

## **FACTORS AFFECTING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY: THE CASE STUDY OF THE TAMALE METROPOLIS**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The study investigated factors affecting customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry in Tamale by assessing the extent to which staff's personal adaptation to customers' expectation, friendliness, physical environment and employee's emotional stability influence customer satisfaction. The study employed a cross-sectional survey and adopted a quantitative approach. A purposive sampling method was used in selecting five (5) hotels rated between 1 to 3-star in Tamale. Convenience sampling technique was used to sample 200 respondents. The results revealed adaptation to customers' need, friendliness, the ambience of the hotels and staff's emotional stability significant to customer satisfaction. The study found a notable correlation between customer satisfaction and the quality of service. Direct personnel services, room quality was also found as key determinates influencing customer satisfaction in the hotels than the outside environment. The research therefore, recommends hotel management to review and evaluate their customer database to include guest personality traits.*

**KEYWORDS:** Ghana, customer satisfaction, personality, staff service quality, physical evidence.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The hospitality industry which is mainly driven by effective functioning of hotels in the country has the mandate to offer perfect services aimed at making the customer have the needed satisfaction in the hospitality industry. Those at the helm of affairs of service provision play a central role in the development of the hospitality industry in Ghana. Apart from its contribution to customer satisfaction, the industry also contributes to the growth of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The hospitality industry provides employment to cleaners, cooks, receptionists, security guards and a whole lot. Lovelock and Wirtz (2010) held the view that a good number of new employment opportunities inevitable of effective services are provided by the hospitality industry. According to the United States Central Intelligence Report, (2012) the service sector in 2010 added 51.4% to Ghana's GDP.

Furthermore, the influx of people into Ghana due to the discovery of crude oil in commercial quantity, demand standardised service similar to where they are coming from, from service providers such as hotels. Customer expectations is therefore high on service providers especially the hospitality industry to meet diverse customer needs or guest expectations. Most hotels are challenged with providing quality service transcending customer expectations, to ensure repeated patronage, which is the expectation and bedrock of any business (Caruana, Money, and Berthon,

2000). The quality of services results in customer satisfaction followed by customer loyalty and retention. A loyal customer does not only repeat patronage but also sells the hotel through word-of-mouth, thereby increasing the revenue of the hotel. The implication of this is that a customers' change of patronage would have an impact on the long-term revenue of the hotel. Thus, how service quality impacts customer loyalty and satisfaction is therefore the focus of this paper.

Ghana's hospitality industry has highlighted the regular participation of customers as an intervention for the survival of the industry. Through effective service delivery, the existence of first-class hotels offers meaning to the state of the hospitality industry. However, in contradiction to the above assertion; the hospitality industry is usually not able to meet the expectations of all the different customers utilising the services of the hotels in the Tamale Metropolis.

Consequently, contextually, the hospitality industry is a vital tool for the socio-economic development of every country as such there is a growing need for effective and efficient service. The absence of well-structured service delivery is a bane to the effective performance of the hospitality industry (Ghana Tourism Authority 2014). This is more problematic as some customers perceive the services of the hospitality industry as disappointing, especially in the Tamale Metropolis. Also, it is an indication that there are inequities in the quality of services delivered by most of the hotels. Thus, it is to this extent that this work seeks to ascertain the factors affecting customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry in Tamale.

### **Research Objectives**

The main objective of the study is to assess the factors affecting customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry in Tamale.

### **Specific Research Objectives**

The study, therefore, aims to examine the following specific objectives:

- To ascertain the impact of customer satisfaction on the hospitality industry
- To identify the challenges affecting customer satisfaction the hospitality industry

In line with the research objectives, the study seeks to find answers to the following research questions;

- How does customer satisfaction impact the hospitality industry?
- To what extent does these challenges affect the hospitality industry
- What recommendation aimed at addressing the challenges and could improve customer satisfaction hospitality industry in Tamale?

### **Significance of the study**

Customer satisfaction intends to encourage authorities to raise revenue, manage and have control of their resources. This, however, is usually not the case as there are imperfections in the service delivery aspect in the hospitality industry. The findings could also facilitate the implementation of participatory service delivery.

