Service Quality Evaluation and Management Practices of Guest Houses in Mombasa Island, Kenya

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Abstract: *Guest houses offer an opportunity for entrepreneurs to offer accommodation services at more affordable rates. They have limited number of rooms and are therefore easier to operate and maintain. Additionally, Guest house operators are well positioned to experience guest complaints regarding the services that they provide. The purpose of this research was to assess the quality of services provided by guest houses in Mombasa Island as rated by guests and the supervisors and their management practices. The study had four objectives namely; To establish the dimensions of customers' satisfaction with services offered in guest houses in Mombasa Island, to determine the extent to which the customers are satisfied with services provided in the guest houses, to investigate room attendants' assessment of management practices in the guest houses and to determine the accommodation supervisors rating of the quality of services provided by the guest houses. A descriptive survey design was adopted. This research focused on the registered and unregistered guest houses in Mombasa Island. Out of the fifteen registered guest houses, three were used for pre-testing, of the remaining twelve, six were examined. The number of unregistered guest houses, was estimated to be thirty three; a third of the numbers were researched on. Simple random sampling was used to select the both registered and unregistered guest houses. Convenient sampling was used for the guests, while stratified method was used for service providers. Primary data were collected through observations, interviews and questionnaires. Data collected were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Techniques used included means and factor analysis. The findings show that clean linen, guest supplies, well lit rooms, convenient location of the guest house, comfortable bed, and friendliness and courtesy of staff, convenient location, security and safety of room are the most significant factors for the guests who visit the registered and unregistered guest houses in Mombasa Island. The results of factor analysis showed that there are two main dimensions of service quality: the physical characteristics of the guest houses and the competence and courtesy of the staff. The study further showed that the employees of the registered and unregistered guest houses in Mombasa Island are not satisfied with how the management of the guest houses handles their welfare particularly in relation to their pay, recognition of their contribution to the running of the guest houses and availing enough working materials; but feel that the guest houses are run efficiently and the staff are giving their best.* **Based on these findings, the study concluded that guests' expectations from the guest houses coincided with those of the guest house providers since the factors emphasized by the guests are the same accommodation supervisors rated as satisfying. However, there is need to expose staff to higher level training to improve on their professionalism and communication skills.**

Keywords: Automobile Association, East African Community, Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, Municipal Council of Mombasa, Ministry of Tourism , National Economic and Social Council, Statistical Package of Social Sciences

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the study

Service quality issues have been of concern to researchers for many years and it continues to be an area of wider global research. Its strong significance is related to customer satisfaction and repeat business, which are determinants of profitability of a business [107]; [72]; [13]; [75]. According to [54] the importance of service quality to the financial performance of service oriented organizations cannot be overemphasized. Superior service quality increases customer satisfaction, improves customer retention, enlarges market share, increases return on investment, enhances profitability and facilitates the establishment of sustainable competitive advantage [54]; [101]; [105]; [105]. Studies reveal that, there is a mismatch between customer expectations and perceptions in the hospitality industry [67]; [85]; [101]; [18] .The Hospitality industry has also witnessed increasing competition for high service quality and customer satisfaction [82].Therefore, the need to understand as much as possible what the guests need from a service experience is of great importance to the service providers.

Hospitality is the friendly reception and treatment of guests away from home and it is a broad service industry providing accommodation, food and beverage among other services

[82]. Accommodation, food and beverages sectors comprise the main segments of the hospitality industry. Accommodation establishments are classified by size and type of services provided [12]. The accommodation sector in the coastal region of Kenya is normally affected by high and low seasons. The sector has also experienced fluctuations in bed occupancy, but in the last four years, tremendous growth has been registered as indicated in Table 1.1 [46]

Table 1.1: Hotel rooms and beds available in the Coastal Region, Kenya (1998-2007)

Year	Rooms Available("000")	Beds Available("000")
1998	2897	4349
1999	3071	4905
2000	3071	4905
2001	2442	4514
2002	2489	5030
2003	1802	3590
2004	2305	4790
2005	2698	4827
2006	3362	6701
2007	3855	7594

Source: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2008

Hotels and guest houses are categorized as serviced accommodation. Compared to the hotels, which are the traditional and important providers of accommodation, guest houses offer an opportunity for more entrepreneurs to offer

accommodation services. Guest house proprietors are often independent owner operators who obtain business by word of mouth. Guest houses are cheaper alternatives to hotels and service providers, have the advantage of having closer contact with the customers and can be more flexible, responsive to change and more innovative than hotels. They are usually smaller than an average hotel and only have a limited number of rooms. Guest houses mainly depend on return business and word of mouth recommendations. This means that meeting customers' expectation is of paramount importance to remain competitive and financially successful. Borness Agui, a Kenyan entrepreneur made the following remarks in regard to returns from her guest house business, "investing in guest rooms is a profitable idea. I realize a net profit of between Ksh 100,000 and Ksh 120,000 a month, translating to between Ksh 1.2million and Ksh 1.4 million a year" (Daily Nation, September 27th, 2012). Accommodation is offered on a bed and breakfast or room only basis.

The demand for accommodation in the coastal region has triggered an increase of guest houses. Some of the guest houses which have entered the market because of demand are not registered with the Ministry of Tourism (MoT), Mombasa branch. According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics the room occupancy rate in hotels on Mombasa Island grew at an average of 50.2% in 2007, [46] This shows the occupancy rate in the hotels on Mombasa Island is half-utilized. Yet, in comparison, the guest houses are usually generally fully occupied. However, the high level of demand for the guest houses do not necessarily correspond to quality of service provided in meeting customer expectations according to an officer of Ministry of Tourism. Service quality in guest houses in Mombasa Island necessitates critical scrutiny, to ascertain how the increasing numbers of unregistered guest house operators affect overall standards of service delivery and whether this meets customer expectations. The Government of Kenya, through MoT insists that that they are all licensed and therefore, must have laid down standards of operation. Guest house operators are well-positioned to experience guests' complaints about services that they offer. Where customer issues are not addressed, then the consequences of such complaints may be felt by service providers through reduced guest numbers and fewer return rates of guests. It is, therefore, important for guest house operators to identify areas where such complaints regularly arise from in order to institute corrective measures and sustain the inflow of guests.

