

Service Quality Strategies and Performance of Hotels in Cross River State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study examined “Service Quality Strategies and Performance of Hotels in Cross River State, Nigeria”. The research was motivated by the desire to identify the service strategies that can motivate people to patronize hotels services in Cross River State, Nigeria. To this end, the study sought to examine the influence of reputation and ambience on performance of hotels Cross River State, Nigeria. The study adopted cross-sectional and judgmental sampling technique to survey three hundred and sixty three hotels and their customers in Cross River State. Data were collected using a self-administered four-point scale questionnaire. The data generated were analyzed using mean rating and multiple linear regression analysis. The findings revealed that reputation and ambience had significant influence on performance of hotels. Hence, it was recommended among other things that, hotels Managements should endeavour to monitor their employees actions in order to be sure that its conform to reputational practices guiding the hotel. Key words: service, quality, strategy, performance, reputation and ambience.

1.1 Background of the study

The importance of services has increased during the last decades in Nigeria. Many factors underlie the change from a manufacturing sector towards a society where services dominate. Some of these factors are: globalization, changing patterns in governmental regulation, privatization, technological innovations and growth of franchising (Financial Nigeria, 2018). In 2018, national bureau of statistics revealed that the Nigerian service industry had higher growth than manufacturing industry. Indeed, this was an important shift and one of the largest revolutions in Nigerian economic history. Currently, about 75 percent of all employments is within this sector. Moreover, if adding services that are parts of manufacturing and construction sectors, service employees account for about 85 percent of total employment in Nigeria and these figures also show

the importance of steadily growing field of service marketing in Nigeria (National Bureau of Statistics (N.B.S.), 2017).

The service sector has played an important role in most economies (Tam, 2000). This sector comprises a number of industries, of which accommodation is one of the largest (Yang, 2005). Hotels are the important parts of the accommodation industry and have become one of the most competitive business in the world in recent years (Harrison & Enz, 2005). For example, lodging in Nigeria was a N108 billion industry, with over 2,500 hotels and about 10,000 guestrooms in 2017 (Financial Nigeria, 2018). Recently, there has been an increased focus on the management and marketing of hotels in Nigeria for the achievement of positive performance in short and long terms appraisal (Reisiger, 2018). Hotels provide services that are different from tangible goods because hotel services are immediately consumed and require a people-intensive creation process (Harrison & Enz, 2005). Furthermore, Alexandis, Dimitriadis and Markata (2002) stated that the issue of service quality could not be neglected in the hotel industry if hotels were going to maintain repeat customers.

Strategy on the other hand is the way a firm effectively differentiates itself from its competitors by capitalizing on its strengths (both current and potential) to provide consistently better value to customers than its competitors. Strategy is the direction and scope of an organization over the long term; which achieves advantages for the organization through its configuration of resources within a challenging environment to meet the need of markets and to fulfill stakeholders' expectations. Strategy is the science and art of exploiting, creating, and delivering value to satisfy the needs of a target market at a profit (Kotler, 2014). Therefore, hoteliers need functional strategies in the course of running or operating accommodation and lodging enterprises for effective and efficient performance. These strategies lie within the ambit of marketing

strategies. Service quality is perceived as subjective since it relies on the judgment of the customer and not the organization. However, it is an important concept that influence the extent and nature of customer experience after service delivery. This is because poor service quality produces customer dissatisfaction which may lead to defection, negative or poor hotel performance (Christopher, Jochen & Hean,2005).

Performance deals with the way in which organization functions to accomplish results successfully. Performance has operational and economic implications for every organization and it should be defined and associated with norms created before being established. Performance is the term employed as the outcome of a strategy behind the development in improving the determinant of success. However, performance is totally dependent on independent workforce measured quantitatively and qualitatively (financial, non-financial and operational). Therefore, performance refers to excellence, and includes profitability and productivity among other non-cost factors such as quality, speed, delivery and flexibility in hotel industry.

The hotel industry is in the segment of the service sector otherwise hospitality industry, with diverse offerings to customers and plays an important role in the Nigerian economy, and Cross River State in particular. According to StatisticsTime.com (2019), hotels GDP contribution in Cross River State was 5.9 percent from 6.2 percent (difference of 0.3 percent) out of 9,292 USD which gave the state 11th position in richest states ranking in Nigeria. A hotel is an institution or building which provides lodgings, accommodations, meals and other services for guests or customers. It is said to be a business enterprise having a building for public accommodation, lodging, meals, beverages and personal services. It is a home away from home and a place where the visitors or tourists stop being the traveler and become the guests. To a large extent, the facilities of the hotel may also affect the local population but its primary function is to accommodate those away from home and supply them with their basic needs and try to meet their expectations (Medlik, 2000). Once customers' requirements are clearly identified and understood, hotel operators are more likely to anticipate and fulfill these needs and wants (Juwaheer, 2012). The more satisfied the customers are, the more likely they are to return or prolong their stay in the hotel and the better the hotel would perform (Choi & Chu, 2001). Moreover, service quality strategies application could give some hotels an edge over

other hotels in terms of experiencing high customer patronages during peak and low periods while hotels that lack service quality strategies scramble for customer.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Hotel industry in Cross River State is a multibillion naira business entity that is capable of generating revenue for government, stakeholders and individuals alike. The issues of hotels not being viable and at a stage stopped operations is so worrisome. This negative development could work against the stakeholders socioeconomically. Continouing with the old styles of marketing strategy in hotel firms in this current era would prevent customers from patronizing most hotels' services. Developing a more informed marketing strategy could help better implement the needed service strategies in hotel industry. Thus, we proposed to examine factors that have influence on performance of hotels in Cross River State, Nigeria.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The general objective of this study is to examine service quality strategies and performance of hotels in Cross Rive State. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. examine the level to which reputation influences performance of hotels in Cross River State;
2. determine the extent to which ambience influences performance of hotels in Cross River State;

1.4 Research questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. To what extent does reputation influence performance of hotels in Cross River State?
2. To what extent does ambience influence performance of hotels in Cross River State?

