IMPACTS OF QUALITY SERVICE MANAGEMENT ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN HOTELS WITHIN VOI SUB-COUNTY IN TAITA TAVETA - COUNTY, KENYA

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HPM-4-4007-22

A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF HOSPITALITY, TOURISM AND LEISURE STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULLFILLMENT FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELORS OF SCIENCE DEGREE IN HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT OF GRETSA UNIVERSITY

DECEMBER 2024

DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has not been presented for any award of degree or for any similar purpose in any other institution.
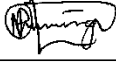
Signature _____   Date: <u>10/11/2024</u>

Samuel Everline Monyangi

HPM-4-4007-22

Declaration by the Supervisor

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: <u>10/11/2024</u>

Peter Irungu

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this research project to my immediate family, with whose motivation and support I was able to successfully complete this paper.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I thank God Almighty for guiding me throughout my university education, till this moment. I Appreciate my children for their dedication towards me and their moral support always. Finally, I thank my project supervisor for the input towards my work, I remain forever grateful.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYM'S

USA   United States of America.

SPSS   Statistical packages for social sciences.

UK   United Kingdom.

EDP   Expectation Disconfirmation Theory.

NPS   Net Promoter Score.

CLTV   Customer Lifetime Value.

FCR   First Contact Resolution**.**

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Customer Service   This is the Heart of any business whereby the customers and the business interact. It encompasses the support and assistance provided before, during, and after service offer or product purchase. This includes everything from answering questions to resolving issues and providing information whose importance are; to make customers loyal, build brand reputation, increase sales and gain competitive advantages.

Service management   This is a strategic approach to designing, delivering, managing, and improving IT services that meet the needs of the business and its customers. It's about ensuring that IT services align with the organization's goal**s.**

ABSTRACT

This study sought to establish the influence of quality service management on customer satisfaction in hotels within Voi Sub- County, Taita-Taveta County. Given the ever-growing and ever-changing nature of customer expectations, service providers in the hospitality industry must continuously be innovate and refine their service offerings and delivery mechanisms. In this competitive environment, understanding the significance of service management and identifying effective operational strategies are essential to achieving desired service management goals. The study was anchored in the Expectation Disconfirmation Theory (EDP) and customer Lifetime Value (CLTV). A descriptive research design was employed specifically a cross-sectional survey. A sample of 150 customers from one stir- five-star hotels in the area were selected using a convenience sampling technique. Primary data was collected using semi-structured questionnaires, and the analysis involved the use of descriptive statistics to summarize the data. The Pearson R correlation coefficient was employed to measure the strength and direction of linear relationships between the variables. Furthermore, multiple regression models at a 5% significance level were used to establish the relationship between various service management dimensions such as tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy—and customer satisfaction. The study anticipated that each of these dimensions had a positive and significant influence on customer satisfaction, providing valuable insights into how hotels in Voi, Taita-Taveta County can enhance their quality service management practices to better meet customer expectations.

Key terms: service quality management, customer satisfaction

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Preview

This chapter entails a comprehensive introduction to the study on the impacts of quality service management on customer satisfaction in hotels within Voi Sub- County, Taita-Taveta County, Kenya. It begins by presenting the background and context of the hospitality industry in the region, highlighting the significance of quality service management in enhancing customer satisfaction. The chapter then articulates the research problem, outlining the need to examine how various aspects of quality service management influence customer experiences and satisfaction levels. Following this, the objectives and research questions that guided the study are defined, providing a clear direction for the investigation. Additionally, the chapter discusses the significance of the study, emphasizing its potential contributions to both academic knowledge and practical strategies for improving service delivery in the hotel industry. Finally, the scope of the study is outlined, and an overview of the subsequent chapters is provided, setting the stage for the entire research process.

1.1 Background of the study

1.1.1 The hospitality industry in USA

The hospitality industry in the United States is a dynamic and highly competitive sector that relies heavily on providing exceptional customer service to thrive. Quality service management plays a crucial role in shaping the guest experience and, in turn, has a significant impact on customer satisfaction. This research explored the detailed relationship between quality service management and customer satisfaction within the hospitality industry in the USA, highlighting how effective service management practices can lead to improved customer satisfaction and long-term success for businesses in this sector.

The researcher noted that effective quality service management in the hospitality industry starts with a well-trained and motivated workforce. Employees are the frontline ambassadors of any hotel, restaurant, or other hospitality establishment. Staff members who are knowledgeable, courteous, and attentive to guest needs create a positive first impression and set the tone for the entire guest experience. Training programs that emphasize not only technical skills but also soft skills, such as communication and empathy, are essential in the hotels. Managers must foster a culture of service excellence, ensuring that employees understand the importance of their role in delivering exceptional service.

One of the key drivers of customer satisfaction in the hotel industry is the ability to personalize and customize services to meet individual guest preferences. Effective service management involves collecting and utilizing guest data to tailor services and experiences. For example, hotels can use guest profiles to provide room preferences, such as types of beds, or restaurant recommendations based on dietary restrictions. Personalization creates a sense of recognition and makes guests feel valued, which leads to higher levels of satisfaction and loyalty. Moreover, technology plays a significant role in enabling personalization, with mobile apps and guest relationship management systems helping hotels to track guest preferences and behaviour.

Quality service management extends beyond guest interactions to the efficient operation of the facility. Timely check-ins, room cleanliness, prompt room service, and well-maintained amenities all contribute to customer satisfaction. Service management practices must ensure that operations run smoothly, and any issues are addressed promptly. Technology also plays a vital role in this aspect, with many establishments using property management systems and service request apps to streamline operations and respond to guest needs more efficiently. "A seamless guest experience that minimizes inconvenience leads to higher levels of satisfaction".

Effective service management includes mechanisms for gathering feedback from guests. This can be in the form of surveys, online reviews, or direct interactions which the researcher aimed at. Analyzing guest feedback provided valuable insights into areas where improvements are needed. Managers must not only adhere to this feedback but also act upon it to enhance continuous guest experience and satisfaction too. A commitment to continuous improvement demonstrates a dedication to meeting and exceeding guest expectations. It also helps in building trust with customers, as they see that their opinions and concerns are taken seriously.

Quality service management isn't solely about managing guest interactions; it also involves managing employee satisfaction. "Satisfied and motivated employees are more likely to provide excellent service."

Therefore, hospitality businesses must invest in employee training, development, and well-being. When employees feel valued and supported, they are more likely to go the extra mile for guests, resulting in higher levels of customer satisfaction. It was noted that, employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction are interlinked, creating a cycle where happy employees lead to happy guests, which, in turn, leads to repeat business and positive word-of-mouth marketing.

In an industry where competition is fierce, customer satisfaction is not only a measure of success but also a driver of future business. By recognizing the importance of service management and implementing best practices, hospitality establishments can build lasting relationships with their guests and thrive in an ever-evolving market.

1.1.2 The hospitality industry in Europe

Sustainability was the key factor that continued to be a growing concern in the European hospitality industry whereby many hotels and restaurants prioritizes environmental

responsibility by implementing energy-efficient operations, waste reduction programs, and sourcing locally-produced, sustainable food. Guests increasingly sought eco-friendly accommodations, and businesses that embraced sustainability were well-positioned to attract and retain environmentally-conscious travelers (Hotel Management, 2021).

1.1.3 The hospitality industry in Africa

One key factor driving the growth of the hospitality industry in Africa is the continent's increasing appeal as a tourist destination. Africa offers a diverse range of attractions, from wildlife safaris and pristine beaches to historical and cultural sites. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), international tourist arrivals in Africa steadily increased in the years leading up to the pandemic, with an average growth rate of around 6% annually.

In some African countries like Kenya, South Africa, and Tanzania have been major draws for tourists. These destinations have invested in infrastructure and marketing to attract international visitors. Additionally, emerging markets like Ethiopia and Rwanda have been making efforts to expand their tourism sectors.

Infrastructure limitations have been a long-standing challenge in Africa's hospitality sector. While major cities and tourist hubs often have well-developed infrastructure, including airports and hotels, there are disparities in rural and less-visited areas. Improvements in transportation and connectivity, such as the expansion of airports and road networks, are crucial to making these regions more accessible to tourists.

1.1.4 The hospitality industry in Taita Taveta county, Voi sub-county - Kenya.

The Kenyan Coastland has long been a favored destination for both domestic and international tourists, known for its stunning beaches, rich cultural heritage, and diverse marine life. The

hospitality industry in this region plays a pivotal role in the local economy, providing employment opportunities and contributing significantly to Kenya's tourism sector. Specifically, Taita Taveta county being one of the counties in coastal region, it is well known for enjoyed thriving tourism industry. Visitors are drawn to its prestige world-class resorts, and a wide range of activities such as wildlife safaris, and cultural experiences. The region also boasted a variety of accommodations, from luxury resorts to budget-friendly lodges, catering to a diverse clientele.

Though hotels, resorts, and other businesses in the sector experienced significant financial strain, the Kenyan government implemented various measures to support the industry during this difficult period, including tax breaks and financial relief packages. Additionally, safety protocols were established to instill confidence in travelers, which included enhanced sanitation, good security and health testing requirements.

In Voi sub- county, the hotels have started to recover on tourism business since more travelers are visiting one of the biggest national parks in Kenya (Tsavo East National Park). Some hotels and resorts within the sub-county have started offering flexible booking policies, contactless check-ins, and online marketing strategies to attract more travelers. Due to the rise of domestic tourism in the area, the hotels are receiving high numbers of people visiting the hotels. Kenyan residents are unable to travel abroad but have opted to explored their own country and rediscovered the beauty of their motherland destinations Voi hotels being one of the most visited sites. This shift in preferences has prompted businesses to tailor their offerings to the domestic market.

Sustainability is a growing concern in the Taita Taveta county's hospitality industry. Many businesses have recognized the importance of preserving the region's natural beauty and

cultural heritage. Initiatives including eco-friendly practices, responsible wildlife viewing, and support for local communities. For example, some lodges are partnering with conservation organizations to protect wild life animals. The Taita Taveta county faced several challenges such as infrastructure and fluctuating visitor numbers due to seasonality. However, it also held significant opportunities, including the potential for niche tourism markets such as eco-tourism, cultural tourism, and adventure tourism.

In conclusion, the hospitality industry in the Taita Taveta county specifically Voi sub county has historically been a vital component of the region's economy, attracting tourists from around the world with its natural wildlife beauty and the Taita cultural richness. The county's commitment to sustainability and its diverse range of attractions bodes well for its long-term prospects in the global tourism landscape.

