

**INFLUENCE OF MEAL EXPERIENCE ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN
FIVE SELECTED HOTELS IN THIKA TOWN, KIAMBU COUNTY, KENYA**

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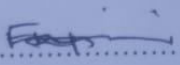
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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF HOSPITALITY
AND TOURISM IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR
THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN
HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT OF GREYSA UNIVERSITY**

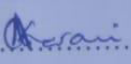
NOVEMBER 2021

DECLARATION

I, Florence Wanjiru Ngigi, do hereby declare that this entrepreneurship project is my original work and to the best of my knowledge it has not been presented to any other University for similar purpose or for any other degree award.

Signature:.......... Date.....6/12/2021.....

I confirm that the work reported in this entrepreneurship project was carried out by the student under my supervision as the University Supervisor.

Signature.......... Date.....6/12/2021.....

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my lovely parents, Mr. and Mrs. Francis Ngigi and my brother Philip Ngigi for their undying support both mentally and financially

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I thank the Almighty God for this great work. Also acknowledge my family and hospitality lecturers who tirelessly offered me help whenever I got stuck. I also acknowledge the respondents who participated in responding to my questionnaires.

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ABBREVIATION AND ACRONYMS

NRAI: National Restaurant Association of India

CBD: Central Business District

COVID: Corona Virus Disease

EDP: Expectancy Disconfirmation Paradigm

OPERATIONAL DEFINATIONS

Customer satisfaction- refers to how well a service or a product provider fulfills the expectations and needs of their customers

Hospitality - is an industrial activity which involves creating a pleasant dining experience for guests by providing foods, beverages and accommodation.

Hotel- is any duly licensed establishment that offers accommodation, drinks and food to the persons in need of them.

Meal experience- refers to a series of events both tangible and intangible that a customer experiences when eating out.

ABSTRACT

This research project focused on investigating the influence of meal experience on customer satisfaction in five selected hotels in Thika town. The specific objectives were; to determine the influence of meal experience in hotels, to investigate the level of customer satisfaction in hotels and to investigate the relationship between meal experience and customer satisfaction in hotels. Descriptive research design was used where the study area was in Thika Town. A sample of 133 customers from 5 selected hotels in Thika Town was taken from a target population of 200 hotel customers using convenience sampling. The research instrument used was a close-ended questionnaire. Descriptive statistics in form of percentage and frequencies as well as inferential statistics in form of Pearson correlation analysis were used to analyze data. The findings revealed that most customers revisit the hotel, are loyal to the hotel, refer other customers as well as spread positive comments about the hotel as result of good quality foods offered, quality service, friendly staff, conducive environment as well as good atmosphere in the hotel. The researcher concluded that customer satisfaction depends on the meal experience in the hotel. Recommendations were made on the improvement on the meal experience in order to satisfy the customers.

Keywords; Meal experience, Customer satisfaction, Thika town, hospitality industry,

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter consists of the background of research, statement of research problem, purpose, objectives, conceptual framework, significance, hypothesis, scope and limitations of the study.

1.1 Background of the study

According to Solomon, (2017) meal experience is a response from customers' senses. There are five senses; sight, smell, taste, hear and touch. Making a choice for food and beverage is an unconscious decision making process which is affected by lighting, colours, plate sizes, smells, and multicultural avenues (De Castro & Stroebele, 2010). Moreover, eating is a fundamentally rewarding behavior, and is linked to emotions and mood. (Gibson and Vögele, 2017).

The main aim of food and beverage operations is to achieve customer satisfaction or to meet the customers' needs. According to Lillicrap and Cousins (2016), the needs that customers might be seeking to satisfy include; physiological needs, economic, social, and psychological and convenience

Meal experience is the series of activities both tangible and intangible that the customer experiences when eating out in a restaurant, (Lillicrap& cousins, 2016). The process begins from the time customers gets inside a restaurant and seats in their tables up to the time they leave. Meal experience has a combination of indicators such as speed of service, food and drink on offer, menu variety, children facilities, level and interior design, price value of the meal, mood and atmosphere of customers, group size and other customers which helps to achieve customer satisfaction (Anderson & Mossberg, 2017).

Ozdemir & Caliskan(2014) had a view that; offering a unique and excellent meal experience and making sure that customers are satisfied is the main sources as far as competitive advantage for a hotel or restaurant is concerned. A good quality Meal is an essential part of a leisure journey basically for the provision of physiological and

convenience need which has emotional benefits partly derived from customers' expectation.

In the assessment of meal experience, customer makes use of the five senses, that is, sight, taste, smell, touch and hearing. Customer sight gives information on appearance, colour, furniture, interior design, quantity, equipment and other customers. The mouth gives information on texture, taste and quality. The nose smells aroma of the meal and the sense of hearing through word of mouth allows people to assess a hotel in their own way.