1.5 Research hypotheses

The following research hypotheses have been formulated to guide this study:

1. Reputation does not influence hotels performance in Cross River State.
2. Ambience does not influence hotels performance in Cross River State.

1.6 Significance of the study

This study will be relevant to Cross River State government and Cross River State Tourism Bureau by adopting the recommendations from this study. This means that hotels industry may be regulated and as a result, viable hotel performance will be achieved while the State will benefit more tax revenue from hotel industry. When hotels

perform better by applying recommendations in this study, there is no doubt that the State will receive more taxes from the hotels compared to the amount received before.

This study will enable hotels and managers of hotels in Cross River State to re-examine their service strategies that influence hotel performance, provide insights on the service quality strategies that need improvement or restructuring which will be useful in planning strategic marketing programmes that will enhance organizational image and make hotels to live up to expectation. This study will be of great help to students and other researchers because it will assist in the advancement of knowledge as a reference material for further research studies in related disciplines.

1.7 Scope of the study

The fundamental concern of this study is about service quality strategies and performance of hotel industry in Cross River State. Two strategies of service quality are used in this study: reputation and ambience, as independent variables while performance is dependent variable measured in non-financial sub-variables. The subjects of this study are customers of 354 two and three star hotels in Cross River State, Nigeria.

1.8 Limitations of the study

There are certain constraints envisaged in the course of carrying out this work. Mostly, the study is limited in scope. Since only two and three star hotels were examined, it may pose a challenge with respect to generalization of the research findings. Nonetheless, with available data and judicious use of the limited resources, reasonable analysis was carried out to ensure that research findings add up to the body of existing knowledge.

2.1 Theoretical framework

This study is based on The SERVQUAL theory (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985)

2.1.1 The SERVQUAL theory (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985)

“SERVQUAL (SERV - service and QUAL - quality) is a multi-dimensional research instrument designed to capture consumers’ expectations and perceptions of a service along the five dimensions that are believed to represent service quality. The SERVQUAL theory was developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry in 1985 and refined in 1988, 1991, and 1994. Realizing the significance of offering quality service for the survival and success of companies,

and the need for a generic instrument which would be used to measure service quality across a broad range of service categories”.

2.2 Conceptual framework

2.2.1 Overview of service

Over recent decades services marketing academics have devoted a great deal of energy to the definition and characterization of ‘services’, especially their differentiation from goods. Despite this work however, there is still a lack of consensus on a general definition of services (Johns, 1999). To provide a context for our argument, we briefly summarize three distinct perspectives of services.

First, services can be thought of as an entire industry which is not concerned with the production of manufactured goods. The Service Industry as a whole comprises distinct segments such as financial services or telecommunications, which are all different (Lovelock 2013). Economists brought about this perspective for the purpose of classifying and reporting those activities in national statistics (Johns 1999). From a management perspective, however, industry based classification schemes are of little help since they overlook the fact that service operations characteristics often vary considerably within specific industries and even within organizations. This makes the management of different service operations or service processes difficult (Silvestro, 2012).

2.2.2 The concept of service quality strategies

Service quality is the customer’s perception of difference between the expected service and the perceived service. According to Fogli (2006), service quality is a judgment or attitude relating to a particular service, the customer’s overall impression of the relative interiority or superiority of the organization and its services. Bonn and Matthews (2013), also defined service quality as the difference between customer’s expectations for service performance prior to the service encounter and their perceptions of the service received. In a similar view service quality is the subjective comparison that customers make between the quality of the service that they want to receive and what actually they get (Fullerton, 2005).

2.2.3 Hotel Reputation

A firm’s reputation is an intangible asset (Dowling, 2013). The nature of such a reputation depends upon everything the firm does as an entity, (Weigelt and Camerer, 2018) and particularly the signals and communications it chooses to give to

the marketplace (Fombrun and Shanley, 2017). The symbol of that reputation, the corporate name, when well managed, represents the organization favorably to its publics and can be particularly valuable in doing so to its customers (Margulies, 2017; Berry, 2018; Balmer, 2015; Brown and Dacin, 2017). Reputation is then a complex phenomenon but one which is worth managing well. What differentiates between the good and the not-so-good management of reputation has been the subject of many practitioner texts (Bernstein, 2014; Smythe, 2012; Sauerhaft & Atkins, 2018), but far less material has emerged from academic research outside of the possible links between an organization's culture and its image, either to the market (Hatch & Schultz, 2017) or with its employees (Dutton, 2014). While something is known about the activities organizations undertake in their management of reputation (Post & Griffin, 2017) less is known about the issues which are addressed by reputation managers, or even their views on those issues that appear, from the available literature, to be important in their role of Corporate Reputation Review.

The increasing competition is one of the reasons why the performance measurement is important in today's business. The intense competition among peers in the hotel industry may influence hotel performance especially when reputation is the undertone priority. Furthermore, studies on hotel performance should be carried out to improve the poor performance of hotels especially in terms of reputation. This is the main purpose of this study - to improve hotel

performance in respect to reputation. The concept of performance is related to the survival and success of an organization. Even though literature on performance is very extensive but there is still a lack in consensus about the meaning of the term (Johannessen, Olaisen, & Olsen, 2013).