The study has both practical and research implications as the findings may cause an expansion and improvement in the hospitality industry and also be expected to encourage the improvement of

local staff capability. Besides that, quality services tend to manage and maintain the local existing competitive advantage for the hotels in the Tamale Metropolis. The study will also add to knowledge and understanding of the management of hotels about the benefits and limitations of service delivery in Ghana. Also, the revelations from this work will be used as a model for stakeholders as well as Non-governmental organizations in the hospitality industry in their quest to plan for suitable interventions to enhance customer satisfaction at the various hotels in Ghana. Furthermore, the results from the study will bring awareness to stakeholders to understand the different roles of each service providers in entirety delivering on their mandate of delivering quality services. Finally, this study will bring to bear whether there will be the need for a more extensive study to be done by policymakers and consultants of the hospitality industry in the design and implementation of factors both internal and external to improve on customer satisfaction.

### **Scope of the study**

The research used five (5) hotels in the Tamale Metropolitan Area. Essentially it included key officers responsible for the supervision of service delivery, customers and the individuals employed to perfect the service. For anonymity H1 -H5 is used for the hotels understudied. The choice of above-mentioned hotels is based on their involvement and role they play in the hospitality industry; and their working relationship with the researcher.

### **Limitation of the study**

This work experienced certain shortfalls where books and literature on the hospitality industry were not easily accessible in Ghana. Therefore, the researcher relied on pieces of information from the internet. Again, the researcher practically experienced challenges with time constraints because although there are reviews of existing literature on the hospitality industry, they are not adequate. Besides, the work was hindered as a result of the busy schedules of the respondents.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Assaf and Mignini, (2011), indicated that customer satisfaction is vital in determining the survival, assessment, and improvement in the efficiency of a hotel. This indicates that satisfaction is an outcome of post-consumption of product or service. The disconfirmation paradigm theory developed by Parasuraman Zeithaml and Barry (1988), is the theory mostly cited in research of customer satisfaction

All things being equal, this theory postulate that consumers have a mindset, standard and expectation which is compared with service experiences. Consumer experience; perceived performance of the service or product; disconfirmation; and satisfaction are the key components that play vital roles. Narteh and Kuada, (2014) and Agyapong, (2011), stated respectively, that disconfirmation is the judgements or evaluation consumers make regarding product services, either positive or negative. Good customer management practices lead to consumer satisfaction (Narteh and Kuada, 2014; Agyapong, 2011), vital to long term towards sustainability and profitability of firms (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

### **Personality Factors Affecting Customer Satisfaction**

Lin, (2010), posit that attitude and behaviour of consumers towards a firm's products or service can be linked to their personality traits. Lin, furthermore, explained the trait theory as people having the same set of traits show it differently, differentiating one individual from to another. A combination of the various traits is due to the individual differences, which makes an individual unique (Lin, 2010). Jani and Han (2015), asserts that personality allude to psychological qualities that contributes to a person undergoing a distinctive pattern of feeling, thinking, and behaviour. McCrae and Costa, (2009) classified personality traits into five categories called the "big five models" which include openness (a person's degree of curiosity, originality, creativity and imagination); extraversion (the degree to which a person is outgoing or sociable); friendliness/sociability (kindness, helpful and general warm feeling towards other people) neuroticism (steadiness of a person's general emotional makeup and excessive cravings or urges); and conscientiousness (the degree to which a person is precise, well organized and orderly). To date, this model is the most preferred by researchers in assessing human personality (Lin, 2010). Personality traits are believed to influence customer service experience. Jani and Han (2014), found personality factors, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism as major drivers of customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry.

Similarly, Lin and Worthly (2012), evaluated the influence of personality traits on satisfaction in an imaginary bar and hotel setting shows that extraversion significantly and directly leads to pleasure which has a direct effect on satisfaction. Akter, D'Ambra and Hani (2013), confirms that personality traits have both negative and positive influence on customer satisfaction and loyalty. The investigation found customers who are sociable and have emotional stability, placing less emphasis on quality service leading to satisfaction than less sociable and emotionally unstable persons. According to a report of WHO, (2017), approximately, about 300 million people of all ages suffer from depression. According to Akter et al., (2013), studies on personality traits are very essential in understanding consumer behaviour and needs.