Ozdemir and Caliskan (2014) are of the view that giving a good meal experience to the customers and making sure that they are satisfied, are main competitive advantage for a hotel. Meal experience is an essential part of leisure travelers basically by providing physiological and convenience need which has emotional benefits partly derived from customer expectation

The gap between customer expectations and what a restaurant is able to serve him with is an area of opportunity for a restaurant. Also it is a challenge on the flipside. Customers who are dissatisfied can do more harm by informing their friends about their experience at the restaurant. A 2017 Deloitte report showed that a positive experience will encourage 60% of guests to be loyal and visit the restaurant frequently. The restaurant interior design should be comfortable enough for target customers. Hotels are no longer just a place where people go to /eat out; rather it has become a lifestyle need and a platform to socialize and entertainment.

According to the food services report from NRAI, 2017, the quality of food they offer will make about 23% of customers to choose to dine out at a hotel. Around 7% returns for a reason that they liked the taste of a certain and specific dish. The quality of food is certainly the most fundamental indicator determining the success of a hotel. Since generations, customers have put the quality of food at the top of their checklist while choosing a hotel. The frequent clients are mainly concerned about the quality of food. They would assume the waiting time taken for preparing the food if the food offered is of premium quality and gratifying.

The staff acts as the face of the hotel to the customers. When hiring staff, hotel should ensure that their image should not be compromised. Staff training should include norms that are aligned with the desired customer experience and the brand hotel want to deliver. Staff retention is actually closely related to providing customers with a better experience as well as making them want to visit again. Develop a customer centric culture and reward good performance to gain the trust of the staff. This will pay rich dividends in terms of ensuring a quality customers experience.

Surveys suggest that people might not revisit to a pricey hotel or where the food quality is not justified for the price they are selling it at. It's only a problem when the vibe of the place is not clearly reflected in the quality of food the hotel is serving.

Understanding consumer behavior is the first step to provide them with stellar experience at the hotel. Restaurant interiors can easily dictate the perception of the hotel brand in the eyes of your customers. As they say, the first impression is the last impression, it is important to create an ambience that reflects the uniqueness of the brand so as to create a positive impact. The interiors should have the power to create an emotion or experience for the customer and make him to return.

Thika is a sub-county of Kiambu county, Kenya. It is an industrial town and a major commerce hub. Thika has a population of 276,429 as of the 2019 National Census. There are two explanations of the origin of the name Thika. One was from kikuyu word 'Guthika' which means 'to bury'. The second claims it was derived from the Maasai word 'Sika' which means 'rubbing something off an edge'. Europeans and Asians settled in Thika, the former setting up farms and the latter shops. A monument in the shape of a pillar was erected by the British in the early 1900s in the central business district of Thika, commemorating the founding of Thika as a town. The town was given its status by the government gazette in 1924. Thereafter it was elevated to a municipality when Kenya gained independence in 1963, and the first mayor was chosen in 1968. The main economic activities in Thika include agricultural processing, particularly in horticulture and pineapple, coffee, cooking oil and animal feed processing. Other industries include textile, macadamia nuts, wheat, tannery, motor vehicle assemblies, cigarette

manufacturing, bakeries, packaging and industrial chemicals. The service sector is well represented with the establishments and growth of educational and financial institutions.