One way of addressing many complaints that drives away prospective guests is to understand their expectation and strive to meet the guests' expectation to the best of management's abilities. The quality of service is largely determined by the extent to which the guests' expectations have been met [77] Expectations are beliefs about a service that serve as standards against which service performance is judged [107].

When service performance falls short of expectations of the customers, the following consequences may result: dissatisfaction [45] decline in customer in confidence [15], negative word of mouth behavior [63], and loss of revenue

(Armistead, Clark & Stanley, 1995). This study was therefore designed to determining whether the services provided by the guest houses in Mombasa Island were meeting customer expectations and how these expectations compare with the guest house service providers' assessment of the quality of services they provide. Although many studies have analyzed customers' level of satisfaction with quality of services provided in the hospitality industry [18], [23]; [61]; [68]; [73] guest houses particularly in Africa and specifically in Kenya has traditionally received relatively little research attention.

1.2. Problem statement and justification

There is evidence of gaps in service quality in the area of accommodation as per researches carried out [78];[6];[41]; [74].However, little or no research has been conducted to determine the customer's rating of service quality in guest houses in Mombasa Island. The following issues formed the basis for this research. First, clear expectations help customers predict what should happen rather than what might happen. However, in the guest houses focused in this research, it is not clear due to lack of research whether customers' expectation for service quality is available.

Dimensions, like clean bedroom and bathroom, friendly, courteous, prompt and professional staff, comfortable surroundings, safety and security and convenient location form the basis for customer satisfaction [19]. However, very little is known about such dimensions in the guest houses on Mombasa Island. At the same time several studies have reported variations in the dimensions depending on the type of service examined [55]; [20]; [10]; [68]; [33]. Guest houses have received little attention on this, thus essence of the study. Secondly, numerous registered and unregistered guest houses in Mombasa Island have emerged. Unfortunately, no research has been done to assess the level of customers' satisfaction regarding the services that they offer. In addition, while much documentation has focused on hotels and restaurants little has been done concerning guest houses in Kenya. Besides, when performance matches expectation, the customer is satisfied [69]. The factors which enhance or retard customer perception of the quality of service and the guest house are understudied. The main function of guest house staff is to deliver quality services. There should be laid down cleaning procedures to be followed if the service providers are to provide quality service. [5] argues that establishments, which fail to meet standards of hygiene and cleanliness expected by customers, are assessed as offering poor or low quality services.

Lack of research on the quality of services makes it hard to establish whether or not the standards on Mombasa Island guest houses are sufficient or not. It is not clear for example, if there are any laid down cleaning procedures for the staff to follow when servicing the rooms. It is well-known that inadequate procedures may result in low service quality. This is an issue of concern which is important for this research. This research, therefore, was designed to determine the level of guests satisfaction with the quality of services provided by guest houses in Mombasa Island and whether these meets their expectations and how these compare with the perception

of service providers on Mombasa Island. Further, it investigated the management practices of the guest houses as perceived by the room attendants. This was very important as they constitute the intangible component of service quality, thus they are likely to influence service delivery depending on how they relate with the guest and the management.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to assess the rating of the quality of guest house services in Mombasa Island and their management practices. This study evaluated service quality as rated by customers and accommodation supervisors and identified factors that influence customers' expectations and perceptions in selected registered and unregistered guest houses in Mombasa Island. It also investigated the management practices of the guest houses as perceived by the room attendants.

1.4 Objectives

1) The study focused on the following objectives:
2) To establish the dimensions of customers' satisfaction with services offered in guest houses on Mombasa Island.
3) To determine the levels of customer satisfaction with the services provided in the guest houses.
4) To investigate room attendants' assessment of management practices and performance of staff in the guest houses.
5) To determine the accommodation supervisors' rating of the quality of services provided by the guest houses and compare with customers' rating.

1.5 Research Hypotheses

HO$_1$ There is no discernible pattern in the dimensions of customer satisfaction with services offered in the guest houses.
HO$_2$ There is no relationship between age and level of education of room attendants and their assessment of management practices and performance of staff in the guest houses.

1.6 Significance of the study

This study makes important contributions to research and practice in the hospitality industry. First, it makes an important contribution to the little researched or neglected area in the hospitality industry: guest houses. Secondly, the study provides some insights into the performance of guest houses in Mombasa Island, Kenya in relation to the service quality.

Additionally, since the dimensionality of service quality apparently depends on the type of service examined [20] and [10] the results of this research is expected to contribute to the understanding of the dimensions of service quality that are important to customers in guest houses and bridge the gap in research by focusing on guest houses.

Finally, the findings of the study provide information that can be used to improve the quality of training by addressing

underlying causes of service dissatisfaction and enhance guest satisfaction-related factors. Moreover the findings can be useful to the guest house proprietors by helping them identify weaknesses in services provided and suggest possible ways of improvement. Finally, the service providers may have a clear understanding of their role in provision of quality services.

1.7 Scope of the study

The study was carried out in the registered and unregistered guest houses on Mombasa Island. Mombasa which is the second largest city in Kenya is an island located in the Indian Ocean on the Island. It is a major port in Kenya and also the whole of East Africa and hence enjoys a large population of guests throughout the year. From guest houses to star rated luxurious hotels, the island provides accommodation to guests who are ethnically and socially diverse. Guest houses were chosen for the following reasons; they are not affected by periods of low season when the number of foreign tourists visiting the country is low; they also do not have formalities of checking in and checking out experienced in hotels. Because they are very flexible, one can just walk in and ask for accommodation and be granted subject to availability of rooms; they are also relatively cheaper compared to the hotels and their central location mainly in Central Business District ensures easy accessibility to any part of Mombasa. To qualify for the study, participants the respondents had to have stayed for at least one overnight stay in a guest house.

