

Determinants of Customer Satisfaction among Hotels in Ebonyi

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Abstract

This study investigated determinants of customer satisfaction among hotels in Ebonyi State. Specifically, it determined ways interior decoration, product quality, service quality, environmental aesthetics and staff welfare influence customer satisfaction in the hotels. Descriptive survey design was used for the study. Population was made up of 100 registered hotel businesses in Ebonyi State. Questionnaire was used for data collection. Data were analysed using mean and standard deviation. Findings reveal 10 ways interior decoration influences customer satisfaction. These include, enhances customers' value for quality ($\bar{X}=3.31$) and fanciful curtains ($\bar{X}=3.31$) and others. Other findings are 10 ways product quality influenced customer satisfaction. These include among others, serving nutritious foods ($\bar{X}=3.10$) and availability of products ($\bar{X}=3.50$). Also, 10 way service quality influenced customer satisfaction such as prompt attendance to customers ($\bar{X}=3.40$) and friendly customer service ($\bar{X}=3.20$). Furthermore, 10 ways environmental aesthetics influenced customer satisfaction. These include among others, paintings and decorations ($\bar{X}=3.12$) and quality of architectural structures ($\bar{X}=3.51$). More findings also reveal 10 ways staff welfare influenced customer satisfaction such as regular payment of staff salaries ($\bar{X}=3.21$) and adequate salaries ($\bar{X}=3.30$).

Keywords: Hospitality, Industry, Influence, Hotels, Factors, Customers, Determinants, Satisfaction.

Introduction

Hospitality is the relationship of a host towards a guest. It means extending welcome to guests or offering a home away from home (Ofobruku 2012). Hospitality connotes friendly reception. It is a business that provides foods, drinks and accommodation for customers. Hospitality industry has been one of the most competitive industries especially in the 21st century. In the recent times, there has been a surge in the business in Nigeria and other nations (Nwokorie & Obiora, 2018). Hospitality industry covers many activities such as tourism services, restaurants, fast food centres, event

management, transportation, hotels etc. Hotels host guests, they provide foods, drinks, recreational facilities etc. Hotels play an important role in the socio-economic growth of emerging societies. It is well-positioned as a major provider of variety of services including paid accommodation, restaurant services, relaxation centres, etc. Hotels offer hospitality services to guests and tourists (Batnic 2016). Hotels are classified into one to five stars based on their amenities, room numbers, furnishings, staff strength etc (Yuvraj 2022). Hotel industry is an important driver of economic development. Due to the linkages it has

with numerous sectors of the economy, it has the potential to create an array of jobs for its international and local populace (Otu, *et al*, 2013). It also offers natural and cultural attractions and historical monuments to guest as well as various entertainment facilities (Yadav 2014).

Over the years, hotels seem to have been experiencing difficulty providing sustainable customer satisfaction (Abdullah & Othman, 2019). Customer satisfaction measures how happy customers are with a company's product, services, capabilities, etc (American Society for Quality 2024). To succeed or simply to survive in the now, the industry is definitely interested in the perception of the services to be in line with expectations (Anwar& Abdullah, 2021). Hotel industries are very essential, because they are considered a source of income for individuals and the country at large. As such, they strive to catch the attention of guests and tourists to their establishment (Ali, *et al*, 2021).

Owing to the strategic role of the hotels, owners have been concerned about appropriate factors that will influence customer satisfaction. Zeleke & Kumar (2020) argued that hotels have launched different initiatives to demonstrate their willingness and determination to promote customer satisfaction including the adoption of relevant conduct and implementation of a viable management system. It is argued that the performance of the industry is dependent on variety of factors that connect with the sustenance of product and service quality aimed at enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty. Anwar & Abdullah, (2021) affirmed that customers prefer and value establishments that provide high service quality. Customers judge service quality about what they want by comparing their

perceptions of service experiences with their expectations of what the service performance should be. For this reason, enhancing customer loyalty is one of the key aspects of competitiveness in the industry as well as ensuring business continuity. In the event that customers are satisfied with products or brand, they most likely become loyal customers and keep spreading good word of the hotel (Prentice, *et al*, 2020). In that same manner, in the event that they are disappointed, they will probably switch off brand and talk bad of it to different customers. Satisfaction occurs when a service or product is superior or equal to the expectations of a customer (Nikou & Khiabani, 2020). With the high increase of hotel businesses and the need to provide distinct services for customers, there have been accompanying demands for the business owners to adopt appropriate service management factors for sustainable customer satisfaction (Nwokorie, 2017).