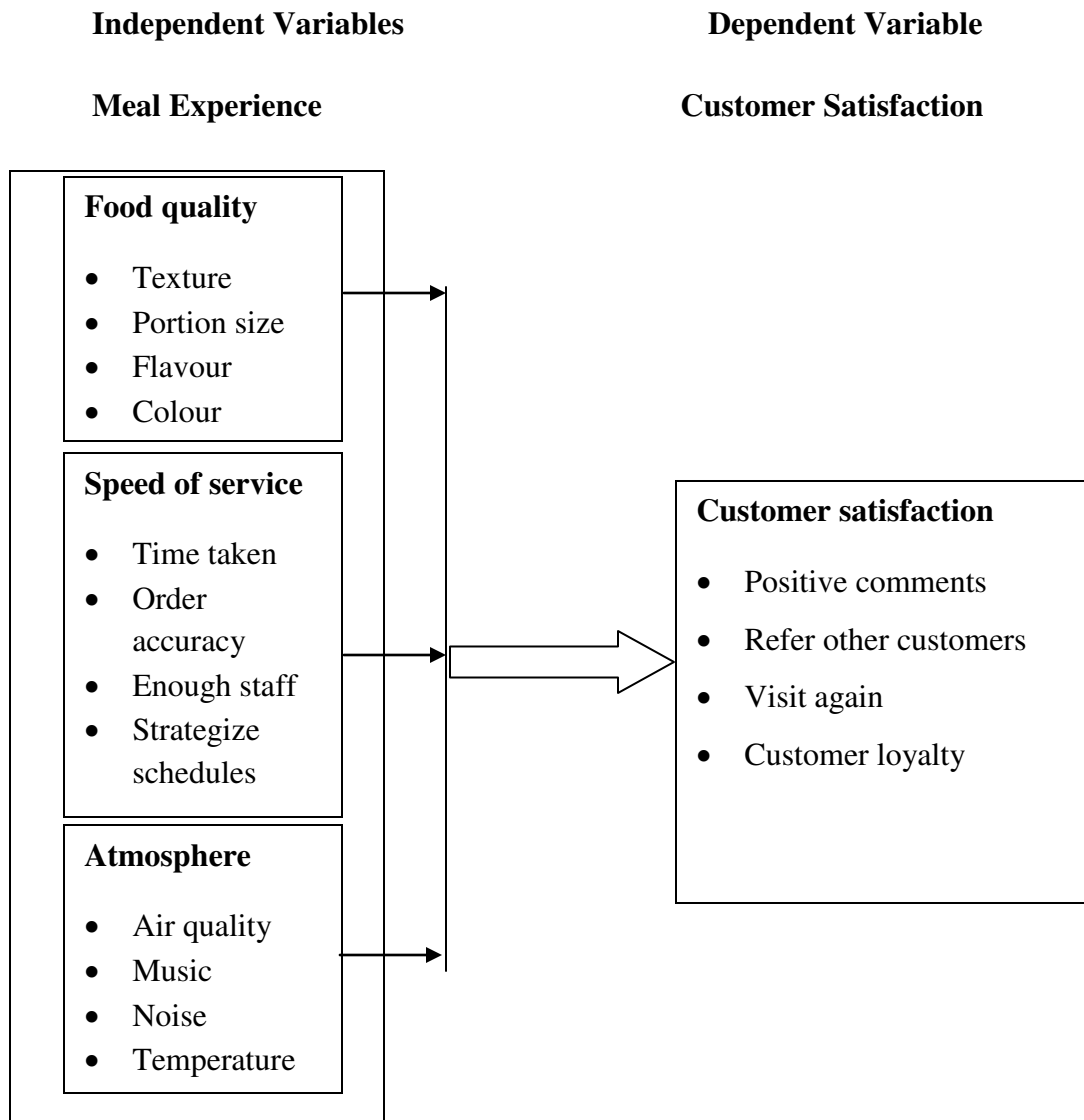
1.2 Statement of the problem

Olga, 2018; noted that most customers are dissatisfied in hotels. This is due to low quality of food and beverages, poor customer service, rude staff, as well as poor handling of customers complaints. These indicators can spread bad comments about the hotel, increase customer churn rate, and hence result to customers trying out the next hotel competing with that hotel since the customer would lose loyalty of the hotel. Customers enter the restaurant with expectation to be satisfied in terms of service quality, food and drink, ambiance and price value, (Fraikue& Osman, 2017).It's not clear whether this happens in hotels in Thika Town and therefore this forms the basis of the researcher's study; to research whether this happens in Kenya, and more specifically in Thika C.B.D

1.3 The study purpose

The project proposal was investigating the influence of meal experience on customer satisfaction in the five selected hotels in Thika C.B.D

1.4 Conceptual Framework of Effect of Meal Experience on Customer Satisfaction



Source: *Modified and adopted from Gustafsson et al. (2008); Ismail et al. (2012); Lawton (2016).*

1.5 Research questions

- i. How does food quality influence customer satisfaction in five selected hotels in Thika town, Kenya?

- ii. How does speed of service influence customer satisfaction in five selected hotels in Thika town, Kenya?
- iii. How does atmosphere influence customer satisfaction in five selected hotels in Thika town, Kenya?

1.6 Objectives of the Study

1.6.1 General objective

To investigate the influence of meal experience on customer satisfaction in five selected hotels in Thika town, Kenya.

1.6.2 Specific objectives

- i. To determine the influence of food quality on customer satisfaction in five selected hotels in Thika town, Kenya.
- ii. To investigate the influence of speed of service on customer satisfaction in five selected hotels in Thika town, Kenya.
- iii. To assess the influence of atmosphere on customer satisfaction in five selected hotels in Thika town, Kenya.

1.7 Hypotheses of the study

H₀ 1: There is no statistically significant relationship between food quality and customer satisfaction in five selected hotels in Thika town, Kenya.

H₀ 2: There is no statistically significant relationship between speed of service and customer satisfaction in five selected hotels in Thika town, Kenya.