### **Physical Environment**

The physical environment is where service transaction takes place usually between customer and service provider (Bitner, 2010). Han and Ryu (2009), asserts that "servicescape" which is the physical environment of a firm could have a direct effect on customer's perception of service delivery, attitude and tolerance level during service failure as well as satisfaction. Serene physical environment is most of the time created or developed. In order to leave a positive impression on guests. The "servicescape" according to Bitner (2010), comprise room design and outside facility design. As too much noise, high room temperatures, unpleasant odour, poor room decor and uncomfortable furniture might discourage a guest from continuing to stay in a hotel. Good conditions such as air-conditioned room, adequate electronic gadgets, easy internet connectivity and facility design of a facility enhances service quality, this is line with the findings of Nimako and Mensah (2013), who agree that flowers, paintings, ceiling and wall decor enhances service quality delivery. Artefacts were also found to be important in determining customer satisfaction and loyalty in a restaurant setting (Han and Ryu, 2009). Lin and Mattila (2010) support the notion

that customer satisfaction does not only depend on just physical environment but many elements contribute such as tangible and intangible.

Security issues are also of paramount concerns according to Clemes et al., (2011). Barsky and Nash (2013) argue that hotels with good interior lighting in public areas such as the car park, hallways and stairways increases a guest sense of security.

### Conceptual Framework

In this conceptual framework key elements believed to have a strong impact on the dependent research variable. The model depicts that personality factors (extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism), staff service quality and the physical environment leads to customer satisfaction. Figure 3.1 displays how the independent variables such as individual factors, service quality exhibited by the staff and environmental factors causing the dependent variable to exist. This, therefore, constitutes a foundation for this conceptual framework.

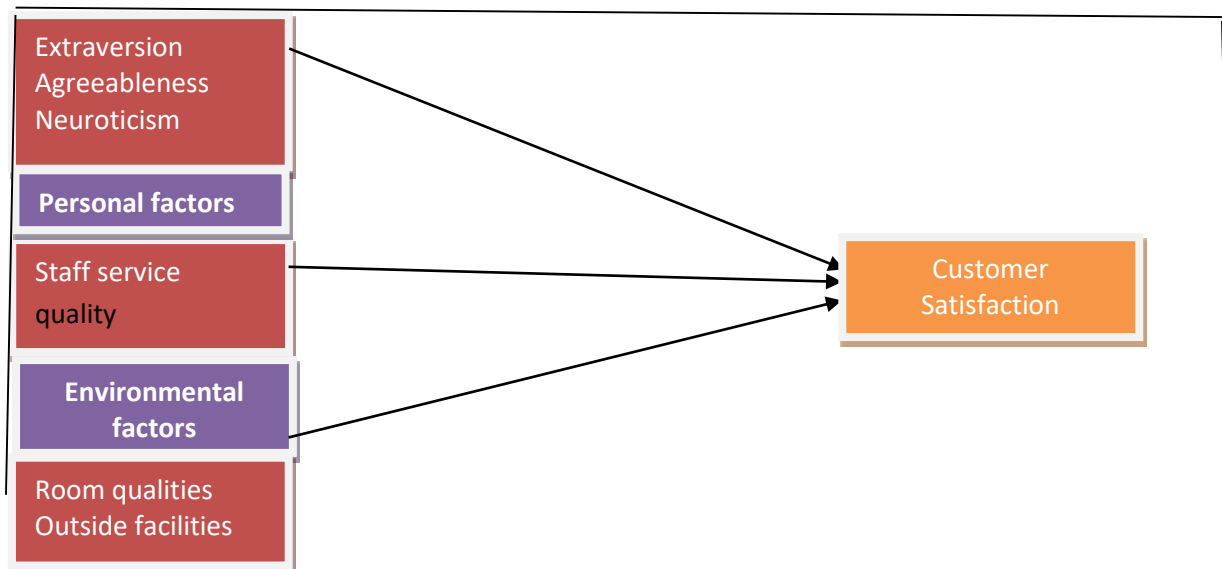


Figure1: The Conceptual Framework Adopted from (Jani and Han, 2014)

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The main part of the research methodology includes the following:

### Sampling Design

This study is a cross-sectional survey. A non-probability purposive and convenience sampling technique was used to select five (5) registered hotels rated between 1 to 3 stars in Tamale. At least one hotel for each category was considered. The selection of these rated hotels was based on Jumia Travel (2016) Ghana's hospitality report that guests in Ghana prefer a 1 to 3-star hotels due to exorbitant fees charged by the 4 and 5-star hotels. Tamale was considered because it is the most

popular visitors' destination in Northern Ghana. Questionnaires were pre-tested on 10 hotel guests or customers before the data collection exercise after seeking permission from the management of the hotels selected. Two hundred (200) hotel guests were suitably targeted sampled for the study (40 from each selected hotel). With the help of two research assistants, questionnaires were administered on respondents at the lounges of the hotels' premises. The data collection exercise lasted twenty (20) days, 4 days for each hotel selected.