1.8 Limitations of the study

The study was carried out on Mombasa Island which is within the tourism region and is very dynamic, so generalization to guest houses in other regions of Kenya should be done with caution. The researcher also concentrated on respondents who had at least one overnight stay at the guest house. This was because there were guests who used the facilities for a few hours, such as long distance bus drivers who ferry passengers from other parts of the country to Mombasa.

1.9 Assumptions

The study was carried out with the following assumptions:
1) Dimensions of quality of service do not vary based on different gender and nationality that will be involved.
2) A gap exists between the services offered and the expectations of the customers.

2. Literature Review

The most recent works on service quality in hospitality industry are reviewed. Topics reviewed include the following: guest houses, classification of guest houses, service quality and customer satisfaction, measurement of service quality, hospitality marketing mix, service quality gaps, dimensions of service quality, and management practices.

2.1 Guest houses

Accommodation establishments are classified by size and type of services provided [12]. In some parts of the world such as South Africa, a guest house is similar to a hostel or inn where bed and breakfast are provided, whereas in other parts such as the Caribbean, guest houses are a type of inexpensive hotel-like lodging. In still other places such as The United Kingdoms, it is a private home which has been converted for exclusive use of guest accommodation. The owner usually lives in an entirely separate area within the property and the guest house may serve as a form of lodging business [19].

In the Kenyan context, accommodation options range from guest houses that provide bed and breakfast to large hotels and resorts that offer luxurious accommodation and services. Another important aspect of the guest houses in Kenya is that they are usually privately owned and are, therefore, different from standard commercial hotels which are independently owned, franchised or run by management companies. Guests in guest houses are accommodated in one of the following categories: private bedrooms with private bathrooms or private bedroom with a shared bathroom.

The purpose of a guest house is to provide temporary quarters to guests while they are away from home. They should be able to provide a safe comfortable and cost-effective accommodation to guests. The extent to which guests' expectation and service performance are similar or different will influence the extent to which the guests are satisfied or dissatisfied, but no research has been done in Mombasa Island to explain the exact situation. While a satisfied guest is a major asset to a business, a dissatisfied guest tends to be a liability [44]. According to [2] a guestroom means comfort, security, privacy, convenience, cleanliness and hygiene, a home away from home.

2.2 Classification of guest houses

A unified system for assessing quality of accommodation, classifies guest accommodation facilities into five classes called stars namely: five stars the highest, four stars, three stars, two stars and one star, the lowest among those ranked by Guest Accommodation Quality Standard [40]. The classification considers cleanliness, hospitality, breakfast, bedrooms and bathrooms as essential items for classification of accommodation facilities [70].

To qualify to be graded as a one star guest accommodation, key minimum requirements include; a cooked breakfast available, staff available for guests arrival, departure and at meal times. All areas should meet minimum quality requirements for cleanliness, maintenance and hospitality as well as facilities and delivery of service; all statutory obligations met.

To qualify to be graded as a two star, the guest house should be well presented and well run facility. For a facility to qualify to be graded as a three star, bathrooms/showers should not be shared and wash basins should be available in every guest bedroom. Good level of quality and comfort is

important. To qualify to be graded as four star, 50 % of the guest bedrooms need to be en suite or with private facilities and excellent standards throughout. For a facility to qualify to be graded as five star, all guest bedrooms should be en suite with private facilities [70].

A unified system for assessing quality accommodation adopted in 2006 by Automobile Association (AA), gave the following summary of star rating of guest houses; one star, simple and practical; two star, well-presented and run; three star, good level of quality and comfort; four star, excellent standards throughout the facility and five star, exceptional standards with a degree of luxury [70]. [30] criteria for classification of hotels and restaurants consider minimum size; fittings, furniture and equipment; furnishings, lighting, floors, walls and ceilings among others as essential items for classification of guest rooms. Lillian Ayimba, MoT officer Mombasa branch, made the following remarks in regard to classification of guest houses "Kenya being a member of the East African Community is obliged by Hotels and Restaurant Authority to comply with the requirements in the criteria for classification of hotels and restaurants for the East African Community". No research has been carried to find out if the guest houses in Mombasa Island comply with laid down requirements.

2.3 Service quality and customer satisfaction

According to [82], the hospitality industry has witnessed increasing competition for high service quality and customer satisfaction, therefore, the need to understand as much as possible what the guests need and want from the service experience is of great importance. Quality can only be defined by customers and can only occur when service providers provide services to specification that satisfies customers [48]. Customer expectations serve as standards against which service experiences are compared. Service quality is then based on customers' perception of service performance. Failure to meet customers' needs and expectations may result in dissatisfaction with the service [100]. It is believed that higher levels of service quality lead to higher levels of customer satisfaction [76], [42]. Moreover, [80], [16],[47] and [37] have not only reported a relationship between service quality and customer's level of satisfaction, but also their willingness to revisit and recommend.

Considerable research has been done on the issue of service quality and studies have revealed that there is a mismatch between customer expectations and perceptions in the hospitality industry [67]; [85]; [100]. Moreover, research on accommodation needs of guests have shown that cleanliness is one of the fundamental qualities for customers' satisfactions.

2.4 Dimensions of Service quality

In 1980s, studies on service quality were enhanced with the development of attributes considered important to customer satisfaction. According to [81] who developed the service quality attributes and defined them as various dimensions. [100] modified these dimensions and referred to them as the

benchmarks of service quality. Table 2.2 identifies and explains these dimensions.

However, according to several studies, these dimensions are not universal and depend on the type of service being examined and the context or place [20]; [10]. For example, [4] investigated the applicability of the SERVQUAL model in the Turkish hospitality industry and identified seven dimensions: courtesy and competence of the personnel, communication and transactions, tangibles, knowing and understanding the customer, accuracy and speed of service, solutions to problems and accuracy of hotel reservations. [68] examined the dimensions of service quality in Australian hotel industry and came up with three dimensions: employees, tangibles and reliability.[33] examined the dimensions of service quality in lodgings in USA and came up with five dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, confidence and communication.