H₀ 3: There is no statistically significant relationship between atmosphere and customer satisfaction in five selected hotels in Thika town, Kenya.

1.8 Significance of the study

The study findings were to make contributions to the management of hotels in Thika town. The study findings were to provide managers with insights on how to achieve customer satisfaction. The hotels will use the basis of the study findings to ensure that meal experience factors are improved in order to eliminate customer dissatisfaction. The

findings on the factors that influence meal experience on customer dissatisfaction will help managers to put strategies that would improve meal experience on customer satisfaction. In addition, future researchers with an interest in related studies will find the findings of this study valuable.

1.9 Scope of the study

The research was carried out in the five selected hotels in Thika Town CBD, which are; Coconut grill, Shuhan hotel, The Luke Cravers hotel, Paleo Hotel and Eton hotel. The researcher collected data on all the five hotels.

1.10 Limitation of the study

The researcher experienced challenges due to COVID 19 pandemic. Customers had negative attitude towards receiving and answering the questionnaires, and therefore this limited the researcher so much.

The researcher had to prepare the respondent to understand the purpose of the study so that they give response on the simple and precise questionnaires.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter consists of the study reviews on the influence of meal experience on customer satisfaction in hotels in Thika town.

2.1 Influence of meal experience

The main aim of food and beverage operations is to achieve customer satisfaction or to meet the customers' needs, that is, physiological, economic, social, psychological and convenience (Lillicrap and Cousins, 2016).

Meal experience is the series of activities either tangible or intangible that the customer experiences when eating out in a restaurant (Lillicrap & cousins, 2016). The process of Meal experience starts from the time customers gets inside a restaurant and seats in their tables up to the time they leave the restaurant .Meal experience has a combination of indicators such as level and speed of service, food and drink on offer, price value of the meal, interior design, menu variety, children facilities, mood and atmosphere of customers, group size and other customers which aids to achieve customer satisfaction (Anderson & Mossberg, 2012).

Caliskan and Ozdemir (2014) had a view that; offering a unique and excellent meal experience and making sure that customers are satisfied is the main sources of competitive advantage for a hotel. A good quality meal is an important part of a leisure journey basically for the provision of physiological and convenience need which has emotional benefits partly derived from customers' expectation.

Meal experience includes intangible and tangible activities that clients experiences in a restaurant. A clients' meal experience includes direct or indirect contact with the hotel which involves ordering and consuming of the food and drink.

The assessment on the meal experience on customer satisfaction varies greatly in various factors; variety of menu, food and drinks, quality and speed of service, price value of food and drinks, atmosphere and mood of staff, location and place at which activities take place in the restaurant (Noone et al.2014); Shahim&Semea. 2010).

2.1.1 Food quality

Food is the most basic and important factor that influences meal experience and an integral part of the entire experiences at any restaurant (Rucks & Geussler 2011). Food is also an unconditional requirement in satisfying the expectations and needs of hotels' clients. To discover the sensory aspects of food include taste of food, temperature, quality, colour of food and aroma, textures, quantity and type of food, (Geissler & Rucks, 2011)

2.1.2 Speed of service

Service is the presentation of food to the customer which takes a number of styles in a foodservice operation (Gregoire, 2015). In restaurant, the only point of contact that customers have with the company is through the service brigade. Prybutok (2011) points out that service quality is one of the indicators of customer satisfaction. Staff can meet consumers' expectations if they pay attention and effectively provide timely service.

2.1.3 Atmosphere

The restaurant atmosphere influencing meal experience comprises of tangible and intangible aspects which is the number one point of call and the first thing that a customer noticed when he /she enters a restaurant (Gustafson et al., 2013). It's true to say that if food was the only thing that draws clients to dining out, most of them would prefer cooking at home or order for home delivery. The atmosphere part of tangible aspects in the restaurant are size, shape, layout, colour scheme, furniture and fitting, lighting, air conditioning, temperature, appearance, music, table settings, seating arrangement, crockery and cutlery.

2.2 Customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is described as a measurement that shows how happy and satisfied clients are with an establishment's products capabilities and services. Customer satisfaction can be measured in terms of surveys and ratings. These can help a hotel to determine how best it can improve or change its products and services for better satisfaction.

Customer satisfaction is the starting point to build customer loyalty and long-term relationship. To obtain loyalty and outweigh other competitors, hotel providers must be able to obtain high levels of customer satisfaction for the service supplied. There are several studies that analyze the needs and the desires of customers. A research by Wuestet al. (2015) indicates that; the perception of hotel attributes as the degree to which clients may find various facilities and services critical for their stay in the hotel. Hotel attributes like personal service, price, cleanliness, security and location, level of service, reputation and appealing image as well as physical attractiveness. All these are recognized as of great importance by clients to assess the quality of the hotel.

