour of employees, cleanliness and timeliness. Choi and Chu (2001) concluded that staff quality, room qualities and value are the top three hotel factors that determine travellers' satisfaction.

Providing services that customers prefer is a starting point for providing CS. A relatively easy way to determine what services customer prefers is simply to ask them. According to Gilbert and Horsnell (1998), and Su (2004), Guest Comment Cards (GCCs) are most commonly used for determining hotel guest satisfaction. GCCs are usually distributed in hotel rooms, at the reception desk or in some other visible place. However, studies reveal that numerous hotel chains use guest satisfaction evaluating methods based on inadequate practices to make important and complex managerial decisions (Barsky, 1992; Barsky & Huxley, 1992; Jones & Ioannou, 1993, Gilbert & Horsnell, 1998; Su, 2004). The most commonly made faults can be divided into three main areas, namely, quality of the sample, design of the GCCs, and data collection and analysis (Gilbert & Horsnell, 1998). In order to improve the validity of hotel guest satisfaction measurement practice, Barsky and Huxley (1992) proposed a new sampling procedure that is a „quality sample. It reduces nonresponse bias by offering incentives for completing the questionnaires. The components of their questionnaire are based on disconfirmation

paradigm and expectancy-value theory. In this manner, guests can indicate whether service was above or below their expectations and whether they considered a particular service important or not. Furthermore, Gilbert and Horsnell (1998) developed a list of criteria for GCC content analysis, which is adopted in this study as well. Schall (2003) discusses the issues of question clarity, scaling, validity, survey timing, question order and sample size

Dube and Renaghan (2000) reported that the top two attributes driving business-meeting travelers' hotel-purchase decisions are physical property (exterior, public space) and guest-room design. Bitner (1992) refers to the physical design or setting as tangible and the quality of interpersonal services or hospitality as the intangible present within the servicescape. This study examined the people factor "hospitality" and the "ambience" of the hotel as antecedents of CS.

2.1.1 Customer Satisfaction Factor: Ambience

Ambience refers to "the special atmosphere or mood created by a particular environment" (<http://www.dictionary.com>). A hotel's image has also been found to have a significant correlation with the satisfaction of a hotel and its departments, as well as with customer preference and customer loyalty (Mazenec, 1995; Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000). Griffin (1998) examined seven small lodging operations in San Jose, Costa Rica and found that ambience was one of the factors contributing to the success of the lodging operations. Research also indicated that the ambience of the hotel affects a customer's selection decision (Lewis, 1984; Anonymous, 1987). Link (1989) suggested that hotel revisits could be enhanced by improving its ambience to meet the needs of the

target market segments. Better ambience will indicate a better perceived SQ of the hotel. Bitner (1992) stressed the importance of the physical surroundings to facilitate ambient conditions that are important to employee productivity and interpersonal services.

Skogland and Siguaw (2004) examined the people factor and satisfaction with hotel ambience and reported that satisfaction with a hotel's ambience did positively affect word-of-mouth loyalty. Their finding supports another study that underscored the importance of hotel design and amenities as drivers of customer satisfaction (Siguaw & Enz, 1999). Sulek and Hensley (2004) reported that in examining CS in restaurants, restaurant atmosphere was one of the factors that had significant effects. This study examined the "Ambience" (see Table 1 for Ambience items) of the hotel as one of the antecedents of CS.

2.1.2 Customer Satisfaction Factor: Hospitality

Hospitality is the people component of SQ. One essential difference between the "hospitality" business and other business sectors is that hospitality produces guest satisfaction-an ephemeral product or, in the service literature, an intangible product (Walker, 2006, p. 8). To further define hospitality in the hotel business, Walker included "the need to greet, assist and serve customers" (Walker, 2006, p. 5). Almost 70% of identifiable reasons why customers switched to competitors were associated with a dissatisfying service experience with a service provider during the service encounter (Whiteley, 1991). The intangible aspect of SQ has to do with the people involved in service delivery. SQ, although intangible, does contain tangible components in the customer evaluation of SQ. In the hotel business, the employees act as the boundary

spanners with the customers that represent the SQ being delivered (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003). The quality of service provided by the service producer during the face-to-face encounter with the customer could be the deciding factor on which the customer makes a re-purchase decision and is an influencing factor in the customer's decision to form and maintain a long-term relationship with an organization (Barksy & Labagh, 1992; Bitner et al., 1990; Bolton & Drew, 1992). Service relationship between the customer and the service provider has always been cited as being critical (Scanlon & McPhail, 2000).

Petrillose and Brewer (2000), using focus groups, found that customers perceived their experience as excellent when employees were courteous, friendly, helpful, and ready to respond. Major findings from Fu and Parks (2001) were that friendly service and individual attention were more important factors than tangible aspects of service in influencing elderly customers' behavioral intentions. Scanlon and McPhail (2000) reported that the underlying dimensions defining relationship formation are positive first impressions, adaptive behavior, memorable and satisfying service experience, extended interaction and conversation, and intentions to continue to patronize the organization.

If the desired behaviors are not experienced in the first and subsequent service encounters, customers may defect to the organization's competitors. The "people factor" may be the most salient factor in determining overall satisfaction and repeated purchasing in the service industries (Yuksel & Yuksel, 2000). Choi and Chu (2001) reported "staff SQ" to be one of the influential factors in determining travelers' overall satisfaction levels and their likelihood of returning to the same hotels. Skogland and Siguaw (2004) examined the people factor and satisfaction with hotel ambience, and reported that the factor that caused guests to be most involved in the purchase decision was its employees.

2.2 Service Quality

2.2.1 Defining Service Quality

First of all, what is Service Quality? Understanding how service and quality are related to each other will be the first key concept to understand.

2.2.2 Service

Any physical product can be turned into a service to a customer if the one person selling the service provided the service is made into a solution to meet the demand of a customer (Blois 1974, 157, cited in Grönroos 1990). Services are intangible activities which provide satisfaction when marketed to consumers which are not tied to the sale of a product or another service (Stanton 1974, 545, in Grönroos 1990). Grönroos (1990), posited a unified definition of service from the several definitions offered by literature; and it states that “a service is an activity or series of activities of more or less intangible nature that normally, but not necessarily, takes place in interactions between the customer and service employees and/or physical resources or goods and/or systems of the service provider, which are provided as solutions to customer problems. The relationship between both definitions is that quality is a result of an activity. Grönroos depicts it as the result as the customer perceives it to be whereas Juran depicts it to be the result of having met the expectations of a customer in the sense of satisfaction.

Fitzsimmons (1994, 189) as well indicates quality as being the result of an activity, but in turn states that actual the assessment of quality is done during the service delivery process which usually takes place within an encounter between a customer and an employee.

For these reasons, quality can then be understood as the result of being satisfied or not after having assessed the quality during a service delivery process or staff-customer contact depending on the delivery of the service in terms of having met the expectations of a customer or not.

2.2.3 Service Quality

The nature of service is defined as being an activity which involves a product or a good and is provided as a solution to meet a customer's demand and that quality is the result of being satisfied or not after having evaluated if a service as well as the service delivery met the expectations of a customer. Nevertheless, this is deemed to be perception of the person receiving the service and the quality then depends if the service met the needs, wants and expectations of that specific customers. Within this story, SQ is seen as the total assessment of how well a service provided meets the expectations of the customer. (Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman 1988; Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1988). SQ for businesses is no different than it is for the customer.

However, the use is different. SQ is used more as an instrument of measurement of performance relating to the expectations of customers. For customers, SQ is the difference between what is wanted, needed, expected and the actual service-experience. This in turn results in CS or dissatisfaction; and it is this satisfaction or dissatisfaction which determines SQ for business as perceived by the customer. The fact that customers are getting satisfied or not by the services provided determines how well business is performing as perceived by the customer and this information is used to improve services, identify problems and better assess CS.

In the light of the many statements on the subject, an own definition of SQ is proposed, namely; SQ is the result of relationship between customer expectations which are derived prior to service delivery versus customer experience which occurs service delivery which is highly dependable on the performance, attitude and behaviour of a contact employee guided by the involvement of management in terms of trainings, motivations, leadership and commitment. The reason why the proposed definition of SQ involves a managerial component is because the fact that one this study revolves around managerial involvement in managing SQ as well as the perspective of the open systems view of service operations, seen as figure 1, which shows operational management's functions and responsibilities in relation to the total service experience.

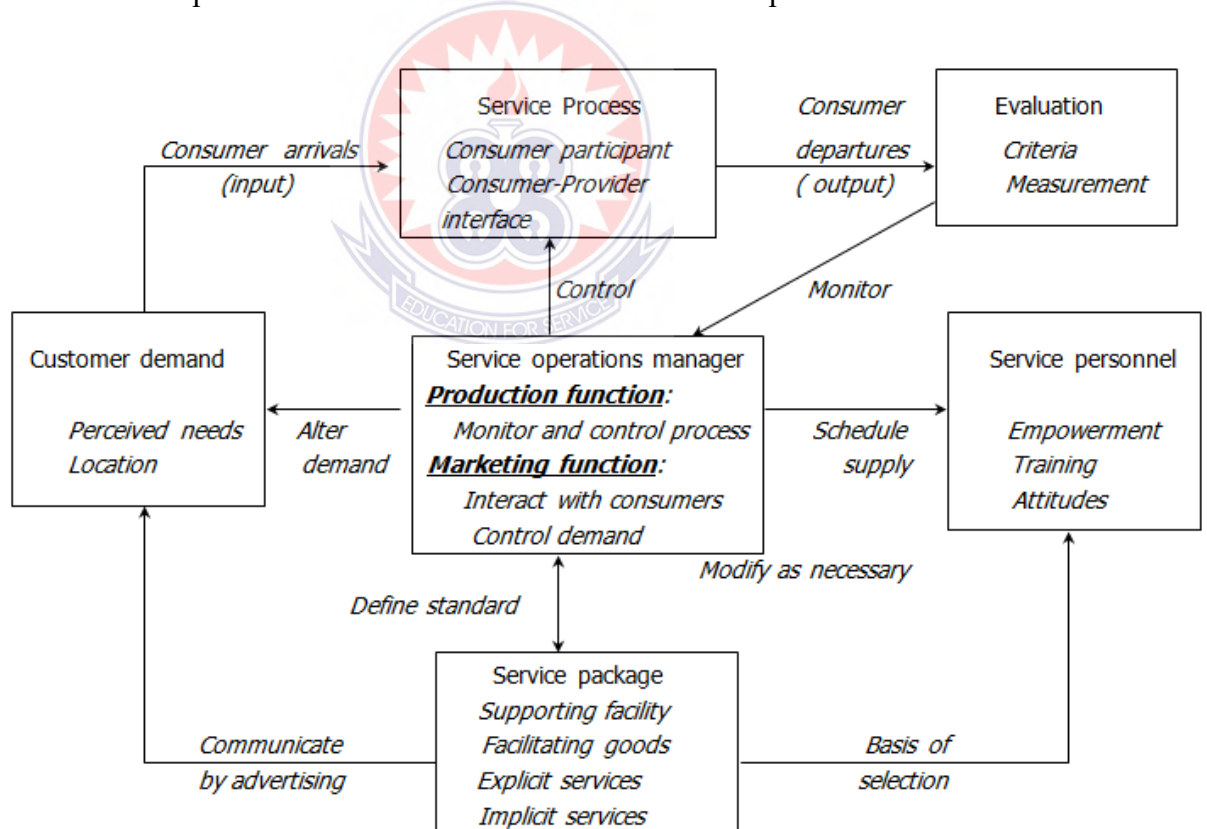


Figure 2.1. Open-systems view of service operations

(Source: Fitzsimmons & Fitzsimmons, 1994, 32)

As is seen in figure 1, management has a direct effect on the delivery of service through trainings, empowerment and attitude on service staff and it's these service staff which dictate the outcome of the service delivery hence showing the importance of operations management indirect role in SQ.

Service Quality is a complex, elusive, subjective and abstract concept. It means different things to different people. The most common definition of SQ is the comparison customers make between their expectations and perceptions of the received service (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Grönroos, 1982). Quality is a multi-dimensional concept. Lehtinen and Lehtinen (1982) defined three dimensions of SQ, namely, physical quality, interactive quality and corporate quality. Similarly, Grönroos (1984) argued that SQ comprises of technical quality, functional quality and corporate image. On the other hand, Parasuraman et al. (1985; 1988) developed the SERVQUAL scale, which became the most popular instrument for measuring SQ. They identified five key dimensions of SQ – reliability, tangibles, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. The SERVQUAL scale consists of 22 items for assessing customer perceptions and expectations regarding the quality of service. A level of agreement or disagreement with a given item is rated on a seven-point Likert scale. The results are used to identify positive and negative gaps. The gap is measured by the difference between perceptions and expectations scores and indicates the level of SQ. If the result is positive, perceived service exceeds expected service. A negative result means low quality of service. According to this instrument, SQ occurs when perceived service meets or exceeds customer's expectations.

The SERVQUAL instrument has been widely applied in a variety of service industries, including tourism and hospitality. Research related to this sector can be divided into measuring SQ in historic houses (Frochot and Hughes, 2000), hotels (Douglas and Connor, 2003; Antony et al., 2004; Juwaheer, 2004; Marković, 2004; Nadiri & Hussain, 2005; Olorunniwo et al., 2006; Wang et al., 2007), restaurants (Heung et al., 2000; Fu & Parks, 2001; Namkung and Jang, 2008), travel agencies (Atilgan et al., 2003; Martinez Caro & Martinez Garcia, 2008), diving (O'Neill et al., 2000), health spas (Snoj and Mumel, 2002; Marković et al., 2004; González et al., 2007), ecotourism (Khan, 2003), theme parks (O'Neill and Palmer, 2003), tourism and hospitality higher education (Marković, 2005; Marković, 2006). The instrument was used to measure hotel employee quality as well (Yoo and Park, 2007). It should be noted that SQ and CS are distinct concepts, although they are closely related. According to some authors, satisfaction represents an antecedent of SQ (Carman, 1990; Bolton & Drew, 1991).

In this sense, satisfactory experience may affect customer attitude and his or her assessment of perceived SQ. Thus, satisfaction with a specific transaction may result with positive global assessment of SQ. Other authors argue that SQ is antecedent of CS (Churchill & Suprenant, 1982; Anderson et al., 1994; Oliver, 1997; Oh, 1999; Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003; Jamali, 2007). This group of authors suggests that SQ is a cognitive evaluation, which may lead to satisfaction. Hence, CS is the result of SQ.

To sum up, the relationship between quality and satisfaction is complex. Some authors have described it as Siamese twins (Danaher & Mattsson, 1994; Jamali, 2007). Although there still remain a lot of unresolved questions, it can be concluded that SQ and CS can be perceived as separate concepts that have causal ordering.

2.3 Customer Satisfaction and Service Quality

SQ and CS are inarguably the two core concepts that are at the crux of the marketing theory and practice (Mackoy, 1996). In today's world of intense competition, the key to a sustainable competitive advantage lies in delivering high quality service that results in satisfied customers (Shemwell et al., 1998). The importance of these two concepts is further manifested by the cornucopia of theoretical and empirical studies on the topic that have emanated over the past few years. Therefore, there is not even an iota of doubt concerning the importance of SQ and CS as the ultimate goals of service providers.

A basic agreement emanating from the wide range of literature on SQ and CS is that the two are conceptually distinct but closely related constructs (Parasuraman et al., 1994; Dabholkar, 1995; Shemwell et al., 1998). A range of authors have offered explanations to differences between the two constructs from the viewpoint of customers. The most notable work in that aspect belongs to Oliver (1997) as mentioned by Williams and Buswell (2003) and presented in the following table.