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provider interactions, keeping promises to customers, and establishing cleaning procedures to be followed in their respective establishments among others [100],[80] recommended lessons for improving service quality (Table 2.1 above).

Table 2.1 Recommendations for improving service quality

Dimension	Description
Tangibility	Refers to the physical characteristics associated with the service encounter. In accommodation, this consists of the general appearances and functionality of the property
Reliability	Means performing the service in the right manner for the first time. It is the extent to which employees can be depended on to perform services correctly and consistently
Competence	Refers to employees possessing the required skills and knowledge necessary to perform the service adequately.
Courtesy	Courtesy dimension of quality describes how polite, respectful, considerate, and friendly contact personnel are towards guest.
Credibility	Refers to the believability and honesty of the service provider
Security	Provides freedom from danger, risk and doubt
Access	Describes the extent to which employees are approachable and easy to find
Communication	Good communication implies good listening skills and using language and terms that all customers can understand.
Understanding	Understanding means making the effort to know the customers' needs

Source: Thuo 2008

Table 2.2: Dimensions of service Quality

Service Quality Recommendations	Description
Listening	Understand what customers really want through continuous learning about customer expectations and perceptions.
Reliability	Prioritize reliability as an important dimension of service quality.
Basic service	Deliver the basics and fulfill expectations: keep promises, listen to customers and be determined to deliver value to customers.
Service design	Develop a holistic view of the service while managing its many details.
Recovery	Encourage customers who encounter a service problem to complain and make it easy to do so. Respond quickly and personally and develop a problem resolution system.
Surprising the customers.	Although reliability is an important dimension in customer service expectation, enhance process dimensions such assurance, responsiveness and empathy, to exceed customer expectation.
Fair play	Make an effort to demonstrate fairness to customers and employees.
Teamwork	Strengthen teamwork, which is what enables establishments to deliver service with care and attentiveness by improving employee motivation and capabilities.
Employee research	Conduct research with employees to reveal why service problems occur and what establishments must do to solve them.
Servant leadership	Established leadership to manifest in excellent service system design.

Source: Thuo 2008

These recommendations were used in this research to reveal those that may exist in the guest houses to be studied as they provide a most comprehensive framework essential to improve service quality.

Measurement of service quality
The original ten dimensions mentioned above have been reduced to five (tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy), resulting in a popular instrument known as SERVQUAL [81]. The SERVQUAL model measures service quality [77]. The approach starts from the assumption that the level of service quality expressed by customers is determined by the gap between the expectations of service and perceptions of what they actually receive from a service provider. The basic assumption underlying the model is that performance below expectation leads to low service quality, while exceeding expectations lead to a perception of high service quality. Therefore, service quality

is the result of the customers comparison of expected service with the service received.

Hospitality researchers have produced a more specific model for the lodging industry called LODGSERV [49]. [61] refined the LODGSERV model to include dimensions such as the cleanliness of the guestroom and bathroom. The concept of cleanliness has also been examined by [93] Dimensions used in both SERVQUAL and LODGSERV were also used in this research in a complementary manner to evaluate service quality in guest houses.

Management practices

a) Training

Training is still a major issue for both developed and developing countries in the hospitality industry. It is an essential feature of improving quality [89]. Training is important for the employees to deliver service quality competently and confidently [81]. Both formal and informal training play an increasingly important role in the industry for the following reasons; employee turnover, need for knowledge, enhancement and career paths and most important to enhance the quality of service delivered to customers. Training and skill development have been considered at the forefront of the challenges facing the hospitality industry. Yet it is through training that standards are inculcated and customer satisfaction levels improved.

Hospitality organizations are known to train employees to behave appropriately when dealing with guests but the industry has a poor reputation for training [65]. The industry has a reputation of offering primarily low skill employment whose job is to help guests feel important. Such jobs are considered to be of last resort because people associate them with servility and dirty work [35]. According to NESC (The National Economic and Social Council), Kenya also experiences shortage of trained staff in the hospitality industry. Education and training are fundamental in provision of skills required to steer the Kenyans to economic and social goals of Vision 2030.

Many of the staff working in the guest houses are casuals or part-time employees. They are less likely to be given any form of training due to the perception of the management that owing to the nature of their employment type, they will only be in the guest house for a short period of time. According to [106] training and education are basic to good housekeeping staff.

b) Recruitment and selection

Recruitment and selection of the best personnel are vital in delivering service quality [108].Poor service quality may be as a result of wrong recruitment. Hospitality employees interact with customers with different cultural dimensions and customer perceptions of quality [102]. As far as the customer is concerned, quality has at least two elements: satisfaction provided and the way the service is delivered by the employee [23].[87] identified understaffing, high staff turnover and poor training as issues affecting hospitality organizations in New Zealand. [28] noted that because of high staff turnover rates, there is an increasing pressure on training requirements to maintain service levels.

c) Empowerment

According to [92] empowerment of staff is fundamental in achieving and improving the level of service quality. Empowerment is important tool for improving employee morale and performance. Performance appraisal and reward including recognition when carefully designed and administered appropriately will have a positive effect on the staff who play important role in provision of service quality to the customers [79].Employees are critical link in the delivery of service quality and hence customer satisfaction.

Literature Review Summary

The reviewed literature reveals that guests view quality service in terms of a blend of attributes. They gauge their expectations according to how well actual performance confirms or disconfirms their expectations. Customer satisfaction may be achieved when the guests' needs and wants are fulfilled. The literature has shown that the dimensions of service quality vary according to the type of service examined and thus there is need to establish these dimensions according to the different services, in the case of this study, guest houses.

The literature has also revealed that there is generally lack of empirical studies on customers satisfaction with services provided by guest houses in Kenya and particularly Mombasa Island yet they provide many people with catering and accommodation services.