Hoteliers need to fully acknowledge which service attributes are most likely to influence clients' choice. Customer satisfaction practices can also help them to identify the crucial elements affecting customers' meal experience. Providing high quality services to the diners with components such as courtesy, attentiveness, knowledge, memory, accuracy, promptness, servers' neatness and clean appearance, cheerful, and friendly attitude are all crucial in determining customer satisfaction, (Lillicrap&Cousins,2016)

Despite the type of restaurant in terms of quick service, full service, and limited service, the quality of food is the highest influential indicator towards a customer satisfaction which can result to a repeat visit of the guest to the hotel services. The food attributes includes ingredients, menu, portion size, taste, texture and appearance. Therefore, for customers to be satisfied out of food quality there should be food made from fresh and good quality ingredients, food portion should be large enough, delicious and well presented.

2.3 Relationship between meal experience and customer satisfaction.

A number of researchers have researched the relationship between meal experience and customer satisfaction. Namkung and Jang (2020) reviewed that client satisfaction relates very well to quality of food and behavior aspects of the staff from the hotel. Furthermore, there are investigations related to customers by determining their satisfaction perceived by the quality and visit intentions which would help the hoteliers' strategies to be directed. This would help the managers to enhance customer satisfaction by improving the quality of hotel attributes to encourage repeat visit by the customers. This study

attempted to determine whether there is any relationship between meal experience and customer satisfaction.

A case study conducted by Gandolfo Dominici (2010), by improving meal experience indicators to the customers will lead to customer satisfaction as well as boost the hotel performances which will definitely results to increase profitability. This would be as a result of customers having a desire to come again and enjoy the products and services offered previously.

2.4 Theoretical framework

2.4.1 The dissonance theory

This theory states that if a customer expect a high-value of product and received a low-value of product he would conclude the disparity and experience as a cognitive dissonance. According to this theory, the existence of dissonance creates pressure and psychological discomfort to the customers,(Yi, 1991). For example, customer would visit a hotel with expectations of getting delicious food, warm welcome, friendly waiters, clean environment among others but contrary to that he gets opposite of those variables, this would lead to dissatisfaction. It is as a result of this that brings about a gap between meal experience and customer satisfaction.

2.4.2 The expectancy disconfirmation paradigm

Oliver (2010) proposed the expectancy Disconfirmation Paradigm (EDP) as the most promising theoretical framework for assessment of customer satisfaction. This theory implies that a guest pre-visits hotel with expectations on the meal experience. As a result the customer compares the expectation and the actual experience. If the outcome matches the expectation, the confirmation of customer satisfaction occurs, while if they don't match disconfirmation occurs. Therefore a customer is either satisfied or dissatisfied as a result of positive or negative differences between expectations and perceptions.

2.5 Summary of the literature review

From the reviewed literature above, it is evident that the meal experience is very important for customer satisfaction in hotel organizations. Therefore that gap between the meal experience and customer satisfaction need to be bridged to ensure that there is a

relationship that will last between customers and the products and service providers. It is clear that there are a number of factors that influences the meal experience on customer satisfaction in hotels, that is, quality of food and beverages, variety in the menu, value for money and price, level and speed of service, attitude of the staff, atmosphere mood in the service area, handling of complains by the supervisors.

Customers can be satisfied in a hotel if the mentioned factors that influence meal experience can be looked at. Out of the satisfaction, customers will be royal to the hotel, visit the hotel again, give positive comments about the hotel, recommend others to visit the hotel thus leads to increase in business sales and profit maximization. This study therefore will look at how meal experience influences customer satisfaction in the selected five hotels in Thika town, Kiambu County, Kenya.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Overview

This section comprises of research design, study area, target population, sampling techniques and sample size, measurement of variables, validity and reliability, data collection techniques, data analysis and finally logistical and ethical considerations.

3.1 Study Design

The researcher sought to examine how meal experience affects customer satisfaction in selected five hotels in Thika town. A descriptive research design was selected to conduct this study. This described and gave a depth analysis of the relationship between meal experience and customer satisfaction variables.

3.2 Study Area

The researcher examined how meal experience influences customer satisfaction in the five selected hotels in Thika Town CBD. Concrete and relevant information on the factors influencing meal experience in hotels was gathered. Thika town central business district has got five hotels, that is, Coconut grill hotel, Eton hotel, Shuhan hotel, The Luke hotel and Paleo hotel.

3.3 Target population

The study targeted all the customers in the selected food restaurants in Thika town. This population is believed to be in a position to understand the influence of meal experience on customer satisfaction. A total of 200 customers from five selected restaurants at Thika town were targeted in this study based on the sitting capacity in each restaurant.