2.2.5 Hotel ambience

Ambience conditions affect the five senses of the customers mind (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003). The dimensions of ambient conditions (lighting, scent and temperature) are very vital in the present study. Ambient conditions encompass an array of background characteristics of the environment such as temperature, lighting, noise, music, and scent (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003). Ryu and Jang (2017) found that ambience (e.g. music, temperature and aroma) and employee appearance had the most important influence on customers' emotional responses, which in turn affected customers post-dining behavioural intentions. As a general rule, ambience conditions affect five senses. Some authors relate ambient conditions to atmospherics. Atmosphere of the firm can be strongly affected by scents and services managers should be aware of this. Of all the human senses, the olfactory sense which is the sense of smell has the greatest impact on people's emotions (Spangenberg, Crowley & Henderson, 2016). Some scent provokes basic emotional reactions because the olfactory lobe is actually part of the limbic system (Hirsch, 2015). The nose is directly connected to the olfactory lobe and the limbic system (Hirsch, 2015). More than any other sense, scent taps into the feeling marketers want to research (Wilkie, 2015).

TABLE 1
 Patronage of selected hotels in Cross River State (March to August, 2019)

| S/n | Hotels | No.of rooms | March | April | May | June | July | Aug. | Total |
|-----|----------------------------|-------------|-------|-------|-----|------|------|------|-------|
| 1 | Freemans hotels | 47 | 49 | 53 | 62 | 33 | 45 | 29 | 223 |
| 2 | 110 residence guest house | 35 | 34 | 26 | 47 | 58 | 63 | 29 | 257 |
| 3 | Royal bit hotels | 52 | 12 | 32 | 27 | 33 | 42 | 28 | 174 |
| 4 | Francis suite limited | 35 | 28 | 29 | 22 | 35 | 37 | 28 | 179 |
| 5 | Bluesea hotel | 27 | 51 | 27 | 53 | 28 | 13 | 26 | 198 |
| 6 | Success villa luxury hotel | 43 | 53 | 33 | 44 | 28 | 26 | 23 | 207 |
| 7 | Blossom nolly | 36 | 44 | 43 | 45 | 54 | 28 | 54 | 268 |
| 8 | Cross road hotel ltd | 41 | 12 | 24 | 15 | 26 | 31 | 21 | 129 |
| 9 | De limit | 36 | 22 | 35 | 36 | 41 | 29 | 21 | 184 |
| 10 | Galaxy lodge | 43 | 40 | 53 | 21 | 25 | 15 | 21 | 175 |
| 11 | Kandiz's hotel | 51 | 53 | 57 | 60 | 27 | 32 | 33 | 262 |
| 12 | Nke hotel | 34 | 41 | 21 | 22 | 32 | 41 | 50 | 207 |
| 13 | Peace lodge | 43 | 31 | 33 | 39 | 29 | 12 | 47 | 191 |
| 14 | Inacho's place | 37 | 28 | 29 | 35 | 52 | 46 | 43 | 233 |
| 15 | Adrains place | 26 | 31 | 35 | 37 | 51 | 30 | 31 | 215 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 16 | Adrains place/apartment | 44 | 21 | 29 | 30 | 32 | 33 | 19 | 164 |
| 17 | Carlton hotels | 54 | 18 | 22 | 21 | 32 | 30 | 31 | 154 |
| 18 | Cytaro hotel | 35 | 20 | 21 | 37 | 38 | 32 | 19 | 167 |
| 19 | Dekka hotel ltd | 36 | 20 | 13 | 27 | 29 | 31 | 40 | 160 |
| 20 | Emmy travellers home | 32 | 30 | 33 | 37 | 29 | 29 | 32 | 190 |
| 21 | Ausma suites | 42 | 49 | 37 | 52 | 68 | 37 | 39 | 282 |
| 22 | Heritage hotels | 45 | 33 | 28 | 34 | 36 | 40 | 48 | 219 |
| 23 | Lizbon hotel | 33 | 27 | 27 | 13 | 48 | 50 | 53 | 218 |
| 24 | Richway hotel | 26 | 54 | 18 | 23 | 24 | 27 | 30 | 176 |
| 25 | Deneb hotel | 33 | 48 | 50 | 53 | 50 | 49 | 13 | 263 |
| 26 | Border hotel | 45 | 31 | 42 | 25 | 16 | 29 | 51 | 194 |
| 27 | Cravings hotels ltd | 35 | 28 | 29 | 32 | 35 | 60 | 45 | 229 |
| 28 | Ivany hotels | 37 | 63 | 45 | 47 | 35 | 48 | 46 | 284 |
| 29 | Ogoja plaza | 30 | 37 | 29 | 27 | 33 | 49 | 50 | 225 |
| 30 | Galili hotel | 31 | 22 | 29 | 28 | 34 | 50 | 52 | 215 |
| 31 | Valley beracah hotel | 36 | 35 | 36 | 26 | 28 | 39 | 42 | 206 |
| 32 | Lakristo hotel & conference | 41 | 40 | 43 | 39 | 69 | 52 | 35 | 288 |
| 33 | Ikpala hotel | 38 | 39 | 28 | 60 | 34 | 64 | 34 | 259 |
| 34 | Lakeside resort | 35 | 29 | 34 | 37 | 42 | 34 | 27 | 203 |
| 35 | Mega Hilton | 38 | 40 | 34 | 42 | 28 | 47 | 50 | 241 |
| 36 | Obudu tourist hotel | 39 | 41 | 29 | 33 | 41 | 21 | 34 | 199 |
| | Total | 1371 | 1214 | 1186 | 1288 | 1333 | 1341 | 1284 | 7646 |

Source: Field work, 2019

2.3 Empirical review

Stromgren (2007) studied the factors influencing service quality in the hotel industry in Peru and established that the customers were more interested on the dimensions of reliability exterior, tangibles and assurance. The best predictor of overall service quality was identified as the dimension of reliability. The researcher however noted that a different result was achieved. This is due to different social demographic variables such as culture and religion which might impact on customer expectations. Hair (2008) on the other hand studied service dimensions that leads to higher levels of customer satisfaction in restaurants in Singapore and found out that assurance, empathy and tangibles are the most important to customers' evaluation of service quality, and thus, may have a positive influence on customer satisfaction.