Table 2.1 Difference between Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction

Service Quality	Customer Satisfaction
Evaluated using specific clues	Evaluation more holistic
Based on perceptions of "excellence"	Based on needs
Cognitive	Emotional

2.4 Customer Service with the check-in experience

In marketing, CS measures how products and services provided by a company or people meet or overcome customers' expectation (Barsky, 1992). In addition to employees of using words, people may communicate via gestures, facial expressions and maintaining eye contact to make customers satisfied when customers checked in at front desk (Ajzen, 2005). The front desk is such an important point for the marketing of the hotel because the employees play a strong role in determining CS with the check-in experience, which in turn determines customers' overall experience (Seijts et al., 2010). For example, employee speaking volume and clarity, as well as a kind tone of voice, can influence CS with the front desk and check-in (Homburg, Koschate, & Hoyer, 2005). Some hotels have online platforms whereby customers can offer their reviews on the specific hotel where they are housed (Pourhosein Gilakjani, 2011). Consistently good ratings from customers will result in a higher net rating than when ratings vary widely from customer to customer, consistently good ratings depend on consistently positive front desk interactions (Ajzen, 2005).

Moreover, if the front desk employees are performance- and learning-oriented, they are more likely to enhance the CS because they will work to improve the front desk and check-in experiences (Ajzen, 2005). These improvements, then, increase the extent of CS as well. In addition, the hotel front desk employees who are performance- and learning-oriented are also more likely to adjust their attitude as well as competency to ensure that the hotel is rated well, thus creating a desirable first impression on customers. In the course of this, the hotel will also achieve high CS (Khurana, 2010).

Generally, CS was concluded to be a powerful tool in giving the companies a competitive advantage (Burgoon, Birk, & Pfau, 1990). It reduces the likelihood of company's failure and increases their probability of success, as well as perform a positive image in the industry (Seijts et al., 2010). If the front desk employees offer a welcoming eye contact, the guests will feel their requests are recognized and appreciated (Khurana, 2010). Therefore, it is important to understand the effects of front desk employees' performance on customers' satisfaction when customers checked in at the front desk (Seijts et al., 2010).

2.5 The Effect of First Impression on Customer Service

Customers walk to the front desk to check in at the first moment when they come to the hotel. As mentioned in the previous paragraph in 2.4, there is never a second chance to make a first impression because the first impression is difficult to change. And some scholars argue that it takes a maximum of 60 seconds to make one (Wargo, 2006). For example, Psychologists Todorov and Willis argued that it takes about 10 seconds for two parties to form a generalized opinion about one another (Wargo, 2006). While during the check-in process, customer already would have a first impression to front desk employee who served that customer (Seijts et al., 2010).

Furthermore, Seijts et al (2010) mentioned that the front desk is such a significant factor for the marketing of the hotel because the employees play a strong role in determining CS with the check-in experience, which in turn determines customers' overall experience. In addition, during the check-in process, the front desk employee already showed his/her competence, knowledge, friendliness and service attitude to the

customer (Meijerink, Bondarouk, & Lepak, 2016). For example, If the front desk employees offer a welcoming eye contact and language, the customers will feel their requests are recognized and appreciated (Khurana, 2010). Meanwhile, a positive first impression formed helps an overall good first impression of hotel employees and even hotel. Otherwise, once customer had a negative first impression to that front desk employee, it would affect that customer had a negative first impression to the rest of employees even the entire hotel (Meijerink, Bondarouk, & Lepak's, 2016). Those first impressions of customers are established during the moment of check-in process. Hence, how first impression influences CS with check-in experience is important to hotels' and hotel employees.

2.6 Theories of Customer Satisfaction

2.6.0 Models of Service Quality

According to Gupta in (2017) SQ is divided into two parts; first is tangible services (furniture, building, rooms, décor etc.) and second is intangible services (personal touch, surprise, felling special). Gupta further argues that in today's world all hotels are almost same in their tangible factor, however the thing which impress the consumers are the intangible services which attract them. Applying to the hospitality industry, there have been numerous studies that examine attributes that travelers may find important regarding CS (Nomnga, 2015). Among all, three most popular models to measure CS and SQ in the hotel industry are SERVEQUAL, HOLSERVE, Lodging Quality Index (LQI) and DINESERVE. Each model has its own strong point and has

been used flexibly in hotel industry to present literatures relevant to this research and to provide a theoretical framework.

In a study conducted by (Awara & Anyadighibe, 2014) on the relationship between CS and loyalty: a study of selected eateries in Calabar, Cross River State, three categories of SQ have been highlighted. Technical quality which refers to what the customer is left with after the customer-employee interactions have been completed. Functional quality which is the process of delivering the same service or product a Societal (ethical) quality a credence quality, which cannot be evaluated by the customer before purchase and is often impossible to evaluate after purchase. Nomnga (2015) states that SQ is a complex, elusive, subjective and abstract concept that means different things to different people. According to (Eshetie *et. al.*, 2016) the quality in a service business has become a measure of the extent to which the service provided meets the customer's expectations. Arguments by (Forozia *et. al.*, 2013) are that in most of the service industries, SQ plays a fundamental role for companies to achieve success and therefore it is crucial for management of hotels to have a proper consideration of what customers' requirements are.

Poor-quality service produces customer dissatisfaction, and customers may not return to the establishment in the future or even immediately move their business dealings to other providers (Prentice, 2013; Cheng & Rashid, 2013). Arguments by Wu *et. al.*, (2014) are that both perceptions and expectations need to be measured in order to evaluate SQ. Mauri *et. al.*, (2013) further defines SQ as “a multidimensional concept, assessed and perceived by consumers, according to a set of essential parts, grouped in five categories, namely: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy”.

More so (Rauch *et. al.*, 2015) indicates that the concept of SQ was initially used as part of a framework of marketing strategies, by making customers the focal point.

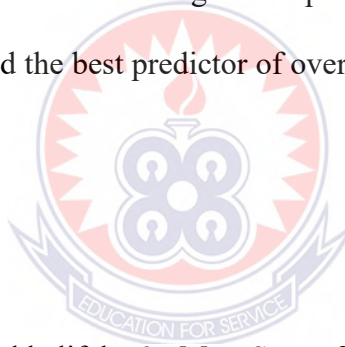
There is abundant literature on the effects of SQ on CS in the hotel industry by (Rauch, Collins, Nale, & Barr, 2015; Mbuthia, Muthoni, & Muchina, 2013; Minh, Ha, Anh, & Matsui, 2017; Abukhalifeh & Mat Som, 2012; Lalla, Cowden, & Karodia, 2015; G/Egziabher, 2015; Eshetie *et. al.*, 2016). These studies have identified the SERVQUAL model and highlighted its five dimensions also known as gaps namely; tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy.

A study conducted by (Eshetie *et. al.*, 2016) investigating literature on the SQ and CS in hospitality industry in selected hotels in Ethiopia highlighted the lodging quality index (LQI) which is multidimensional scale developed on the basis of SERVQUAL model. The process of the LQI scale was argued that it began with the ten dimensions that were originally in the first version of SERVQUAL and was highlighted that the authors claimed that the LQI is a generic measure of hotel SQ. While investigating their literature (Rauch *et. al.*, 2015; Mbuthia *et. al.*, 2013; Minh *et. al.*, 2017) have expounded on the LQI model and highlighted its ten dimensions as follows; tangibility; reliability; responsiveness; competence; courtesy; credibility; security access; communications; and understanding. The LQI, with its five-factor structure, has been further validated in a study which utilized a sample of 200 Canadian respondents (Ladhari, 2012).

In a study conducted by (Tan, Oriade, & Fallon, 2014) on SQ and CS in Chinese Fast Food Sector, the DINESERVE scale was used to measure SQ and was similar to the SERVEQUAL model. The DINESERV instrument was proposed as a reliable and comparatively easy to use tool for determining how guests evaluate restaurant SQ. The

original DINESERV tool consisted of 29 items and five SERVEQUAL dimensions (Watiki, 2014). Another study conducted by (Rauch *et. al.*, 2015) a SQ factor structure with three dimensions; was highlighted which might serve as an appropriate framework by which customers assess SQ in hotels. The three dimensions include; service product; service delivery; and service environment.

Another study conducted by (Minh *et. al.*, 2017), highlights the HOLSERV scale by extending the SERVQUAL scale to include 27 items with 8 new items. The study tested the reliability and validity of HOLSERV to which dimension is the best predictor of overall SQ. Findings were that quality of service in the hospitality industry is represented by three dimensions relating to employees (behaviour and appearance), tangibles and reliability, and the best predictor of overall SQ is the dimensions referred to “employees”.



2.6.1 SERVQUAL Model

According to (Abukhalifeh & Mat Som, 2012) SERVQUAL model allows customers to evaluate quality of a service based on five distinct dimensions namely tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy on which SQ and CS can be judged (Gupta, 2017). The model was developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry in 1988 as a tool of identifying SQ shortfall and is based on the premise that customers can evaluate a firm’s SQ by comparing their perception of its SQ with their own expectations (Waitiki, 2014). Eshetie *et. al.*, (2016) argues that commitment towards quality improves the guest’s level of satisfaction and increases profits as well as consequently the benefits gained by the guest and the employee. Eshetie *et. al.*, (2016), further highlights that on

the opposite, mistakes in service provision cost the hotel money and its reputation may suffer. This is the “non-quality cost” concept. The scenario created by non-quality service can be daunting for any hotel manager. However, an unhappy guest does not usually express his or her unhappiness to the management of a hotel, but will on average, inform at least nine other people about poor service experiences. The reverse is also true that, happy guest will inform only limited number of people about his or her good service experiences in a hotel. (Eshetie *et. al.*, (2016) goes ahead to argue that the SERVQUAL instrument is used to assess consumer perceptions and expectations regarding the quality of a service. The original service dimensions used by consumers to judge the quality of a service are assurance, reliability, responsiveness, empathy and tangibles.

2.6.1.1 Assurance

This refers to the knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire, convey trust and confidence in hotel guests. Assurance refers to the knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence including competence, courtesy, credibility and security. The assurance dimension may be measured using elements of knowledgeable trained professionals, communication and taking care of the customer (Awara & Anyadighibe, 2014).

- A. **Competence** means possession of the required skills and knowledge to perform the services. It involves knowledge and skill of the contact personnel, knowledge and skill of operational support personnel, and research capability of the organization.

- B. **Courtesy** involves politeness, respect, consideration, and friendliness of contact personnel.
- C. **Credibility** involves trust worthiness, believability, honesty; it involves having the customers best interest at heart. Contributing to credibility is company reputation, personal characteristics of the contact personnel. The degree of hard sell involved in interaction with the customer.
- D. **Security** refers to the freedom from danger, risk or doubt. It involves physical safety, financial security and confidentiality. Below are some examples:

Example 1: The guests expect to feel safe during their stay at hotel from the staff.

Example 2: The staff can handle effectively complaints and problems from the guests.

2.6.1.2 Reliability

This consists of four items, such as “My reservation was handled efficiently (Mbuthia *et al.*, 2013). Reliability is defined as the dependability, consistency and accuracy with which the service is performed by the provider (Rauch *et. al.*, 2015), as well as hotel’s ability to perform services on time right at the first time (Minh *et. al.*, 2017). Dependably is defined as the ability of the service provider to provide what is needed and to be trusted while accurately is defined as the ability of the service provider to achieve the outputs that are correct (Tefera, Africa, Govender, & Africa, 2017). High service reliability refers to the error-free performance provided by the service provider. Reliability of service includes complaint handling, pricing and promises delivery (Rahman *et. al.*, 2014). Besides, customers compare the expectation and the perception of

the company's delivery performance in order to evaluate their acceptability (Demoulin & Djelassi, 2013). The ability involves the delivery of the promised service dependably and accurately. It includes. Doing it right the first time, which is one of the most important service components for customers. Reliability also extends to provide services when promised and maintain error-free records. The following examples present the reliability factor.

Example 1: The staff perform tasks that have been promised to guests and resolve problems encountered by guests.

Example 2: The customers are sensitive to issue such as the telephone being picked up within five rings and their reservations being correct.

2.6.1.3 Responsiveness

This refers to hotel's willingness and flexibility to serve and help customers (Minh *et. al.*, 2017) in a timely, efficient manner and includes items such as helpfulness, friendliness and warmth of the service staff (Rauch *et. al.*, 2015). The front office staff are willing to help customers and provide prompt service to customers such as quick service, professionalism in handling and recovering from mistakes. It has been said that today's luxury is time. Consequently, service providers, ability to provide services in a timely manner is a critical component of SQ for many guests. The examples of responsiveness are as follows:

Example 1: The staff is asking for customers, name, address, post code and telephone number during the telephone booking.

Example 2: The customers are asked to guarantee their booking, the different

rates that they are offered and which ones they accept.

Example 3: The customers are offered alternative accommodation at a sister hotel and how efficiently that is arranged and reservation cards being ready to sign upon arrival.

2.6.1.4 Empathy

Empathy is related to the caring personal attention extended to customers, as well as the level of understanding personnel demonstrate relative to customer needs (Rauch *et. al.*, 2015) It refers to the provision of caring and individualized attention to customers including access, communication and understanding the customers.

- A. Access involves approach, ability and ease of contact. It means the service is easily accessible by telephone, waiting time to receive service is not extensive, hours of operation are convenient and location of service facility is convenient.
- B. Communication means keeping customers informed in language they can understand. It means listening to customers, adjusting its language for different consumers and speaking simply and plainly with a novice. It also involves explaining the service itself, explaining how much the service will cost, and assuring the customer that a problem will be handled.
- C. Understanding the customers means making the effort to understand the customer's need. It includes learning the customer's specific requirements, providing individualized attention, recognizing the regular custom. A typical example is when staff acknowledge the presence of customers at the reception with a verbal greeting and/or when staff are keeping eye contact, using customers,

names and asking customers to return their key upon departure. It is clear from the above results that customers like to be given enough individualized attention and treated with care. It thus allows the customers to easily get themselves familiarized with the FOS and becomes comfortable with the environment as well.

2.6.1.5 Tangibles

This refers to the appearance of hotel and hotel staff, equipment personnel, physical facilities at hotel and rooms, communication materials and visual materials for customers (Minh *et. al.*, 2017). Elements within the tangibles dimension are cleanliness, space, atmosphere, appearance of server and location (Awara & Anyadighibe, 2014). SERVQUAL model further, the model measures customer expectations and perceptions of SQ. The quality gap (Q) is calculated by subtracting the expectation (E) from the perception (P) value i.e. $P-E=Q$. Summation of all the Q values provide an overall quality rating which is an indicator of relative importance of the SQ dimensions that influence customers' overall quality perceptions. SERVQUAL is a standardized instrument that has been applied across a broad spectrum of service industries.

The SERVQUAL scale (Questionnaire) has two sections: one to measure customer expectations in relation to a service segment and the other to measure perception regarding the organization whose service is being assessed. SERVQUAL comprises a 22-item Likert-type with five dimensions of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles. From the 5 dimensions, 22 statements are derived, each measuring both the expectations and perceptions of customers towards the quality of services of the

organization being assessed. The customers are required to rate, on a 5- point Likert scale, the degree to which they feel the service provider should deliver for an excellent service. Another identical scale is provided adjacent to the first one in which the respondents rate the actual quality of service delivered to them by an organization based on their perceptions. For each statement, the difference between perception and expectation is calculated; the averages of the obtained score being the SERVQUAL score (Parasuraman *et. al.*, 1988).