1.1.5 Customer satisfaction

Customer Satisfaction has attracted the attention of several authors who have defined it in different ways. According to Philip & Hazlett (2017) customer satisfaction is when the customer's perception that his or her expectations have been met or surpassed. If the product or service performance falls short of expectation, the customer is dissatisfied. If performance matches expectations, the customer is satisfied. If the performance exceeds expectations, the customer is highly satisfied or delighted (Philip & Hazlett, 2017). However, Ekinci, Sirakaya-Turk and Preciado (2013) argue that customer satisfaction comes from the evaluation of service management. Solomon (1994) defined customer satisfaction as an overall feeling, or attitude a person has about a product after it has been purchased.

Customer satisfaction is typically defined as a post consumption evaluative judgment concerning a specific product or service (Gundersen, Heide & Olsson, 1996). Further, Kotler

(2006) defines customer satisfaction as a 'person's feeling of pleasure or disappointment which resulted from comparing a product's perceived performance or outcome against his/her expectations. Like service management, there are many definitions of customer satisfaction by different authors. Customer satisfaction is often measured using two main scores namely Customer Satisfaction Score (CSAT) and Net Promoter Score (NPS). CSAT measures how products and services supplied by a company meet or surpass customer expectations. In the tool, a respondent expresses his/her satisfaction on a number of statements in terms of their perception and expectations on a score on a linear scale from either 1-3 or from 1-5 (Elegba & Adah, 2015).

The Net Promoter Score (NPS) was also introduced by Reichheld, (2003) and it focuses on measuring long-term happiness for instance repeat purchase or customer loyalty. It does so by asking a respondent to score how likely they are to recommend the organization/product/service in question on a scale which ranges from 0-10. CSAT is often used to measure short-term or immediate happiness of clients, NPS on the other hand focuses on measuring customers' long-term happiness thus customer loyalty.

1.1.6 Service Management

Service management is a critical component of the hospitality industry, encompassing a wide range of activities and strategies designed to deliver exceptional service experiences to guests. In this research, the researcher explored what quality service management means in the context of the hospitality sector involving four key elements: employee training and development, customer engagement and satisfaction, operational efficiency, and continuous improvement.

One of the cornerstones of service management in the hospitality industry is the training and development of employees. Well-trained and motivated staff members are the frontline

ambassadors of any hotel, restaurant, or resort. They are responsible for creating the first and lasting impressions on guests.

1.2 Statement of the research problem

The research topic "Impact of Service Management on Customer Satisfaction" addresses a critical concern within hospitality industry. It explores how the way services are managed and delivered directly influences customer satisfaction levels. However, this research topic poses several pressing issues and challenges that warrant investigation: In many service-oriented industries, there is a persistent problem of inconsistent service management. Customers often experience variations in service standards, even within the same organization. This inconsistency can lead to dissatisfaction and customer churn.

In today's dynamic business environment, customer expectations are constantly evolving. With the advent of technology, customers expect faster responses, personalized experiences, and convenient service delivery. Quality service management must be adapted to meet these changing expectations. Service management is closely tied to the training, motivation, and engagement of employees. Lack of employees training, motivation which are not aligned with the organization's service goals is a complex challenge. Inadequate training and employee turnover can negatively impact service management and, subsequently, customer satisfaction.

Service failures are inevitable, and how organizations handle these failures through service recovery strategies is crucial. Effective service recovery can actually enhance customer satisfaction, but poorly managed service recovery efforts can exacerbate dissatisfaction. Addressing these issues can lead to valuable insights that help businesses and organizations improve service management and ultimately enhance customer satisfaction.

1.3 Purpose of the research study

The purpose of the research study is to investigate on the impact of Quality service management on customer satisfaction using one stir up five stir Voi sub-county hotels and lodges.

1.4 Conceptual framework

Independent variable

Dependent variable

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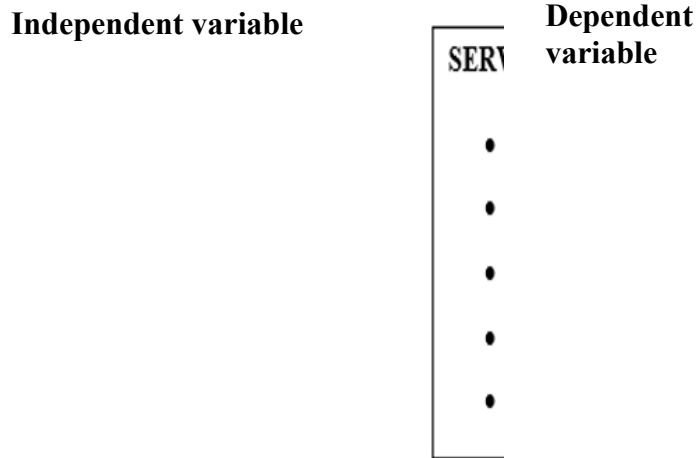
Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Researcher (2024)

1.5 Research questions

The study aimed to answer the following research questions;

a) What is the effect of tangibility on customer satisfaction among hotels in Voi sub-county -Kenya?

b) What is the effect of reliability on customer satisfaction among hotels in Voi sub-county?

c) What is the effect of responsiveness on customer satisfaction among hotels in Voi sub-county?

d) What is the effect of assurance on customer satisfaction among in Voi sub-county?

e) What is the effect of empathy on customer satisfaction among hotels in Voi sub-county?

1.6 Research hypothesis

H01-What is the effect of tangibility on customer satisfaction among hotels in Voi sub-county -
Kenya

H02-What is the effect of reliability on customer satisfaction among hotels in Voi sub-county -
Kenya?

H03-What is the effect of responsiveness on customer satisfaction among hotels in Voi sub-
county -Kenya?

H04-What is the effect of assurance on customer satisfaction among hotels in Voi sub-county -
Kenya?

H05-What is the effect of empathy on customer satisfaction among hotels in Voi sub-county -
Kenya

1.7 Objectives of the research study

a) To determine the effects of tangibility on customer satisfaction among hotels in Voi sub-
county -Kenya

b) To assess the effects of reliability on customer satisfaction among hotels in Voi sub-
county -Kenya

c) To determine the effects of responsiveness on customer satisfaction among hotels in Voi
sub-county -Kenya

d) To determine the effects of assurance on customer satisfaction among hotels in Voi sub-
county -Kenya

e) To establish the effects of empathy on customer satisfaction among hotels in Voi sub-
County.

1.8 Limitations of the Research Study

This study was limited to investigating the relationship between quality service management and customer satisfaction using the five quality dimensions—tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy—within one-star - five-star hotels in Voi Sub- County, Taita-Taveta County. The study specifically focused on this sub-county due to its high concentration of hotels and the ease of access for the researcher. The target population for this study consisted of customers from the 7 identified hotels in Voi Sub- County, as listed by the Kenya Association of Hotel Keepers and Caterers (2018). Data collection was carried out primarily through questionnaires, making the study quantitative in nature. The research was scheduled to be conducted between May 2024 and October 2024.

1.9 Significance of the Research Study

This study is expected to make significant contributions to policy, practice, and research. For policymakers, the study will provide valuable insights for designing policies aimed at enhancing customer satisfaction through improved service management in hotels. These policies will guide hotel managers in adopting effective service management dimensions to better serve their customers. The study's findings will offer current perspectives on customer perceptions of service quality dimensions in hotels and what customers consider important for achieving high satisfaction levels. In terms of practical application, the findings will assist hotel operations managers in formulating strategies for improved quality management, ultimately facilitating higher customer satisfaction through the adoption of best operational management practices. This, in turn, is expected to result in better hotel performance and increased customer loyalty. Additionally, the study will contribute to the existing literature on service management within the emerging field of hotel franchising.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter portrays a review of the theoretical and empirical literature on effects of service management and customer satisfaction. It is divided into five major sections namely, theoretical formulization, empirical review, knowledge gaps, conceptual framework and operationalization of variables

2.1 Empirical literature review

This section reviews studies carried out by other researchers on service management and customer satisfaction. The review was center on studies that authors have conducted on the relationship between a few or all service management dimensions and customer satisfaction.

2.1.1 Service management and Customer Satisfaction

In 1988, Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry had conducted an empirical study to measure the service management towards the customers' perceptions by using the ten dimensions as a basic structure. The results indicated that some variables in these ten dimensions were overlapped with each other. In the ten elements of service management, tangibility, reliability and responsiveness remain constant while the remaining seven determinants were categorized into the last two dimensions which are assurance and empathy (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

As a result, there are five service management dimensions in the modified version of SERVQUAL model that affect customers' satisfaction and thus brand image: Tangibility is related to the physical environment, facilities and the employees' appearance. Reliability is the ability to carry out the services consistently and accurately. Responsiveness is the willingness of the employees in helping the customer to solve the problem. Assurance is the adequate

knowledge that the employees possess and the ability of the employees in entrusting the confidence.

Empathy is associated with the organization provide the caring and individualized attention to their customers. Buttle (1996) mentioned that SERVQUAL model is been used widely in measuring customers' perceptions towards various types of services. Al-Azzam (2015) studied the impact of service management on customer satisfaction: a field study of Arab Bank in Irbid City, Jordan. The study used the model of service management with five dimensions to evaluate its effect on the customer satisfaction. The results indicated that the higher the service management, the more the costumer's satisfaction. The findings also indicated that the five factors of service management positively affected the customer satisfaction. This study was conducted in the banking industry whose customers differ in the social, economic and cultural elements from the customers that the current study that was conducted on in the four star and five-star hotels in Voi sub-county.

Rahhal (2015) evaluated the effects of service management on customer satisfaction: an empirical investigation in Syrian Mobile Telecommunication Services. Convenience sampling was used to select 600 mobile phone service users and was distributed among the 17 Damascus and Aleppo. Confirmatory factor analysis was used in the analysis. The findings of the study showed the direct significant impact of service management on customer satisfaction. This study was conducted in the Syria, while the current study was also conducted in Kenya, specifically Voi sub-county that has economic, social, political and cultural differences.