Kiange (2011) investigated managers' perception of customer expectations in hotel industry in Kenya. The results showed that assurance, empathy and tangibles were regarded as the most important factors affecting service quality. This research was however limited to managers' perception of customer expectations and failed to take into account customer's expectations. The result of the study therefore, does not represent the voice of the customer. More study therefore needs

to be carried out to establish whether the manager's perception of customer expectations matches customers' expectations.

Akoko (2012) studied service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction in Kenyan telecommunications industry and established that all the five service quality dimensions had positive impact on customer satisfaction. However, reliability dimension was considered to be having the highest impact while tangibility was considered to have the least impact. He suggested that all service quality dimensions should be improved and allocated more resources since they positively affect customer satisfaction.

In a study carried out by Musyoka (2013) to establish whether there exists any relationship between service quality and library user satisfaction among universities in Kenya, it was established that service quality accounts for 73.9 percent of user satisfaction. He noted further that reliability dimension contributes most towards user satisfaction while empathy dimension contributes the least.

Bolton and Drew (2017), study on a multi-stage model of customer's assessments of service quality and value revealed that there is a direct link between service quality and behavioural intentions. Among the various behavioural intentions,

considerable emphasis has been placed on the impact of service quality in determining repeat purchase and customer loyalty. The study concluded that in order to enhance customer patronage, service providers should channel resources towards improving on their services quality offered to customers. Another study by Khalifa, Hassab and Abdulhafiz (2012), entitled: "The effect of the quality of service on customer loyalty : A study on hotel services in Aden revealed that the results of the study presented a number of recommendations related to quality of service and building a strong loyalty among customers have also been proposals for future studies .

3.1 Research design

The study employs cross sectional survey research design because the researcher obtained individual opinion of guests on hotel service quality strategies once.

3.3 Population of the study

The population of this study comprises the three hundred and fifty four (354) hotels and their customers, although the population of hotel customers is unknown in Cross River State. According to Cross River State Tourism Bureau 2018 report, there are 354 hotels in Cross River State. Appendix two shows the list of available hotels in Cross River State.

3.4 Sample size determination

Since the population of hotels in Cross River State is known, a proportion method of selecting 10 percent of hotels was adopted through hat and ball technique as revealed by (Ogolo, (2007); Churchhill, Brown; & Suiter, 2008). However, the population of hotels' customers was unknown. The reason is due to poor records keeping by some hotels in Cross River State. Hence, the Cochran's formula was adopted to determine the sample size of this study based on data from a pilot study of 30 respondents. Hotels used for pretesting are: Santo hotel in Calabar, Egba Jabengo in Obubra, and Emaron in Yala selected through simple random sampling technique using ballot system. Data obtained from the respondents were used in estimating the sample size for the study. Out of 30 copies of questionnaire administered, 26 copies were correctly filled and returned while four copies were not return. Out of the 26 copies returned 16 customers representing

60 percent agreed and strongly agreed with the statements in the questionnaire. While 10 customers representing 40 percent disagreed. Therefore, the values were substituted into the Cochran's formula thus:

The Cochran's formula is stated thus:

$$n = \frac{Z^2(Pq)}{e^2}$$

Where:

n = Cochran's sample size

z = Value of z-score associated with the selected degree of confidence

p = positive responses

q = 1-P

e = Tolerable error margin (5% to be used)

3.5 Sampling technique

The study adopted a multistage sampling technique by using stratified sampling, simple random sampling and convenience sampling techniques in selecting the sample for the study. The area of the study was divided into three strata namely: south, central and north. Simple random sampling was adopted to select two local government areas from each of the three strata making it six local government areas (LGAs) from the entire state. The Local Government Areas (LGAs) selected and the number of hotels are: Calabar South 53, Calabar Municipal 162, Ikom 27, Yakkur 13, Ogoja 14 and Obudu 16. The 36 hotels representing 10 percent of the 354 hotels in Cross River State were selected by simple random sampling through ballot technique.

While convenience sampling technique was used to administered questionnaire to the selected elements of 369 respondents for the study. 36 hotels were sampled for this study as follows : south 27 hotels, central 5 hotels and north 4 hotels. The decision to allocate the proportion to senatorial districts was based on the number of hotels in each district. Southern senatorial district with the highest number of hotels was allocated 27 hotels which represents 75 percent of total hotels selected (36 hotels), Central has 14 percent and Northern senatorial districts were allocated 5 and 4 hotels each which represent 13.89 percent and 11.11 percent respectively. The stratified sampling technique was applied by way of accruing percentage to the six selected LGAs representing the three zones in Cross River State. This was done by substituting the total population of the six hotels and multiplying by 100 as shown below.