The literature has also shown that service quality literature lacks comparative studies that compare service quality dimensions from customers' and management perspectives. This study was undertaken to address this gap in knowledge by looking at the perspectives of customers and guest house supervisors.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

The design adapted for this research was descriptive survey. Descriptive survey research studies are designed to obtain pertinent and precise information concerning the current status of phenomena and whenever possible to draw valid general conclusions from the facts [60]. It seeks to identify and describe phenomena. A survey also aims at obtaining information, which can be analyzed, patterns extracted and comparisons made [14] hence its choice. It was used to evaluate service quality as perceived by guests in selected registered and unregistered guest houses on Mombasa Island. This design enabled the researcher to gather information, summarize, present and interpret information for the purpose of clarification [76].

3.2 Study area

This research focused on the registered and unregistered guest houses on Mombasa Island. Mombasa Island is a 5km by 3km coral outcrop located on the Kenyan coast on the Indian Ocean. The Island is connected to the mainland to the

north by Nyali Bridge, to the south by Likoni Ferry and to the west by Makupa Causeway. Mombasa city which is the second largest city in Kenya is located on Mombasa Island. It is an important port, not only in Kenya but also in East Africa. Fig 3.1 below shows the map of Mombasa Island.
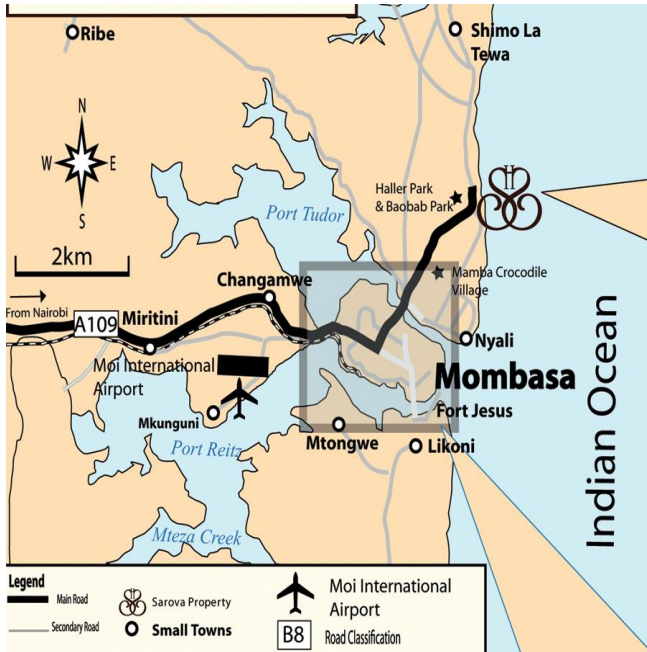

Figure 3.1: Map of Mombasa Island
Source: Kenya Tourism Guide, 2010-2011

3.3 Target population

The respondents for this research were obtained from registered and unregistered guest houses on Mombasa Island. The government through the MoT provides licenses for guest houses and also is entitled to monitor the quality and standard of facilities in the guest houses, and therefore, provided a crucial preliminary source of information for this research. The MCM grants permits for businesses operation and hence has a good record of both the registered as well as unregistered guest houses. However, it was found in the preliminary research that the records on guest houses were not adequate, and lacked proper data on visitors to the guest houses on the Island. The documentations tend to emphasize on hotels and restaurants.

The categories of respondents targeted in the guest houses were accommodation supervisors, room attendants and the guests. The accommodation supervisors are in charge of setting standards and are also training to ensure employees provide excellent customer service. Therefore, the administration comprised an important target population in this research. The room attendants are responsible for servicing the guest rooms while the guests are the consumers of the services provided.

3.4 Sampling Techniques

The researcher used records from the MCM and MoT to form the basis of a sampling frame (see Appendix 2).The researcher established from a preliminary survey that there are fifteen guest houses registered with MoT in Mombasa Island. Three were randomly selected to form a pretest sample for registered guest houses. Out of the twelve remaining, six which constitutes 50% formed the sample size for the research. The guest houses that were on the MCM list but not registered with MoT were referred to as the unregistered guest houses. They were 33 in total. Simple random sampling was used to select ten unregistered guest houses, this constitute about 30% which is acceptable in cross-sectional survey (Gay, 1999; O'Brien, 1992). Random sampling gives each and every item in the population an equal chance in the inclusion in the sample [76], [51].

Using stratified sampling, the subjects were stratified into supervisors and the room attendants. In stratified sampling, supervisors were categorized as part of management while room attendants were subordinates. This method ensured that a representative number was obtained since the population from which the sample was drawn did not constitute a homogenous group [76],[51];. Purposive random sampling was used to select the subjects from each of the levels to ensure that new members of staff were not part of the sample since they were not fully familiar with the guest houses. Finally, convenient sampling was used to select guests accessible in the sampled guest houses and able to respond to the questionnaire. Participation of respondents was purely on voluntary basis.

3.5 Sample Size

In each of the sampled registered and unregistered guest houses, subjects included accommodation supervisors, room attendants and the guests. The following formula was used to determine the sample size for the guests [71]

$$N = \frac{Z^2 p\, q}{d^2}$$

Where;
N=the desired sample size (if the target population is greater than 10,000).
Z=the standard normal deviation at the required confidence level.
P=expected prevalence of the problem being investigated.
q=1- P
d= absolute precision

$$N = \frac{(1.96)^2 (0.5)(1-0.5)}{(0.05)^2}$$
$$= 384$$

The total targeted sample for the guests was 384, however, only 320 provided full information and thus was included in the final study. This made up 10% of the total targeted customer population (estimated at 10,000) which according to Gay (1999)is acceptable in descriptive survey study. At the same time 48 room attendants which formed50% of the targeted population were sampled [71]as well as all the accommodation supervisors (Table 3.1). The data were collected in the months of March through June 2012.

	Registered	Unregistered	Total

	Guest House	Guest Houses	Sample
Guests	120	200	320
Room attendants	18	30	48
Accommodation Supervisors	6	10	16
Total	144	240	384

3.6 Research instruments

The instruments that were used to collect data for the study were interview schedules, questionnaires and observation form.

3.7 Validity and reliability

Since the version of the questionnaire used was adapted, the validity and reliability of the instruments were based on the fact that the attributes that were used in this research had been used in the development of SERVQUAL[81] and LODGSERV [49].