Customer satisfaction is a term that portrays a customer's perception of the value of the products and services they have received compared to the amount they have spent on the products and services. A customer who receives what he or she expected in a hotel is most likely to be satisfied (Flores, *et al*, 2020). Customer satisfaction with the hotels can be triggered by many elements, such as the ambience of the hotel, the exterior designs and arrangement to enhance more aesthetically pleasing environment for consumers using the space and the services. Customer satisfaction is a critical success factor in hotels. Satisfied customers repurchase the service, recommend and encourage others to use the service, while a dissatisfied customer responds differently.

Customer's discernment may depend on the nature of the services, products, aesthetics and staff welfare that can trigger performance. A loyal customer is a customer who keeps consuming the services of an organization and keeps recommending the services to other people. Consumer's loyalty is a good measure of the quality of service offered to customers. Hotel businesses can create strategies to improve the quality of their services and products by measuring the level of their customer's loyalty.

In Ebonyi State, hotels have increasingly assumed a crucial role in the economic growth and development of the state. They offer varied services however, in some cases qualities of services and products remain questionable. There are cases of customers not repeating visits to the organizations especially in Abakaliki. In such situation, customers may visit once and owing to the nature of the products and services they received and also due to the decline in the quality of the environment and interiors may decide not to come again, they go all out to seek for better options and alternatives which usually may not be readily available as occurrences are similar in other hotels. They start good but as time passes, a lot of complaints begin to manifest. Customers complain about products, choky and unfriendly environment, foul smell etc. They also identify lapses and inconsistency on the part of the services and products provided. The establishment consistently loses their initial statuesque. This seems to make owners and management alike not to enjoy prolonged patronage translating to a great loss in their business investments. It is common that when a customer is not satisfied with service quality, environment both in and out, product

quality, etc, such customer may not continue to patronize them. It seems that managers face the problems of trying to satisfy their customers and end up experiencing high levels of customers' dissatisfaction. It thus becomes necessary to evolve ways of enhancing customer satisfaction in hotels in Ebonyi state.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to investigate determinants of customer satisfaction in hotels in Ebonyi State. Specifically, the study determined ways the following could influence customer satisfaction in the hotels:

1. interior decoration
2. product quality
3. service quality
4. environmental aesthetics
5. staff welfare.

Methodology

Design of the Study: A descriptive survey design was employed for the study.

Area of Study: The area of study was Ebonyi State in South-east geopolitical zone of Nigeria. There are three senatorial zones in the state. The hotels in the area are mostly one-star to three-star hotels. There are no five-star hotels in the state presently. The hotels used for the study were registered with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and also registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission.

Population of the Study: The population was made up of all the customers who patronize the hotels in Ebonyi State. The state has 45 one - star hotels, 34 two - star hotels and 21 three - star hotels registered under Ebonyi State Ministry of Culture and Tourism (EBMCT Registration Data, 2022).

Sample for the Study: Abakaliki senatorial zone was purposively selected because it has more hotels (70) than the other zones.

Stochastic sampling approach was employed to draw 180 respondents, comprising of 181 males and 49 females, who were customers seen on site at the selected hotels at the time of data collection. They were all adults of different socio-economic, educational and age levels.

Instrument for Data Collection: Questionnaire was used for the study. It was developed based on extensive literature review and in line with the objectives. The instrument was face validated by three experts in Hospitality management. A pilot study was conducted using 20 respondents who were not part of the study and from another zone. Data obtained were

analyzed to determine the internal consistency of the instrument using Cron back Alpha. A reliability co-efficient of 0.786 was obtained.

Data Collection Method: A total of 180 copies of questionnaire were distributed by hand to respondents. All the 180 copies were completed and retrieved. This gave 100 percent return rate.