$$\text{Calabarsouth} = \frac{53}{215} \times \frac{100}{1} = 24.65 \text{ percent}$$

$$\text{Calabarmunicipal} = \frac{162}{215} \times \frac{100}{1} = 75.35 \text{ percent}$$

$$\text{Ikom} = \frac{27}{40} \times \frac{100}{1} = 67.5 \text{ percent}$$

$$\text{Yakkur} = \frac{13}{40} \times \frac{100}{1} = 32.5 \text{ percent}$$

$$\text{Ogaja} = \frac{14}{30} \times \frac{100}{1} = 46.6 \text{ percent}$$

$$\text{Obudu} = \frac{16}{30} \times \frac{100}{1} = 53.33 \text{ percent}$$

$$\text{Calabarsouth} = \frac{24.65}{100} \times \frac{27}{1} = 6.7$$

$$\text{Calabarmuni.} = \frac{75.35}{100} \times \frac{27}{1} = 20$$

$$\text{Ikom} = \frac{67.5}{100} \times \frac{5}{1} = 3$$

$$\text{Yakur} = \frac{32.5}{100} \times \frac{5}{1} = 2$$

$$\text{Ogoja} = \frac{46.67}{100} \times \frac{4}{1} = 2$$

$$\text{Obudu} = \frac{53.33}{100} \times \frac{4}{1} = 2$$

Therefore, 7+20+3+2+2+2=36 hotels

TABLE 2
Questionnaire distribution schedule table

| S/N | HOTELS | LOCATIONS | NO.OF GUEST SAMPLE |
|-----|-----------------------------|-----------|--------------------|
| 1 | FREEMANS HOTELS | CALABAR | 12 |
| 2 | 110 RESIDENCE GUEST HOUSE | CALABAR | 13 |
| 3 | ROYAL BIT HOTELS | CALABAR | 09 |
| 4 | FRANCIS SUITE LIMITED | CALABAR | 09 |
| 5 | BLUESEA HOTEL | CALABAR | 10 |
| 6 | SUCCESS VILLA LUXUARY HOTEL | CALABAR | 11 |
| 7 | BLOSSOM NOLLY | CALABAR | 13 |
| 8 | CROSS ROAD HOTEL LTD | CALABAR | 07 |
| 9 | DE LIMIT | CALABAR | 10 |
| 10 | GALAXY LODGE | CALABAR | 09 |
| 11 | KANDIZ'S HOTEL | CALABAR | 14 |
| 12 | NKE HOTEL | CALABAR | 11 |
| 13 | PEACE LODGE | CALABAR | 10 |
| 14 | INACHO' PLACE | CALABAR | 12 |
| 15 | ADRAINS PLACE | CALABAR | 11 |
| 16 | ADRAINS PLACE/APARTMENT | CALABAR | 09 |
| 17 | CARLTON HOTELS | CALABAR | 08 |
| 18 | CYTARO HOTEL | CALABAR | 09 |

| | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|---------|-----|
| 19 | DEKKA HOTEL LTD | CALABAR | 08 |
| 20 | EMMY TRAVELLERS HOME | CALABAR | 10 |
| 21 | AUSMA SUITES | CALABAR | 15 |
| 22 | HERITAGE HOTELS | CALABAR | 11 |
| 23 | LIZBON HOTEL | CALABAR | 11 |
| 24 | RICHWAY HOTEL | CALABAR | 09 |
| 25 | DENEB HOTEL | CALABAR | 14 |
| 26 | BORDER HOTEL | CALABAR | 10 |
| 27 | CRAVINGS HOTELS LTD | CALABAR | 12 |
| 28 | IVANY HOTELS | YAKURR | 15 |
| 29 | OGOJA PLAZA | YAKUR | 12 |
| 30 | GALILI HOTEL | IKOM | 11 |
| 31 | VALLEY BERACAH HOTEL | IKOM | 11 |
| 32 | LAKRISTO HOTEL & CONFERENCE | IKOM | 15 |
| 33 | IKPALA HOTEL | OGOJA | 13 |
| 34 | LAKESIDE RESORT | OGOJA | 11 |
| 35 | MEGA HILTON | OBUDU | 13 |
| 36 | OBUDU TOURIST HOTEL | OBUDU | 10 |
| | TOTAL | | 396 |

Source: Field work, 2019

3.7 Instrument for data collection

To examine service quality strategies and performance of hotels in Cross River State the researcher made use of the service quality strategies performance Questionnaire (SQSPQ) as the data collection instrument.

The questionnaire is structured into two major sections. The first section focuses on eliciting information from the respondents on their demographic data. The second section focuses on service quality dimensions and performance measured on a four point Likert scale.

TABLE 3

Survey constructs, sample items and sources

| STRATEGIES | DESCRIPTION | SAMPLE ITEM | NO. OF ITEMS | SOURCE |
|------------|----------------------------------|---|--------------|---|
| REPUTATION | Honesty, justice fairness, trust | I feel satisfied with honest hotel | 5 | Kiange,(2011), Samen et al (2013), Alnsour et al., (2014); Santos et al.,(2015) |
| AMBIENCE | Environmental aesthetics | I am attracted to flowers around hotels | 5 | Francesca & Harini (2013), |

3.8 Validity of the instrument

In order to ascertain whether the instrument which was developed by the researcher was adequately designed to measure what it is meant to measure; the questionnaire was given to my supervisory team and other experts in the Department of Marketing for necessary corrections and scrutiny based on the following criteria:

- The relevance of the items in relation to the objectives of the study.
- The comprehensiveness of the items in relation to the coverage of all the itemized sections

The various screenings and vetting helped in improving on the quality of the items and the

general validity of the research instrument. Therefore, the approval of the administration of the research instrument was finally given by dissertation supervisory team, meaning that face and content validity of the instrument were ensured using factor analysis. The results obtained revealed that a measure is highly positively correlated with other measures of the same construct (convergent validity = 1) while this same measure is not correlated highly with measures of other constructs (discriminant validity < 1) and these confirmed the validity of the instrument used.