2.7 The conceptual framework

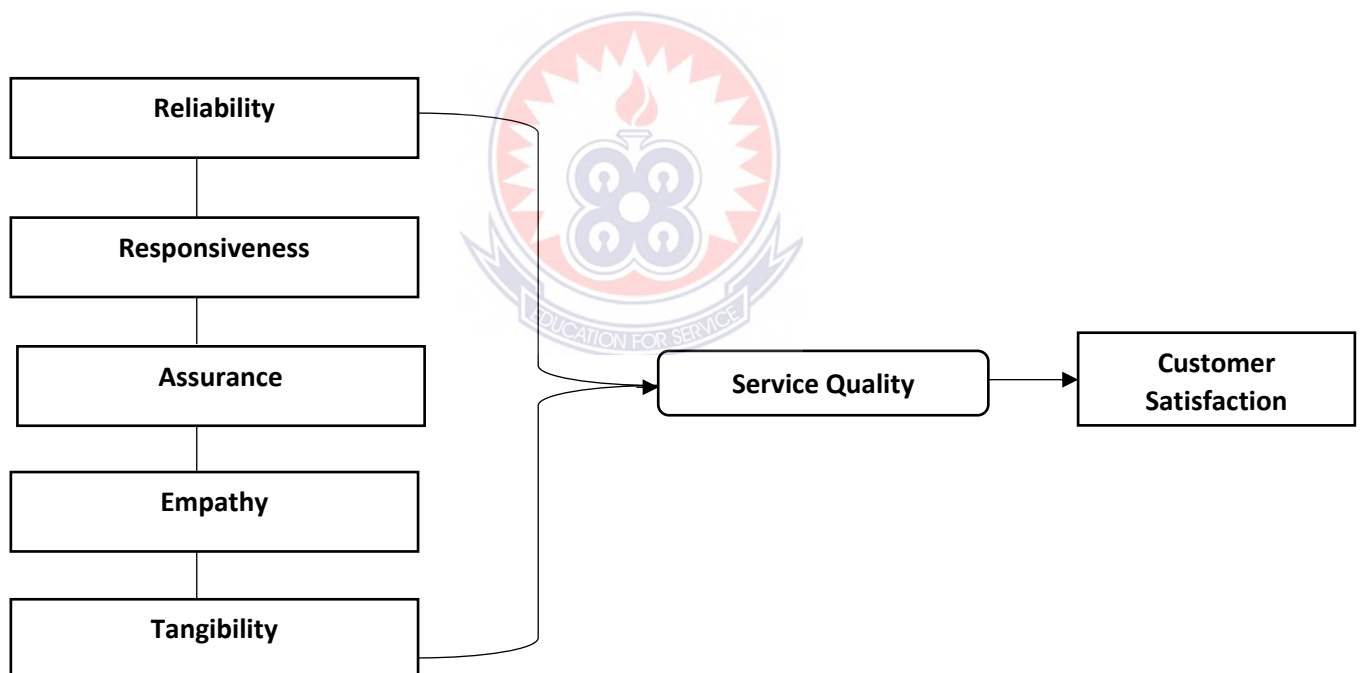


Figure 2.2: Service Quality in Front desk Operations

Source: Author's Elaboration, 2020

Front desk operation in the hotel industry has got considerable attention from researchers and academics given that this department may help guide the development of SQ. Understanding the dynamics of SQ allows the hotel industry to concentrate on SERVQUAL model. The model on which SERVQUAL is based allow customers to evaluate quality of a service based on five distinct dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The provision of individualized attention to customers and the use of this model are suggested by previous studies (e.g., Lin, 2006; and Nield et al., 2000).

Cho and Wong (1998) highlighted the relationship between SQ and guest satisfaction, and discussed the measurement of SQ using a computerized control system. According to them, the gaps between management requirements and the functionality of computer systems could thereby be reduced. The gap between consumer expectation and management perception, as well as the gap between SQ specifications and service delivery leads to a gap in perceived SQ (Babajide, 2011). The front desk operation employees play an important role in providing SQ during the service encounter. Bitner, Booms and Tetreault (1990) found that proper five dimensions of employees possess the ability, willingness and competence to solve their problems. Price, Arnould and employee behavior and performance (mutual understanding, extra attention, authenticity, competence and meeting minimum standards of activity) that influence customers' perception. Front desk operation workers must be able to behave in a more customer-oriented way. Several researchers have emphasized the importance of customer-oriented behavior and job related attitude influence customer perceptions of SQ (Bettencourt and Brown, 2003; Ackfeldt and Wong, 2006).

In his study, Sriyam (2010) used SERVQUAL approach to measure SQ in hotel and other related service industries. He explored expectation and perception levels of customers towards SQ concerning the front desk staff and SQ dimensions in other hotel departments. The SERVQUAL model scale enables actual measurement of SQ.

2.8 The Roles of Front-Desk Staff

The front office staffs play the roles as the facilitator between the guest and other departments of the hotel. Besides, they also need to support and help in providing services to the guests. The number of interactions and transactions between the guest and the hotel during a guest stay determine the type and nature of front office operations (Baker, Bradley, & Huyton, 2001). Various transactions between the guest and the hotel, therefore, depend upon the stage of the guest stay including pre-arrival, arrival, occupancy, and departure. The transactions can be best understood by the illustration of the guest cycle.

Figure 2 describes transactions and exchange of services between a guest and the hotel. The transactions involve in reservations, check-in and registration, mail and information, uniformed service and baggage handling, telephone calls and messages, handling guest accounts, and checkout and bill settlement. The front office department handles all these services and transactions. The functions and services of the front office department can be differentiated depending upon the area where they are being performed. Some of the functions are performed by the reception desk as front-of-the-house operations and rest are performed as back-of-the-house operations (Baker, Bradley, & Huyton, 2001).

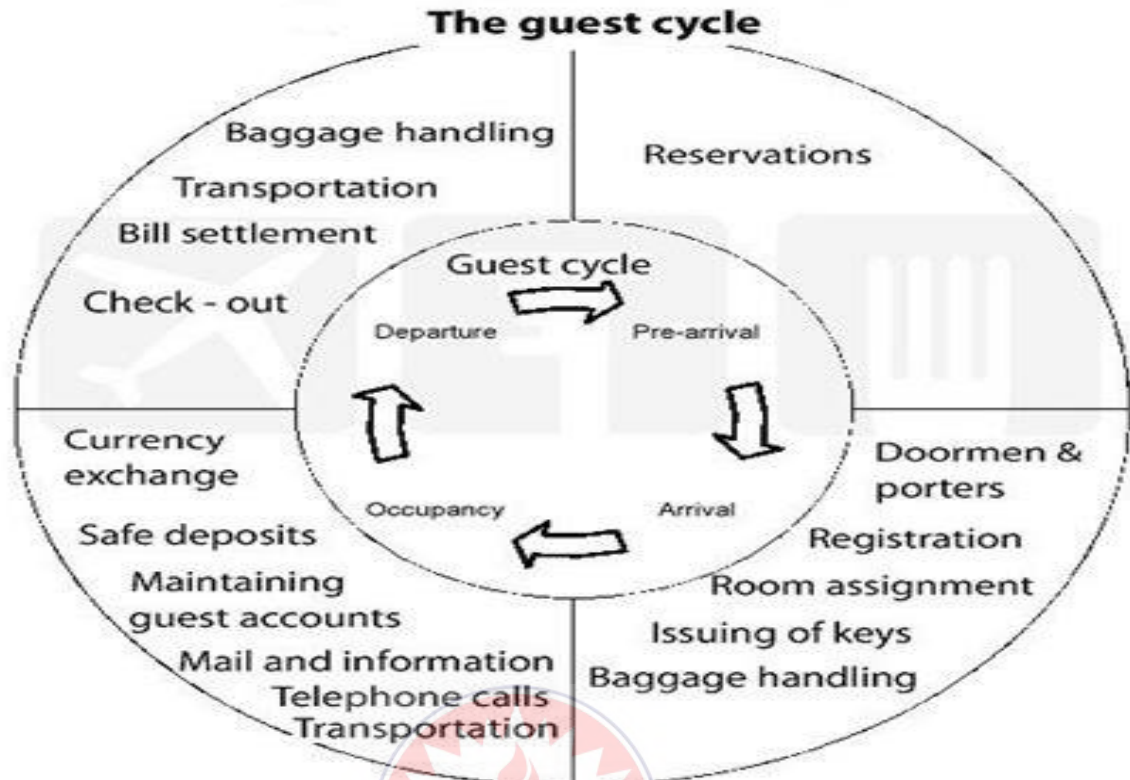


Figure 2.3: The Guest Cycle

(Source: Baker, Bradley and Huyton, 2001)

2.9 Factors Affecting Customer Satisfaction

Maintaining a superb SQ is of the greatest importance for every company who wants to survive, compete and develop in the competitive market nowadays. Particularly for the well-known brand, SQ must go with the values it promises to customers. There is always the variance in the perspectives of the providers and service consumers about the quality (Gronroos, 1984). The SQ can only be achieved if the organization can capture the information about the needs and expectations of their customers as Gronroos (1984) has stated that SQ is the quality of service customers perceive it to be. He also

emphasized that only when the customers admit the values of the service, its quality makes sense.

Bergman and Klefsjö (2003) argue that SQ is affected by different dimensions from those of product quality. Among those factors is communication. They emphasized that being able to communicate in a comprehensive and understandable way is critical to build up the SQ. Other dimensions are responsiveness and courtesy, with responsiveness referring to willingness to helping customers and courtesy referring to the serviceperson's behaviour and manners, for example good will and politeness. In addition, they stated that the ability to understanding customers, their situation and their needs is also an important dimension of SQ.

Services are defined as subjectively perceived processes where production and consumption occur simultaneously (Gronroos, 1984). Gronroos (1984) raised up two dimensions in the measurement of SQ including technical quality (what) and functional quality (how).

The technical quality comprises of a hotel room, which the customer receives as a part of the process. Because the technical quality does not itself explain the total quality perceived by the customer, the functional quality must be research during the evaluation of the total quality (Gronroos, 1984). The functional quality perspective in the hotel is the way the service is delivered, how all the service encounters that occur during the stay are managed and how well the production (making a reservation, checking in) and consumption (staying at the hotel) process goes (Gronroos, 1984). For that, understanding SQ closely relates to researching the first impressions of the customers about the technical part as well as the staff qualities that significantly affect their evaluation about

the functional quality of the hotel. In conclusion, according to Grönroos (1984), the SQ is considered to be dependent on the customer expectations, first impressions about the technical parts and the staff qualities.

2.9.1 Customer Expectations

Excellent customer service and high CS begins with understanding customer expectations. It has to be noted who your customers are and what they want. In companies 'CS is generally measured by asking customers whether their product or service has met or exceeded expectations. It is very important to ask this question because asking is a key factor that leads to CS.

When customers have high expectations, and the reality fall short, they will be disappointed and will likely rate their experience as less than satisfying. For this reason, a luxury resort, for example, might receive a lower satisfaction rating than a budget motel even though its facilities and service would be deemed superior in 'absolute' terms.

Customer expectations set the bar for CS, which also affects repurchase decisions and customer loyalty. If a customer feels like you did not deliver a service that was expected, they will not come back and buy from you again. On the flip-side, if you deliver a service that exceeds customer expectations, you can bet they will come back to buy again, and tell all their friends about the experience. One of the author's favorite quotes about customer expectations is from Roy Hollister Williams, a best-selling author and marketing consultant best known for his Wizard of Ads trilogy. "The first step in exceeding your customer's expectations is to know those expectations." Roy Hollister Williams Benefits of understanding customer expectations CS is a result of the service

level you deliver compared to what your customer expects to receive. Here are the four benefits you can get from understanding customer expectations:

- It lets you know what service levels are expected to keep customers happy and achieve high CS.
- It enables employees to focus on fulfilling customers' expectations.
- It gives you the opportunity to exceed expectations and create raving advocates.

It can help you resolve customer complaints. Since complaints are a result of failing to meeting expectations, you have the ability to quickly fix the problems and retain the business.

Learning the customer's expectations is essential for the organization to know the area of the service that can be improved to obtain a higher level of performance, because what the customers expect from the service is closely related to the satisfactions they have while experiencing the service. The expectations and needs are often built up based on the customer's previous experience, the image of the company/service provider, what promises has been made and also to some degree, the price (Bergman, Klefsjö, 2003).

There is one fact that the customer always compares expectations and experiences, and each perceived service encounter the increasing of new criteria and new expectations. The customer's requirements can only get higher and higher once their previous expectations are met (Gronroos, 1984). Particularly, Grönroos (1984) describes that if the SQ experienced by the customer meets the expected quality, it is considered good or neutral. If the expectations on the services are unrealistic, the experienced quality will be perceived as bad, even when it was objectively good.

2.9.2 Qualified Personnel

An important factor of the service is obviously the service person. Chris Fill (2013) emphasized that it is particularly important in-service environments that the staff plays the roles and the ambassadors of the organizations and represent the interface between an organization's internal and external environment. He believes that their actions can have a significant influence in creating brand images among the customers (Fill, 2013). Motivating the employees and getting them involved in the company is important for the companies particularly those in the hospitality industry to present a consistent message to the guests Fill (2013).

2.9.3 First impression

In order to provide the guests with the best service experience, the front office staffs have to take care of all three stage of guest stay including arrival, the service encounter itself and departure. However, the stage considered the most important is the arrival as the first few moments have a great impact on how the customer perceives the service (Gronroos, 1984).

The first impression decides whether the more works need to be done to build up the foundation for customer experience (Gronroos, 1984). The first impression is created by the surroundings of the workplace as well as the gestures and professionalism of the employees (Hognas, 2015). It is obvious that employees who provide with positive attitude and act in an ethical and trustful way will be likely to be more impressive than those who fail to give an unappealing appearance (Hognas, 2015). Therefore, it is always

recommended that the employees should wear appropriate clothing for the business, and should also be groomed to create a professional overall look (Hognas, 2015).

2.10 Strategies to Improve Front Desk Operations to Ensure Service Quality

If we now turn our attention to quality improvement, particularly from an operations perspective, we immediately see that our choice is one of addressing how we can deliver the service better, so as to increase the perceptions of the customer. Examining the service literature reveals this choice reflected in four primary themes, specifically, culture-based, design-based, variation-based, and failure-based improvement strategies.

2.10.0 Culture-based Improvement

One of the earliest approaches seen for improving quality in services was based on the soft side of the total quality management movement. One of the greatest sources of positive, or negative, perceptions of the service is derived from the interaction between the service provider and the customer during the service encounter. The providers' ability and willingness to be flexible according to customers' needs, and to resolve any problems which occur promptly and without hassle, is a function of their training and the organizational culture in which they operate. (Hostage, 1975) identified the importance of a service's employees and culture as early as 1975 in his analysis of the success of Marriott Corporation. These thoughts are echoed fifteen years later by Albrecht (1990) who asserts that relative to standards-based approaches, "...culture-based approaches will ultimately emerge as more effective for the management of service." Schneider (1986)

addresses improving service culture through a focus on individual and group psychology. Berry, Zeithaml, and Parasuraman (1990); and Schneider and Chung (1993); add the importance of employee selection and training; Schlesinger and Heskett (1991b); and Roth and Jackson (1995) elaborated on this importance of investing in people, since even though generic operations capabilities affect SQ, the employee's ability to exploit technology and market insight moderates this effect. Harrington and Akehurst (2000) confirm the importance of employee resourcefulness as well as senior management commitment to quality implementation. Hartline, Maxham and McKee (2000) discuss how a customer-oriented strategy from senior management can be disseminated to the front-line employees through specific control mechanisms. Kingman-Brundage (1991) emphasizes the need to provide technology to support the service culture. One notable assertion made by Kingman-Brundage is the importance of the service logic being consistent with the service policies, so as not to induce customer frustration.