Data Analysis: Mean and standard deviation were used for data analysis. The decision rule was 2.50. Mean score of 2.50 and above was considered a “way” while customer satisfaction could be influenced. Mean score below 2.50 was considered as “not a way”

Findings

Table 1: Mean Responses and Standard Deviation on Ways Interior Decoration could Influence Customer Satisfaction in Hotels in Ebonyi State

S/N	Ways Interior Decoration could Influence Customer Satisfaction	\bar{X}_1	SD_1	\bar{X}_2	SD_2	\bar{X}_g	R
1	Beautiful paintings enhance comfort of guests.	3.20	0.15	3.22	0.18	3.20	W
2	Interior decoration enhances customers' value for quality.	3.30	0.18	3.31	0.17	3.31	W
3	Beautiful lightings attracts customers patronage	3.48	0.32	3.48	0.35	3.48	W
4	Appropriate colour mix promotes customer's appeal.	3.33	0.17	3.36	0.18	3.34	W
5	Beautiful ornamental fixtures give customers beautiful serenity.	3.32	0.12	3.30	0.19	3.31	W
6	Televisions make customers feed relaxed for picture tourism.	3.21	0.12	3.18	0.18	3.20	W
7	Having quality cameras increases customers' engagement when they visit.	3.31	0.18	3.28	0.17	3.30	W
8	Decorative flowers in rooms and receptions enhance closeness to nature.	3.53	0.35	3.51	0.35	3.52	W
9	Quality beds and soft sofas enhance customers comfort	3.27	0.19	3.32	0.18	3.29	W
10	Fanciful and clean curtains and beddings improve room comfort and appeal	3.32	0.17	3.27	0.19	3.31	W

\bar{X}_1 = Mean of Male Customers; SD_1 = Standard Deviation of Male Customers; \bar{X}_2 = Mean of Female Customers; SD_2 = Standard Deviation of Female Customer; \bar{X}_g = Grand Mean; R = Remark; W = Way customer satisfaction is influenced.

Table 1 shows mean (\bar{X}) responses on ways interior decoration influence customer satisfaction in hotels in Ebonyi State. The Table shows that all the 10 interior

decoration items have mean scores of ≥ 2.50 . This means that they are all ways | interior decoration influence customer satisfaction in the hotels.

Table 2: Mean Responses and Standard Deviation on Ways Product Quality could Influence Customer Satisfaction in Hotels in Ebonyi State

S/N	Ways Product Quality Influence Customers Satisfaction	\bar{X}_1	SD ₁	\bar{X}_2	SD ₂	\bar{X}_g	R
1	Serving nutritious foods	3.10	0.16	3.09	0.16	3.10	W
2	Serving chilled drinks of different varieties	3.40	0.28	3.33	0.29	3.38	W
3	Serving healthy and rich snacks	3.29	0.18	3.27	0.18	3.28	W
4	Food varieties encourages customers unending choices	3.23	0.18	3.20	0.15	3.22	W
5	Serving indigenous cuisines	3.50	0.36	3.52	0.37	3.50	W
6	Ala carte is of great value to customers food choices	3.10	0.17	3.12	0.18	3.11	W
7	Improve appearance and colour mix of foods	3.39	0.29	3.41	0.29	3.39	W
8	Good taste and texture of food products	3.29	0.17	3.32	0.18	3.30	W
9	Eye catching products display style	3.19	0.17	3.20	0.19	3.20	W
10	Steady availability of products	3.49	0.34	3.52	0.35	3.50	W

\bar{X}_1 = Mean of Male Customers; SD₁ = Standard Deviation of Male Customers; \bar{X}_2 = Mean of Female Customers; SD₂ = Standard Deviation of Female Customer; \bar{X}_g = Grand Mean; R = Remark; W = Way customer satisfaction is influenced.

Table 2 shows that all the 10 items have mean scores above 2.50 ($\bar{X} \geq 2.50$). This implies that each of the 10 items is a way product quality could influence customer satisfaction.

Table 3: Mean Responses and Standard Deviation on Ways Service Quality Influence Customer Satisfaction in Hotels in Ebonyi State

S/N	Ways Service Quality Influence Customer Satisfaction	\bar{X}_1	SD ₁	\bar{X}_2	SD ₂	\bar{X}_g	R
1	Attending to guests quickly	3.40	0.30	3.38	0.29	3.40	W
2	Resolving the complaints of guests promptly	3.31	0.18	3.28	0.17	3.30	W
3	Attending friendly to customers	3.18	0.18	3.23	0.16	3.20	W
4	Conducting regular surveys on the opinions of customers and acting on them promptly	3.48	0.27	3.50	0.29	3.48	W
5	Offering regular promotional and motivational packages for customers	3.21	0.18	3.22	0.17	3.21	W
6	Availability of smart workers	3.49	0.31	3.39	0.29	3.46	W
7	Availability of workers with good knowledge of products	3.28	0.16	3.30	0.18	3.28	W
8	Availability of attendants with clear and polite communication skills	3.19	0.17	3.22	0.19	3.20	W
9	Availability of attendants who have respect for customer's needs and choices	3.34	0.28	3.40	0.30	3.36	W
10	Creating a community with customers	3.21	0.18	3.22	0.17	3.21	W

\bar{X}_1 = Mean of Male Customers; SD₁ = Standard Deviation of Male Customers; \bar{X}_2 = Mean of Female Customers; SD₂ = Standard Deviation of Female Customer; \bar{X}_g = Grand Mean; R = Remark; W = Way customer satisfaction is influenced.