Table 3.3.1: Target Population

RESTAURANT	TARGET POPULATION	SAMPLE SIZE (30% OF THE TARGET POPULATION)
Etom	38	11
Paleo	32	10
Shuhan	36	11
The Luke Cravers	44	13
Coconut Grill	50	15
Total	200	60

3.4 Sample Size

Mugenda and Mugenda, (2003) recommended that a sample size of between 10% and 30% is a good representation of the target population and hence the researcher took 30% of the target population which was considered adequate for analysis as represented in the table 3.3.1 above.

3.5 Sampling Techniques

Convenience sampling technique was used whereby the researcher ensured that population was adequately represented within the whole sample of the research study.

3.6 Validity and Reliability

Validity is the accuracy and meaningfulness of the inferences based on the research (Mugenda&Mugenda, 2008). Face validity was carried out where the research instrument was checked with the help of the supervisor and food and beverage manager to check whether the instrument was measuring what it intended to measure. Reliability is a measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields constant results after repeated attempts. The researcher used pretesting technique to evaluate the reliability of the questionnaires in different customers of different restaurants.

3.7 Measurement of Variables

Variable	Measures/indicators	Measurement scale	Question number.
Independent variable	-Input -Impact	Nominal&ordinal scale.	Part one & two of question sheet
Dependent variable	-outcome	Interval & likert scale	Part three & four of question sheet

3.8 Data Collection Techniques

The researcher used questionnaires to gather primary raw data from the participants using closed questions in order to give the scholar a provision of specific answers towards the study. The question sheets were distributed to the participants via the hotel's Food and beverage Managers or supervisors as per the establishment setup. The researcher was picking up the questionnaires after two days or as per the agreement with the managers. Drop – and – pick aspect of collecting data, was used by the researcher. The questionnaires had four parts. The first Part was to grasp generally the knowledge concerning the participants' gender, age, occupation and number of times he/she has visited the hotel. Part two was illustrating insight in connection to meal experience influence factors. The third Part focuses on examining the factors influencing customer satisfaction in different hotels. Fourth part focuses on the relationship between meal experience and customer satisfaction.

3.9 Data analysis

Data was processed after collecting back questionnaires from the respondents. The data was checked, coded and entered and then transformed to enable for the analysis of the data by use of statistical packages for social sciences (SPSS). Both descriptive and inferential statistics to analyze the data collected. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviation was used whereas inferential statistics such as Pearson correlation tests was used to calculate the effect of change in one variable when the other variable changes.

3.10 Logistical and Ethical consideration

Ethics are the values that the researcher used when conducting the research. She seeks the consent from the food and beverage managers and also obtains the data collection letter

from Greta University requesting the hotels to allow her to collect data from the customers. The researcher did not cause any interference with the normal activities of the hotels. The researcher explained to the respondents about the study and its purpose was for academic only. The researcher requested the respondents to voluntarily participate upon assuring them of confidentiality over the information they provided in the question sheet as it is meant only for research work. Their privacy was protected completely by the researcher

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter consists of the research findings, interpretation and explanation of the study findings.

4.1 Response Rate

The researcher distributed 60 questionnaires to the respondents in the hotels covered in the study. All 60 questionnaires were returned having been fully filled as required therefore yielding a response rate of 100%.

4.3 Demographic Information

4.3.1 Gender of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Male	36	60.0	60.0	60.0
Female	24	40.0	40.0	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

The findings revealed that 60% of the respondents were male, while 40% were female. This indicates that the majority of hotels in Thika town are male.

4.3.2 Age of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Below 20	4	6.7	6.7
	21-30years	13	21.7	28.3
	31-40 years	33	55.0	83.3
	Above 40years	10	16.7	100.0
	Total	60	100.0	100.0

This shows that the age between 31-40 years, i.e. 55%, are the most customers who patronize the hotels in Thika town. This is followed by age between 21-30 years, i.e. 21.67%. The least age group is below 20 years.

4.3.3 Occupation of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Unemployed	5	8.3	8.3
	self employed	15	25.0	33.3
	employed	40	66.7	100.0
	Total	60	100.0	100.0

The findings show that 66.67% of the customers are employed while 25% were self-employed.

4.3.4. Number of Times Visited

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Once	5	8.3	8.3	8.3
Twice	13	21.7	21.7	30.0
Valid Thrice	18	30.0	30.0	60.0
above three times	24	40.0	40.0	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

The findings show that 40% of the customers had visited the hotels more than three times followed by 30% who had visited the hotels three times.