In a separate work, Schlesinger and Heskett (1991a) develop a system dynamics model to explain the feedback relationships between organizational variables that cause poor service culture and result in service failures. The system dynamics model indicates that poor culture is the result of two positive feedback loops, meaning that it will get worse at an increasing rate. The authors identify points of leverage in the system where the cycle can be reversed by management intervention. Georgantzas and Madu (1994) presented their own version of such a system dynamics model. Kelly and Hoffman (1997) identified a positive relationship between provider affect and cultural variables of organizational citizenship and customer orientation, and a negative relationship with being sales oriented. This positive provider affect has, in turn, a positive impact on

customer affect and SQ. Hartline and Ferrell (1996) investigate the interfaces of the service delivery process (manager-employee, employee role, and employee-customer) and find that managers should decrease employee's role conflict and ambiguity, and increase self-efficacy and job satisfaction in order to increase customers' perceptions of SQ. Schneider, White and Paul (1998) indicate that in addition to a climate for service, policies and practices that focus attention on SQ are needed.

Other work has focused on fostering favorable social interaction between the customer and the provider. Tansik and Smith (1991) discuss scripting employees' behavior. Bitner, Booms and Mohr (1994) identify misbehavior of the customer as an unusual potential source of customer dissatisfaction. Bettencourt (1997) instead looks at how helpful discretionary customer behaviors can be promoted. Price, Arnould, and Tierney (1995) introduce a framework for extended, affectively charged and intimate encounters. Broderick (1999) introduces role theory as a means of understanding and managing the dynamics of long-term service relationships. Kandampully (1998) discusses how providers can form an emotional connection with customers that leads to exceptional service and long-term loyalty. Measurement driven approaches are also seen. Lings (1999) develops an internal marketing schematic that focuses employees on the impact their activities have on the customer. Measures and improvement targets drive this approach. Rust, Zahorik and Keiningham (1995) instead use a financial model of cost of quality to relate the cost of SQ initiatives to increased profitability.

Surveys have found that the quality culture in services, as a whole, still lags behind that of manufacturing indicating a strong potential for culture-based improvement strategies within many service firms (Troy and Schein, 1993). Ultimately, the service

culture is the result of management style, organizational structure, incentive systems, and group dynamics. Because of this, improvement through service culture changes remains a difficult challenge to service businesses, and the focus of researchers who emphasize organizational behavioral issues.

2.10.1 Design-based Improvement

Another major SQ improvement approach is by addressing quality through design. There have been three approaches to using design in this manner— linking the design to customer needs, linking the design to customer perceptions, and direct psychological manipulation of satisfaction through design.

2.11 Linking Design to Customer Needs

The first structured approach to linking the service system design to customer's needs was Heskett's (1987) strategic service vision. Heskett indicates how a service should begin with an understanding of the target market. This understanding is used to derive a service concept, a strategy for delivering on the key points of this strategy is developed, and the strategy ultimately dictates the design of the service delivery system. Behara and Chase (1991) take a slightly more quantitative approach, by combining quality function deployment (QFD) with SERVQUAL and producing what they refer to as a house of service. The result is a matrix that links the needs of the customer to operating design variables under the control of the system designer. Applications of quality function deployment without the SERVQUAL component are also seen in services. Berkley (1996) takes a particularly rigorous approach to service QFD, using

FAST diagrams to draw connections along the means-ends hierarchy, and morphology diagrams for the selection of appropriate technologies. The most quantitatively advanced approach to assuring that the customers' needs are met by the service design is through the use of conjoint analysis (a good discussion of which can be found in Green and Srinivasan, 1990.) Probably the most widely known application of this technique was Wind, Green, Shifflet and Scarbrough's (1989) design of the Courtyard by Marriott hotel chain. Through conjoint analysis, the authors were able to assign a dollar value to each design option, based on the willingness of the customer to pay for them. The actual design then became a simple financial analysis.

2.12 Linking Design to Perceptions

Instead of linking the design to the needs of the customer, another approach in the literature seeks to link the design to the ultimate perceptions the customer has of the service delivery process. Collier (1994) uses LISREL to develop his service/quality process maps. The maps are a series of causal relationships between design variables (in the form of process performance measures) and perceptual variables (such as CS). The relationships are either direct, or through some intermediary variables. The validity and strengths on any anticipated relationships can be empirically derived from company data, and then used to guide quality improvement. Armstrong (1995) investigated linking customers' perception of SQ with service system design variables through linear models, neural nets, and multivariate adaptive regression splines. In addition to demonstrating the usefulness of linking design to perceptions, the author found that simple linear models provided better fit than the more advanced techniques. Later work by Soteriou and Chase

(1998) builds on this research, and provides more convincing empirical support of the methodology.

2.13 Direct Manipulation of Satisfaction

A final design approach to improving quality is through direct manipulation of satisfaction. Wirtz and Bateson (1992) suggest that it might be possible to increase CS independently of the confirmation of perceptions relative to expectations. They suggest that producing pleasure for the customer can have direct effect on CS. The design of the service setting is one means of producing such an effect. Pyzdek (1994) asserts that this second approach will be advantageous, since it would prevent inflation of expectations as superior service perceptions increase the expectations for the following encounter. It is not clear, however that such an effect exists. According to the original GAP model by Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry, the expectations are derived not from the experience with the particular service firm, but rather from a broad exposure to similar service firms. Under this context, the effect could easily be considered part of perceptions. Regardless of whether or not this effect is distinct from perceptions, one author promotes the use of fun and random rewards to alter perceptions of the service experience. Gross (1994) suggests that what he refers to as random “outrageous service” will build regular desirable behavior, and improve customers’ long term perceptions of the service delivery. Bitner (1992) addresses the tangible characteristics of the service setting, which she refers to as the services cape. In addition to impacting the ability to perform service tasks, the services cape can affect customers’ attitude towards the service. This attitude can be manipulated to elicit appropriate behavior, prompt favorable social interaction, and shape

expectations for the service. In a later work, Bitner (1993) provides a strategy for identifying the important physical evidence of the servicescape, and how to integrate this with the goals of the service delivery system.

2.13.1 Variation-based Improvement

Our third theme builds on the success of statistical process control (SPC) in manufacturing, as people attempted to apply SPC to services. Where meaningful numerical data can be obtained, the approach has shown its expected success. Wyckoff (1984) discusses the successful use of SPC at Midway Airline. Midway tracks the percentage of flights departing on time with control charts, and can quickly identify when changes in the system have occurred. Negative changes elicit corrective action, and positive changes indicate opportunities for improving the system on a long-term basis.

Unfortunately, other than monitoring time, demand and satisfaction scores, there are not many meaningful statistical variables to measure in services. A 1993 special issue of *Quality Progress* emphasized customer service, provided many articles which used SPC to track SQ issues, but the scope of the different types of variables considered is, sadly, rather narrow. The applications seen were: the waiting time to replace a battery (Yoshida, 1993); the waiting time on hold for a service representative (Graessel and Zeidler, 1993); the time to return a call or resolve a technical support problem (Cleary, 1993); the time to process an order and the time to pick up an order (Pratt, 1993); the percentage of insurance claims processed within 48 hours (Kirscht and Tunnell, 1993); and the American Society for Quality Control tracks simply the time until notification of certification test results (Vora, Harthun & Kingen, 1993).

Another SPC approach taken is variance reduction through parameter design. Parameter design was developed by Taguchi, and involves adjusting the parameters of the design so that the variation of the inputs produces a minimal variation in the outputs. The logic is that as the output deviates from its targeted level, the costs would increase at a quadratic rate. Krehbiel (1994) applies this approach to a service setting evaluating two process designs to determine which provides the more consistent service in terms of time spent in the system. The author concludes that although one system produces a slightly longer average time, its smaller variation makes it the best choice. The larger variation system is shown to cost customers sufficiently more in waiting time than the system with the longer average waiting time.

Once again, the approach is limited only to the subset of variables that are meaningful to the quality of the service, which can actually be measured. Snee (1993) discusses conceptually how robust work processes might be produced without the need for measurement, such as through simplifying work processes, mistake-proofing, clear communication, training and automation. In suggesting this approach, Snee begins to depart from the statistically based approach, and begins to look towards failure-based improvement.

2.13.2 Failure-based Improvement

With the absence of sufficient meaningful data to allow statistical process control, some researchers are turning to failure prevention, analysis, and recovery as our final theme in SQ improvement. Schlesinger and Heskett (1991a) assert that “Most service failures are not failures: they have been designed into the system.” And, as recently as

1997, Johns and Tyas have confirmed that service incidents play the most significant part in perception formation, although they also find some evidence of an effect from mythologies (generalizations of reality shared by a group of individuals). One approach taken by Hart (1988) is the unconditional service guarantee. As a SQ improvement tool, a service guarantee is best seen as a means of generating reliable data about important service failures. The guarantee focuses on what is important to the customer, provides an incentive to the customers to provide information about service failures, and provides a measure of these failures in an easy to understand form (guarantee payouts). Hart (1993) has also gone on to link guarantees to business performance through customer defections.

This link to customer defections leads us to a slightly broader concept promoted by Hart, Heskett and Sasser (1990); Zemke (1993); and Sinha (1993) – that of service recovery. The essence of service recovery is to identify when a service failure has occurred, and then to correct the problem and make amends to the customer. This has a two-fold effect. First, you are able to retain the customer's business, and second you avoid the negative word of mouth associated with a service failure. Youngdahl and Kellogg (1997) explore the cost associated with customers' efforts to increase their own satisfaction through recovery activities. Chase and Stewart (1993, 1994, 1995) take a more active approach to service failures, which they refer to as fail-safing. The authors assert that service failures can be anticipated, and through the use of special procedures or devices, can be eliminated or at least prevented from reaching the customer. Stewart and Chase (1999) investigate errors in services and find that errors drive dissatisfaction, and that the errors made by customers and those made by providers are different. One important source of that difference is the attribution of blame. They also discuss how

design can be used to minimize errors. Van Raaij and Pruyn (1998) also discuss the critical factors of service production as validity (do the right thing) and reliability (doing things right) as well as the attribution of blame as customers gain greater control over the service. Reichheld (1996) discusses using a failure-driven, cost-based approach to improvement. He suggests viewing each defection as a failure of the service system, and promotes the use of failure analysis to drive changes to the system, which are assessed by changes in the cost of defections.



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

Research design is a formal plan of action for a research project. A mixed method comprising both quantitative and qualitative research design was used for this study. This was mainly a descriptive study that was conducted to assess customer satisfaction of hotel front desk operations at the Modern City and Mariam hotels in the Tamale Metropolis. It was anticipated that this study was best undertaken with the use of questionnaire. The questionnaire survey technique is a very effective quantitative technique since it enables large scale numerical data to be obtained over a short period of time. The researcher also wanted to gain data using qualitative techniques. This was done by interviews and participant observation. According to Rubin and Babbie (2007) qualitative research has the ability to provide the researcher a comprehensive perspective as well as in depth insight into the phenomenon under study. Bell (2008), qualitative approach offers insight and understanding into the individual perception of the study. The researcher intended to interview five (5) managers from the various hotels to gain insight into impact of front desk operation on customer satisfaction. The interview is a useful strategy since it enables respondents to give their views on the topic.

3.2 Research Location

The setting for the study is Tamale Metropolis of the Northern Region of Ghana. An overview of the metropolis is discussed below.

3.2.1 Profile of the Tamale Metropolis

Tamale is the regional capital of the Northern Region of Ghana and doubles as the capital for the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly (TaMA) which is one of the 16 local government units in the Northern Region. Tamale was a colonial creation in the first decade of the 20th century when the colonial administration decided to make it the capital of the British Northern Territories. It has since grown to become the third-largest urban centre in Ghana after Accra and Kumasi with its population growing from less than 2000 people in 1907 to about 400,000 as at 2013 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013). While the status of Tamale, as one of the most important settlements in Ghana's geopolitical space dates back to colonialism, the city only emerged as a growth centre in the previously marginalised and de-pressed Northern part of the colonial Gold Coast after independence in 1957 (Songsore, 2009). The Metropolis is located within latitudes 9°16'N and 9°34'N and longitudes 0°34'W and 0°57'W (Fig. 1), and covers a total area of 922 km² (Tamale Metropolitan Assembly, 2010).

Regarding its relative location, the Metropolis shared boundaries with the Savelugu Municipality and the Nanton District to the north; Mion District to the east; East and Central Gonja Municipalities to the south; Tolon Municipality to the west and the Kumbungu District to the north-west. Due to the rapid development of the Metropolis, the Sagnarigu municipality was carved out of it (Fuseini, Yaro, & Gerald, 2017) (Fig. 1).

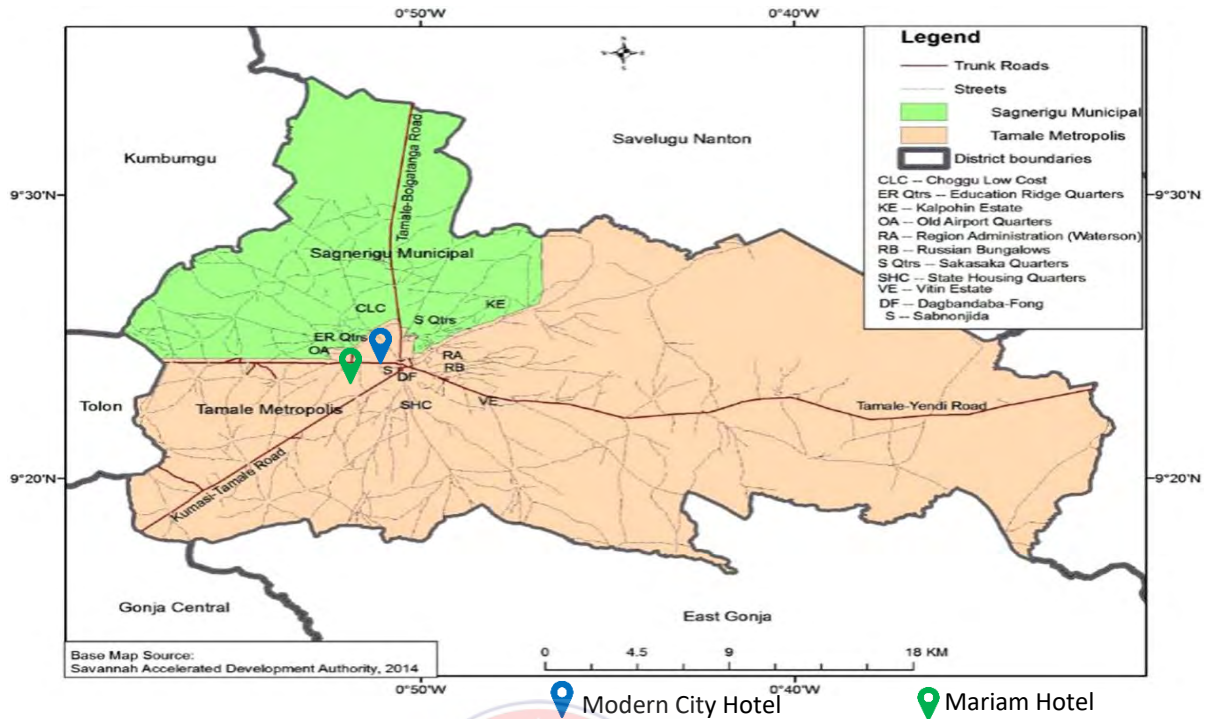


Figure 3.1: Map of the Tamale Metropolis Showing the Study Setting

The Tamale Metropolis is the principal centre of tourism and business in the North of Ghana. Currently, it has a total of 26 Hotels and 35 Guest Houses. The most prominent hotels are the Gariba Lodge, the Radach Lodge, Ghanaa Hotel, Alhassan Hotel, Regal Hotel, Hamdala Hotel, Pioneer Lodge, UDS International Conference Center, Picorna Hotel, Mariam Hotel and the Modern City Hotel. The focus of this study is however, on Modern City Hotel and Mariam Hotel.