3.8 Data collection techniques

Primary information was obtained from guests' and service providers in the field through direct interviews and questionnaires. Records of guest suggestion forms formed part of the primary data. Secondary data were obtained from written materials, including books and journals and official government reports from MCM and MoT, Mombasa branch. The questionnaires for the guests and the room attendant were administered on a face to face basis.

3.9 Data analysis

3.9.1 Qualitative analysis
Qualitative data were analyzed using qualitative analysis methods. Qualitative analysis has a strong emphasis on describing the world, as different observers perceive it [29],[84] points out that there is no one kind of qualitative data analysis, but rather a variety of approaches, related to the different perspectives and purposes of researchers. Content analysis was utilized in analyzing information from the interview schedule. It also helped in deriving useful detailed information from secondary sources. The data were classified into different categories to lay the conceptual foundation for analysis. These classifications were guided by research objectives and links between the data were identified through key patterns that emerged. The important service quality trends were captured using qualitative descriptions.

3.9.2 Quantitative analysis
Data obtained through the rating scale and questionnaires were analyzed using quantitative methods. These data were first subjected to computation of simple statistics such as frequencies, totals, percentages, tabulations and cross-tabulations. Customers' responses on the quality of services provided by the guest houses were ranked on a quantitative scale as follows: extremely satisfied (5) satisfied (4), neutral (3), dissatisfied (2) and extremely dissatisfied (1). Means generated were interpreted as follows: 4.50-5.00-extremely satisfied, 3.50-4.49-satisfied, 2.50-3.49-neutral, 1.50-2.49-dissatisfied and below 1-49 strongly dissatisfied.

To identify and classify dimensions of customer satisfaction with services provided by the guest houses, factor analysis was used. Factor analysis is a technique of data reduction (Shower & Wheeler, 1985) Data reduction is carried out for three reasons namely:; to rewrite data set in an alternative form, reduce the number of variables being studied and lastly to identify and classify groups of inter-correlated variables. Factor analysis in this study was used for the third reason of identifying variables into groups of related factors and to determine if the groups of factors identified are statistically significant.

Table 3.1 Sample Size
The factor analysis was also used to isolate the dominant factors affecting customers satisfaction with services offered in guest houses on Mombasa Island.

The data was further subjected to significance tests of ANOVA to determine the relationship between dependent and independent variables.

3.10 Conceptual framework

This research used SERVQUAL model which is a method for measuring service quality. It proposes five dimensions upon which customers evaluate service quality. These are tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy [81],[77]. In addition, the research used LODGSERV model which was designed by [50] to measure service quality for the lodging industry. Attributes which included in the current research correspond to those used in both models. SERVQUAL and LODGSERV were used in this research to complement each other, because when either of the two is used singularly, it cannot adequately be able to explain the proposed research.

The gap between expectation and actual service is measured along service dimensions. Examining differences or gaps between the desired level of service and what is actually delivered reveals where improvements in service are required. Three scenarios were used to define service quality as perceived by customers. These are: one, when expectations of service quality are exceeded, then quality exceeds expectation. Two, when expectations of service quality are met, quality is acceptable. Three, when expectations of service quality are not met, quality is not accepted. Figure 3.2 is a conceptual framework of service quality attributes derived from SERVQUAL and LODGSERV.
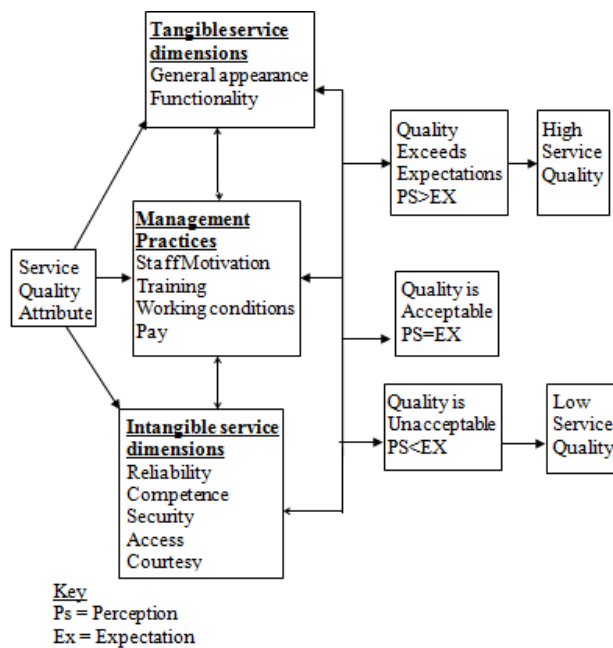
Conceptual framework

Figure 3.2: A simplified model of service quality attributes.
Source: (Adapted from Parasuraman et al., 1988)

Service quality is based on the Gap Model developed by [81] is similar to the Disconfirmation Theory. According to this model, service quality gap results from customers comparing their expectations prior to receiving service to the perceptions of the service experience itself. Three outcomes are possible according to [31] namely;

- Confirmation: if the customers' perception is matched by their expectations, then the customers are satisfied with services received.
- Positive disconfirmation: if the experience is better than the expected, then the perceived service quality is high and the customers are satisfied and delighted.
- Negative disconfirmation: if the experience does not meet expectations, then service quality is perceived to be low and customers are dissatisfied.

3.11 Measurement of variables

The variables of this study were the components of service quality which affect perception of guests on service provided. They include:
Variable: Indicator
Tangibility: Staff appearance, physical facilities and their maintenance
Responsiveness: Ability of staff in dealing with guest request
Compete: Professionalism of staff
Communication: Staff communication skills
Courtesy: Friendliness and courtesy of staff
Security: Security and safety of room,   Availability of secure parking convenient location of guests' house
Reliability: Time-related promises   Sincere interest in solving guests' problems Services carried out correctly the first time
Assurance: Confidence of staff
Empathy: Staff gives individual attention to guests Employees understand guest needs

The dependent variable is the subject matter "service quality" which is dependent on variables listed above.