4.4 Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

4.4.1 Descriptive Statistics on Food Quality

Descriptive Statistics

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Texture	60	3.40	.821
Portion size	60	3.23	.816
Colour	60	2.67	.723
Flavour	60	3.43	.831
Valid N (listwise)	60		

The table above shows that most of the respondents moderately agreed with the fact that there are factors that of food quality which are the texture of the food, portion size and flavour of the food where measures had means of 3.40, 3.23 and 3.43 respectively.. However, others seemed to disagree with the measure that states colour is an indicator of

food quality in meal experience that leads to customer satisfaction; this only recorded a mean score of 2.67.

4.4.2 Descriptive Statistics on Speed of Service

Table 4.4.2 Descriptive statistics on Speed of Service

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Time taken	60	3.63	.910
Order accuracy	60	3.54	.806
Schedule strategy	60	2.38	.714
Enough staff	60	3.80	.820
Valid N (listwise)	60		

The table above shows that most of the respondents moderately agreed with the fact that the speed of service while serving the customers affect meal experience due to the time taken to serve food and beverage after the staff has taken the order, order accuracy and enough staff where the measures had means of 3.63, 3.54 and 3.80 respectively. However, some of the respondents seemed to disagree with the measure that states employees are expected to come to work as per schedule strategy, this only recorded a mean score of 2.38.

4.4.3 Descriptive Statistics on Atmosphere

Table 4.4.3 Descriptive statistics on Atmosphere

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Air quality	60	3.43	.870
Music	60	3.51	.843
Noise	60	2.15	.703
Temperature	60	3.83	.832

Valid N (listwise)	60		
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The table above shows that most of the respondents moderately agreed with the fact that atmosphere in the restaurant can affect meal experience on customer satisfaction as result of air quality, music and temperature where the measures had means of 3.43, 3.51 and 3.83 respectively. However, some of the respondents seemed to disagree with the measure that states atmosphere in terms of noise affect meal experience in the restaurant as this only recorded a mean score of 2.15.

4.4.4 Descriptive Statistics on Customer Satisfaction

Table 4.4.4 Descriptive statistics on Customer Satisfaction

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Positive comment	60	3.50	.882
Refer other customer	60	3.41	.812
Visit again	60	2.29	.742
Customer loyalty	60	3.79	.831
Valid N (listwise)	60		

The table above shows that most of the respondents moderately agreed with the fact that customer satisfaction in the restaurant can lead to a customer giving positive comments about the hotel, refer other customer and customer becomes loyal to the restaurant. The measures had means of 3.50, 3.41 and 3.79 respectively. However, most of the respondents seemed to disagree with the measure that states customer will visit again to the restaurant since they are satisfied and this only recorded a mean score of 2.29.

4.5 Pearson Correlation Results

A Pearson correlation was conducted to investigate the relationship between study variables.

Table 4.5.1: Correlations

		1	2	3	4
1. Food Quality	r	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N	60			
2. Speed of service	r	.043	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.0564			
	N	60	60		
3. Atmosphere	r	.479	.258*	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.648	.060		
	N	60	60	60	
4. Customer Satisfaction	r	.509*	.651*	.747*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	.002	.643	
	N	60	60	60	60

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

4.5 Summary and Discussion of the Findings

Table 4.9 Correlations among variables

Variables	Work Output	Decision	Rule
Food Quality	Pearson Correlation (<i>r</i>)	.509*	Reject H₀1
<i>p</i> -value	.001		
Speed of Service	Pearson Correlation (<i>r</i>)	.651*	Reject H₀2
<i>p</i> -value	.000		
Atmosphere	Pearson Correlation (<i>r</i>)	.747*	Reject H₀3
<i>p</i> -value	.001		

Notes: n = 60. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

According to the correlation analysis table above (table 4.9) that was set at a p-value of <.001, the researcher was able to conclude that all the study null hypotheses (Ho1, Ho2 and Ho3) are all rejected hence there is a statistically significant relationship between food quality, speed of service, atmosphere and customer satisfaction. Although there exists a statistically significant relationship between food quality and customer satisfaction (p-value= .001), the strength of relationship between this two variables is positive but not as strong (r=.509). On the other hand, both speed of service and atmosphere have a strong positive relationship with customer satisfaction (I.e. r=.651 and r=.747 respectively).

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter entails the summary of the findings and its implication of the study. It also includes the conclusion of the study and the recommendations as well as areas for further research.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The research shows that there are factors that influences meal experience that guests face while eating out in the hotels restaurants which may lead to customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction. They range from quality of food with the indicators; portion size, texture, colour and flavour, speed of service with the indicators; time taken to serve customers, order accuracy, enough staff and schedule strategy, to the atmosphere of the restaurant with the following indicators; air quality, music, noise and temperature.

The level of customer satisfaction according to the study shows that the above indicators of meal experience results to customer satisfaction measured by a number of indicators. i.e. customers revisiting the hotel, recommending hotel to other guests, giving positive comments about the hotel and being loyal to the hotel.