3.9 Reliability of the instrument

The reliability of the research instrument was established by trial testing on 30 guests of three selected hotels in Cross River through judgmental sampling technique. Hotels used for pretesting are: Santo hotel in Calabar, Egba Jabengo in Obubra, and Emaron in Yala selected through simple random sampling technique using ballot system. Data obtained from the respondents

were used in estimating the cronbach Alpha reliability index with the aid of statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 20. The instrument was considered as reliable as the r-value ranges from 0.82 and above. The table that follows shows the result of the Cronbach Alpha reliability test:

TABLE 4
 Reliability Estimates

| S/N | Variables | No. of items | Cronbach Values |
|-----|------------|--------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Reputation | 5 | 0.82 |
| 2 | Ambience | 5 | 0.84 |

3.10 Model specification

The multiple regression model is shown below:
 $Y = b_0 + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + b_3x_3 + b_4x_4 + b_5x_5 + b_6x_6 + E$

Where:
 Y=Performance
 b1= Reputation
 b2= Ambience
 b0= Slope

E=Error

3.12 Data analysis technique

The data of this study were analyzed using descriptive statistics precisely while multiple regression was adopted to test the hypotheses of the study at 0.05 level of significance with the aid of SPSS version 20.

4.1 Data presentation and interpretation

TABLE 5
 Administration and return of questionnaire

| S/N | Option | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----|--|-----------|------------|
| 1 | Number of questionnaire completed and returned | 363 | 98.37 |
| 2 | Number of questionnaire not returned/discarded | 06 | 1.63 |
| | Total | 369 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2019

4.1.2.3 Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

TABLE 6

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

| | N | Normal Parameters ^{a,b} Mean Std. Deviation | Most Extreme Differences Absolute | Differences Positive | Negative | Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z | Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) |
|------------|-----|---|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| REPUTATION | 363 | 10.29 3.133 | .222 | .222 | -.100 | 4.237 | .060 |
| AMBIENCE | 363 | 10.61 3.512 | .232 | .232 | -.103 | 4.428 | .062 |

- a. Test distribution is Normal.
- b. Calculated from data.

Source: SPSS, 2019

Decision: the table 6 above shows that the Asump. Sig > 0.05, it is ruled that the data is normally distributed. From the table above, it is revealed that all the seven constructs (reputation, ambiance and performance) were normally distributed.

4.1.2.5 Multicollinearity

TABLE 7
Coefficients^a

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients Beta | T | Sig. Collinearity Statistics | |
|------------|-----------------------------|------------|-----------------------------------|--------|------------------------------|-------|
| | B | Std. Error | | | Tolerance | VIF |
| (Constant) | .222 | .189 | | 1.170 | .243 | |
| REPUTATION | -.125 | .036 | -.108 | -3.435 | .001 | 4.532 |
| AMBIENCE | -.028 | .041 | -.027 | -.669 | .504 | 1.36 |

a. Dependent Variable: PERFORMANCE

Source: SPSS, 2019

Decision Rule: if the VIF value lies between 1-10, then there is no multicollinearity. If the VIF <1 or >10, then there is multicollinearity (Keller & Warrack, 2017). Therefore, table 7 above reveals that, there is no problem with multi-collinearity in the two constructs of this study.

4.1.2.7 KMO

TABLE 8
KMO and Bartlett's Test

| | | |
|--|--------------------|-----------|
| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy. | | .872 |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | Approx. Chi-Square | 18563.086 |
| | Df | 595 |
| | Sig. | .000 |

Source: SPSS, 2019

KMO and Bartlett's test value at .872 in table 8 above shows that there is sampling adequacy in the data set of the study.

TABLE 9
Demographic representation of the respondents

| Demographic | Total | Percentage (%) |
|-------------|-------|----------------|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 190 | 52.3 |
| Female | 173 | 47.7 |
| Total | 363 | 100.0 |
| Age | | |
| 18-25 | 66 | 18.2 |
| 26-35 | 77 | 21.2 |

| | | |
|---------------------------|-----|-------|
| 36-45 | 71 | 19.6 |
| 46-55 | 117 | 32.2 |
| 56 and above | 32 | 8.8 |
| Total | 363 | 100.0 |
| Marital status | | |
| Single | 145 | 39.9 |
| Married | 214 | 59.0 |
| Divorced | 4 | 1.1 |
| Total | 363 | 100.0 |
| Occupation | | |
| Student | 12 | 3.3 |
| civil/public servant | 170 | 46.8 |
| Business | 78 | 21.5 |
| Unemployed | 52 | 14.3 |
| Others | 51 | 14.0 |
| Total | 363 | 100.0 |
| Educational qualification | | |
| FSLC | 9 | 2.5 |
| SSCE | 66 | 18.2 |
| Diploma/NCE | 43 | 11.8 |
| B.Sc/HND | 141 | 38.8 |
| Master's | 60 | 16.5 |
| Ph.D | 24 | 6.6 |
| Others | 20 | 5.5 |
| Total | 363 | 100.0 |