### **Data Collection**

Data was collected on selected hotels in Tamale with different classifications as provided by the Ghana Tourist Board (Ghana Tourist Board, 2005). They include H1-H5. Since all the hotels offered boarding and lodging which is a common feature, the study selected twenty (20) guests or customers from each of the hotels for investigation. A survey instrument used was a questionnaire to gather data on the frequency of customer expectations, perceptions and satisfaction concerning the service quality of the hotels.

Also, 5 staff members per hotel were purposively selected and interviewed. Descriptive characteristics of the respondents and the weighted averages of their responses were summarized using tables, frequencies and graphs.

Besides, a gap analysis was used in comparing means between expectation score and perception score of the respondents. Assessing the impact of customer satisfaction on the hospitality industry was measured using a simple probit regression model and analysed by SPSS. Probability values were estimated using the software Stata v10. All the service quality elements were measured using a five-point Likert scale. However, responses were transformed to dummies where all responses with a mean of 4.0 or above belonged to the 1="satisfactory" category, whilst responses with averages less than 4.0 belonged to the 0="unsatisfactory" category. Thus, all guests who had visited their respective hotels twice or more (repeat guests) were deemed loyal and otherwise deemed not loyal).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

In this section, the socio-demographic data of the respondents are presented and discussed. In the table below the various socio-demographic features are analysed.

**Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristic**

<b>Ages</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
20 – 30 years	28	14
31 – 40 years	96	48
41 – 50 years	64	32
50 and above	12	06
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Male	140	70
Female	60	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Education Level</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Senior High School	20	10
Diploma/Professional Certificate	36	18
Polytechnic	84	42
University Degree	60	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Duration of service at MASLOC</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
6 months - 1 year	20	10
2 – 3 years	40	20
4 - 5 years	90	45
Above 5 years	50	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Designation of employees</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Receptionists	20	10
Waiters/waitresses	40	20
Finance	20	10
Cleaning	120	60
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Author's Field Survey, 2020.

The table above shows the various socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. In the first place, the age distribution of the respondents reveals majority, thus 48% of the respondents were found to be within 31–40 years. Those in the minority were 50 and above. The gender/sex distribution of respondents shows 70% of them being males. In terms of educational background, a majority (42%) of the staff had Polytechnic education; with the least being 10% who had senior high school qualification. With regards to the duration of service of the staff at their respective hotels, most of the respondents (45%) had served in the hospitality industry between 4-5 years. Quite a significant number of the respondents were staff of the sanitation unit undertaking cleaning-related activities since 60% were found to be in this category.

**Table 2: Factors Contributing to Customer Satisfaction in the Hospitality Industry**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Adaptation	70	35
Friendliness/sociability	40	20
Physical environment	30	15
Staff's personal emotional stability	60	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Author's Field Survey, 20120

The research purpose was to examine the extent to which varied factors contribute to the satisfaction of the diverse customers patronizing the services of the identified hotels in the Tamale Metropolis. The first contributing factor as seen in the Table revealed that service providers' adaptation to the customers' needs is indeed a panacea to the achievement of customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry. This describes a situation where the customers measure the level of comfort he or she feels as they come into contact with their customers. Numerically, 70 respondents representing 35% were found to be in this category.

This study found friendliness/sociability that prevails in the hotels to have a significant effect on customers' satisfaction. Even though foreigners were involved in the study, Ghanaians representing 20% considered this as a contributory factor. It can therefore be argued that Ghanaians, by their nature and cultural values, are known to be friendly and these were inexplicably exhibited; strangers were welcomed with open arms and tolerate them in many perspectives. This relates to Amissah and Amenumey (2015) assertion which states that service personnel are expected to show extraversion characteristics (that is to be friendly, sociable) and agreeableness characteristics such as warm reception, respect and concern to customer needs) to be satisfied with the services delivered.

