Effect of Housekeeping Service Qualities on Guest Satisfaction in Star-Rated Hotels in Nairobi City County, Kenya

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Abstract: *The major contributors to guest patronage in a hospitality organization are the standards of cleanliness and quality of services offered. In Kenya, despite the knowledge, set rules and guidelines of housekeeping practice, hotels have been faced with complaints from guests ranging from room cleanliness and maintenance to the quality of services offered. The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of housekeeping service qualities on guest satisfaction in star-rated hotels. A cross sectional survey design was adopted for the study. The target population for the was 1298 participants comprising of 1033 hotel guests, 21 executive housekeepers and 244 guestroom attendants. Stratified random sampling techniques was used to select 149 GRAs and 221 hotel guests. Whereas purposive sampling was used to select 21 executive housekeepers to participate in the study. Questionnaires, interviews and observation checklists were used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Regression and Thematic analysis were used to analyze quantitative and qualitative data respectively. Regression analysis was used to measure the relationship between housekeeping service quality and guest satisfaction and the findings revealed that R=0.323 which indicated there existed a weak but positive relationship of housekeeping quality services and guest satisfaction. Based on these findings, the study concluded that quality of housekeeping services in star-rated hotels has a direct relationship with management decision making in that a unit change in decision making process directly influences the quality of service delivery. The study recommends there is need for hotels in Nairobi City County to benchmark with other hotels to be able to offer consistent housekeeping quality services. In addition, there is need for hotels to continually develop marketing strategies to meet the today's guest demands. This can be done by hotels introducing guest cards in the guestrooms and ask guests to identify the housekeeping quality services they would like to experience in their rooms.*

Keywords: Housekeeping quality services, Guest satisfaction, Guestroom Attendant

1. Introduction

Guest satisfaction is an important factor affecting the hotel business performance, it is regarded as the main driver of guest loyalty. According to Markovic & Raspor (2010), the high level of guest satisfaction leads to repurchase and favorable word-of-mouth publicity and eventually increases revenue. Valdani (2009), points out that organization exist because they have a guest to serve. One of the things guests look for in a service is quality. Service quality can be defined as conforming to guest's expectations on a consistent basis (Kuruuzum & Koksal, 2010). The hotel service consists of three departments namely reception, food and beverage and housekeeping (Wang & Pearson, 2002). Jay and Dwi (2000) in their studies of quality service in hotel departments claimed that hotel guests perceive guest satisfaction with housekeeping to be more important than satisfaction with reception and food and beverage when deciding whether to return or recommend. Among various changes and improvements made by hotels to increase occupancy and guest satisfaction, housekeeping is regarded to be the key player to revenue generation (Andrew, 2008).What makes a hotel be popular amongst its guests is the effort made by the housekeeping department in ensuring that cleanliness and organization of the facility is in its rightful place.

Today as globalization advances, increasing the number of people travelling for business and leisure thereby increasing the demand for lodging facilities so should be the cleaning standards used; they must be practical and consistent to be able to provide a product that would bring guest satisfaction which will not only translate to revenue generation but also guest satisfaction.

Recent research from Europe reported that hotel's reputation and image is improved through the mechanisms used by housekeeping in maintaining cleanliness, ambience and comfort. One of the major factors considered in classifying hotels is the standard of cleanliness (Law of Kenya, 1986). The classification is done in a manner that the higher the star of the hotel, the better the quality of services expectations, amenities, standards and overall structure (Baum, 2002). Traditionally, housekeeping is not considered by hotel managers as a front line service department hence service training offered to the staff is minimal in comparison with that provided for reception and restaurant staff. In addition, few research studies have focused on housekeeping service quality impact on guest satisfaction (Kawachart & Sriboonjit 2013).

Hotels in Kenya present varied range of services to accommodate the different needs of guests. Ayele, (2012) argues that class, elegance, ambience and quality services are amongst some of major distinguishing factors of Nairobi hotels. According to the Kenya gazette (2003), Nairobi has eight 5-star-rated hotels, one 4-star-rated hotel, nine 3-star-rated hotels and three 2-star-rated hotels. The hotels are

operating in high competition for market share and resources (http://www.kenyaspace.com/hotels,htm); with the City County setting to host nine new international hotels which include Marriot, Accor, Radisson Blu, Park Inn, Lorno, Rezidor and Hilton (Kenya economic survey, 2013). The importance of housekeeping tasks in performance is undeniable, yet little research has been done to evaluate it (Sturman, 2006).