Source: Field work, 2019

TABLE 10
Origin of Guest of selected hotels in Cross River State

| S/N | Hotles | C.R.S | Other Nig. States | Other Africans | Europe | Americans | Asia |
|-----|----------------------------|-------|-------------------|----------------|--------|-----------|------|
| 1 | Freemans Hotels | 43 | 80 | 50 | 13 | 15 | 22 |
| 2 | 110 Residence Guest House | 57 | 101 | 63 | 6 | 7 | 23 |
| 3 | Royal Bit Hotels | 62 | 68 | 40 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| 4 | Francis Suite Limited | 81 | 90 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 5 | Bluesea Hotel | 47 | 121 | 25 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| 6 | Success Villa Luxury Hotel | 73 | 92 | 30 | 2 | 1 | 9 |
| 7 | Blossom Nolly | 68 | 125 | 57 | 3 | 6 | 9 |
| 8 | Cross Road Hotel Ltd | 29 | 63 | 26 | 2 | 4 | 5 |
| 9 | De Limit | 83 | 60 | 20 | 3 | 4 | 14 |
| 10 | Galaxy | 38 | 63 | 15 | 0 | 3 | 18 |

| | | | | | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|
| | Lodge | | | | | | |
| 11 | Kandiz's Hotel | 103 | 102 | 28 | 7 | 8 | 14 |
| 12 | Nke Hotel | 115 | 83 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 13 | Peace Lodge | 57 | 101 | 17 | 5 | 7 | 4 |
| 14 | Inacho's place | 72 | 87 | 30 | 17 | 12 | 15 |
| 15 | Adrains Place | 112 | 93 | 7 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 16 | Adrains Place/Apartment | 64 | 70 | 15 | 3 | 7 | 5 |
| 17 | Carlton Hotels | 73 | 63 | 3 | 3 | 7 | 5 |
| 18 | Cytaro Hotel | 33 | 98 | 18 | 2 | 6 | 10 |
| 19 | Dekka Hotel Ltd | 68 | 78 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| 20 | Emmy Travellers Home | 32 | 108 | 33 | 7 | 3 | 7 |
| 21 | Ausma Suites | 81 | 63 | 108 | 8 | 10 | 12 |
| 22 | Heritage Hotels | 109 | 102 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 23 | Lizbon Hotel | 63 | 55 | 96 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| 24 | Richway Hotel | 51 | 96 | 20 | 3 | 1 | 5 |
| 25 | Deneb Hotel | 86 | 101 | 53 | 3 | 7 | 13 |
| 26 | Border Hotel | 74 | 89 | 27 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| 27 | Cravings Hotels Ltd | 119 | 96 | 10 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| 28 | Ivany Hotels | 63 | 126 | 70 | 5 | 6 | 14 |
| 29 | Ogoja Plaza | 79 | 88 | 30 | 8 | 6 | 14 |
| 30 | Galili Hotel | 63 | 103 | 30 | 3 | 7 | 9 |
| 31 | Valley Beracah Hotel | 85 | 96 | 20 | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| 32 | Lakristo Hotel & Conference | 88 | 112 | 58 | 15 | 7 | 8 |
| 33 | Ikpala Hotel | 59 | 109 | 50 | 18 | 8 | 15 |
| 34 | Lakeside Resort | 63 | 78 | 41 | 2 | 4 | 15 |
| 35 | Mega Hilton | 49 | 129 | 32 | 7 | 4 | 20 |
| 36 | Obudu Tourist Hotel | 92 | 88 | 9 | 3 | 2 | 5 |
| | Total | 2534 | 3189 | 1142 | 146 | 153 | 313 |

Source: Field work, 2019

TABLE 11
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

| S/N | ITEM | SA | A | D | SD | MEAN |
|-----|--------------------------------------|----|---|---|----|------|
| | A. Service Quality Strategies | | | | | |
| 1. | Reputation | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|----|---|------------|------------|------------|------------|------|
| | strategy (honest, justice, fairness, trust) | | | | | |
| 7 | I feel satisfied with honest hotel staff | 46(12%) | (38%) | 138(38%) | 141(38.8%) | 1.97 |
| 8 | I like to see justice done when hotel staff erred | 102(27.5%) | 110(30.3%) | 98(27) | 55(15.2%) | 2.70 |
| 9 | I feel good in fair deals with hotel | 26(7.2%) | 56(15.4%) | 131(36.1) | 150(41.3%) | 1.88 |
| 10 | I can always trust booking hotel online | 42(11.6%) | 42(11.6%) | 113(31.1%) | 166(45.7%) | 1.89 |
| 11 | I prefer hotel staff to be trustworthy | 12(3.3) | 44(12.1%) | 181(49.9%) | 126(34.7%) | 1.84 |
| 2. | Ambient (flower, painting, lighting, cleanliness, music) | | | | | |
| 12 | I like lighting in and around hotel | 46(12.7%) | 48(13.2%) | 144(39.7%) | 125(34.4%) | 2.04 |
| 13 | I like bright colours of paint used in hotels. | 111(30.6%) | 109(30%) | 75(20.7%) | 68(18.7%) | 2.72 |
| 14 | I am often attracted to flowers around hotel. | 18(5%) | 58(16%) | 145(39.9%) | 142(39.1%) | 1.87 |
| 15 | I like to patronize hotel with clean surrounding. | 54(14.9%) | 40(11%) | 101(27%) | 168(46.3%) | 1.94 |
| 16 | I like musical interlude in hotel. | 46(12.7%) | 36(9.9%) | 163(44.9%) | 118(32.5%) | 2.03 |

4.2 Tests of hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

H₀: Reputation does not influence hotels performance in Cross River State.

Hypothesis 2

H₀: Ambience does not influence hotels performance in Cross River State.

TABLE 13a

Model Summary

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | .960 ^a | .922 | .921 | 1.022 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), REPUTATION, AMBIENCE.