4. Research Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

The main findings of the study are summarized as follows:

i. Demographic characteristics of respondents.
Guests' demographic data revealed that females (41.6%) and males (58.4%) form the population of the guests on Mombasa Island, that Kenya in particular and the Eastern region provide the bulk of the guest house guests on the Island and thatthe majority of guests preferred unregistered to registered guest houses. The study also established thatmajority of guests make visits between once on weekly basis (24.4%) and twice monthly (24.1%) and majority of the guests (41.6%) preferred rooms charged between Kshs. 1,001 to Ksh1,500.

The significant characteristics of the room attendants were; young aged group of employees, the age category 26 to 35 years (56.3%) are the majority; mobile workforce with high turnover rates. Most room attendants had been on the job for less than five years (88.6%); relatively low levels of formal education qualificationwith the majority of the room attendants having secondary school level of education (75.0%) and high proportion of low-skilled workers because most of the room attendants (54.2%) lack formal training in housekeeping.

Accommodation supervisors' demographic data revealed that majority (56.3%) have served between 2-5 years, majority (62.5%) are diploma holders and most (56.3%) of them handle between 11-20 employees. The challenges of the guest houses not being in a position to hire highly qualified personnel opting for the middle-level trained personnel and also the same supervisors handling a large number of room attendants put them at risk of not being able to properly supervise the room attendant.

ii. Dimensions of customers' satisfaction with services offered in guest houses in Mombasa Island.
The results revealed that there is a pattern of association in the rating of factors that influence the extent of customer satisfaction with services provided. Factor analysis revealed that there are two main factors that affect customers satisfaction with services provided in the guesthouses. These are: ample supply of guest needs (towel, soap, toilet paper), adequate furniture provided in the room, ample supply of clean linen (bad sheets, blanket, pillowcase), room well lit, convenient location of guesthouse, quality of bathroom and shower facilities, bathroom/toilet well lit and comfortable mattress and pillow. These variables are linked to the physical characteristics of the service and are therefore, labelled *tangibility factor*.

Ability of staff in dealing with guest's request, breakfast attractive and interesting, breakfast served at right temperatures, good quality products served, friendliness and

courtesy of staff given the name *competence and courtesy factor.*

iii. Customers level of satisfaction with the quality of service provided by the guesthouses

It has emerged from the study that, most of the guests were satisfied with ample delivery of supplies such as clean linen (bed sheets, blanket, pillow case among others); guest supplies such as towel, soap, toilet among others; staff appearance; the lighting of the room and bathroom; comfortable bed; convenient location of the guest house; security and safety of room. The findings also revealed that the guests were satisfied with the following attributes; confidence of staff; staff ability in dealing with guests' requests; staff communication skills; friendliness and courtesy of staff and professionalism of staff.

Observations revealed that the floors, walls and ceilings met the criteria for classification for guesthouse for the EAC, the lighting and ventilation and adequate guest supplies in some cases. Guest supplies were available but were influenced by the amount charged per night. Sanitization in most of the guesthouses was not adequate; there were no set standards and rules on cleaning procedures to achieve efficiency and hence provision of service quality. Most of the guest rooms studied would not qualify for even one star rating according to the laid down requirements by the [30].

Further, the gender of the guest was found to play a critical role in the choice of guesthouses. Male guests were mostly satisfied with the staff who were confident, their level of professionalism and appearance. In contrast, the female guests were found to be satisfied with the quality of products served, nature of cleanliness of room, interior of the rooms and visually appealing physical facilities. Apart from the variation of guest choices based on gender, the study also found the origins or type of guest was important. The international guests were found to prefer secure rooms, quality of products served, clean rooms and physical appealing facilities and they did not attach much importance to breakfast and availability of secure parking space. The domestic and regional guests did not consider professionalism of staff, quality of bathroom, adequacy of furniture and security of rooms important. Overall, the study found that guests have diversity dimensional requirement, which need to be taken into consideration in the provision of service quality, for customer satisfaction.

iv. Room attendants' assessment of management practices and performance of staff in the guesthouses.

The study found that room attendants were satisfied with how management placed right amount of emphasis on quality of services; effectiveness in operating the guest houses; staff were quick, efficient and enthusiastic when dealing with guests; staff were friendly, personable and enthusiastic when dealing with guests; and that staff were responsible to the individual needs of guests.

However, they were not satisfied with how the management handles their welfare particularly in relation to pay, recognition their contributions and availing working materials and equipment.

On the basis of gender, the study found slight differences between male and female attendant responses. The males agreed that availability, quantity and conditions of materials, equipment and supplies were sufficient to do their job, females were neutral. On the other hand, females agreed that supervisors listened and responded to what they had to say and management of the guest house places right amount of emphasis on quality of services, while males were neutral.The findings further revealed that majority (70.8%) of the room attendants were happy with their working conditions in the guesthouses. However, they out-rightly disagreed that the pay is right for the work they do.

v. Accommodation supervisors rating of the quality of services provided by the guesthouses

The study revealed that accommodation supervisors highlighted the following aspect of services they provide: ample supply of guests' needs; ample supply of clean linen; well-lit and ventilated rooms; bathrooms/toilet well lit; convenient location of guest house; standard of cleanliness; friendliness and courtesy of staff; security and safety of rooms; adequate furniture provided; interior of guestrooms; washrooms/bathrooms comfort ability and attractive surrounding. Except for adequate furniture, the same attributes were rated by customers as satisfying thus indicating that customers' level of satisfaction matched management perception of the quality of services they provide in the guest houses.

The study further revealed a difference between supervisors who had professional qualification and those without. The educated supervisors were able to distinguish the difference levels of performances while those without qualification tended to rate everything extremely satisfied. Further, their ratings differed based on the length of service. The supervisors who had served for less than five years, rated that they were satisfied with the services provided. Those who had served for over five years were neutral on staff communication skills, friendliness and courtesy, quality of bathrooms and shower facility. However, they were all extremely satisfied with ample supply of guest supplies provided in the guest houses.