This study's focus on housekeeping service quality applied in star-rated hotels in Nairobi City County and their effect towards guest satisfaction. The independent variables were the factors of housekeeping service qualities which included cleanliness and hygiene of bedroom and bathroom, physical facilities and technology in the rooms, speed of services, guest requests attended on time, cleaning methods and procedures, supervision, standard operating procedures, training of staff, employees professionalism, housekeeping communication skills, friendliness and courteous of staff; the dependent variable was guest satisfaction while the intervening variable was housekeeping services. Specifically, the study sought to address the following hypothesis:

H_01: There is no significant effect between the housekeeping service qualities and guest satisfaction.
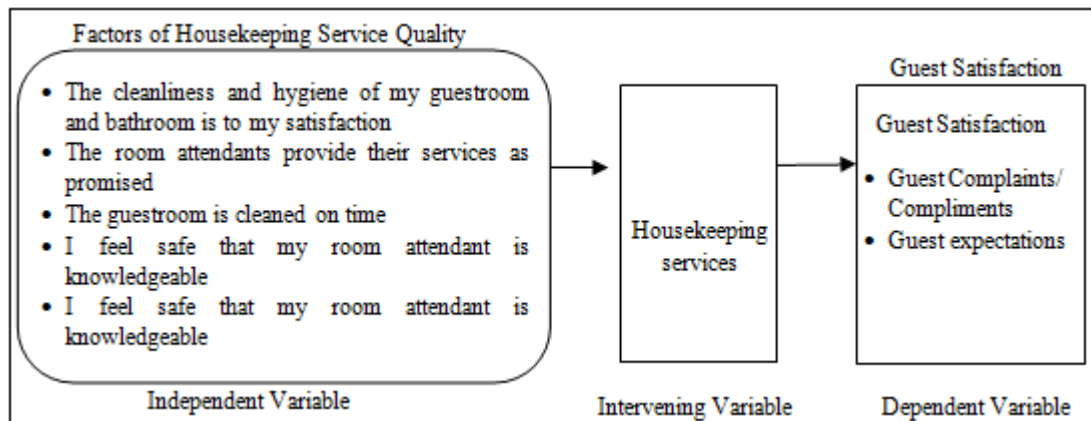
Conceptual Framework and Measurement of Variables

Figure 1.1: Modified Framework of Guest Satisfaction in Housekeeping Service-Quality by Kawachart & Sriboonjit, 2013

2. Research Methodology

Research Design and Target Population
The study adopted a cross sectional survey design. This research design was considered adequate as it provided a deep insight to housekeeping quality services; it captured attitudes and patterns of behavior with regard to service delivery and guest expectations.

The target population for the was 1298 participants comprising of 1033 hotel guests, 21 executive housekeepers and 244 guestroom attendants. 30.3% bed occupancy rate was used to determine the number of guests used in the study (KNBS, 2017). The total number of hotel guestrooms in the star-rated hotels in Nairobi City County accounted to 3411. This translated to 1033 guests following the expected number of guests 30.3 per cent of the total number of guestrooms (3411) in the star-rated hotels. The ration of the total number of hotel guestrooms to expected number of guests was 1:0.303 (1033).

The distribution of Executive housekeepers in the star-rated hotels were totaling to twenty-one (21) respondents. All hotels have one Executive housekeeper as the head of housekeeping department.

One (1) guestroom attendant attends to fourteen (14) guestrooms. The ratio of guestroom attendants to hotel guestrooms is 1:14 (Raghubalan & Raghubalan, 2007). A total of 244 guestroom attendants was to be used in the study. This was determined through the ratio formula where the total number of rooms in all the star-rated hotels was 3411 divided by 14 rooms cleaned by one guestroom attendant.

The study used a mixture of stratified random sampling and purposive sampling techniques. Stratified random sampling was used in star-rated hotels which were divided into four strata where each stratum was treated to have the characteristics of homogeneity. The first was of five star hotels, the second strata was of four star hotels, the third strata was of three star hotels and the fourth strata was of two star hotels since there was no stratum of one star hotel (The Kenya Gazette Notice, 2003). Purposive sampling technique was used to select 21 executive housekeepers as they are the key policy makers of the housekeeping services.