2.1.2 Tangibles and Customer Satisfaction

This section looks at the relationship between tangibles and their effect on customer satisfaction across different conceptual and contextual research works explored by other authors across

different geographical regions and industrial sectors. Tamwatin, Trimetsoontorn and Fongsuwan (2015) studied the effect of tangible and intangible service management on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in Siam Kempinski Hotel in Bangkok, Thailand. A self-selection sampling technique was used to select the sample by sending the questionnaires to the guests who stayed at the hotel, out of which 425 guests returned the completed questionnaires. Structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to analyze the collected data. Findings confirmed that tangibles and intangible services influence customer satisfaction significantly and all these jointly influence customer loyalty. This study though similar in the industry will be focused on what was conducted in Thailand whereas the current one was conducted in a different country that is, in Voi safari lodge, Voi wildlife, Two oceans hotel, Maghonyi resort, Ngutuni, African lodges and Lion hill lodge in Voi sub-county, Kenya. Lee, Lee & Dewald (2016) carried out a study on measuring the customers' perception of tangible service management in the restaurant industry.

The purpose of the study was to investigate the relative importance of tangible service attributes toward diners' satisfaction within the upscale dining segment. A total of 29 tangible service attributes will be identified. Through the exploratory factor analysis (EFA), five underlying dimensions of tangible service attributes was delineated: presentation value, table aesthetics, sensory perceptions, hygiene purity, and vehicle convenience. This study only focused on tangible service management, the reliability, responsiveness, assurance and service empathy SERVQUAL dimensions. Santos (2002) studied the intangibility to tangibility on service management perceptions: a comparison study between consumers and service providers in four service industries. The study investigated the importance of tangibles and intangibles in perceptions of service management as assessed by both customers and service providers.

The study was conducted in 19 service industries to reflect a range from high to low levels of tangible components and degree of intangibility in both service process and output. Results showed that the level of tangible components has a positive impact on the perceived importance of the tangible dimension in service management. This study focused on consumers and providers across four service industries while the current study will be focusing only on consumers in 7 hotels in Voi sub-county, Kenya. Alsaqre (2011) carried out a study on the effects of tangible and intangible factors on customers' perceived service management and loyalty in Hotel Industry in Al-Ladhiqiyah, Syria. The study investigated the effects of both tangible and intangible aspects of service management at hotels on both customers' overall perception of service management and loyalty. Data were collected from 209 respondents who were guests at some hotels at Al-Ladhiqiyah, a Syrian coastal city. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire. This study showed that design of the hotels, the equipment at hotels and the ambient conditions at hotels had their effects on customers' overall perceptions of service management.

The results also showed that only intangible factors of empathy and assurance had their significant influence on customers' overall perception of service management. In addition, the results indicated that empathy, assurance and reliability had a high significant influence on customers' loyalty. This study was conducted in Syria while the current study was conducted in one to five hotel in Voi- sub county-Kenya.

2.1.3. Reliability and Customer Satisfaction

This section looked at the relationship between reliability and its effect on customer satisfaction across different conceptual and contextual research works explored by other authors across different geographical regions and industrial sectors.

. Gagnon and Roh (2008) evaluated the impact of customization and reliability on customer satisfaction in the U.S. Lodging Industry. The study examined the relationship between customers' perceptions of reliability, customization, overall quality, and customer satisfaction in the US lodging market. The American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) provided the secondary data for the research. The results provided evidence that US hotel guests were satisfied with the overall quality of their hotel experiences and that overall quality, customization, and reliability all have significant, positive impacts on customer satisfaction.

This study was conducted in the United States of America which is a developed economy compared to the current study that focused hotels, resorts and lodges within Voi sub-county, Kenya. Galetzka, Verhoeven and Pruyn (2006) did a study on service validity and service reliability of search, experience and credence services, a scenario study. Service validity and service reliability were manipulated in scenarios describing service encounters with different types of services. Customer satisfaction was measured using questionnaires. It was established that Service validity and service reliability independently affect customer 21 satisfaction with search services. For experience services, service validity and service reliability are necessary conditions for customer satisfaction. For credence services, no effects of service validity were found but the effects of service reliability on customers' satisfaction were profound.

2.1.4 Responsiveness and Customer Satisfaction

This section looked at the relationship between responsiveness and its effect on customer satisfaction across different conceptual and contextual research works explored by other authors across different geographical regions and industrial sectors Pandey and Devasagayam (2010) undertook a study on responsiveness as antecedent of satisfaction and referrals in financial services marketing. It was a detailed study of a multinational bank operating in the emergent

economy of India with a random national sample of over 9000 of their customers. The study provided empirical evidence suggesting that responsiveness to customer enquiries and complaints might be a strong driver of customer satisfaction, irrespective of the outcome of the resolution process. The study found that responsiveness supersedes a positive outcome in service provider-customer conflict resolution. This study was conducted in India who's political, social, economic and cultural aspects differ from the current study that was focused in Taita-taveta , Kenya.

2.1.5 Assurance and Customer Satisfaction

This section looks at the relationship between assurance and its effect on customer satisfaction across different conceptual and contextual research works explored by other authors across different geographical regions and industrial sectors Rachman (2017) undertook a study an analyzing the of effect of physical evidence and service assurance on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in using car rental service (PT Pusaka Prima Transport Cases). The method used in this research was descriptive analysis method, using multiple regression, and tools questionnaire given to 107 consumers PT Pusaka Prima Transport. The results showed that the four variables had a significant influence in the amount of 42.99% for physical evidence to customer satisfaction, 18.40% for the guarantee of service to customer satisfaction, and 64.8% for customer satisfaction to customer loyalty.

This study was conducted in the transport sector while the current study was conducted in four star and five-star hotels in Voi sub-county. Park, Bhatnaga & Rao (2014) carried out a study on assurance seals, on-line customer satisfaction and repurchase intention. The study explored how third-party assurance seals, a privacy service provided by vendors to mitigate customers' fears, have an impact on online customer satisfaction and repeat-purchase intention. The study

showed, first, that seals provide a frame such that a consumer's overall satisfaction and repeat-purchase intention would be higher when vendors provide assurance seals than when they do not. Second, applying the concept of diminishing sensitivity, it showed that consumers would be 23 subjectively less sensitive to service performance of vendors who provide seals than vendors who do not provide seals. This study focused on how the different ways customer fears are mitigated impact customer satisfaction while the current study focused on how service management dimensions influence customer satisfaction.

2.1.6. Empathy and Customer Satisfaction

This section looks at the relationship between empathy and its effect on customer satisfaction across different conceptual and contextual research works explored by other authors across different geographical regions and industrial sectors Ye, Dong and Lee (2017) conducted a study on long-term impact of service empathy and responsiveness on customer satisfaction and profitability: a longitudinal investigation in a healthcare context. Using 24 quarters of longitudinal patient satisfaction data and archival financial data from 25 clinical units in a large healthcare organization, the study examined how empathy and responsiveness influence profitability over time. The findings showed that downgrading empathy and responsiveness allows firms to lower costs, resulting in immediate productivity benefits; however, this strategy had an enduring negative effect on customer satisfaction and ultimately hurts profitability in the long run. This study was conducted in the health industry while the current study was conducted in four star and five-star hotels in Voi sub-county.

Bahadur, Aziz and Zulfiqar (2018) studied the effect of employee empathy on customer satisfaction and loyalty during employee–customer interactions: The mediating role of customer affective commitment and perceived service management. The study investigated the indirect

effect of employee empathy (EE) on customer loyalty (CL) and loyalty outcomes through intervening variables, i.e. customer affective commitment, perceived service management, and customer satisfaction (CS). Associations between the constructs of the proposed model were examined in the context of employee–customer interactions. Data were collected through the online survey from 360 useable responses collected from active users of telecommunication services from the province of Anhui, China. To test the model, structural equation modeling was applied by using AMOS 21. The findings confirmed the positive and indirect effect of EE on CL and loyalty outcomes (i.e. positive word-of-mouth 24 and repurchase intentions). This study was conducted in China which is a developed economy compared to the current study that focused on hotels in Voi sub-county-Taita-Taveta, Kenya which is a developing country.

2.2 Summary of Knowledge Gaps

From the above empirical literature review the study identifies conceptual, empirical and contextual knowledge gaps. Conceptually, prior studies have mainly used one or two service management dimensions and studied their relationship with customer satisfaction (Omar, 2015 ; Lee, Lee & Dewald, 2016; Pandey & Devasagayam, 2010; Rachman, 2017; Bahadur, Aziz & Zulfiqar, 2018). Empirically prior studies also yield different results. Some authors found that three out of the five dimensions had a the most influence on customer satisfaction while other authors who only focused on one dimensions found a positive relationship e.g Olakutan and Ojo (2016) and Omar (2015) . This implies that this relationship still presents mixed findings warranting further research. The current study instead employed all five service management dimensions to establish their relationship with customer satisfaction.

Contextually, prior studies (e.g Gagnon and Roh, 2008; Alsaqre, 2011) were conducted in different environments/ countries that have both social, economic and cultural differences from

where the current study took place since market dynamics in developing markets like Kenya differ significantly, that is, how customers perceive quality of a service in Kenya may differ from how it is perceived in developed markets. Arising from these conceptual, empirical and contextual knowledge gaps, this study sought to address them by investigating the influence of service management dimensions on customer satisfaction among one stir to five-star hotels in Voi sub-county.

2.3 Theoretical framework

Theories are formulated to explain, predict, and understand phenomena and, in many cases, to challenge and extend existing knowledge within the limits of critical bounding assumptions. The study was based on Expectation Disconfirmation Theory (EDP) and Contrast Theory. However, the main theory supporting the study is Expectation Disconfirmation Theory (EDP)

2.3.1. Expectation Disconfirmation Theory (EDP)

Oliver (1977; 1980) proposed the Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory (EDP) as the most promising theoretical framework for the assessment of customer satisfaction. The framework employed in the assessment of customer satisfaction with hospitality and tourism services. The model implies that consumers purchase goods and services with prepurchase expectations about the anticipated performance. The expectation level then becomes a standard against which the product is judged. That is, once the product or service has been used, outcomes are compared against expectations. If the outcome matches the expectation confirmation occurs (Yi 1990). Disconfirmation occurs where there is a difference between expectations and outcomes. A customer is either satisfied or dissatisfied as a result of positive or negative difference between expectations and perceptions. Thus, when service performance is better than what the customer had initially expected, there is a positive disconfirmation between expectations and performance

which results in satisfaction, while when service performance is as expected, there is a confirmation between expectations and perceptions which results in satisfaction (Kopalle & Lehmann, 14 2001). In contrast, when service performance is not as good as what the customer expected, there is a negative disconfirmation between expectations and perceptions which causes dissatisfaction (Boulding et al., 1993).