3.3.2 Population of the study

The population of a study is defined as total set of observation from which a sample is drawn. It refers to the complete set of individuals (subjects), objects or events having common observable characteristics in which the researcher is interested in studying. Cooper and Emory (1995), state that in research, the word population is used to

mean the total number of people, groups or organizations who could be included in the study. Before any data collection commences, the researcher needs to explain clearly who or what the population will include (Agyedu, Donkor, & Obeng, 2007). Therefore, the population of this study comprised Managers, Staff (front desk operation) and Customers of Modern City Hotel and Mariam Hotel in the Tamale Metropolis, of the Northern Region of Ghana.

3.4 Sampling Technique and sample size

The study employed purposive and random sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was used to select the hotels' Managers and the FOS; whilst simple random sampling was used to select the customers of the two hotels. Simple random sampling involves the drawing of sampling units directly from the population by some procedure, which is designed to meet the essential criterion of randomness (Agyedu, Donkor, & Obeng, 2007). Simple random sampling ensures that each member of the population has an equal chance of being included in the study, especially customers who booked reservations within that period.

A sample size of two hundred (200) respondents was used for the study. This was made up of ten (10) Managers and twenty (20) staff (front desk operation) and one hundred and seventy Customers from each of the two hotels. The Hotels included in the study were conveniently selected based on their ratings (2-star) and their level of patronage by prominent people in the country. For example, whilst the Modern City hotel hosts the president of the Republic of Ghana (Nana Akuffo Addo) each time he visits the Northern Region, the Mariam hotel hosts the former president, John Dramani Mahama.

The staff and customer respondent-groups were randomly selected to give specific and detailed responses to the questionnaire instruments in order to prevent any biases. This was done to ensure that every worker or customer of the selected Hotel had an equal chance of being part of the study.

Table 3.2: Distribution of Respondents by Hotels

Selected Hotels	Respondents	Sample	Sampling Technique	Data collection Procedure
Modern City Hotel	Managers	10	Random	Interview Guide
	Staff	20		Interview Guide
	Customer	90		Questionnaire
Mariam Hotel	Managers	10	Random	Interview Guide
	Staff	10		Interview Guide
	Customer	60		Questionnaire

3.5 Instrumentation for Data Collection

Two instruments were used in the study. These were questionnaire (Appendix 'A') and interview guide (Appendix B). In the view of Leedy & Omond (2006), questionnaires offer participants the advantage of answering questions with the assurance of anonymity for their responses. Questionnaires are fast and convenient and given to both workers and customers of the two hotels, it was not likely for them to misinterpret

the questions and give misleading answers. The use of questionnaire ensures that quantifiable responses are obtained for the purpose of establishing relationships between the identified variables and the responses.

Therefore, a questionnaire was constructed by the researcher with guidance from her academic supervisor and pretested on a sizeable number of respondents. The questionnaire comprised of forty (40) questions which were a combination of open and closed ended items. The questionnaire had four (4) sections. Section A sought demographic information, Section B: the levels of customer satisfaction, Section C: Guests' Perceptions of Service Quality Dimensions of Front Desk Staff, Section D: factors affecting customer satisfaction and section E: strategies to improve front desk operations to ensure efficiency. The questionnaire was 5- point Likert scale (1 – Strongly Disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3 – Uncertain, 4 – Agree, 5 – Strongly Agree) in which higher score indicate more perceived positive response.

As mentioned earlier, interviews were also employed. Frankel and Wallan (2007) explained that interviews are taken to find out from people things that we cannot directly observe or notice. They point to the fact that one cannot observe everything, for instance feelings, thoughts and intentions. In view of this, the researcher structured informal face to face interview with the sampled workers and customers of the two hotels. Interviews were therefore conducted with the staff and six randomly chosen customers. A semi-structured interview guide was therefore designed for the purpose. The purpose of the interviews was to gather more information about assessment of customer satisfaction of hotel front desk operations.

3.6 Types of data

The primary data were collected using questionnaire and interview. The secondary data collected for the study were from books, journals, internet source, and reports. Data on the number of hotels and their rating was also collected from the Northern Regional office of the Ghana Tourism Authority (Appendix C).

3.8 Pre-testing of instruments

Having constructed your research instrument, whether an interview schedule or a questionnaire, it is important that you test it out before using it for actual data collection. Pre-testing a research instrument entails a critical examination of the understanding of each question and its meaning as understood by a respondent. A pre-test should be carried out under actual field conditions on a group of people similar to your study population. The purpose is not to collect data but to identify problems that the potential respondents might have in either understanding or interpreting a question. Your aim is to identify if there are problems in understanding the way a question has been worded, the appropriateness of the meaning it communicates, whether different respondents interpret a question differently, and to establish whether their interpretation is different from what you were trying to convey. If there are problems you need to re-examine the wording to make it clearer and unambiguous (Kumar, 2011, p. 150).

Therefore, in view of the above advise offered by Kumar (2011), 10% of the questionnaires representing 12 and 15 for customers, and the FOS respectively were pre-tested in different hotels in the same metropolis twice in the same hotels using the same sample and size. According to Mugenda & Mugenda, (1999), from 1% to 10% of the

sample size is considered acceptable for pre-testing an instrument. The questionnaires were modified in respect of the feedback from the pre-test by way of restructuring, re-wording, re-phrasing for purposes of addressing seemingly ambiguous questions and to enhance clarity and readability of the research items.

3.9 Validity of Instruments

Validity of an instrument, refers to the extent to which the instrument measures that which it purports to measure (Agyedu, Donkor, & Obeng, 2007; Orodho, 2009; Kumar, 2011); and answers the question “ Are we measuring what we think we are measuring?” The purpose of validity is to ascertain the degree to which an instrument is accurate for a specific purpose (Agyedu, Donkor, & Obeng, 2007). How does one determine whether a research instrument is valid? There seems to be two ways of doing this in the social science research. You either based your judgement on the objectives that informed the construction of the instruments or a result of statistical analysis using the data gathered through the instrument whose validity is under test.

The researcher, being armed with this knowledge establishes validity of the instruments by justifying each item in relation to the objectives of the study. Furthermore, to still ensure validity, the instrument was discussed with the researcher’s supervisor for re-wording and clarity; and to ensure that the instrument will actually measure that which it seeks to measure. A pre-test of the instruments was done to further consolidate the researcher’s stands with respect to the validity of the instrument.

3.10 Reliability of Instruments

Reliability of an instrument refers to the extent to which an instrument measures the same way each time it is used under the same conditions with the same subjects (Agyedu, Donkor, & Obeng, 2007). It refers to the consistency of a research instrument in producing similar results over a period of repeated trials employing the same methodology. Therefore, to ensure reliability in this study, the pre-test of the instruments was repeated in the same hotels after a week's interval, thereby employing the test and re-test method of ensuring reliability of research instrument (Agyedu, Donkor, & Obeng, 2007). It is therefore, safe, to conclude that the instruments were reliable.

3.11 Data Collection procedures

Personal visit was made to the hotels with a letter introducing the researcher and the need for her to be assisted to collect data for her research as well as the purpose of assessing the impact of family income or resource on children educational performance. A variety of methods were utilized to obtain the relevant data for this study. Firstly, questionnaire was used to collect data. The questionnaire is a very effective data collection tool; it enables large volumes of data to be collected over a short period of time and can be self-administered. The researcher also interviewed two (2) classes each of the two (2) workers and customers to validate whether customers are satisfied or not. The researcher also interviewed workers within the Hotel setting and made field notes of the interview.

3.10.1 Data Analysis Procedure

The data collected in the form of field notes through and interview were transcribed into narratives and descriptive forms. To answer the research questions, descriptive statistics was employed, where the researcher used frequencies and percentages to make the interpretation of the results more meaningful, conclusions were drawn and recommendation made. The details of this will appear in chapter four. Interviews were recorded and later transcribed. Written notes were taken by the researcher. A content analysis was conducted on these data to determine emerging patterns.



CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Demographic information of the respondents such as gender, age, marital status, academic qualifications, professional status, purpose of travelling, booking or reservation and professional rank were sought. The results are presented in figures 4.1 to 10.

4.2 Gender of Respondents

Responses with regard to the gender of the customers, staff and managers are presented in Figure 4.1

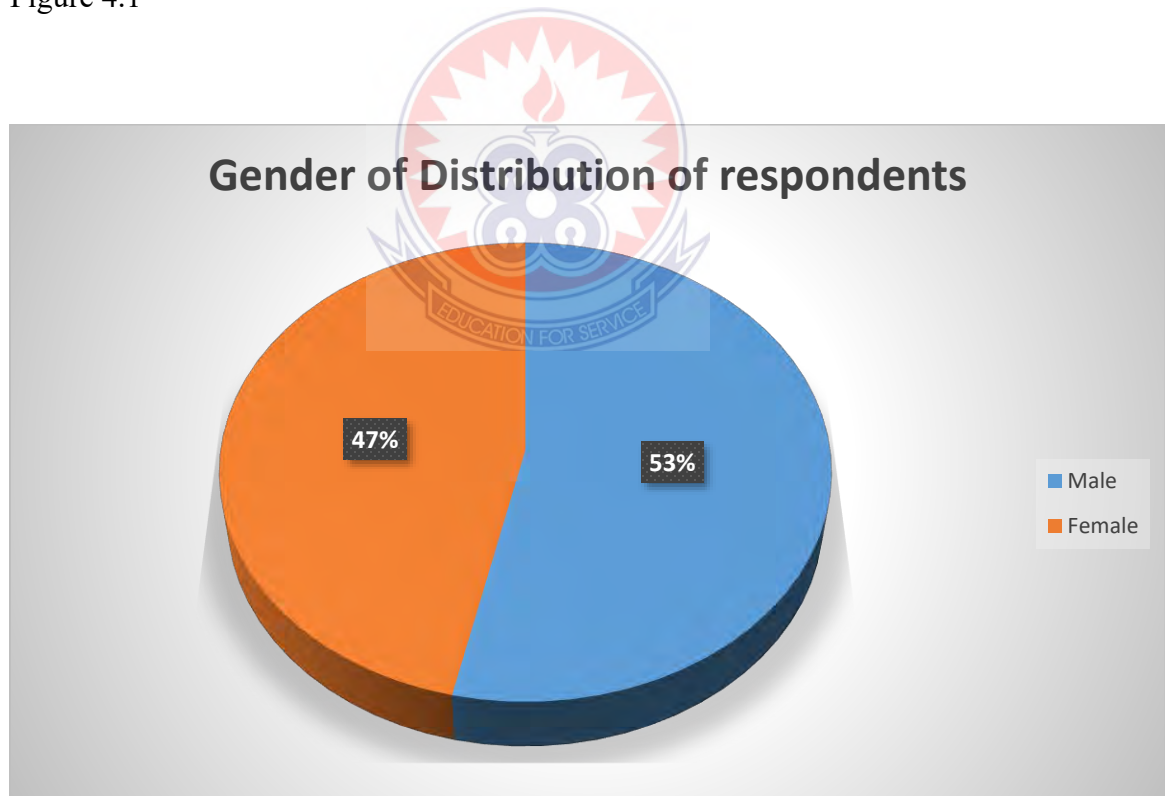


Figure 4.1 Gender Distribution of Respondents

The data in Figure 4.1 reveals that out of a sample size of two hundred (200) respondents, the males formed 107(53%) whilst females were 93 (47%). This instrument was necessary in finding out which gender was predominant among customers, staff and managers of Modern City Hotel and Mariam Hotel in the Tamale Metropolis. This finding is an indication of the masculinity of the caliber of customers, staff and managers of Modern City Hotel and Mariam Hotel in the Tamale Metropolis.

4.1.1 Age of Respondents

The results regarding the age distribution of the respondents are presented in Figure 4.2.

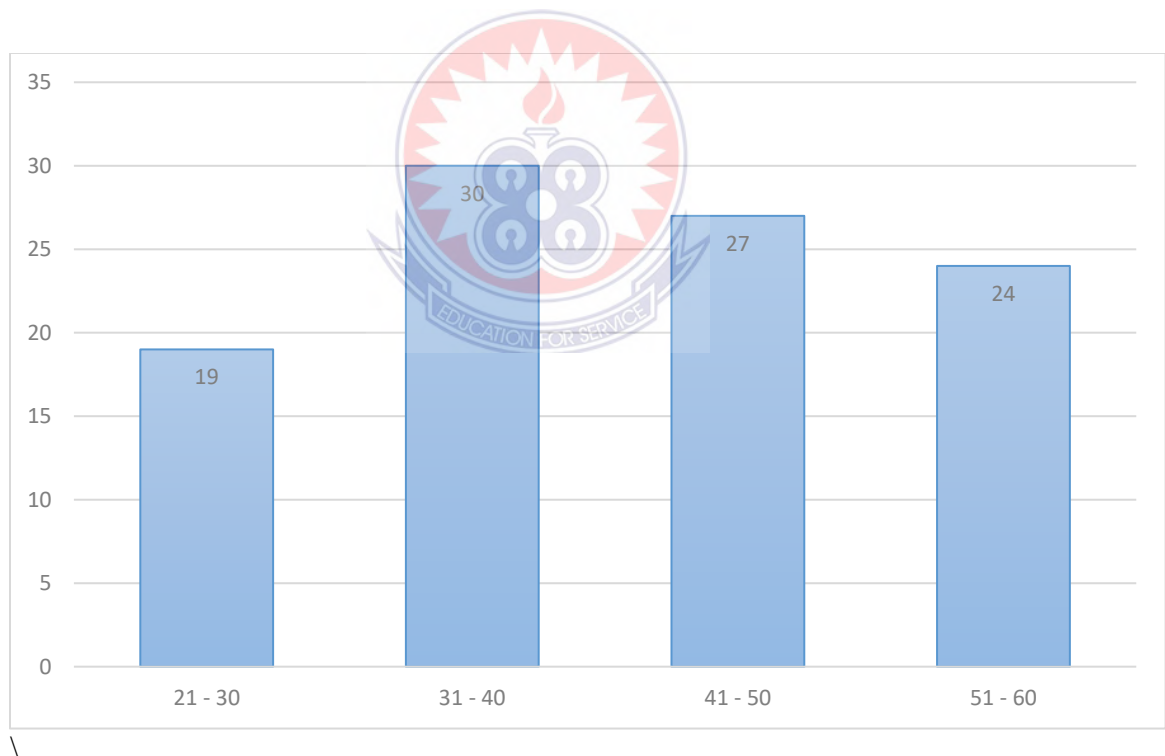


Figure 4.2 Age Distribution of Respondents

Figure 4.2 indicates that 60 (30%) of the sample were aged between 31 to 40 years and 53 (27%) aged between 41 and 50 years. Furthermore, 50 (24%) were aged between 21 to 30 years, and remaining 37 (19%) aged between 51 to 60 years. The finding also gives an indication that all the sampled respondents are grown enough to partake in a credible research endeavour such as this study.