Sample Size Determination
Since the population under the study was less than 10000, Fisher's formula was applied in determination of sample size (Fisher's et al, 1999). This was arrived at through disintegrating Cochran sample size determination to fisher's sample size determination through the following formula Cochran (1963:75). Cochran formula: $n° = \frac{Z^2 pq}{e^2}$

Where Z^2 is the abscissa of the normal curve that cuts off an area α at the tails (1-α equals the desired confidence level, e.g., 95%); e is the desired level of precision, p is the estimated proportion of an attribute (p = 0.5 which is the maximum variability); q is 1 – p. The value of Z is found in the statistical tables which contain the area under the normal curve.

$$n° = \frac{1.96^2 * 0.5 * 0.5}{0.05^2} = 385$$

The n^o represents sample of Cochran. This is for a population size of above 10,000 (Cochran, 1975). The study further reduced the sample generated from Cochran as follows using Fisher's sample size determination. $n= {}^{no}/1 + (no - 1) / N$ where n is the sample size and N is the population size as tabulated below:

$$n = {}^{no}/1 + (no - 1) / N$$

For Hotel guests: $= {}^{385}/1 + 385 - {}^{1}/1033 = 280$

$$n = {}^{no}/1 + (no - 1) / N$$

Guestroom attendants: $= {}^{385}/1 + 385 - {}^{1}/244 = 149$

The sample for hotel guests were distributed proportionately among the star-rated hotels with regard to the number of rooms as indicated in table 1.0.

Table 1: Sample Size of the Target Population

Description (Strata)	Population of Hotels	No. of Rooms	Population of Hotel Guests 1: 0.303	Sample of Hotel Guests	Population of Executive housekeepers	Population of Guestroom attendants 1:14	Sample of Guestroom attendants
Five Star	8	1789	542	107	8	129	79
Four Star	1	100	30	13	1	7	4
Three Star	9	1168	354	120	9	83	51
Two Star	3	354	107	40	3	25	15
Total	21	3411	1033	280	21	244	149

The five star strata comprises of eight hotels, while four stars is one hotel, three stars is nine hotels and two stars is three hotels.

Research Instruments
The study used observation checklist, personal interviews and questionnaires to collect data (Anderson, 2010). Questionnaires were used to collect data from both GRAs and hotel guests where in Guestroom attendants the focus was on gathering data on housekeeping service quality. Questionnaires were also used to gather data from the guests through the use of Likert scale involving close-ended questions. Questionnaires were used in this study to collect data from the large number of respondents and effectively measurethe opinions of the respondents in the study.Interviews were held with executive housekeepers to obtain qualitative data to better understand the opinions of the executive housekeepers in regard to the services they offer to the guests.

Reliability
To test the reliability, the study used Cronbach's alpha (α) coefficient. The questionnaire had two sections each having Likert scale questions. It was assumed that a higher value among the variables was an indicator of a higher internal consistency among the items in the questionnaire for testing. A coefficient of 0.7 was used for the study. Nunnaly (1978) indicated that 0.7 to be an acceptable reliability coefficient. The higher the coefficient, the higher the reliability test.

Data Collection Techniques and Data Analysis
To secure appointments, bookings were done by telephone calls followed by personal visits. Drop and pick later method was used to collect the filled questionnaires. Self-administered questionnaires were hand delivered to executive housekeepers who were to distribute them respectively to the GRAs and hotel guests.Regression analysis was used to analyze quantitative data while thematic analysis was used to analyze qualitative data.

3. Findings

The study applied regression analysis to determine the effect of housekeeping service quality to guest satisfaction (my expectations about the services the guest receive in this hotel reflect the required service quality). The housekeeping service quality variables used were based on the identified service standards in accordance to the guests. Regression analysis was used to predict the effect of one or more independent variable and the dependent variable. The study used ordinary least square method in examining the effect of each housekeeping service quality variables on guest satisfaction. Table 1.2 shows the results of the regression analysis.

Table 1.2: Regression Analyses of Each Housekeeping Service Quality Variables on Guest Satisfaction

Independent Variable	Coef.	Std.Err	t	P<0.05
The cleanliness and hygiene of my guestroom and bathroom is to my satisfaction	0.14	0.178	0.784	0.039
The room attendants provide their services as promised	0.211	0.183	1.153	0.008
The guestroom is cleaned on time	-0.045	0.183	-0.246	0.005
I feel safe that my room attendant is knowledgeable	0.136	0.178	0.764	0.002
The housekeeping staff are friendly and ready to help	0.105	0.177	0.592	0.007

Dependent Variable: my expectations about the services l receive in this hotel reflect the required standards).
No. of Obs   =   221
R   =   0.323
R- Squared   =   0.104

From the table 1.2, the findings revealed that the multivariate correlation that exists between guest satisfaction and the housekeeping service quality was (R=0.323) which indicated there existed a weak but positive relationship between the variables under consideration, while the findings had a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 10.4%

which depicted that 10% of variation in guest satisfaction is due to the identified significant variables of housekeeping service quality namely, the cleanliness and hygiene of my guestroom and bathroom is to my satisfaction, the room attendants provides their services as promised, the guestroom is cleaned on time, the guest feels safe that my room attendant is knowledgeable and, the housekeeping staff are friendly and ready to help combined.