This type of discrepancy theory has a long history in the satisfaction literature dating back at least to Howard's & Sheth's (1967) definition of satisfaction which states that it is a function of the degree of congruency between aspirations and perceived reality of experiences. Porter (1961) can be credited with early empirical applications of this comparative model of customer satisfaction in the field of job satisfaction (cf. Oliver, 1997). In his study, Porter (1961), for instance, compared the worker's perception of how much of a job facet (for example, pay) there should be to the worker's perception of how much is the facet. Thus, in this theory, the customer's perception of overall satisfaction results from a comparison between expectation and outcome performance.

2.3.2. Contrast Theory.

It was first introduced by Hovland, Harvey and Sherif (1987). Dawes et al. (1972) defines contrast theory as the tendency to magnify the discrepancy between one's own attitudes and the attitudes represented by opinion statements. According to the theory, when actual product performance falls short of consumer's expectations about the product, the contrast between the expectation and outcome will cause the consumer to exaggerate the disparity (Yi, 1990). The Contrast theory maintains that a customer who receives a product less valuable than expected, will magnify the difference between the products received and the product expected (Cardozzo, 1965). This theory predicts that product performance below expectations will be rated poorer

than it is in reality (Oliver & DeSarbo, 1988). In other words, the Contrast Theory would assume that "outcomes deviating from expectations will cause the subject to favorably or unfavorably react to the disconfirmation experience in that a negative disconfirmation is believed to result in a poor product evaluation, whereas positive disconfirmation should cause the product to be highly appraised.

While the theory of assimilation asserts that the consumers will try to minimize the expectation-performance discrepancy, the theory of contrast insists on a surprise effect that can lead to exaggerating the discrepancy. From the theory, any discrepancy of experience from expectations will be exaggerated in the direction of discrepancy. If the firm raises expectations in his advertising, and then a customer's experience is only slightly less than that promised, the product/service would be rejected as totally un-satisfactory. Conversely, under-promising in advertising and over-delivering will cause positive disconfirmation also to be exaggerated. This theory is useful to the current study as it helps to explain the resulting customer satisfaction with a service whereby customers provide a rating on the level of their satisfaction from highly satisfied to highly dissatisfy. This therefore helped the 4- and 5- star hotels understand any major disparity in the customer satisfaction reviews given by clients who experienced their products and services.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology of research. The chapter covers the research design, target population, the sample frame, sample and sampling techniques. In addition, the chapter also identified the data collection instruments utilized for data collection, the data collection procedure, pilot testing, validity and reliability of the research instrument, data analysis and presentation.

3.1 Research design

The research design facilitates the framework of the various research operations, thereby making research as efficient as possible hence yielding maximum information with minimal expenditure of effort, time and money (Mugenda, 2008). This study used a descriptive research design specifically cross-sectional survey. This type of research design focuses on explaining the aspects of the study in a detailed manner. A researcher starts with a general idea and uses this research as a medium to identify issues that can be the focus for future research. The purpose of explanatory research is to increase the understanding on a certain subject. It also explains why events occur to build, elaborate, extend or test theory (Creswell, 2013). Explanatory research is interested in understanding, explaining, predicting and controlling relationships between variables than in detecting causes. Explanatory studies go beyond description and attempts to explain the reasons for the phenomenon that the descriptive study only observed (Yin, 2013). The study sought to be explanatory in nature because it increases understanding between common people, or other researchers among the topic that is investigated. Zikmund, Babin, Carr and Griffin (2012) recommended explanatory research

design because it is associated with greater levels of internal validity due to systematic selection of subjects.

3.2 Target population

Target population is the entire set of units for which the study data are to be used to make inferences; the target population thus defines those units for which the findings of the study are meant to generalize (Sarason, 2013). A population includes all elements that meet certain criteria for inclusion in a research study. It is the entire set of individuals or objects sharing some common characteristics as defined by the sampling criteria established for the study (Burns & Grove, 2013). McLeod (2014) note that a research population is generally a large collection of individuals or objects that is the focus of a scientific query. It is for the benefit of the population that researches are done. The unit of observation was the four star and five-star hotels while the unit of analysis was the customers at the four star and five-star hotels. There were 14 four star and five-star hotels in Taita-Taveta County as at Dec 2020 (Kenya Association of Hotel Keepers and Caterers, 2018). Seven hotels were selected to participate in the study. According to Kenya Association of Hotel Keepers and Caterers, (2018), these hotels in 2018 were estimated to have 10,000 customers and a sample of these was selected.

3.3 Sample size

Yin (2013) explains that sampling is the procedure of selecting a representative of the total population as much as possible in order to produce a miniature (small) cross section. Kothari (2010) defines a sample as a small proportion of a target population selected for analysis. The study used the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula to arrive at the sample size. n = N 1+(N-1) e2 Where n= the required sample size N = is the Target Population (172) e = accuracy level required. Standard error = 5% n = 10,000 / 1 + (10,000-1)0.052; n = 385 respondents. The study

therefore targeted a total of 385 respondents distributed equally between 4- and 5-star hotels as 193 and 193 respondents, respectively. This is because there is an equal distribution of 7 hotels each between the four- and five-star hotels. Convenience sampling method was adopted in the selection of the respondents. According to Kothari (2010) convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where subjects are selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher. In convenience sampling, the first available primary data source is used for the research without additional requirements. This sampling method involves getting participants wherever the researcher can find them and typically wherever is convenient.

In convenience sampling no inclusion criteria identified prior to the selection of subjects. All subjects are invited to participate (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). This method enables the study to achieve the sample size it targets in a relatively fast and inexpensive way. This method was adopted to select the customers. The researcher presented the letter from Gretsa School of hospitality indicating the ongoing research and get approval from the hotel management staff first before politely approaching their clients to participate in the questionnaire. The researcher approached the clients checking out or the ones relaxing at the reception lounge area. The researcher explained to the hotels clients what the study's aims to do, how confidentiality was to be maintained and then sought consent before giving them the questionnaire to fill.

3.4 Data collection and Research instruments

Primary data was collected from respondents using a semi structured questionnaire in which most questions were closed; however, there were a few open-ended questions to generate further insights on the quality of service offered by the hotel. The questionnaires given were

self-administered using a fill and wait approach for the respondents who were customers at the hotel premises at the time of data collection. For example, as they customers check out when the researcher is at the premises. Research assistants were trained for the purpose of data collection. The questionnaire was divided into six sections each following the 5 service management dimensions yielding the 22 SERVQUAL statements. The researcher also employed a five-point Likert scale on each of the 22 SERQUAL 35 statements (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1990).

The sections also included the CSAT questions to directly measure the effect of each service management dimension on customer satisfaction using a five-point likert scale as well. Some of the advantages of using questionnaires for data collection are that the researcher had the opportunity to personally introduce the study to the respondents and explain to them the intentions of the study, and also to clarified to the respondents any issues that arose during the study. According to Sekaran (2003) data collection instrument is the means by which information is obtained from the selected subject under investigation. The study collected primary data using questionnaires. According to Babbie (2009), questionnaires are used for data collection because of their simplicity in the administration and scoring of items as well as data analysis. The questionnaire had seven sections. These include demographic information, questions on tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, empathy and customer satisfaction.

3.5 Reliability of the research study

According to Mugenda a (2008) reliability is a measure of the degree to which research instruments yields consistent results or data after repeated Trials. The test-retest method was adopted in the study. Reliability of the questionnaire was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha which measures the internal consistency. The value of the alpha coefficient ranges from 0-1 and

may be used to describe the reliability of factors extracted from dichotomous and or multi-point formatted questionnaires or scales. A higher value shows a more reliable generated scale. Cooper and Schindler (2008) have indicated 0.7 to be an acceptable reliability coefficient therefore the study used 0.7 as the cutoff point. The reliability results are presented in chapter four, section 4.3.

3.6 Validity of the research study

Validity is the degree to which an instrument measures the construct under investigation. For a data collection instrument to be considered valid, the content selected and included must be relevant to the need or gap established (Liaw & Goh, 2002) stated that a pilot study is not compulsory in research design, but is a normal practice before an actual study. There is different method of measuring validity. Face validity is the degree to which a test seems to measure what it reports to measure. Construct validity defines how well a test or experiment measures up to its claims. It refers to the degree to which an assessment instrument is relevant to, and representative of the targeted construct it is designed to measure (Liaw & Goh, 2002) stated that a pilot study is not compulsory in research design, but it is a normal practice before an actual study. In this study content validity was used to determine the validity of the research instrument. Before the actual study, the instrument was discussed with lecturers in the field under study. The feedback from the lecturers and the experts assisted in modifying the instrument prior to data collection.

3.7 Data Analysis

Once all the questionnaires were received from the field, the researcher embarked on data editing, coding and analysis. When it comes to data editing, the researcher checked for completeness, accuracy, consistency of data by arranging the data in a systematic manner. The

filled questionnaires were checked for completeness at two levels where the data collectors verified that questionnaires were complete before they are taken to the researcher to do the final verification. This was done to ensure that any anomalies detected were corrected immediately before the questionnaires were collected from the respondent. Spelling and grammatical mistakes were also corrected. With editing the data, the researcher made sure that all responses were very clear to understand.

Bringing clarity is important otherwise the researcher can draw wrong inferences from the data. Data coding refers to the process of transforming collected information or observations to a set of meaningful, cohesive categories. It is a process of summarizing and re-presenting data in order to provide a systematic account of the recorded or observed phenomenon. The questionnaire had both closed and open questions. The responses from the closed questions were assigned numerical numbers which were entered into the SPSS software in preparation for analysis. The researcher generated themes for the responses from the open-ended questions and grouped the responses that are similar. 37 Data was entered numerically into an SPSS software data matrix and this process was automated in a computer-assisted system. The researcher imported an ASCII file and named the variables/column headings or, creates variables/column headings and then data in each case was entered

Data analysis was guided by the research objectives presented. The data collected from the field was analyzed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) 23 program. All questionnaires received were referenced and items in the questionnaire coded to facilitate data entry. Quantitative data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS (version 23). Descriptive statistical analysis was performed by computing percentages of variations in response as well as describing and interpreting the data in line with the study

objectives and assumptions to communicate research findings. Descriptive statistics were presented through percentages, means, standard deviations and frequencies. The information was displayed by use of bar charts, graphs and pie charts. Inferential statistics included performing correlation and regression analysis to examine the effect of service management on customer satisfaction among hotels in Voi sub- County. Pearson R correlation was used to measure strength and the direction of linear relationship between variables. Correlation value of 0 showed that there is no relationship between the dependent and the independent variables. On the other hand, a correlation of ± 1.0 means that there is a perfect positive or negative relationship (Hair et al., 2010). The values were interpreted between 0 (no relationship) and 1.0 (perfect relationship). The relationship was considered weak when r = ± 0.1 to ± 0.29, while the relationship was considered moderate when r = ± 0.3 to ± 0.49, and when r= ± 0.5 and above, the relationship was considered strong. The study adopted multiple regression models at 5% level of significance to examine direct and indirect relationship between the study variables. The regression model was; $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon$, where; Y= Customer satisfaction, β_0= constant (coefficient of intercept), X_1= Tangibles; X_2= Reliability; X_3= Responsiveness; X_4= Empathy; ε = error term; 38 This study used regression analysis. The data was however checked for violations of assumptions of normality and linearity, multicollinearity, heteroscedasticity and independence.