4.1.2 Academic Qualification of Respondents

The results regarding the academic qualification of the respondents are presented in the Figure 4.3

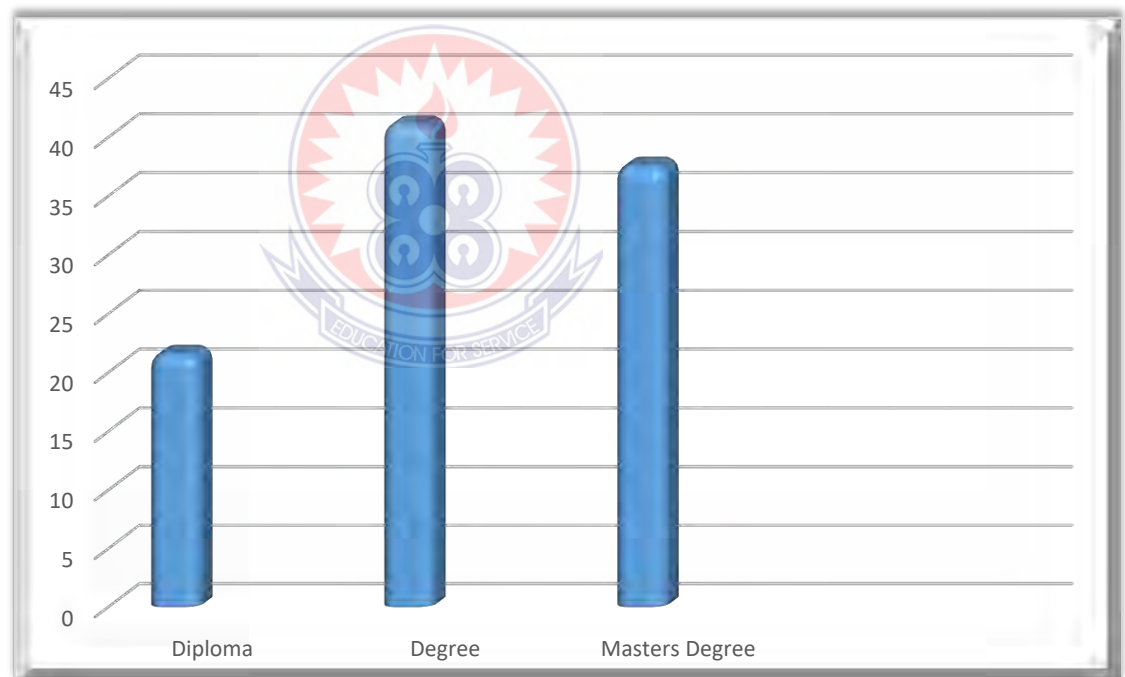


Figure 4.3 Academic Qualification Distribution of Respondents

Figure 4.3 indicates that in terms of the academic qualification of respondents, most respondents 82 (41%) had some form of tertiary education (Bachelor Degree) 75

(37.5%) had postgraduate degree education and the remaining 43 (21.5%) had diploma. This finding is indicative of the high level of education amongst the respondents.

4.1.3 Purpose of Travelling

The reason for travel varied from one guest to the other. From figure 4.4 The accumulation of multi-respondents showed 40% travelled for Tourism, 21.2% for Business, 16.8% for Visiting friends/Relatives, and for other purposes such as work 12% for other reasons. Those who travelled for less than 10% travelled for holiday. The result is presented in figure 4.4

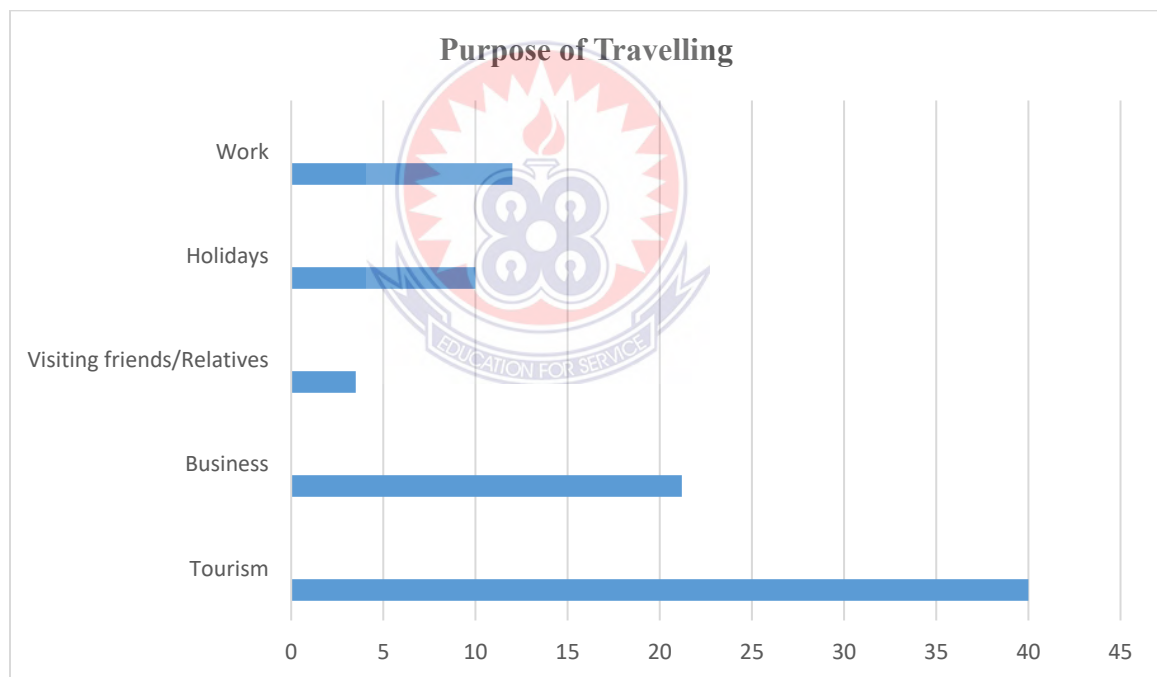


Figure 4.4 Purpose of Travelling

4.1.4 Hotel booking

Respondents were asked to state how they make booking at the hotels. There was clear sequence on the dropping of percentage; majority 57.8% book on Personal

Reservation, 24.2% were Online Reservation, and 18% Booked by a friend and the result is also presented in figure 4.5



Figure 4.5 Hotel booking

How the Descriptive Results Were Analysed and Interpreted For the Research Questions (RQ1-RQ4)

To gather evidence for the study, the selected 170 customers of Mariam hotel and Modern City hotel in the Tamale metropolis were made to rate their responses using Strongly Agree, Agree, Uncertain, Disagree and Strongly Disagrees. Using means, the scales were scored as (Strongly Agree =5, Agree =4, Uncertain =3 Disagree= 2 and Strongly Disagree =1). The criterion score of 3.00 was established for the scales. To obtain the criterion score (CS=3.00), the scores were added together and divided by the

number scales (that is..... $5+4+3+2+1= 15/5=3.00$). To understand the mean scores, **positive** items/statements on influences of customers satisfaction of the operations of the HFO at Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis that scored a mean of **0.00 to 2.49** was regarded as low practice. Those items/statements that scored a mean from **3.00 to 5.00** regarded as high customer satisfaction. -Analysis were done with the use of means, standard deviations and Kurtosis. These Analysis and Interpretation were applicable to all the research questions.

Research Question One: Which of the SERVQUAL Dimensions is the most influential on Customers' Satisfaction of the HFO at the Modern City and Mariam Hotel in Tamale Metropolis?

The Research Question one sought to find out which of the SERVQUAL dimensions influences customers satisfaction of the operations of the HFO at Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis

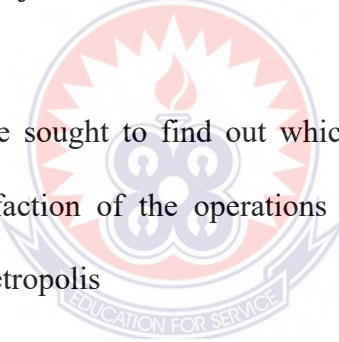


Table 4.1: Descriptive Results on the most influential SERQUAL Dimensions on Customers' Satisfaction of the HFO at the Modern City and Mariam Hotel in Tamale Metropolis.

Statements	MS	SD	Kurtosis		MR
			Std. Error	Score= 3.00	
Front desk staff give prompt service	4.08	1.169	.389	.370	1 st
Front desk staff possess the appropriate communication skills	3.79	1.251	-.049	.370	2 nd
Front desk staff perform services correctly	3.77	1.359	-.608	.370	3 rd
Front desk staff provide services as promised	3.72	1.028	-.890	.370	4 th
Front desk staff show personal level attention to you	3.69	1.953	44.832	.370	5 th
Dress of Front Desk Staff is always clean	3.66	1.098	-.929	.370	6 th
Front desk staff are able to communicate with you in any other language apart from English	3.66	1.085	.169	.371	7 th

Front desk staff can be trusted	3.45	1.197	-1.093	.370	8th
Front desk staff always appear smart and elegant	3.41	1.449	-1.243	.370	9 th
Front desk staff respond to request as quickly as possible	3.29	1.054	-.689	.371	10 th
The staff have product knowledge of the hotel	3.26	1.247	-1.347	.370	11 th
Front desk staff have skills required to perform service tasks	3.25	1.172	-1.178	.370	12 th
Front desk staff are always willing to help guests	3.25	1.447	-1.391	.370	13 th
Front Desk Staff dress appropriately	3.20	1.429	-1.188	.370	14 th
Front desk staff provide accurate information	3.09	1.373	-1.264	.370	15 th
Front desk staff are always aware of your specific needs	2.95	1.459	-1.366	.370	16 th
Front desk staff service with a smile	2.51	1.062	-1.111	.370	17 th
Front desk staff tell exactly when service will be provided	2.11	1.341	-.976	.370	18 th

Source: Field Data (2020)

(RS=170)

Key*M*= Mean,

SD =Standard Deviation

MR=Means Ranking

RS=Retrieved Sample

The customers were asked to indicate the degree to which they are satisfied with the various items under the SERVQUAL constructs with respect to the operations of HFO at Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis as presented. Starting with the Kurtosis values, the results show that the variables follow a normal distribution. This is based on the reason that the kurtosis values were within the acceptable limit for normal distribution of ± 3 (George & Mallery, 2011). This indicates that the data was normal and as such the descriptive statistics were deemed appropriate for the analysis.

Table 4.1 indicates that Front desk staff provide accurate information given ($M=4.083 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.169$, $K=.389$, $n=170$), which happened to fall under the *reliability* construct, come out as the most important factor that determines the levels of customer satisfaction at Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis. This implies that a significant majority of the customers are satisfied with how front desk staff provide information on the hotels. The findings of the study commensurate with the idea of (Pasimeni, 2019) Accuracy is to be ensuring that the information is correct and without any mistake. Information accuracy is important because the life of people depend on it like the medical information at the hospitals, so the information must be accurate. The quality of information measured by accuracy, timeliness, completeness, relevance and if it is easy to understood by the users, so the accuracy important for quality of information. And the accuracy represents all organization actions. To get accurate information we need the right value. According to (Pasimeni, 2019) if front desk staff gave inaccurate information, it is difficult to find who made the mistake.

Second to this is that front desk staff possess the appropriate communication skills ($M=3.79 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.251$, $K=-.049$, $n=170$). This was evident as it scored a mean greater than the criterion score.

In another results, front desk staff performed their services correctly ($M=3.77 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.359$, $K=-.608$, $n=170$). This was as well evident as it scored a mean greater than the criterion score.

It was again found that front desk staff provide services as promised ($M=3.72 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.028$, $K=-.890$, $n=170$). Also, front desk staff show personal level attention to you ($M=3.69 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.953$, $K=44.832$, $n=170$). Furthermore, the dress of Front Desk Staff was always clean ($M=3.66 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.098$, $K=-.929$, $n=170$). Front desk staff could communicate to customers in any other language apart from English ($M=3.66 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.085$, $K=-.169$, $n=170$).

Moreso, front desk staff were trustworthy ($M=3.45 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.197$, $K=1.093$, $n=170$). Customers saw that front desk staff always appeared smart and elegant ($M=3.41 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.449$, $K=-1.243$, $n=170$). Front desk staff were as quick to respond to customers request ($M=3.29 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.084$, $K=-.689$, $n=170$). Customers also observed that the staff have product knowledge of the hotel ($M=3.26 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.247$, $K=-1.347$, $n=170$). Front desk staff had skills required to perform service tasks ($M=3.25 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.172$, $K=-1.178$, $n=170$).

In addition, front desk staff were always willing to help guests ($M=3.25 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.447$, $K=-1.391$, $n=170$). Customers saw front Desk Staff dressed appropriately ($M=3.20 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.429$, $K=-1.181$, $n=170$). Front desk staff

provided accurate information ($M=3.09 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.373$, $K=-1.264$, $n=170$). All the above variables recorded a Mean (M) greater than the Criterion score (CS).

In the opinion of Awara & Anyadighibe, (2014) the front desk staff must stay in sight at the reception to prevent unnecessary and impatient waiting of guests. The front desk should always respond to guest requests at a faster pace— whether its pillows, blankets, towels, etc. Even at the time of check-out the front desk employees should be as friendly as possible and should try to keep conversations to a minimum as the guests mostly look for a quick exit.

The results lend ample support to the work of Guest Involvement Ideas, (2017) who observed that the Front desk agent or the guest service staff need to respond knowledgeably to guest requests for information and special request. Guests may request special equipment and supplies during any stage of the guest stay cycle Front desk agents have many duties as the face of a hotel's lobby. Finding a good system for prioritizing their tasks is integral to keeping up with work, so asking about how they plan to handle this is a good way to gauge a candidate's ability for the position. Additionally, any good answer should impress upon you the importance of putting a guest first above anything else.

However, front desk staff were always not aware of customers' specific needs ($M=2.95 < CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.459$, $K=-1.366$, $n=170$). This was evident as it scored a mean less than the criterion score. Front desk staff service could not were a smile ($M=2.51 < CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.062$, $K=-1.111$, $n=170$). Last but not least, front desk staff tell exactly when service would be provided ($M=2.11 < CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.341$, $K=-.967$, $n=170$)

Feedback from Customers on Satisfaction Construct

Some selected customers interviewed concerning customer satisfaction revealed that most of the customer said they are *satisfied with the Physical facilities*. This refers to the appearance of hotel and hotel staff, equipment personnel, physical facilities at hotel and rooms, communication materials and visual materials for customers (Minh *et. al.*, 2017). Elements within the tangibles dimension are cleanliness, space, atmosphere, appearance of server and location (Awara & Anyadighibe, 2014). SERVQUAL model further, the model measures customer expectations and perceptions of service quality. The quality gap (Q) is calculated by subtracting the expectation (E) from the perception (P) value i.e. $P-E=Q$. Summation of all the Q values provide an overall quality rating which is an indicator of relative importance of the service quality dimensions that influence customers' overall quality perceptions.

Customers were asked to rate the quality of the services offered by the hotel you last visited in a rating scale of 1 to 5 (1 being the smallest). Majority of the customers interviewed stated that in terms of rating on service quality customers rated both hotels four (4) out of five (5). The findings were in line with the statement made by Bergman and Klefsjö (2003) that service quality is affected by different dimensions from those of product quality. Among those factors is communication. They emphasized that being able to communicate in a comprehensive and understandable way is critical to build up the service quality. Other dimensions are responsiveness and courtesy, with responsiveness referring to willingness to helping customers and courtesy referring to the serviceperson's behaviour and manners; for example, good-will and politeness. In addition, they stated

that the ability to understand customers, their situation and their needs is also an important dimension of service quality.

Services are defined as subjectively perceived processes where production and consumption occur simultaneously (Gronroos, 1984). Grönroos (1984) raised up two dimensions in the measurement of service quality including technical quality (what) and functional quality (how).

Research Question Two: What are Guests' Perceptions of Service Quality Dimensions of Front Desk Staff

Table 4.2 Guests' Perceptions of Service Quality Dimensions of Front Desk Staff of Modern city and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis.

Research question two sought to examine the Guests' Perceptions of Service Quality Dimensions of Front Desk Staff.