From the regression analysis, it was also established that one unit increase of the cleanliness and hygiene of my guestroom and bathroom is to my satisfaction will lead to 0.14 unit increase in guest satisfaction. This variable was significant (0.039) when tested at 95% confidence level. Hotel rooms is the major contributor to hotel marketing itself and thus generate profits therefore this means that the rooms have to look the image the hotel wants the guest to perceive it. This might be as a result of hotels advertising their products and services using social media platform to reach out to guests. This finding was in conformity with studies by Barber and Scarcelli (2010) on enhancing the assessment of tangible service quality through the creation of a cleanliness measurement scale, who indicated that cleanliness of hospitality facilities has a positive influence on guest satisfaction.

On the housekeeping service quality on room attendants provides their services as promised, it was also established that one unit increase of the room attendants provides their services as promised will lead to 0.211 unit increase in guest satisfaction. This variable was significant (0.008) when tested at 95% confidence level. If hotels decide to advertise to attract guests, it must be done in accordance with what they actually have to offer the guests in order to reduce raising curiosity in guests that can lead to an increase of guest complaints. The finding was in conformity with (Gunderson et al., 1996; Choi and Chu, 2000; Qu et al, 2000) who pointed out housekeeping department had the ability to provide efficiency services.

On the guestroom being cleaned on time, the findings revealed that there existed an inverse relationship between guestroom being cleaned on time and guest satisfaction with a negative effect in that a unit increase of cleanliness as perceived by the guestroom attendants will lead to (0.045) unit decrease in guest satisfaction. It should be noted that guest satisfaction was measured using compliments and complaints where if cleaning on time increased, the number of guest complaints will reduce. The implication here means that time of service is a key factor in explaining how a guest can react on the services they expect to be provided to them. Though the effect is weak, it supports studies conducted by Vanselow, et al (2009) on hotel room attendants and labor market institutions in Europe and the US on work intensification that the time calculated by management to clean rooms was being shortened therefore guestrooms not cleaned on time.

On guest feeling safe that the room attendant is knowledgeable in providing quality service, the findings revealed that there existed a positive relationship where one unit increase of the variable will lead to 0.136 unit increases in guest satisfaction, with a significant (0.002) when tested

at 95% confidence level. The study finding was in conformity with Laetitia and Yi Wang (2006) in their research of dimensions of guest house in South Africa who found out that hotel guests identified professionalism of staff as the most important determinant when selecting somewhere to stay. It was therefore noted that there was no significant relationship between the housekeeping service qualities and guest satisfaction.

Observations confirmed that hotel guestrooms provide guest supplies, clean linen and the bedroom and bathrooms were clean and well lit. This was in conformity with Gu and Ryan (2008) findings who identified bed comfort, bathroom cleanliness, room size, room amenities and facilities, as attributes that contribute to guest satisfaction.

4. Discussions, Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

4.1 Discussions and implications

On determining the housekeeping services on guest satisfaction, the study applied regression analysis where out of the five (5) identified quality services by the hotel guests on their satisfaction aspect, it was established that; the cleanliness and hygiene of my guestroom and bathroom is to my satisfaction, the room attendants provide their services as promised, l feel safe that my guestroom attendant is knowledgeable and the housekeeping staff are friendly and ready to help aspects had a positive relationship though weak with a significant relationship when tested at a Sig value of $p \leq 0.05$ whereas one variable 'the guestroom is cleaned on time' had a negative relationship with guest satisfaction. It should be noted in this variable that guest satisfaction was measured as number of complaints. The weak positively effect can be concluded to be attributed to guestroom attendants' impetus to rush cleaning of rooms to finish within a given time frame. From the findings, it was concluded that all the independent variables explain 10.4% of change that occurs in guest satisfaction.

4.2 Recommendations

There is need for hotels to develop a uniform platform of housekeeping quality services that will bring consistency in all hotels not only in Nairobi County, but to the whole Country. There is need for housekeeping service providers in the hospitality industry to be encouraged to formulate guidelines that will encompass all housekeeping practitioners in the industry to act as internal regulatory body to ensure the industry has quality of services for practice and operations.

4.3 Conclusion and Further Research

The key components that affect guest satisfaction in star-rated hotels are five aspects and that all of them affect guest satisfaction in a positive direction. This therefore means hotels lack the capacity to offer services related to lack of documented policies to adhere to when it comes to housekeeping services.

It is recommended that further research on examining the quality of performance by guestroom attendants when using selected cleaning equipment and chemicals in guestroom cleaning in Kenya hotels.

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