3.8 Ethical and logistical considerations

The researcher sought for and was granted ethical approval for the study by the Gretsa Ethics Review Board. A research permit was also obtained from National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) and this granted permission to collect data. An introduction letter was obtained from Gretsa University that helped in introducing the study to

the respondents. The respondents who were willing to participate in the study were provided with a consent form to sign that clearly stated that participation in the study is purely voluntary and no one was coerced to take part. To ensure anonymity the name of the respondents did not appear anywhere in the research instrument. The respondents were also informed that the study is purely academic and that their information was to be kept confidential. The researcher encouraged the respondents to respond to the questionnaire truthfully, honestly and in an unbiased fashion without any fear that their responses would put them in any physical or psychological harm

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

Data analysis, presentation, interpretation, and discussion of findings obtained from data collection are discussed in this chapter. This chapter also presents background information of the respondents and findings of the analysis based on study objectives. To discuss the study findings descriptive and inferential statistics were applied.

4.1 Response Rate

The study selected a sample of 185 respondents from 1,2,3,4 and 5-star hotels. All respondents selected for the study were issued with questionnaires, but the researcher was able to receive back 155 questionnaires having been dully filled. Returned questionnaires translated to a response rate of 83.78%. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a response rate of 50% and above is adequate and can be used for analysis and reporting, that of 60% and above is good while that of 70% and above is excellent. Therefore, this study had an excellent response and was therefore was used for analysis and reporting.

Table 4.1: Response Rate

Questionnaires	Frequency	Percent
Returned	150	83.783
Un-returned	35	18.918
Total	185	100.00

Source: Primary Data (2024)

4.2 Reliability Analysis

The study evaluated reliability of the questionnaire using Cronbach's Alpha which measures the internal consistency. A higher value showed a more reliable generated scale. Reliability of each variable was evaluated, and the results obtained were as presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Reliability Analysis

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Tangibility of Services	0.793	9
Reliability of Service	0.764	6
Responsiveness of Services	0.759	8
Assurance of Service	0.783	8
Empathy of Services	0.725	7
Customer Satisfaction	0.774	7

Source: Primary Data (2024)

From the findings presented in table 4.2, all variables had Cronbach alpha value of 0.7 and above. Specifically, tangibility of services had alpha value of 0.793, reliability of service had Cronbach alpha of 0.764, responsiveness of services had alpha of 0.759, assurance of service had alpha value of 0.783, empathy of services alpha value of 0.725, and the dependent variable (customer satisfaction) had Cronbach alpha value of 0.774. Cooper and Schindler (2008) indicated 0.7 to be an acceptable reliability coefficient therefore the study used 0.7 as the cutoff point. Based on the study findings, it is evident that all variables were reliable since they all met the set threshold value of 0.7 and above and therefore, all items were used for analysis and reporting.

4.3 Demographic Information

In this section, the study presents the general information of respondents. The study sought to determine the gender, age, level of education, marital status, length of time visiting the hotel and their reasons for visiting the hotel. This guided the researcher in determining the nature of customers visiting the 1,2,3,4- and 5-star hotels in Voi sub- County. The results obtained were as presented in subsections below.

4.3.1 Gender of Respondents

The study sought to determine the gender distribution of respondents used in the study. Determining the gender of respondents helped the researcher to determine the nature of respondents visiting the selected hotels based on their gender. It also informed on whether the study was biased when selecting respondents for the study. Table 4.3 presents the results obtained.

Table 4.3: Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	65	41.94
Female	90	58.064
Total	185	100.0

Source: Primary Data (2024)

Results presented show that 41.94% of the respondents were male while 58.06% were female. Based on these findings, the study was not gender biased since respondents of both genders were used in the study. It is also an indication that hotels in Voi sub- County receive customers of both genders.

4.3.2 Age of the Respondents

The study sought to determine the age distribution of respondents selected for the study. The results provided were analyzed and the results obtained were as presented in Table 4.4

Table 4.4: Age of the Respondents

Category	Frequency	Percent
Below 25 years	20	12.90
26-40 years	35	22.58
41-50 years	62	33.51
51-60 years	26	16.77
Above 61 years	12	7.741
Total	155	100.0

Source: Primary Data (2024)

From the findings, 33.51% of the respondents indicated that they were aged 41 to 50 years, 22.58% were aged 26 to 40years, 16.77% were of ages 51 to 60, 12.90% were aged below 25 years, and 7.77% were aged above 61 years. These findings show that customers of hotels in Voi sub- County are of varied ages and that the study was not biased based

on age since respondents used in the study were of varied ages. The results also show that most (33.51%) of the customers in these hotels in Voi sub- County are 40 years. This implies that most of the customers in these hotels are adults.

4.3.3 Respondents Highest Level of Education

Respondents were asked to indicate their highest level of education. This guided the researcher in determining how learned customers visiting the four- and five-star hotels in Voi sub- County were. Responses provided were analyzed and the findings were as presented in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Respondents highest level of education

Category	Frequency	Percent
undergraduate	86	55.7
post graduate	60	38.6
diploma	6	4
certificate	3	1.7
Total	155	100.0

Source: Primary Data (2024)

From the findings presented, 55.7% of the respondents indicated undergraduate as their highest level of education, 38.6% indicated post graduate, 4% indicated diploma while 1.7% had certificate. Based on these results, it is evident that majority of customers of four-and five-star hotels in Voi sub- County, Kenya have high levels of education. From the results obtained, it is only 1.7% and 4% that had certificates and diploma, respectively. This implies that most respondents were undergraduates.

4.3.4 Respondents Marital Status

Respondents were asked to indicate their marital status. The results obtained were as presented in Table 4.6

Table 4.6: Respondents Marital Status

Category	Frequency	Percent
Single	21	13.54
Married	91	58.70
Divorced	12	7.74
Separated	31	20
Total	155	100.0

Source: Primary Data (2024)

The findings presented in Figure 4.4 and Table 4.6 show that 58.7% of the respondents were married, 20% were separated, 13.5% were single, and 7.7% were divorced. Based on these findings it is evident that the hotels in Voi sub- County receive customers of varied marital status. Majority (58.7%) of customers are married. This implies most of the customers attending hotels are married who visit hotels with their families.

4.3.5 Respondents Frequency Visiting the Hotel

Respondents were asked to indicate how frequently they usually visit the hotel. Their results were analyzed and the findings were as presented in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Respondents Frequency Visiting the Hotel

Category	Frequency	Percent
Once a year	4	2.58
Once every six months	64	41.29
Once every four months	23	14.83
once every month	64	41.29

Total	155	100.0

From the findings, 14.83% of the respondents indicated that they visited the hotels once every four months, 41.29% visited once every six months, 41.29% visited once a month and 2.58% visited once a year. Based on these findings, the frequency in which respondents visited the hotel varied. Most of the customers that participated in the study visited the hotel twice a year that is once every six months and once a month.

4.3.6 Respondents Reasons for Visiting the Hotel

Respondents were asked to indicate the reasons why they visited the hotel. The results obtained were as presented in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8: Respondents Reasons for Visiting the Hotel

Reason	Frequency	Percent
Visually appealing facilities and up to date equipment	295	92.2
Great service delivery by staff	280	87.5
Great location	247	77.2
Individualized attention by staff	260	81.3
Hotel is clean	301	94.1

From the findings, 301(94.1%) of the respondents indicated that they visit the hotel because it is clean, 295(92.2%) indicated it is because it has visually appealing facilities and up to date equipment, 280(87.5%) indicated it is because it has great service delivery by staff, 260(81.3%) indicated it is because of its individualized attention by staff while 247(77.2%) indicated it is because of the great location. Based on these findings, it is evident that cleanliness is the main concern of customers followed by how appealing and up to date the hotel equipment is, service delivery by staff and staffs individualized attention.

4.4 Descriptive Statistics

Respondents were asked to indicate the level to which they agreed or disagreed with some statements relating with study variables. They used a 5-poing Likert scale where 1-Strongly disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- Neutral, 4- Agree, and 5- Strongly agree. The results were interpreted using means and standard deviations where a mean (M) value of 0.5-1.4 was interpreted as strongly disagree, 1.5-2.4 as disagree, 2.5-3.4 as moderate, 3.5-4.4 as agree and 4.5-5 as strongly agree. On the other hand, the standard deviation (SD) values showed the amount of variation in respondents' responses. A standard deviation value greater than two means that the respondents had differing opinions while a value less than 4 is low and indicates that the respondents had similar opinions. The results are presented in subsections below.

4.4.1 Tangibility of Services

The study sought the opinion of respondents regarding the kind of physical facilities in the hotel. They were asked to indicate their level of agreement/disagreement with various statements on tangibility of services offered by the hotel. Table 4.9 presents the results obtained.

Table 4.9: Tangibility of Services

Statements	Mean	Std. Dev.
The hotel premises are always clean	3.982	1.370
There is a unique feature that differentiates the hotel and are visually Appealing	3.777	1.275
The hotel rooms are spacious	3.889	1.381
The hotel rooms are well ventilated	3.738	1.155

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The equipment in the hotel rooms are up to date	3.698	1.331
The hotel rooms are well arranged and attractive	3.948	1.263
The servers are usually dressed in uniforms	3.863	1.326
Customers are usually guided by the employees	3.836	1.220
The hotel is strategically located in an area with good road Infrastructure	3.915	1.343

Source: Primary Data (2024)

Results in table 4.9 show that all the mean values were greater than 3.5 and less than 4.5; this is an indication that the respondents agreed with the various statements on responsiveness of services. Also, the standard deviation values were less than two which is a small standard deviation and therefore suggests that respondents had similar opinions. From the findings, the respondents agreed that the hotel premises are always clean (M=3.982, SD=1.370); the hotel rooms are well arranged and attractive (M=3.948,SD=1.263); the hotel is strategically located in an area with good road infrastructure(M=3.915, SD=1.343); the hotel rooms are spacious (M=3.889, SD=1.381); the servers are usually dressed in uniforms (M=3.863, SD=1.326); customers are usually guided by the employees (M=3.836, SD=1.220); there is a unique feature that differentiates the hotel and are visually appealing (M=3.777, SD=1.275); the hotel rooms are well ventilated (M=3.738, SD=1.155); and the equipment in the hotel rooms are up to date (M=3.698, SD=1.331). Based on these findings, it is evident that the one- five-star hotels in Voi sub- County are always clean, and have unique feature that differentiates the hotel and are visually appealing. Aside from that, the hotels have specious rooms which are well ventilated and are equipped with up-to-date equipment. The findings also showed that the arrangement of the hotels is attractive and the servers/workers in the hotels are dressed in uniforms. Employees also offer customers of the hotel with help and this includes

guiding them. The study also found that the hotels are located in areas with good road infrastructure.