5. Conclusions

The study was designed to assess customers' level of satisfaction and supervisors' `1rating of the service quality of guest houses in Mombasa Island and the management practices as perceived by room attendants. The findings show that:

- Clean linen, guest supplies, and well lit rooms, convenient location of the guest house, comfortable bed, and friendliness and courtesy of staff, security and safety of room indicate that these are the most significant factors for the guests who visit the registered and unregistered guesthouses on Mombasa Island. These factors were the same identified by the accommodation supervisors.
- Gender of the guest influences factors the guest considers in selecting a guest house.

- There are two main dimensions of service quality identified through factor analysis from the responses by guests who visit the registered and unregistered guesthouses on Mombasa Island. These are the tangibility factors of the guest houses, the competence and courtesy of the staff providing services.
- The employees are not satisfied with how the management of the guesthouses handles their welfare particularly in relation to their pay, recognition of their contribution and availing enough working materials, but feel that the guesthouses are efficiently being run and the staff are giving their best.
- Kenya in particular and the East African region provide the bulk of guesthouse customers on Mombasa Island which is an essential factor in development of domestic tourism. This is because international tourism is many times affected by political instability and insecurity.
- Most of the guestrooms studied would not qualify for even one star rating according to the laid down requirements by the [30].

Based on these findings, the study concludes that the guests' level of satisfaction with the quality of services provided from the guesthouses coincide with those of the guesthouse providers since the factors emphasized by the guests are the same as those the accommodation managers rated as satisfying. However, there is need to expose the staff to higher training to improve on the professionalism and communication skills.

6. Recommendations for Policy and Practice

The central idea of the study was to analyze the service provision implications of the findings. A service is a function of the magnitude and direction of the gap between expected service and perceived service. When performance matches expectations, the customer is satisfied. The main function of a guesthouse is to provide quality service, but the success of this depends on the performance of the guesthouse. In analyzing the implications of the findings, different dimensions of service quality are addressed.

The results of the study indicated that two dimensions of service quality were important to the guests who frequent guesthouses in the Island of Mombasa, these are physical characteristics such as ample supplies of clean linen, guest supplies, convenient location of the guesthouse, cleanliness and lighting of the rooms and bathrooms, these are categorized as tangibility. The other dimension is the competence and courtesy of the staff such as their ability in dealing with guests, their friendliness and courtesy and their ability to provide quality service. Thus, it is recommended that the management of the guesthouses should always strive to provide ample and quality supplies to the guests and mind the quality of the rooms in terms of cleanliness, ventilation and lightning. The staff should also be encouraged and motivated to be friendly and courteous to the guests and strive to offer quality service.

The results of the study showed that most guest houses on the Island of Mombasa did not provide adequate furniture. They also did not in most cases provide breakfast or it was not attractive to the expectation of the guests. This implies that these facets of service are not satisfactorily provided. These are likely to cause low levels of satisfaction among guests, and if not addressed, may drive away guests. Against this background, it is recommended to the management of the guesthouses that some investment should be made to avail adequate furniture in the rooms and breakfast be provided to the guests.

In analyzing the room attendance assessment of management practices, it came out clearly that the staffs are not satisfied with how the management handles their welfare particularly in relation to their pay, recognition of their contributions and in availing enough working materials. This implies that the management of the guesthouses has not laid emphasis on these aspects of staff welfare. It also implies that the staffs are not well-equipped to work effectively and efficiently and in healthy protective environment. Against these findings, it is recommended that the guest houses should from time to time adjust the pay for staff and find ways of recognizing the contributions of staff in order to motivate them to work hard and provide quality service. The management should also provide enough working materials to facilitate the work and enable staff to work in a protective environment.

Education is key to optimal management as well as a key process in provision of service quality. The study found that qualification was not a necessary requirement in the recruitment of staff in the guest houses. This comprises professionalisms of the staff and thus the provision of quality services. Both the supervisors and the room attendants must upgrade their skills in order to make their guesthouses more attractive to the customers and hence encourage repeat business.

The universities training hospitality students should also develop curriculum for housekeeping that would include one to two months training. This can be done through in-service training. The Universities and training institutions can also develop training modules or courses aimed at training students who want to specialize in housekeeping in order to improve standards and thus attract more tourists.

It is further recommended that the Ministry of Education should in liaison with training institutions set benchmarks on educational level required for one to practice in this industry and enforce the same through the licensing boards at the county and national levels to improve quality.

The study found, particularly through observations, that the quality of standard of some guest houses did not meet the standards as per the MoT criteria. It is thus recommended that MoT should not only formulate guidelines for the operations of the guest houses but also ensure they are adhered to by establishing a monitoring unit and bring on board the county government to assist in enforcing these guidelines. Further, service providers in the hospitality industry should be encouraged to formulate guidelines encompassing all practitioners in the industry to act as internal regulatory body to ensure that the industry has standards of practice and operation. Development of such

standards of practice and operation could attract more entrepreneurial enterprises and deter unprofessional practitioners. This will improve standards and lead to attraction of more customers and thus boost tourism industry in Mombasa County and Kenya in general.

The study revealed that unregistered guest houses far outnumber those that are registered, thus remain unregulated by MoT. This means that they are operating haphazardly without adherence to any proper guidelines which could be detrimental to the success of the tourism industry. Thus, MoT should come up with regulations requiring that all guest houses obtain registration and licensing from them in order to enhance delivery of service and weed out unqualified individuals and guest houses from the industry.

7. Recommendations for Future Research

The research revealed valuable findings that laid a foundation for future studies on service quality in guesthouses. Further research needs to be done to address some of the gaps identified by this study. The study recommends further research in the areas listed below;

- This study was conducted in only one tourists' destination site. Future researchers could extend to other sites particularly inland.
- The study revealed two main dimensions of quality that are significant to customers in guest houses, these dimensions are likely to vary between different types of service providers in hospitality industry thus there is need to extend research to other service providers such as spa in order to compare results.
- The study focused on customers' level of satisfaction with service quality in guest houses and how room supervisors rate the quality of these services. Further research could incorporate the rating by the staff.

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