The research revealed that there is a strong positive correlation between meal experience and customer satisfaction. The findings show that coefficient of correlation was 0.509. This means while meal experience is low it continues to affect customer satisfaction in hotels and thus revenue will be low. This findings support the statement by Anderson& Mossberg, (2012), that customers are satisfied as result of the meal experienced in the hotel.

5.3 Conclusions

In the basis of findings, a number of conclusions can be made about the study; Quality of food, atmosphere and speed of service are major factors that influence meal experience in customer satisfaction. They are key determinants of whether customers will visit the hotel

again, recommend other guest, be loyal to the hotel or give positive comments about the hotel.

5.4 Recommendations

As a result of the study and the findings got, several recommendations on the running of the hotels to improve the meal experience and thus increase revenue and profitability. Hotels operators need to motivate their staff in order to have positive attitudes towards customers as well as having a professional way of handling complaints from the guests. Also they should have enough staff in order to speed up service to avoid long time waiting for orders by the customers. They should make sure that the restaurant has a conducive atmosphere favorable to the guests. The food and beverages should of high quality for the value of customer's money. All these factors will definitely results to customer satisfaction.

5.5 Recommendation for Further Research

This study recommends that more research to be done in other the departments such as housekeeping and front office, in order to find out how customers are satisfied in those areas.

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APPENDIX 1 : DATA COLLECTION LETTER
**OFFICE OF THE HEAD, SCHOOL OF HOSPITALITY & TOURISM
MANAGEMENT**

10/09/2021

Dear Sir/Madam

This letter is to introduce **Florence Wanjiru Ngigi** registration number [HPM-4-3216-19] who is a student in the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management at Grets University pursuing BSc. in Hospitality Management.

To complete her degree course, she is undertaking research leading to the production of a research report or other publications and her study is entitled:

“Influence of Meal Experience on Customer Satisfaction in Selected Star-rated Hotels in Thika Town, Kiambu County, Kenya”

She would like to invite you to assist in this project by filling in the questionnaire which covers certain aspects of this topic.

Be assured of confidentiality of any information you provide and that none of the participants will be individually identifiable in the resulting research report or other publications. You are entirely free to discontinue your participation at any time or to decline to answer particular questions.

Any enquiries you may have concerning this research project should be directed to her supervisor Catherine Karani- **0722698023** or by email **karanikate11@gmail.com**.

Thank you for your attention and assistance.

Yours Sincerely

Winnie Malel

**Research Coordinator School of Hospitality & Tourism Management
Grets University**

APPENDIX 2: QUESTIONNAIRE

The researcher aims to investigate the influence of meal experience on customer satisfaction in the selected hotels in Thika town, CBD, Kiambu County, Kenya. You are requested to participate in this study to help the researcher achieve her objectives. This questionnaire is designed to collect data strictly for academic purposes.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please tick where appropriate.

1. Gender : Male [] Female []

2. Age;
 Below 20 years []
 21-30 years []
 31-40 years []
 Above 40 years []

3. Occupation;
 Unemployed []
 Self-employed []
 Employed []

4. Number of times you have visited this hotel?
 Once []
 Twice []
 Thrice []

Above three times []

PART B: MEAL EXPERIENCE

Please **circle** your answer to each statement based on the Key below:

(1) *Strongly Disagree (SD)*; (2) *Disagree (D)*; (3) *Moderately Agree (MA)*; (4) *Agree (A)*; (5) *Strongly Agree (SA)*

S/N	Food Quality	SD	D	MA	A	SA
1	Portion size	1	2	3	4	5
2	Texture	1	2	3	4	5
3	Flavour	1	2	3	4	5
4	Colour	1	2	3	4	5

	Speed of Service	SD	D	MA	A	SA
1	Time taken	1	2	3	4	5
2	Order accuracy	1	2	3	4	5
3	Enough staff	1	2	3	4	5
4	Schedule strategy	1	2	3	4	5

S/N	Atmosphere	SD	D	MA	A	SA
1	Air quality	1	2	3	4	5
2	Music	1	2	3	4	5
3	Noise	1	2	3	4	5
4	Temperature					

PART C: CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Please circle your answer to each statement based on the key below:

(1) *Strongly Disagree (SD)*; (2) *Disagree (D)*; (3) *Moderately Agree (MA)*; (4) *Agree (A)*; (5) *Strongly Agree (SA)*

	Customer Satisfaction	SD	D	MA	A	SA
1	Customers will visit the hotel again	1	2	3	4	5

2	Customer will refer other customers	1	2	3	4	5
3	Customer will be loyal to this hotel	1	2	3	4	5
4	Customers will give positive comments about the hotel	1	2	3	4	5