4.4.2 Reliability of Service

In this section, respondents were asked their opinion on how reliable the services offered by the hotel are. Respondents indicated their level of agreement on various statement about reliability of services offered by the hotel. The results obtained were analyzed and Table 4.10 presents the findings.

Table 4.10: Reliability of Service

Statements	Mean	Std. Dev.
Customers complaints and requests are handled fast	3.961	1.476
Pricing is similar to all customers	3.856	1.525
The hotel personnel were concerned, reassuring and helpful when an issue was brought to their attention	3.994	1.476
Services of the hotel delivered within the promised time frame/at the right time	3.955	1.546
The prices of the extra services at the hotel are reasonable	3.836	1.426
The hotel had an accurate record and costing of the services requested For	3.994	1.343

Source: Primary Data (2024)

Results in table 4.10 show that all the mean values were greater than 3.5 and less than 4.5; this is an indication that the respondents agreed with the various statements on responsiveness of

services. Also, the standard deviation values were less than two which is a small standard deviation and therefore suggests that respondents had similar opinions. Specifically, the respondents were in agreement that the hotel personnel were concerned, reassuring and helpful when an issue was brought to their attention (M=3.994, SD=1.476); the hotel had an accurate record and costing of the services requested for (M=3.994, SD=1.343); customers complaints and requests are handled fast (M=3.961, SD=1.476), services of the hotel are delivered within the promised time frame/at the right time (M=3.955, SD=1.546); pricing is similar to all customers (M=3.856, SD=1.525); and the prices of the extra services at the hotel are reasonable (M=3.836, SD=1.426). These findings suggest that customers get good services since their complaints and requests get to be attended to fast. There is no discrimination or favors in pricing and the prices of the extra services at the hotel are reasonable. Also, the personnel are concerned, reassuring and helpful and therefore contribute to the services of the hotel being delivered within the promised time frame/at the right time. In addition, there are accurate record and costing of the services.

4.4.3 Responsiveness of Services

Respondents were asked to indicate their opinion regarding how responsive the hotel and hotel staff were to their needs, requests and issues. Respondents gave their level of agreement/ disagreement with various statements about responsiveness and the results obtained were as presented in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11: Responsiveness of Services

Statements	Mean	Std. Dev.
Employees were helpful in informing customer when service will Occur	3.830	1.441

Customers problems are solved immediately	3.988	1.475
Customers order is delivered on time	3.961	1.674
Customers get help when needed	4.007	1.251
The employees are friendly	3.817	1.142
Important information is shared to the customers	3.902	1.235
In case of inconveniences apologies are made	3.764	1.168
Employees assist guests and provide prompt service.	3.975	1.169

Source: Primary Data (2024)

4.4.4 Assurance of Service

Respondents were requested to give their opinion on regarding how assured they are of the Services offered by the hotel and hotel staff. Respondents indicated their level of agreement/disagreement with statement about the assurance of service by the hotel and hotel employees and the results obtained were as presented in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12: Assurance of Service

Statements	Mean	Std. Dev.
Customers information is kept confidential	3.902	1.235
Employees are well trained on customer service	3.830	1.300
Customers security is paramount	3.836	1.207
Hotels employees have the customer's best interest at heart	3.902	1.345
The customer care employees are welcoming and polite	3.955	1.199
Hotels employees deal with guests in a caring fashion	3.961	1.149
Employees are polite when answering my questions	3.836	1.234
Employees have essential resources and support to execute customer requests well	3.803	1.248

Source: Primary Data (2024)

Results in table 4.12 show that all the mean values were greater than 3.5 and less than 4.5; this is an indication that the respondents agreed with the various statements on responsiveness of

services. Also, the standard deviation values were less than two which is a small standard deviation and therefore suggests that respondents had similar opinions. Specifically, the respondents agreed that hotels employees deal with guests in a caring fashion (M=3.961, SD=1.149); the customer care employees are welcoming and polite (M=3.955, SD=1.199); customers information is kept confidential (M=3.902, SD=1.235); hotels employees have the customer's best interest at heart (M=3.902, SD=1.345); customers security is paramount (M=3.836, SD=1.207); employees are polite when answering their questions (M=3.836, SD=1.234);employees are well trained on customer service (M=3.830, SD=1.300); and that employees have essential resources and support to execute customer requests well (M=3.803; SD=1.248).

These findings show that there are high levels of service assurance in four- and five-star hotels in Voi sub- County. This is because confidentiality of customer information is observed, employees of the hotel are trained on customer care and the hotels prioritize on the security of its customers. Also, hotel employees have the customer's best interest at heart which allows them to be welcoming and polite, and their dealing with customers is in a caring fashion. This is evident from the way employees answer questions from their customers; it is in a polite manner. To ensure that the requests of customers are executed well, the hotels have provided their employees with the essential resources.

4.4.5 Empathy of Services

Respondents were asked to give their opinion regarding the empathy expressed by the hotel and hotel staff towards their needs, requests and issues. Respondents gave their level of agreement/disagreement with various statements about empathy expressed by the hotel's employees. Results in table 4.13 show that all the mean values ranged between 3.5 and 4.5 this

is an indication that the respondents agreed with the various statements on responsiveness of services. Also, the standard deviation values were less than two which is a small standard deviation and therefore suggests that respondents had similar opinions. The study specifically established that employees' give individualized attention to customer is addressing them (M=4.021, SD=1.265); opening times of the company are suitable (M=3.988, SD=1.182); guests are allowed to get through what they are saying without interrupting and changing the subject (M=3.902, SD=1.235); the staff is interested in what the guest has to say (M=3.896, SD=1.210); staff listens to customers' issues and/or requests carefully (M=3.836, SD=1.313); customer feels that employees adequately listened to their issues and requests (M=3.810, SD=1.142); and employees act towards the benefit of the customers (M=3.738, SD=1.168).

Results show that there is empathy of service among the hotels in Voi sub- County. This is because the study found that staff listens to customers' issues and/or requests carefully and this shows that they are interested in what the guest has to say. This is the form of individualized attention the customers of these hotels get from employees and therefore, the customers feels that employees adequately listened to their issues and requests. When guests are expressing themselves, employees have been trained to listen to them without interrupting. All the actions of employees are towards benefiting the customer. Other indication of empathy of service is suitable opening hours.

4.4.6 Customer Satisfaction

Respondents were asked to indicate their opinion on how satisfied they were by the hotel and the services offered by the hotel. Respondents indicated their level of agreement/disagreement regarding how satisfied they are with the services offered by the hotel. Table 4.14 presents the findings.

Table 4.13: Customer Satisfaction

Statements	Mean	Std. Dev.
I will recommend the hotel to your family and friends	3.902	1.235
The hotel met my expectations	3.836	1.313
I intend to return to the hotel the next time I travel	3.850	1.220
The hotel's advertised image and brand was similar to what I Experienced	3.909	1.359
I would like to receive information on the hotel's new service or services' discounts	3.863	1.326
The hotel made me feel valued as a customer	3.836	1.220
I am highly satisfied with the services offered by the hotel	3.836	1.426

Source: Primary Data (2024)

Results in table 4.14 show that all the mean values ranged between 3.5 and 4.5 this is an indication that the respondents agreed with the various statements on responsiveness of services. Also, the standard deviation values were less than two which is a small standard deviation and therefore suggests that respondents had similar opinions. The findings specifically showed that the respondents agreed that the hotel's advertised image and brand was similar to what they experienced (M=3.909, SD=1.359); they will recommend the hotel to their family and friends (M=3.902, SD=1.235); they would like to receive information on the hotel's new service or services' discounts (M=3.863, SD=1.326); they intend to return to the hotel the next time they travel (M=3.850, SD=1.220); the hotel met their expectations (M=3.836, SD=1.313); the hotel made them feel valued as a customer (M=3.836, SD=1.220); and that they are highly satisfied with the services offered by the hotel (M=3.836, SD=1.426).

These findings show that customers of four- and five-star hotels in Voi sub- County. were satisfied with the services they received. This is because they indicated that they would

recommend the hotel to their family and friends, and that the next time they visit they will return to the hotel. Also, the hotel's advertised image and brand was similar to what they experienced and therefore, customers found that the hotel met their expectations. Customers also felt satisfied with the services they received from the hotel and felt valued as customers. Because of this customer would like to receive information on the hotel's new service or services' discounts.

4.5 Inferential Statistics

Inferential statistics included performing correlation and regression analysis to examine the effect of service management on customer satisfaction among hotels in Voi sub- County.

4.5.1 Correlation Analysis

Pearson R correlation was used to measure strength and the direction of linear relationship between variables. The relationship was considered weak when $r = \pm0.1$ to ±0.29, while the relationship was considered moderate when $r = \pm0.3$ to ±0.49, and when $r = \pm0.5$ and above, the relationship was considered strong. Table 4.15 presents the results obtained.

Table 4.14: Correlation Analysis

		CustomerSatisfaction	Tangibility	Reliability	Responsiveness	Assurance	Empathy
Customer Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)						
	N	185					
Tangibility	Pearson Correlation	.653**	1				

	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003					
	N	155	155				
Reliability	Pearson Correlation	724**	.453*	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.040				
	N	155	155	155			
Responsiveness	Pearson Correlation	.539**	.339**	.051	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	.524			
	N	155	155	155	155		
Assurance	Pearson Correlation	.619**	.374**	.119	.565**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.000	.134	.000		
	N	155	155	155	155	155	
Empathy	Pearson Correlation	.568**	.339**	.068	.640**	.286**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.000	.394	.000	.000	
	N	155	155	155	155	155	155

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Source: Primary Data (2023)

From the findings, it is evident that the relationship between the dependent and the independent variables are strong. The findings show that tangibility has a strong positive correlation with customer satisfaction (r=0.653, p-value=0.003); reliability and customer satisfaction are seen to be strongly and positively correlated (r=0.724, p-value=0.000); responsiveness had a strong positive relationship with customer satisfaction (r=0.539, p-value=0.001); assurance and customer satisfaction were seen to be positively and significantly related (r=0.619, p-value=0.004); and lastly, empathy had a strong positive correlation with customer satisfaction (r=0.568, p-value=0.004). These findings suggest that tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy all have direct relationship with customer satisfaction among hotels in Voi sub- County.