Table 3 shows that all the 10 items have mean scores of 2.50 and above 50 ($\bar{X} \geq 2.50$). It follows that the 10 items are ways service quality influence customers satisfaction.

Table 4: Mean Responses and Standard Deviation on Ways Environmental Aesthetics could Influence Customer Satisfaction in Hotels in Ebonyi State

S/N	Ways Environmental Aesthetics could Influence Customer Satisfaction	\bar{X}_1	SD ₁	\bar{X}_2	SD ₂	\bar{X}_g	R
1	Paintings and decorations attract customers	3.13	0.17	3.11	0.17	3.12	W
2	Spacious seating arrangements allow customers free movement	3.40	0.30	3.42	0.29	3.41	W
3	Beautiful flowers and ornamental trees in the surrounding	3.32	0.17	3.33	0.19	3.32	W
4	Surrounding need to be nature.	3.20	0.16	3.14	0.19	3.18	W
5	Quality of architectural structures influences retention of customers	3.54	0.37	3.43	0.36	3.51	W
6	Covered gutters within environment boost environmental appeal	3.11	0.19	3.06	0.18	3.10	W
7	Prevention of pollution around premises promotes healthy environment	3.39	0.30	3.37	0.26	3.38	W
8	Spacious and organized car park portrays orderliness	3.30	0.17	3.31	0.18	3.30	W
9	Spacious and designed sit-outs enhances environmental appeal	3.21	0.18	3.22	0.17	3.21	W
10	Beautiful and serene walk ways present homely presence	3.55	0.35	3.54	0.37	3.55	W

\bar{X}_1 = Mean of Male Customers; SD₁ = Standard Deviation of Male Customers; \bar{X}_2 = Mean of Female Customers; SD₂ = Standard Deviation of Female Customer; \bar{X}_g = Grand Mean; R = Remark; W = Way customer satisfaction is influenced.

Table 4 shows that all the 10 items in the Table obtained mean scores of 2.50 and above. The items are therefore ways environmental aesthetics could influence customer satisfaction.

Table 5: Mean Responses and Standard Deviation on Ways Staff Welfare could Influence Customer Satisfaction in Hotels in Ebonyi State

S/N	Ways Staff Welfare Influence Customer Satisfaction	\bar{X}_1	SD ₁	\bar{X}_2	SD ₂	\bar{X}_g	R
1	Payment of staff salaries regularly	3.20	0.18	3.23	0.19	3.21	W
2	Payment of adequate salaries to workers	3.29	0.18	3.31	0.17	3.30	W
3	Regular promotion of workers increases productivity	3.50	0.36	3.53	0.32	3.51	W
4	Paying workers bonuses for overtime	3.32	0.17	3.33	0.20	3.33	W
5	Retraining of workers to promote professionalism	3.32	0.18	3.33	0.18	3.32	W
6	Leave allowance promotes staff commitment to service	3.22	0.19	3.23	0.20	3.22	W
7	Sponsored vacations for staff	3.30	0.16	3.29	0.17	3.30	W
8	Organizing end of the year parties for staff	3.51	0.35	3.44	0.37	3.49	W
9	Giving awards for excellence to deserving staff	3.29	0.19	3.34	0.17	3.30	W
10	Provision of pension plan for staff	3.32	0.18	3.30	0.17	3.31	W

\bar{X}_1 = Mean of Male Customers; SD_1 = Standard Deviation of Male Customers; \bar{X}_2 = Mean of Female Customers; SD_2 = Standard Deviation of Female Customer; \bar{X}_g = Grand Mean; R = Remark; W = Way

Table 5 shows that the all the 10 items obtained mean scores of 2.50 and above. This implies that each of the items is a way staff welfare could influence customer satisfaction.