As the results reveal, 30 respondents representing 15% viewed physical environmental factors such as room and outside facilities create a serene atmosphere that influences customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry in Tamale. It further, identified neuroticism among the three personality traits assessed most influential in keeping customers content and satisfied with hotel service. The findings thus reveal that since room quality has a considerable persuasive effect on hotel customers satisfaction than the outside facilities. It can be concluded that although outside facilities could attract more guests, the inside facilities would keep them satisfied with hotel services.

Staff's emotional stability according to 60 (30%) respondents was also identified as an explicit factor that undoubtedly contributes to customer satisfaction. this result relates directly to the ability of respondents to establish cordial relationships that have to do with the sociable make-up of a person in terms of being helpful and having warmth feeling towards people. this is consistent with Jani and Han (2014) supposition who found personality traits such as extra rapport and good humour to be significant predictors of customer satisfaction.



It can therefore be argued that personality traits such as friendliness and individual sociability might be context-specific. This study indicates that there is a significant positive relationship between personality traits indicated above and customer satisfaction in hotel services in Ghana. This study found the staff service quality as very significant in ensuring customer satisfaction. It is thus a key determinant of customer satisfaction in the hotel sector in Ghana. In the final analysis, the inseparable affinity that exists between service delivery and human interaction is very essential and conscious efforts ought to be implemented to hold on to the needed quality services since they do not happen in establishments such as hotels and other sectors of the service industry by accident.

**Table 3: Challenges Affecting Customer Satisfaction the Hospitality Industry**

Possible challenges	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Disgusting behaviour	30	15
Discomfort for customers	90	45
Impersonal attitude	20	10
Presence of insects in the atmosphere	60	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Author's Field Survey, 2020

The table above contains the possible challenges that adversely affect customers' satisfaction in the hospitality industry. First and foremost, 15% of the respondents identified disgusting staff behaviour as one of the possible challenges that create difficulties for hotel guests in Tamale. The second challenge according to 45% of the respondents reveals that there is possible discomfort created for customers, and this a very significant determinant of risky social condition in the hotels. The respondents numbering 10% also mentioned that impersonal attitude also emanates from the and thus adversely affect customer satisfaction. The data further reveals that 30% of the respondents considered the presence of insects in the atmosphere as one of the barriers which adversely affects the achievement of customer satisfaction in the hotel settings.

## CONCLUSION

The success of the hospitality to a greater extent depends on customer satisfaction when they patronize the services of the selected hotels in the Tamale Metropolis. Findings of this study are consistent with the fundamental factors such as staff's adaptation to customers' needs, as well as friendliness that determines how sociable hotels workers are towards the varied customers to be more significant. An understanding of how physical environment such as rooms and outside factors have really and can influenced customer satisfaction which enables management of hotels to create the enabling hotel environment that might reduce the stress and depression of some guest at the hotel. However, the possible challenges such as disgusting behaviour, discomfort for customers, impersonal attitude and presence of insects in the atmosphere could adversely affect the achievement of customer satisfaction in the hotels studied in Tamale. Analysis from this study indicates that most of the respondents had positive emotions as they indicated that they did not get anxious or tensed up easily. This positive emotion of guest can influence their satisfaction with hotel services.

## Recommendations

To strengthen efforts aimed at improving on the customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry, this study, therefore, recommends that hotel management should re-examine and re-programme their customer database system to capture guest personality traits to deliver services that meet customers' needs.

Employees should be enlightened, trained, and empowered on how to handle customers with different personality traits and resolve guest complaints quickly. Management of hotels should factor in personality traits when designing their communication messages to capture a wider market. Staff service quality was found to be the overall key determinant of guest satisfaction in hotels. Management must, first of all, envisage it, take initiatives, plan towards its achievement, deliver, monitor and find the means of sustaining it.

Hotel managers must have staff retention strategies, a good communication system where employees form part of the decision-making unit to place customer needs at the centre of the business. This study also recommends that staff should be empowered by training them on good customer practices. Staff with outstanding performance should be given incentives or motivated by rewards and recognition. Hotel regulatory bodies should ensure that hotel standards comply so that those that fail to meet standards are sanctioned accordingly.

This study recommends that hotel managers should pay extra attention to the quality of room service delivered to their guests. It involves constant monitoring of T.V cable network and internet facilities to ensure their efficiency in operation and purchasing of quality products to furnish rooms. Business guest should be encouraged to use more of the outside facilities for them to enjoy the full services available. This can be achieved through promotional messages that showcase outside facilities and activities to be interesting and appealing.

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