4.5.2 Multiple Regression Analysis

The study adopted multiple regression models at 5% level of significance to examine direct and indirect relationship between the study variables. The findings were presented in three tables discussed in subsections below.

4.5.2.1 Model Summary

Model summary is used to show the mount of variation in dependent variable that can be explained by changes in the independent variables. In this study, model summary was used to show the amount of variation in customer satisfaction as a result of changes in tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Table 4.16 presents the results.

Table 4.15: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.805a	0.648	0.637	.46503

a. Predictors: (Constant), tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy

Source: Primary Data (2024**)**

From the findings, the value of R square was 0.648 which suggests that 64.8% variation in customer satisfaction can be explained by tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The remaining 35.2% suggest that there are other factors that can explain variation in customer satisfaction among hotels in Kenya. The findings further show that the variables under investigation are strongly and positively related as indicated by correlation coefficient (R) value of 0.805.

4.5.2.2 Analysis of Variance

Analysis of variance is used to determine how fit the model developed is to the data. It tests the significance of the model. In this study the significance of the model was tested at 5% level of significance.

Table 4.16: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	604.029	5	120.806	6.060	.000b
1 Residual	3070.214	154	19.936		
Total	3674.244	159			

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction
b. Predictors: (Constant), tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy
Source: Primary Data (2024)

The findings from ANOVA analysis showed that the population parameters had a p-value of 0.000; an indication that the model was significant. This suggests that the data was suitable for making conclusion on the population under investigation because the p-value was less than 0.05. The F critical, obtained from the f-distribution table (2.273) was less than F calculated (6.060). This shows that tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy significantly influence customer satisfaction among hotels in Kenya.

4.5.2.3 Beta Coefficients of the Study Variables

The regression model was;

$$= \beta0 + \beta1X1 + \beta2X2 + \beta3X3 + \beta4X4 + \varepsilon,$$

Table 4.17: Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.

	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.730	0.197		8.782	0.000
Tangibility	0.153	0.038	0.176	4.026	0.028
Reliability	0.291	0.036	0.377	8.083	0.004
Responsivenes					
1 s	0.140	0.029	0.107	4.828	0.030
Assurance	0.340	0.038	0.255	8.947	0.021
Empathy	0.520	0.055	0.492	9.455	0.002

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction

Source: Primary Data (2023)

From the findings, the following regression model was fitted; $Y = 1.730 + 0.153X_1 + 0.291X_2 + 0.140X_3 + 0.340X_4 + 0.520X_5 + \varepsilon$, From the above equation, it is evident that when the variables; tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy are held to a constant zero, customer satisfaction will be at a constant value of 1.730. The study also found that tangibility has a positive influence on customer satisfaction ($\beta=0.153$). The study also found that tangibility had p-value (0.028) less than selected level of significance (0.05) an indication that the influence of tangibility on customer satisfaction is significant. Therefore, tangibility can be said to have a positive significant influence on customer satisfaction.

The first research question was; what is the effect of tangibility on customer satisfaction among hotels in Voi sub- County.? Based on the research findings, tangibility positively and significantly influences customer satisfaction among hotels in Voi sub- County. The second research question was; What is the effect of reliability on customer satisfaction among hotels in Voi sub- County.? From the results presented in table 4.13, reliability had a positive influence on customer satisfaction ($\beta=0.291$). The findings further showed that the influence of reliability

on customer satisfaction was significant since the p-value obtained. (0.004) was less than the selected level of significance (0.05). Therefore, reliability can be said to have a positive significant influence on customer satisfaction.

The third research question was; what is the effect of responsiveness on customer satisfaction among hotels in Voi sub- County.? From the findings, responsiveness was found to have positive influence on customer satisfaction (β=0.140). Further, the influence of responsiveness on customer satisfaction was found to be significant (p=0.030<0.05). Based on these findings, responsiveness can be said to have positive significant influence on customer satisfaction in Voi sub- County.

The fourth research question was; what is the effect of assurance on customer satisfaction among in Voi sub- County.? From the findings, the study established that assurance has a positive influence on customer satisfaction among hotels in Kenya (β=0.340). The study also found that the influence of assurance on customer satisfaction was significant since the p-value obtained (0.021) was less than the selected level of significance (0.05). Therefore, based on the findings, it can be deduced that assurance has a positive significant influence on customer satisfaction among hotels in Voi sub- County.

Lastly, the study sought to answer; what is the effect of empathy on customer satisfaction among hotels in Voi sub- County? From the findings, empathy is seen to have positive influence on customer satisfaction (β=0.520). Further, the influence of empathy on customer satisfaction is seen to be significant since the p-value obtained (0.002) was less than the selected level of significance (0.05). Therefore, from these study findings, it is seen that empathy has a positive significant influence on customer satisfaction among hotels in Voi sub- County.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

5.0 Introduction

Summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations made there-to are presented in this chapter. Conclusions and recommendations made, addressed the research objectives.

5.1 Summary of the Findings

In this section, the study presents summary of findings for each study objective. based on the specific objectives of the study which were: to determine the effects of service management on customer satisfaction among hotels in Voi sub-county, to assess the effects of reliability on customer satisfaction among hotels Voi sub-county, to determine the effects of responsiveness on customer satisfaction among in Voi sub-county, to determine the effects of assurance on customer satisfaction among hotels in Voi sub-county and to establish the effects of empathy on customer satisfaction among hotels in Voi sub-county.

5.1.1 Tangibility of Services

The study found that the hotels in Voi sub-county are always clean and have unique feature that differentiates the hotel and are visually appealing. A side from that, the hotels have specious rooms which are well ventilated and are equipped with up-to-date equipment. The findings also showed that the arrangement of the hotels is attractive and the servers/workers in the hotels are dressed in uniforms. Employees also offer customers of the hotel with help and this includes guiding them. The study also found that the hotels are located in areas with good road infrastructure. The study findings agree with the findings of Lee, Lee and Dewald (2016) who carried a study on measuring the customers' perception of tangible service management in the restaurant industry using five dimensions of tangible service attributes: presentation value, table

aesthetics, sensory perceptions, hygiene purity, and vehicle convenience and found a statistically significant causal relationship between tangible service factors and the diners' satisfaction exists within the upscale dining segment. The study disagrees with the findings of Alsaqre (2011) who noted that only intangible factors of empathy and assurance had their significant influence on customers' overall perception of service management.

5.1.2 Reliability of Service

The study found that customers get good services since their complaints and requests get to be attended to fast. There is no discrimination or favors in pricing and the prices of the extra services at the hotel are reasonable. Also, the personnel are concerned, reassuring and helpful and therefore contribute to the services of the hotel being delivered within the promised time frame/at the right time. In addition, were accurate record and costing of the services. The study findings agree with the findings of Omar (2015) that there is a very strong relationship between quality of service (Reliability) and customer satisfaction; on the basis of the conclusion made, Reliability of business was representing the ability of the web site to fulfill orders correctly, deliver promptly, and keep personal information secure. The study disagrees with the findings of Alsaqre (2011) who noted that only intangible factors of empathy and assurance had their significant influence on customers' overall perception of service management.

5.1.3 Responsiveness of Services

The study found that there is responsiveness of service among the hotels in Taita-Taveta County. This is because, the study found that employees were friendly, and helpful in informing customer when service will occur, and assist guests and provide prompt service. Also, customers problems are solved immediately, their orders are delivered on time and in case of inconveniences apologies are made. These study findings agree with Pandey and Devasagayam

(2010) who provided empirical evidence suggesting that responsiveness to customer enquiries and complaints might be a strong driver of customer satisfaction, irrespective of the outcome of the resolution process. Their study also found that responsiveness supersedes a positive outcome in service provider-customer conflict resolution which concurs with the findings of current study. The study disagrees with the findings of Alsaqre (2011) who noted that only intangible factors of empathy and assurance had their significant influence on customers' overall perception of service management.

5.1.4 Assurance of quality Service

The study found that there are high levels of service assurance in hotels within Voi sub-County. This is because confidentiality of customer information is observed, employees of the hotel are trained on customer care and the hotels prioritize on the security of its customers. Also, hotel employees have the customer's best interest at heart which allows them to be welcoming and polite, and their dealing with customers is in a caring fashion. This is evident from the way employees answer questions from their customers; it is in a polite manner. To ensure that the requests of customers are executed well, the hotels have provided their employees with the essential resources. The study findings agree with the findings of Rachman (2017) who did an analysis of effect of physical evidence and service assurance on customer satisfaction and the results showed that guarantee of service had a significant influence on customer satisfaction. The study findings disagree with Ye, Dong and Lee (2017) that assurance strategy had an enduring negative effect on customer satisfaction and ultimately hurts profitability in the long run.

5.1.5 Empathy of Services

The study established that there is empathy of service among the four- and five-star hotels in Taita-Taveta County. This is because staff listens to customers' issues and/or requests carefully and this shows that they are interested in what the guest has to say. This is the form of individualized attention the customers of these hotels get from employees and therefore, the customers feels that employees adequately listened to their issues and requests. When guests are expressing themselves, employees have been trained to listen to them without interrupting. All the actions of employees are towards benefiting the customer. Other indication of empathy of service is suitable opening hours. The study findings disagree with Ye, Dong and Lee (2017) that downgrading empathy and responsiveness allows firms to lower costs, resulting in immediate productivity benefits; however, this strategy had an enduring negative effect on customer satisfaction and ultimately hurts profitability in the long run. The findings agree with Bahadur, Aziz and Zulfiqar (2018) who confirmed a positive and indirect effect of EE on CL and loyalty outcomes.

5.2 Conclusions

The first objective of the study was to determine the effects of tangibility on customer satisfaction among hotels in Voi County. The study found that tangibility has a positive influence on customer satisfaction. The study also found that the influence of tangibility on customer satisfaction is significant. Based on the research findings, the study concludes that tangibility positively and significantly influences customer satisfaction among hotels in Voi sub- County. Therefore, increasing level of service tangibility among hotels in Kenya will result an increase in customer satisfaction.