Statements	M	SD	Kurtosis		MR
			Criterion Score =3.0	Std. Error	
Providing error free service	3.79	1.418	-.546	.370	1 st
Performing services right from the first time.	3.54	1.250	-.390	.370	2 nd
Providing service without any	3.46	1.265	-.438	.370	3 rd

 delays

Hotel staffs devote their time to answer the questions asked by guests	3.45	1.255	-.377	.370	4 th
Solving the problems of the guests with interest	3.42	1.258	-1.003	.370	5 th
Visually appealing materials (pamphlets, statements and web sites)	3.42	1.200	-.878	.370	6 th
Hotel staffs provide personal attention.	3.24	1.261	-1.246	.370	7 th
Hotel staffs' behavior instills confidence in guests.	3.23	1.226	-.613	.370	8 th

Guests feel safe and secure during their hotel stay	3.14	1.231	-.674	.370	9 th
Visually appealing physical facilities.	3.13	1.454	-1.342	.370	10 th
Performing the service within the promised time duration	3.08	1.218	-1.285	.370	11 th
Neat, clean and tidy hotel premises	3.06	1.381	-1.350	.370	12 th
Availability of clear information in the hotel	2.88	1.371	-1.297	.370	13 th
Hotel has adequate facility and supplies.	2.81	1.550	-1.570	.370	14 th

Source: Field Data (2020)

(RS=170)

Key

M= Mean,

SD =Standard Deviation

MR=Means Ranking

RS=Retrieved Sample

Table 4.2 presents the Guests' Perceptions of Service Quality Dimensions of Front Desk Staff. Customers perceived that providing error free service ($M=3.79 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.418$, $K=-546$, $n=170$) was the most important out of all as this came out to be the most significant guests' perceptions of service quality dimensions of front desk staff. It recorded a mean greater than the criterion score.

Also, customers perceived that performing services right from the first time ($M=3.54 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.250$, $K=-390$, $n=170$) was necessary. Followed by providing service without any delays ($M=3.46 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.265$, $K=-438$, $n=170$) and Hotel staffs devoting their time to answer the questions asked by guests ($M=3.45 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.255$, $K=-357$, $n=170$).

Moreover, staff solving the problems of the guests with interest ($M=3.42 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.258$, $K=-1.003$, $n=170$) and helping customers with visually appealing materials (pamphlets, statements and web sites) ($M=3.42 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.200$, $K=-.878$, $n=170$). Customers, moving on, perceived hotel staff provide personal attention ($M=3.24 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.261$, $K=-1.246$, $n=170$).

Furthermore, hotel staffs' behavior instills confidence in guests ($M=3.23 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.226$, $K=-.613$, $n=170$). Guests also felt safe and secure during their hotel stay ($M=3.14 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.231$, $K=-.674$, $n=170$). Physical facilities were visually appealing ($M=3.13 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.454$, $K=-1.342$, $n=170$) and staff Performed the service within the promised time duration ($M=3.08 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.218$, $K=-1.285$, $n=170$). Customers believed the hotels premises were neat, clean and tidy ($M=3.06 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.318$, $K=-1.350$, $n=170$).

The result indicates, when the guest feels safe and secure during their hotel stay, the guest will feel welcome and comfortable to interact with the personnel. Meanwhile, it could be concluded that most of the respondents at least slightly agreed towards all the items proven through the mean scores of above 3.00. Nevertheless, under responsiveness aspect, the respondents neither agree nor disagree that the front office personnel gave them prompt service during their stay in the hotel.

This mirror the quality of service provided and the management should seriously look into that since service quality will determine repeat patronage. Moreover, the personnel must have determination when helping a guest and always ready to provide the service. For assurance dimension, Hotel staffs provide personal attention earned mean score of 3.72 (Mean =3.88). The personnel must have knowledge and confidence when addressing guest by using titles like, prof, mister, miss, sir, or madam so that the guest will feel honoured when the staff acknowledged them.

Also, Parasuraman et al. (1991) depicted empathy dimension represent the provision of individualized attention and caring towards customer. Customers want the service personnel to give attention towards their needs and wants. This finding aligned with sriyam (2010) who identified that effective communication among front office personnel is the main factor that contributes to customer perception.

Nonetheless, customers perceived that there was not an availability of clear information in the hotel ($M=2.88 < CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.371$, $K=-1.297$, $n=170$) and hotels lacked adequate facility and supplies ($M=2.81 < CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.550$, $K=-1.570$, $n=170$). as these two variables scored a mean less than the Criterion score.

Feedback on interview

Customer were interviewed on Perceptions of Service Quality Dimensions of Front Desk Staff at Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis. Majority of the customers stated that *Perceptions of hotel service quality are the degree to which hotel guests find various hotel attributes important in enhancing their satisfaction with the hotel stay*. In the present study, it was revealed that the main dimensions of perceived service quality in luxury hotels were found to be ‘first impression. They also stated that a *friendly front desk associate makes for a great first impression to any hotel guest*. The tone in which you greet them and handle their check-in will remain with them throughout their stay. So it’s important you make a good impression right from the beginning. The secret of every great front desk associate is to master the elements of good customer service before your guests walk through the door. As a front desk associate, you represent the hotel you work for at all times. As much as you practice each task and master ‘checking in’ a guest, you must take care of your appearance as well. Before taking a step toward the front desk, take a look at yourself in a mirror. If you greet guests in a wrinkled uniform or with unkempt hair, you can forget about making a good first impression.

4.2.3 Factors affecting customer satisfaction

Research question three sought to identify the factors affecting customer satisfaction and response from the customers, staff and managers are presented in table 6.

Table 4.3 Factors affecting customer satisfaction

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Kurtosis Statistic	Std. Error	MR
Criterion Score= 3.0					
Ability to disseminate the needed information	3.89	1.314	.179	.371	1 st
Friendly and smiling faces of staff	3.79	1.394	-.359	.370	2 nd
Efficient and accurate chick-in and	3.48	1.246	-.279	.370	3 rd
First impression	3.42	.953	-.892	.370	4 th
Equality of treating	3.41	1.262	-.483	.370	5 th
Service standard	3.40	1.268	-1.077	.373	6 th
Pleasant and surprise welcome	3.35	1.188	-1.315	.370	7 th
Friendliness	3.26	1.214	-1.460	.370	8 th
Proper directions	3.23	1.182	-1.468	.370	9 th
check-out	3.19	1.234	-.640	.371	10 th
Responsiveness/attention to details	3.11	1.372	-1.360	.370	11 th
Language proficiency	3.08	1.202	-.765	.371	12 th
Customer care services	2.95	1.246	-.882	.370	13 th
Pleasant appearance	2.86	1.183	-1.169	.370	14 th
Prompt and courteous	2.16	1.132	-.742	.370	15 th

Source: Field Data (2020)

(RS=170)

Key*M* = Mean,*SD* = Standard Deviation*MR* = Means Ranking*RS* = Retrieved Sample

In Table 4.3 indicate factors affecting customer satisfaction. A high proportion of customer believed that staffs ability to disseminate the needed information satisfies them ($M=3.89 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.314$, $K=.179$, $n=170$). This was evident as it scored the highest mean at the same time greater than the criterion score. Second to this was the friendly and smiling faces of hotel staff ($M=3.79 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.394$, $K=-.359$, $n=170$). Next to this was the efficient and accurate check in observed on the part of the hotel staff ($M=3.48 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.246$, $K=-.279$, $n=170$).

Additionally, customers observed the first impression of hotel staff ($M=3.42 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=.953$, $K=-.892$, $n=170$) and the equality of treatment ($M=3.41 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.262$, $K=-.483$, $n=170$). Customers also considered the service standards of both hotels ($M=3.40 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.268$, $K=-1.077$, $n=170$) and the pleasant and surprise welcome they always received from hotel staff ($M=3.35 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.188$, $K=-1.315$, $n=170$).

Poon & Low (2005) maintained that hospitality is the most important factor affecting greatly the satisfaction and dissatisfaction among the tourists. The tourists' first impression about the hotel is more important and it will affect the entire evaluation about the facilities and offerings of the hotel and their satisfaction. Therefore, the managers

should arrange better welcome programs which will be surprised to the tourists. Another important task is to ensure the quick, friendly, and efficient check-in and check-out procedures which are expected by the tourists. The comments highlighted that a considerable number of tourists have developed negative perceptions and dissatisfaction about the poor check-in and check-out procedures and behaviors of the front office staff.

Moreover, hotel staff were observed by customers to be friendly ($M=3.26 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.214$, $K=-1.460$, $n=170$) and the former issued proper directions ($M=3.23 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.182$, $K=-1.468$, $n=170$). They also observed pleasant check out ($M=3.19 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.234$, $K=-.640$, $n=170$), paid attention to details ($M=3.11 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.372$, $K=-1.360$, $n=170$) and were satisfied with language proficiency of hotel staff ($M=3.08 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.202$, $K=-.765$, $n=170$).

Usually, the reception and front office staffs of a hotel have to work long hours continually. As a result, the employees are physically and mentally tired and frustrated and it is natural to have human errors. The tourists do not like to tolerate such errors and mistakes, since their objective is the maximization of utility or satisfaction. The hotel management should pay attention to this scenario and employ the staff for short hours or allow them to relax for a while within the long working hours. It is also suggested to employ the supportive staffs during the busy and peak hours. Even the managers can come out of their rooms and support the staffs during the peak hours, which will increase the satisfaction of the employees as well as the guests.

It is highlighted that the quality of rooms and bath rooms has a significant effect on guests' satisfaction. The tourists consider the hotel accommodation as their second home and expect everything to be perfect. The expected things are spacious rooms,

proper lighting, comfortable bed, fresh and proper changing of bed linen, pillow covers, towels, and free from insects like mosquitoes, cockroaches, flies, etc.. A considerable number of tourists are dissatisfied with the poor-quality bath rooms of the hotel rooms. The tourists expect the bath rooms to have standard and quality fittings, proper maintenance, hot water without interruption, proper lighting, mirrors, hair dryers, and other necessary facilities and to be spacious. The hoteliers have to pay much attention to this issue and should take corrective actions to improve the quality and standards.

The internal marketing is more important than external marketing as far as the hospitality industry is concerned. Internal marketing is the process that motivates and empowers employees at all management levels to consistently deliver a satisfying customer experience (Kotler, Bowen, & Makens, 1999). A considerable number of tourists are dissatisfied due to the irresponsible and lethargic behaviors of the employees. The hotel management should take necessary actions and programs to maintain a highly motivated and empowered work force for customer care services. The motivated employees work accurately and happily. Therefore, the in-house guests will be able to consume high-quality and standard services with higher satisfaction levels. The external factors that are beyond the control of the hoteliers also affect the in-house guests' satisfaction. The affected factors are: bad weather, beach boys, bad smell in the sea, sewage come to the beach with the high tidal waves, etc. Especially, the beach hotels affect badly those factors and caused dissatisfaction among the tourists. The hoteliers can intervene in managing these situations through two ways, i.e., situational approach and plan in advance.

However, customer care services were not satisfactory ($M=2.95 < CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.246$, $K=-882$, $n=170$), unpleasant appearance of staff ($M=2.86 < CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.183$, $K=-1.169$, $n=170$) and tardiness, unreadiness and uncourteousness on the part of the hotel staff ($M=2.16 < CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.132$, $K=-742$, $n=170$) were issues that couldn't have been swept under the carpet. All these variables scored means less than the criterion score.

Feedback on Interview

From the interview conducted on factors affecting customer satisfaction and most of the customers said that *the identified factors related to the tourists' satisfaction are: front office operations, hospitality, accommodations, bath rooms, food and beverages, recreation and entertainment, auxiliary services, safety and security, hotel staffs, hotel management, location, design and maintenance, price and payments, business support services, and responsible marketing.* The availability and adequacy of these factors have the satisfaction among the tourists, while the non-availability and inadequacy have caused the dissatisfaction among the tourists.

Research question four: What are the Strategies to improve front desk operations to ensure service quality

Research question four sought to examine strategies to improve front desk operations to ensure service quality and the response from Customers, Staff and managers are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Strategies to Improve Front Desk Operations to Ensure Service Quality

Statements	M	SD	Kurtosis		MR
			Statistic	Std. Error	
Criterion Score=3.0					
Responds to any request from customers	4.10	1.175	.752	.370	1 st
Make Optimum Use of Technology	4.07	1.116	-.461	.371	2 nd
Helpful when customers need assistance	3.84	1.334	-1.584	.370	3 rd
Accurate responses to any enquiries	3.60	1.316	-1.649	.370	4 th
Guest Specialist	3.35	1.265	-1.585	.370	5 th
Keep Training Your Front Desk Team	3.29	1.416	-1.390	.370	6 th
Read the Cues	3.12	.687	.148	.370	7 th
Friendly and polite to customers	2.96	1.143	-.799	.370	8 th
Empowering the front desk with technology	2.85	1.231	-1.265	.370	9 th
Source: Field Data (2020)			(RS=170)		

Key

M= Mean,

SD =Standard Deviation

MR=Means Ranking

RS=Retrieved Sample

Table 4.4 shows the strategies to Improve Front Desk Operations to Ensure Service Quality. The most outstanding of the responses of the customers was hotel staffs ability to respond to any request from them ($M=4.10 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.175$, $K=-752$, $N=170$).

This recorded a mean greater than the criterion score. Customers also agreed that they were allowed to make optimum Use of Technology ($M=4.07 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.116$, $K=-461$, $n=170$) and hotel staff were helpful when customer staff needed their assistance ($M=3.84 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.334$, $K=-1.584$, $n=170$). Computerized front desk technology enables the agent to perform check-in duties ranging from room availability and reservations, to inventory, pricing and guest data capture. On checkout, the guest's billing is integrated with phone accounting, in-room entertainment costs and point of sale purchases (Erdem, Atadil & Nasoz, 2019).

A need is a desire that causes a customer to buy a product. If customers buy products to satisfy needs, then needs provoke customers to buy products. But this definition is vague; it doesn't give any direction to product teams or market researchers on how to understand what customers want (Ashtiani and Bahmanzadeh, 2017).

Additionally, customers agreed that they received accurate responses to any enquiries ($M=3.60 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.316$, $K=-1.649$, $n=170$) and were attended by guest specialist ($M=3.35 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.265$, $K=-1.585$, $n=170$). The findings support the argument made by Brown (2016) who maintained that a guest specialist performs a vital role as the front-line representative for her employing company or organization. Guest specialists, sometimes referred to as hosts or receptionists, work in hotels, restaurants, recreational facilities, private clubs and public organizations. They greet all patrons, or

guests, and ensure that their overall experience with the establishment is a positive one. Successful guest specialists provide optimal customer service and ensure the safety and satisfaction of each guest.

The findings support the argument made by Erdem, Atadil and Nasoz, (2019) that the Enquiry area should have all the information pertaining to the hospital and public services. This includes information regarding facilities, cost of treatment and procedures, name of the physicians and surgeons, and duration of hospital stay for all available treatments and problems, queries related on medical record number and room number of inpatient. The receptionist should also be familiar with the timings for buses, trains and airways. A guide map of the places of interest to see in the city can also be kept for customers' guidance. Exponential advances in technology are causing significant changes in today's business landscape and the hospitality industry is no exception. The Lodging Technology Study from Hospitality Technology magazine gathered data from more than 60,000 properties to explore the technology challenges operators face today and how they choose to grow their businesses to complement the growth of technology (Erdem, Atadil and Nasoz, 2019). The study features priorities among hoteliers, including their top challenges, investment plans and technology goals. The results show hotels are looking to gain a competitive advantage in the market by prioritizing one thing in particular.

Furthermore, customers agreed that staff of both hotel have been undergoing training and been offered on the job training ($M=3.29 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.416$, $K=-1.390$, $n=170$) and very observant in reading cues ($M=3.12 > CS (3.00)$, $SD=.687$, $K=.148$, $n=170$). One of the greatest sources of positive, or negative, perceptions of the service is derived from the interaction between the service provider and the customer during the

service encounter. The providers' ability and willingness to be flexible according to customers' needs, and to resolve any problems which occur promptly and without hassle, is a function of their training and the organizational culture in which they operate.