Discussion of Findings

Findings of the study reveal that interior decoration is a determinant of customer satisfaction in hotels in Ebonyi State. Beautiful paintings, lightings, ornamental fixtures etc. enhance the comfort of guests. These findings are consistent with those of Chattergee (2022) that effectiveness and efficiency of hotel is dependent on the packaging of the interior decoration. The interior decoration of hotels is essential part of the marketing strategy since the looks of the organisation is crucial to branding. The findings are also in line with those of Obinwanne & Alozie (2019) who reported that interior decoration of a hotel is the first thing that customers will notice as they walk through the door. This first impression will dictate how they perceive the brand, what level of service they expect, what kind of time they anticipate and if they want to come back again. Thus, the importance of interior design cannot be underplayed. Dzremedo *et al* (2019) also agreed that interior decoration is crucial for branding. The way the organization looks impacts how the customers perceive their concept and if they consider it a good enough place to eat in or sleep over.

Product quality describes the quality of foods, drinks, product varieties on display aimed at eliciting customer's desire. According to Jana & Chandra (2016) the quality of food, drinks and associated products determines whether customers would continue to patronize

the business or not. Aroma has always been associated with food and its ability to simulate appetite. It is one of the sensations that are debated as being highly psychological and also varying from person to person. The anticipation of taste depends on perceived aroma. Aroma is a strong driver of food choice and desire (Majeed *et al* 2017). Rajah & Metin (2016) affirmed that the value for money paid on products continues to play a crucial role in customer's overall satisfaction because consumers wants a balance between product and cost. The result of the findings agrees with Rua *et al* (2020) who affirmed that product quality is a major determinant of customer's level of satisfaction.

Service quality influences on customer satisfaction in hotels. Services include attending to guests promptly, resolving the complaints of guests quickly etc. Siti (2022) in his study confirms that consumers prefer where they are offered varied and complete products and also regarding the depth, breadth and quality of service. He said that service is key and has the capacity to give a company a high turnover. Attending to customers with friendliness is satisfying to customers and promotes customer's responsiveness in patronage. In hotels, conducting regular surveys on the opinion of customers is a pathway to offering quality service. This finding is in line with that of Adiza (2020) who found a notable correlation between customer's satisfaction and the quality of service. Direct personnel services, room quality were also found as key determinants influencing customer's patronage in the hotels than the outside environment. Nwokorie (2021) also revealed a significant relationship

between sufficient service management and guest satisfaction. Ali *et al* (2021) corroborated that hotel managers can investigate reasons for negative factors that lead to dissatisfied guest and improve their current service to meet guest needs and expectations.

Findings on environmental aesthetics and influence on customer satisfaction in hotels are consistent with those of Olabode (2020). Olabode (2020) observed that "servicescape" which is the physical environment of a firm could have a direct effect on customer's perception of service delivery. Serene physical environment is most of the time created or developed in order to leave a positive impression on guests. (Dewi 2020) also report that servicescape provides positive encounter and interactions between customers and service providers.

Staff welfare has significant influence on customer satisfaction in hotels in Ebonyi State. Payment of staff salaries regularly, payment of adequate salary, regular promotion, payment of bonuses for over time etc triggers quality service. It makes them more dedicated to their duties thereby promoting customer satisfaction. The study of Wapande *et al* (2020) affirmed that there is a significant relationship between workers attitude and customers satisfaction. Regular training and retraining of workers promotes professionalism among them thereby enhancing a positive customer – staff relationship. The result also agrees with that of Sanders (2020) who affirmed that staff welfare stimulates employees' level of performance and effectiveness. He established a significant relationship between staff welfare package and their commitment to work. Adeyemi (2014) revealed that customers and workers relationship is a predator of customers'

satisfaction. The development of positive attitude of workers towards their job is a significant influence to customer satisfaction in hotels in the study area.

Conclusion

The findings have shown that interior decorations, products quality, service quality, environmental aesthetics and staff welfare are determinants of customer satisfaction. The reduction in the level of customer's loyalty might be due to compromises in quality. Ensuring high quality products and services is essential for maintaining customer satisfaction. This also advances customer's positive brand reputation, increased revenue and overall boosting of employee and employer's morale. Staff welfare enhances the employers' loyalty towards the organization which translates to their attendance to guest.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Hotels should continue to improve their interior decoration, product quality, service quality, staff welfare and environmental aesthetics for maximum customer satisfaction.
2. Condition of service for staff of the hotels should be improved.
3. Staff service should be improved through in-service training.

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