The second objective of the study was to assess the effects of reliability on customer satisfaction among hotels in Voi sub- County. The study found that reliability had a positive influence on customer satisfaction. The findings further showed that the influence of reliability on customer satisfaction was significant. Therefore, the study concludes that reliability has a positive significant influence on customer satisfaction. This means that an increase in service reliability n the hotels will result to an increase in level of customer satisfaction.

The third research objective was to determine the effects of responsiveness on customer satisfaction among in Voi sub-County. Responsiveness was found to have positive influence on customer satisfaction. Further, the influence of responsiveness on customer satisfaction was found to be significant. Based on the research findings, the study concludes that responsiveness has positive significant influence on customer satisfaction in Voi sub-county. Therefore, a unit increase in service responsiveness in hotels will result to an increase in customer satisfaction.

The fourth objective of the study was to determine the effects of assurance on customer satisfaction among hotels in Taita-Taveta County. The study established that assurance has a positive influence on customer satisfaction among hotels in Kenya. The study also found that the influence of assurance on customer satisfaction was significant. Therefore, based on the findings, the study concludes that assurance has a positive significant influence on customer satisfaction among hotels in Voi sub-county. This suggests that an increase in service assurance among hotels in Kenya will result to an increase in its customer satisfaction.

The final objective of the study was to establish the effects of empathy on customer satisfaction among hotels in Taita-Taveta County. The study found that empathy has positive influence on customer satisfaction. Further, the influence of empathy on customer satisfaction was found to

be significant. Therefore, from the study findings, the study concludes that empathy has a positive significant influence on customer satisfaction among hotels in Taita-Taveta County. This suggests that increasing the level of empathy of service among hotels in Kenya will result to an increase in level of customer satisfaction.

5.3 Recommendations

The study found that service tangibility positively influences customer satisfaction. The study therefore recommends management of hotels in Kenya to embrace new technology and the use of up-to-date equipment's. The study also recommends the hotels to ensure that their facilities are visually appealing to its customers and this includes ensuring its employees are neat. Improved tangibility of services will enhance customer satisfaction and therefore their loyalty. Reliability was found to positively influence customer satisfaction; the study therefore recommends management of hotels in Kenya to ensure that they are reliable in providing services to its customers; this will enhance their satisfaction and therefore loyalty. Reliability can be enhanced by ensuring response is provided within the time frames, and reassuring customers whenever challenges arise. Management of hotels in Kenya should also ensure that their records are accurate and are dependable.

The study recommends hotels to hire employees with customer service skills. The study also recommends employees to be provided with regular trainings on service delivery this will enhance their promptness in service delivery. It is also the responsibility of the management of the hotel to ensure that its employees are well conversant with the hotel and services provided so that they can help guests and respond to their requests/queries.

Assurance was also found to be a significant determinant of customer satisfaction. The study recommends hotels in Kenya to hire trustworthy employees who can ensure customers safety.

Human Resource department in Hotels in Kenya should ensure that hired individuals are polite and can interact with customers. It is also the responsibility of the hotel to provide its employees with the support they need to do their job well.

Increase in empathy level results to an increase in customer satisfaction. The study therefore recommends hotels in Kenya to ensure hired employees are emphatic to facilitate provision of caring, individualized attention to customers, and understanding of customer needs.

5.3.1 Contribution to Policy

The study findings can be used by policy makers to encourage hotel managers to enhance the service management dimensions (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy) due to their positive impact on customer satisfaction. The managers can also be encouraged to consistently use service management dimensions, this would ensure that they maintain long-term relationships with their customers.

5.3.2 Contribution to practice

To enhance customer satisfaction in the hotels, managers should consider applying the service management measures and this should be well implemented to ensure customer satisfaction. The managers should emphasize the service management dimensions in order of importance. This would help in improving customer satisfaction.

5.3.3 Contribution to theory

The study results can be used by individuals conducting other researchers and scholars; it provides a foundation to those who want to conduct research in a similar field. Academicians can make use of the research findings as foundation of discussing service management and customer satisfaction in organizations. The research would also be an addition to the body of

knowledge. It can make contributions to improve the practice and the existing knowledge on service management and customer satisfaction.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Studies

The main objective of this study was to establish the influence of service management on customer satisfaction among hotels in Taita-Taveta County. The study was conducted among four- and five-star hotels in Taita-Taveta County and coast region at large. The study therefore recommends replication of the research study in other four- and five-star hotels in coast region to facilitate comparison and generalization of the research findings.

The study also recommends a study to be conducted among other hotels other than Voi hotels in higher stir rated to provide a wider perspective on influence of service management on customer satisfaction. The study further recommends a study to be conducted on the influence of service management on customer satisfaction in other service providing organizations such as hospitals. The study recommends a study to be conducted using a different study design other the descriptive research design. This will improve the data collection and analysis as well as validity of the study results.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

Some respondents were unwilling to take part in the study. The researcher explained the purpose of this research study to the respondents and assured them that filling of the questionnaire will take a little time. The respondents feared that their identity would be leaked to the public and the management of the hotel. The researcher assured them that the information they provide was solely for academic reasons and therefore was to be kept confidential. The information was stored in the university database so that only authorized individuals can access it. Some hotels declined to stamp the questionnaires fearing of their stamp security.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Research Instrument: Questionnaire

Serial Numbers:

Star Rating:

Name of Hotel:

Part A: Demographic Information

1. Kindly indicate your gender.

   Male   [ ] Female   [ ]

2. Kindly indicate your age?

   Below   25 years   [ ]

   26-40 years   [ ]

   41-50 years   [ ]

   51- 60 years   [ ]

   Above 61 years   [ ]

3. What is your highest level of Education?

   Certificate   [ ]

   Diploma   [ ]

   Undergraduate   [ ]

   Postgraduate   [ ]

   Others …………………………………………………..

4. Kindly Indicate your marital status

   Single   [ ]

   Married   [ ]

   Divorced   [ ]

   Separated   [ ]

Kindly tick or write in the spaces provided as appropriate.

5. What is your occupation? ………………………………………

6. How frequently do you visit this hotel?

Once a year   [ ]

Once every six

months   [ ]

Once every four months [ ]

Once every month   [ ]

Other   [ ] Specify: ………………………………………

7. Reason(s) why you visit the hotel: (tick three that apply to you)

Visually appealing facilities and up to date

equipment   [ ]

Great service delivery by staff   [ ]

Great location   [ ]

Individualized attention by staff   [ ]

Hotel is clean   [ ]

Part B: Tangibility of Services

1. This section seeks your opinion regarding the kind of physical facilities in the hotel. Indicate your level of agreement on the following statement about the tangibility of services offered by this hotel; where 1 –Strongly disagree, 2-disgaree, 3-moderate, 4-agree, 5- strongly agree.

	Strongly	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly
Statements	1	2	3	4	5
The hotel premises are always clean					
The hotel products are visually appealing.					
The hotel rooms are spacious.					
The hotel rooms are well ventilated					
The equipment in the hotel rooms are modern.					
The hotel rooms are well arranged and attractive.					
Customers are usually guided by					

the employees.				
The hotel is strategically located in an area with good infrastructure.				
The servers are usually dressed in uniforms.				

2. Indicate and briefly talk about the physical aspects of the hotels that were or were not mentioned above that greatly affected your stay at the hotel positively or negatively.

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

Part C: Reliability of Service

1. This section seeks your opinion regarding how reliable the services offered by the hotel are. Indicate your level of agreement on the following statement about reliability of services offered by this hotel; where 1 –Strongly disagree, 2-disgaree, 3-moderate, 4-agree, 5-strongly agree

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Moderate	Agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5
Customers complaints and requests are handled fast.					
Pricing is similar to all customers					
The hotel personnel were concerned when an issue was brought to their attention.					
Quick service delivery					
The hotel had an accurate record					

2. Indicate and briefly explain about any issues or experiences encountered at the hotel that were or were not mentioned above that greatly affected how you view the hotel from a more or less reliable point of view.

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

Part D: Responsiveness of Services

1. This section seeks your opinion regarding how responsive the hotel and hotel staff were to your needs, requests and issues. Indicate your level of agreement on the following statement about the responsiveness of employees of the hotel where 1 – Strongly disagree, 2-disgaree, 3-moderate, 4-agree, 5- strongly agree

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Moderate	Agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5
Employees were helpful in informing customer when service will occur					
Customers are solved promptly.					
Customer orders are delivered on time.					
The employees are friendly					

2. Indicate or briefly explain about any other aspect mentioned above or not that you experienced at the hotel in regards to how responsive employee were to you that may have affected your view of the hotel in a more or less positive point of view.

……………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

Part E: Assurance of Service

1. This section seeks your opinion regarding how assured you are of the services offered by the hotel and hotel staff. Indicate your level of agreement on the following statement about the assurance of service by the hotel and hotel employees where 1 –Strongly disagree, 2-disgaree, 3-moderate, 4-agree, 5- strongly agree

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Statements	1	2	3	4	5
Customers information is kept confidential					
Employees are well trained on customer service					
Customers security is paramount					
Hotels employees have the customer's best interest at heart					

2. Indicate or briefly explain about any other aspects mentioned above or not that affected you negatively or positively in how assured you were by the hotel and its staff about their service delivery

………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

Part F: Empathy of Services

1. This section seeks your opinion regarding the empathy expressed by the hotel and hotel staff towards your needs, requests and issues. Indicate your level of agreement on the following statement about empathy expressed by the hotel's employees where 1 –Strongly disagree, 2-disgaree, 3-moderate, 4-agree, 5- strongly agree

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Statements	1	2	3	4	5
Staff listens to customers' issues and/or requests carefully					
Customers express themselves without interruption.					
The staff is interested in what the guest has to say.					

2. Indicate or briefly explain about any other aspect or experience mentioned above or not that may have made you feel that the hotel and hotel employees did or didn't Care about your well-being while at the hotel.

………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

Part G: Customer Satisfaction

1. This section seeks your opinion regarding how satisfied you were by the hotel and the services offered by the hotel. Indicate your level of agreement on the following statement about how satisfied you are with the services offered by the hotel; where 1 –Strongly disagree, 2-disgaree, 3-moderate, 4-agree, 5- strongly agree

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Statements	1	2	3	4	5
I will recommend the hotel to your					

family and friends					
The hotel met my expectations I intend to return to the hotel the next time I travel					