The study reported here was designed to investigate employee performance cues within a hotel service environment. The results indicate that front desk, housekeeping, and parking employee performance have significant effects on perceived quality, whereas front desk and room service employee performance have significant effects on perceived value. The only performance cue having a direct effect on word-of-mouth intentions is the performance of housekeeping employees.

Customers however disagreed that staff of both hotels were friendly and polite to them ($M=2.96 < CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.143$, $K=-.799$, $n=170$) and hotel management failing to empower the front desk with technology ($M=2.85 < CS (3.00)$, $SD=1.231$, $K=-1.265$, $n=170$). Both variables scored a mean less than the criterion score.

Feedback on Interviewee's

Majority of the customers interviewed opined that some of the significant to *improve front desk operations to ensure service quality at Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis were training, huge salaries and bonuses*. Well trained and motivated staff is always a key to success for any organisation. Highly trained staff especially on the front desk of the hotel plays a key role in the business success and in customer's satisfaction, a famous quotation 'First impression is the last impression' fits perfectly on the hotel industry. The findings suggest that work in this department of hotel is challenging, demanding and communication is an important skill for the staff. It also

says that high-quality human resources are lacking in the hospitality sector and emphasises on professional development and training in order to improve the skills of staff in the front office. Minghetti Valeria, 2003, the article suggests that to increase the occupancy levels, consecutively the revenue levels and the guest experience, the hoteliers must understand the needs of the guest, their preferences in the hotel.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

The study assessed customer satisfaction of hotel front desk operations in Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis. Specifically, the study sought to find out the levels of customer satisfaction, Guests' Perceptions of Service Quality Dimensions of Front Desk Staff at Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis, the factors affecting customer satisfaction at Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis and the strategies to improve front desk operations to ensure service quality at Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis. Data were collected from two hundred (200) respondents using random sampling. The data collected were coded, fed into the computer and processed using the SPSS (version 21) computer application software and Microsoft Excel. Basically, descriptive statistics were used for the data analysis. Mean Standard Deviation, Frequencies and percentages, simple tables and figures were employed to analyse customer satisfaction of hotel front desk operations in Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

From a careful analysis of the variables as presented in the previous chapter, the study revealed the following major findings:

5.3 The levels of customer satisfaction at Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis

Research question one sought to assess the levels of customer satisfaction at Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis. Front desk staff provide accurate information ($M= 4.41$; $p<0.001$) come out as the most important factor that determines the levels of customer satisfaction at Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis. Again, dress of Front Desk Staff is always clean ($M=4.23$; $p<0.001$), Front desk staff service with a smile ($M=4.22$; $p< 0.041$) were equally influential in the level of customer satisfaction. Front desk staff provide services as promised ($M= 4.11$; $p<0.032$), Front Desk Staff dress appropriately ($M= 4.01$; $p< 0.001$) were other influential level of customer satisfaction in the Tamale Metropolis.

5.4 Guests' Perceptions of Service Quality Dimensions of Front Desk Staff at Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis

The research question two sought to examine guests' perceptions of service quality dimensions of front desk staff. Guests feel safe and secure during their hotel stay ($M= 4.23$; $SD= 0.351$; $p< 0.001$) came out to be the most significant Guests' Perceptions of Service Quality Dimensions of Front Desk Staff. Performing services right from the first time ($M= 3.98$; $SD= 0.569$; $p< 0.023$), Visually appealing materials (pamphlets, statements and web sites) ($M= 3.92$; $SD= 0.221$; $p<0.022$) and Hotel staffs provide personal attention ($M= 3.69$; $SD= 0.225$; $p<0.001$) drives Guests' Perceptions of Service Quality Dimensions of Front Desk Staff. To some extent Hotel staffs devote their time to answer the questions asked by guests. Hotel staffs' behavior instills confidence in guests.

Were rated above the average point (3) were statistically not significant at the 0.05 confident interval. The study also revealed that Majority of the customers stated that Perceptions of hotel service quality are the degree to which hotel guests find various hotel attributes important in enhancing their satisfaction with the hotel stay. In the present study, it was revealed that the main dimensions of perceived service quality in luxury hotels were found to be ‘first impression.

5.5 The factors affecting customer satisfaction at Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis

A high proportion of customer, staff and manager stated (M= 4.35; SD= 1.367; $\chi^2= 65.496$; $p<0.0001$) identified that, first impression was the main factor affecting customer satisfaction in the hotel industry. Again, majority of the respondents agreed friendly and smiling faces of staff (M= 4.25; SD= 1.367; $\chi^2= 65.496$; $p<0.0001$) was significantly affect customer satisfaction. Factors such as Equality of treating (M= 3.22; SD= 1.521; $\chi^2= 44.114$; $p<0.0001$), Responsiveness/attention to details (M= 2.45; SD= 1.383; $\chi^2=42.732$; $p< 0.001$), Language proficiency (M= 2.41; SD = 1.312; $\chi^2=62.325$; $p< 0.001$), Efficient and accurate chick-in and check-out (M= 2.13; SD = 1.332; $\chi^2=85.089$; $p< 0.001$), service standard (M= 2.09; SD = 1.545 $\chi^2=76.659$; $p< 0.001$), Proper directions (M= 2.01; SD =1.358 $\chi^2=46.553$; $p< 0.001$), Pleasant and surprise welcome (M= 1.92; SD = $\chi^2=94.033$; $p< 0.001$), Pleasant appearance (M= 1.81; SD =1.536 $\chi^2=22.325$; $p< 0.001$) were significantly affect customer satisfaction.

From the interview conducted on factors affecting customer satisfaction the study revealed that The identified factors related to the tourists’ satisfaction are: front office

operations, hospitality, accommodations, bath rooms, food and beverages, recreation and entertainment, auxiliary services, safety and security, hotel staffs, hotel management, location, design and maintenance, price and payments, business support services, and responsible marketing.

5.6 Strategies to improve front desk operations to ensure service quality at Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis

The study revealed that majority (60 – 85%) of respondents agreed that guest specialist

keep training your front desk team, read the cues, make optimum use of technology, accurate responses to any enquiries, responds to any request from customers, empowering the front desk with technology, friendly and polite to customers and helpful when customers need assistance were the strategies to improve front desk operations to ensure service quality at Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis.

5.7 Conclusion

It is irrefutable that front desk service plays a very important role in the hospitality service. Through its operations including handling reservations, check-in and register, mail and information request handling, uniform service and baggage, telephone and message handling, guest account handling, the front desk office is considered as the image of the hotel and the facilitator between guests and other functional departments.

The most important elements in guest satisfaction leading to repeat customers are standardized products, motivated and trained staff and quality management. An overall

view of the study shows that most of the guests are satisfied with the overall services of the Front Desk Operators.

The Front office department on the whole seems to be one area which is a key promoter of the guest satisfaction. The motivational techniques used for the staff like the Star-o-meter (earning star points for the quality services offered), Employee of the Month Award, displaying such information on the display boards for everyone to know are effective motivational tools. It can also be said that the training practices as well as the recruitment policies for the hotel are effective. The Front Offices practices followed during the departure like sending the bill a night before the departure or slipping it early morning with the newspaper for the guest to check, offering goody bags and gifts while leaving the hotel, catching such moments in the photos and mailing them to the guest, answering the queries and effective handling of complaints have added to the level of guest satisfaction.

The results were shown that while first impression is significant factors that can leverage the satisfactions of the customers while working with the front desks in such a diverse business environment where customers are coming from all over the World, staffs of this department haven't completely performed these skills up to the expectations of the customers and co-workers from other departments. These problems lead to misunderstandings and mistakes during working process, prolong the time needed to perform the tasks, and therefore lower the effectiveness of the operations in general. It gets reflected in the loyalty of the guests towards the Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis

5.8 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommends that:

1. The findings of this paper present more important insight knowledge and implications for hoteliers to open their eyes and identify the current situations as responsiveness dimension emerges the greatest influence on customer satisfaction. The managers need to take immediate actions to re-correct if there is any deviation of their practices. Customer satisfaction is more important for the success of business organizations. Therefore, the managers should pay attention to each and every aspect of the hotels. Perhaps, the hoteliers do not even imagine that a small error may cause the dissatisfaction about the entire operations of the hotel. The satisfied customers make repeat visit and talk favourably about their satisfaction, and it will spread positive publicity about the hotel. The satisfaction of the tourists leads to the loyalty about the hotel.
2. The behaviour of the hotel staff and their services can make the customer satisfied or dissatisfied. The hoteliers should take the necessary actions to improve the efficiency and attitudes of the employees in order to display positive behaviors and provide quality services that will merit with guest perception. Therefore, the hoteliers should first practice the internal marketing to maintain highly motivated and satisfied employees to provide services to satisfy the external customers.
3. Emphasis should be given on selling of the hotel travel desk services, chauffer services for airport pick up and local transport which will serve as an additional revenue source for the hotel. This innovations will contribute to a high customer satisfaction and patronage.

4. To enhance the guest stay and overall experience, employees to be made more sensitive towards the needs and preferences of the guest through briefing & training programs. Qualified staff should be employed and much assurance given to customers for quality services.

5.9 Suggestions and Areas for Further Research

Because of the stipulated period for the study, the research was limited to specific areas and suggests that, further research be done to cover more districts to present the true picture of Assessment of customer satisfaction of hotel front desk operations. A case of Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis. The research also focused on population which had stayed in the hotel. There is need to conduct research on clients in the hotel at the time of study but not on their past experiences. Lastly, further research should look at different factors that affects customer satisfaction besides service quality, perceived value quality and customer expectations. Relatively, a relationship between quality service and customer retention may as well be looked at.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CUSTOMERS

Dear Respondent,

ASSESSMENT OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION OF HOTEL FRONT DESK OPERATIONS. A CASE OF MODERN CITY AND MARIAM HOTEL IN THE TAMALE METROPOLIS

I am Alhassan Shafawu, a graduate student of the University of Education, Winneba- Kumasi Campus, conducting a study on the topic: “*Assessment of customer satisfaction of hotel front desk operations. A case of Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis*”

This study is in partial fulfilment for the award of Master of philosophy. You are kindly requested to provide responses to the questions as candidly as possible. All information given will be treated with strict confidentiality. Your responses would be highly appreciated for the success of the research.

I count on your co-operation in this regard.

Thank you.

SECTION A

Respondents' Profile

1. Gender i). Male [] ii). Female []
2. Age in years: i). 21-30 [] ii). 31-40 [] iii). 41--50 [] iv). 51 and above. []
3. Educational background i) Basic [] ii) Secondary/Technical [] iii).Tertiary []
4. Nationality i) Ghanaian [] ii).Other (Specify)_____
5. Purpose of Travel i).Business [] ii) Tourism [] iii) Visiting friends/Relatives []

17	Front desk staff are always willing to help guests					
It terms of Assurance						
18	The staff have product knowledge of the hotel					
19	Front desk staff have skills required to perform service tasks					
20	Front desk staff possess the appropriate communication skills					
21	Front desk staff can be trusted					
In terms of empathy						
22	Front desk staff are able to communicate with you in any other language apart from English					
23	Front desk staff show personal level attention to you					
24	Front desk staff are always aware of your specific needs					



SECTION C

**GUESTS' PERCEPTIONS OF SERVICE QUALITY DIMENSIONS OF FRONT
DESK STAFF**

Please tick (✓) in the appropriate boxes to indicate the Guests' Perceptions of Service Quality Dimensions of Front Desk Staff.

1=Highest 2=High; 3=Moderate; 4=Low; 5=Lowest

No	Item	Responses				
		1	2	3	4	5
25	Hotel has adequate facility and supplies.					
26	Visually appealing physical facilities.					
27	Visually appealing materials (pamphlets, statements and web					

	sites)					
28	Hotel staffs provide personal attention.					
29	Neat, clean and tidy hotel premises					
30	Performing the service within the promised time duration					
31	Solving the problems of the guests with interest					
32	Performing services right from the first time.					
33	Providing service without any delays					
34	Providing error free service					
35	guests feel safe and secure during their hotel stay					
36	Hotel staffs devote their time to answer the questions asked by guests					
37	Availability of clear information in the hotel					
38	Hotel staffs' behavior instills confidence in guests.					

SECTION D

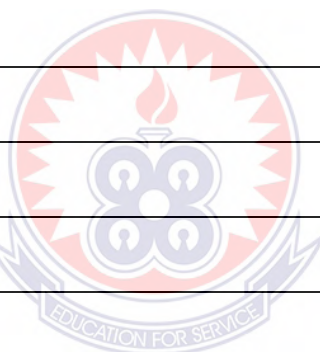
FACTORS AFFECTING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Please tick (✓) in the appropriate boxes to Factors affecting customer satisfaction

1=strongly disagree; 2= disagree, 3= uncertain; 4= agree; 5= strongly agree

No	Item	Responses				
		1	2	3	4	5
40	Efficient and accurate chick-in and					
41	check-out					

42	Equality of treating					
43	Friendly and smiling faces of staff					
44	Responsiveness/attention to details					
45	Language proficiency					
46	Ability to disseminate the needed					
47	information					
48	Service standard					
49	Proper directions					
50	Pleasant and surprise welcome					
51	Friendliness					
52	Pleasant appearance					
53	Prompt and courteous					
54	Customer care services					
55	First impression					



SECTION E**STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE FRONT DESK OPERATIONS TO ENSURE
SERVICE QUALITY**

Please tick (√) in the appropriate boxes to strategies to improve front desk operations to ensure service quality

1=strongly disagree; 2= disagree, 3= uncertain; 4= agree; 5= strongly agree

No	Item	Responses				
		1	2	3	4	5
56	Guest Specialist					
57	Keep Training Your Front Desk Team					
58	Read the Cues					
58	Make Optimum Use of Technology					
60	Accurate responses to any enquiries					
61	Responds to any request from customers					
62	Empowering the front desk with technology					
63	Friendly and polite to customers					
64	Helpful when customers need assistance					

APPENDIX B



INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR MANAGEMENT

I am Alhassan Shafawu, a graduate student of the University of Education, Winneba- Kumasi Campus, conducting a study on the topic: “*Assessment of customer satisfaction of hotel front desk operations. A case of Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis*”

This study is in partial fulfilment for the award of Master of philosophy. You are kindly requested to provide responses to the questions as candidly as possible. All information given will be treated with strict confidentiality. Your responses would be highly appreciated for the success of the research.

I count on your co-operation in this regard.

Thank you.

1. A. What are the levels of customer satisfaction at Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis
- B. How would you rate the quality of the services offered by the hotel you last visited in a rating scale of 1 to 5 (1 being the smallest).
2. Can you please tell me Guests’ Perceptions of Service Quality Dimensions of Front Desk Staff at Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis?

3. What are the factors affecting customer satisfaction at Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis?
4. What are strategies to improve customer satisfaction at Modern City and Mariam hotel in Tamale Metropolis?



APPENDIX C

LETTER FROM RESEARCHER TO GHANA TOURISTS BOARD, TAMALE



May 6, 2020.

The Regional Manager,
Ghana Tourism Authority
Northern Region, Tamale

Dear Sir,

REQUEST FOR DATA FOR A STUDY

Please, I write to request for data (**number of hotels and guests' houses and their respective grades in the Tamale Metropolis**) to enable me complete my Master of Philosophy Dissertation. I am a student of University of Education, Winneba, Kumasi Campus with Identification Number **200030947**; and dissertation title "***An Assessment of Customer Satisfaction of Hotel Front Desk Operations: A Case Study of Two Selected Hotels in the Tamale Metropolis.***"

Sir, am grateful and hopeful that my request will be granted.

Thank you

Yours truly,

Alhassan Shafawu

(200030947)

APPENDIX D

LETTER FROM GHANA TOURISTS BOARD, TAMALE TO RESEARCHER