Source: SPSS output, 2020

TABLE 13b

ANOVA^a

| Model | | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|-------------------|
| 1 | Regression | 4407.593 | 6 | 734.599 | 703.629 | .000 ^b |
| | Residual | 371.669 | 356 | 1.044 | | |

Total 4779.262 362
 a. Dependent Variable: PERFORMANCE
 b. Predictors: (Constant), REPUTATION, AMBIENCE
 Source: SPSS output, 2020

TABLE 13c

| Coefficients ^a | | | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | T | Sig. |
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| (Constant) | .222 | .189 | | 1.170 | .243 |
| REPUTATION | .125 | .036 | .108 | -3.435 | .001 |
| AMBIENCE | .028 | .041 | .027 | -.669 | .504 |

1

a. Dependent Variable: PERFORMANCE
 Source: SPSS output, 2020

The regression tables (Table 13a, 13b and 13c) showing influence of service quality strategies (reputation and ambience) on performance of hotels. Table 13a, which is the model summary reveals that the relationship between both variables is 96 percent (as seen in the R column). The R² value (0.922) signifies that up to 92.2 percent of performance of hotels is caused by the service quality strategies when other variables are held constant. This relationship is strong and statistically significant. This indicates that the model has a good fit in estimating the population mean.

The F-test (703.629, p<0.05) of the relationship in Table 13b indicates that the overall prediction of the independent variable to the dependent variable is statistically significant, therefore, the regression model provides sufficient evidence to conclude that service quality strategies significantly influence performance of hotels.

Table 13c is the coefficients table, which provides the necessary information on the capability of each service quality strategies variable to predict performance of hotels. From the table it can be seen that two variables (reputation and ambience) significantly influence performance of hotels positively as their p values are less than 0.05 with positive t-test values.

Additionally, the standardized beta coefficient column in Table 13c shows the individual contributions of each of the variables to the model. It can be seen that reputation contributes 10.8 percent while ambience with a beta coefficient of .027 (that is 2.7 percent).

4.3 Discussion of findings

4.3.1 Influence of reputation on performance of hotels in Cross River State:

The result of hypothesis one revealed that, there is significant influence of reputation on performance of hotels. A firm's reputation is an intangible asset (Dowling, 2013). The nature of such a reputation depends upon everything the firm does as an entity (Weigelt & Camerer, 2018) and particularly the signals and communications it chooses to give to the marketplace (Fombrun & Shanley, 2019). The symbol of that reputation, the corporate name, when well managed, represents the organization favorably to its publics and can be particularly valuable in doing so to its customers (Margulies, 2017; Berry, 2018; Balmer, 2019; Brown and Dacin, 2017). Argenti and Druckenmiller (2018) argue that 'organisations increasingly recognize the importance of corporate reputation to achieve business goals and stay competitive. Therefore, Reputation was, is, and always will be of immense importance to hotels. To reach their goals, stay competitive and prosper, good reputation paves the hotels path to acceptance and approval by customers.

Reputation is an important aspect that can improve and maintain consumers patronage of hotels services and positively add to its performance. Lack of integrity, unethical behavior, and lack of trust can triggers negative reputation by customers or publics against hotels, management and staff of hotel. Reputation is then a complex phenomenon but one which is worth managing well. Reputation was, is, and always will be of immense importance to hotels, and other organizations whether commercial, governmental or not-for-profit. To reach their goals, stay

competitive and prosper, good reputation paves the organizational path to acceptance and approval by stakeholders. Even organizations operating in difficult ethical environments – perhaps self-created – need to sustain a positive reputation where possible.

4.3.2 Influence of ambience on performance of hotels in Cross River State:

The result of hypothesis two revealed that, there is no significant influence of ambience on performance of hotels in Cross River State. This result is contrary to Ryu and Jang (2007), which found that ambience (e.g. music, temperature and fragrance) and employee appearance had the most important influence on customers' emotional responses, which in turn affected customers' post-dining behavioural intentions.

This is in line with Fiore, Yah and Yoh (2000) assumption. They said that to be effective, ambience should be constituent with whatever product is presently under evaluation by the customer. Having pleasant ambience in restaurants has got many benefits. For example fragrance can boost sales (Bradford and Desrochers, 2009). A pleasant fragrance can cause customers to spend more time in a restaurant, thus increasing sales opportunities (Bradford and Desrochers, 2009).

In this study, ambience signifies flower, painting, lighting, cleanliness and music. Therefore, ambience is more or less environmental appearance of the entire hotel for the purpose of achieving the end result of the organization which is optimum performance. The findings of this study revealed that ambience strategy is not significant on performance of hotels.

5.2 Conclusion

Service quality as a strategy has an important role to play in the attainment of performance of hotel industry in Cross River State, Nigeria. In the highly competitive hotel industry, service quality becomes one of the most important elements for gaining a competitive advantage in the marketplace. Consequently, the efforts of service managers and academic researchers are directed towards understanding the influence of service quality in service industry.

This study concludes that, performance of hotels are influenced by reputation, branding, facilities, security and innovation. On a contrary, ambience has not been considered so significant based on the findings. Hence, the findings portray the importance of hotels to pay proper and more attention towards formulating and implementing

formidable services strategies in order to improve and maintain performance.

5.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations were made after careful study of the research findings:

1. Hotels' managers should always endeavour to monitor their employees' actions in order to be sure that they conform to reputational practices guiding the hotel. In the same action, hotel managers should introduce price lists for all products (goods and services) available and formulate a policy that would guide workers' actions attending to customers.
2. Operators of hotels should emphasize on art of lighting, music interlude, clean and conducive hotel environment to create improved customers' patronage.

5.5 Suggestions for further research

Since this study focused on the hotels industry, it is suggested that further studies should be carried out in the health industry in Cross River State and other sub-variables of ambience should be tested.

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