UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

SERVICE QUALITY IN HOTELS: A CASE OF ACCRA METROPOLIS

BY

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THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM MANAGEMENT OF THE FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR AWARD OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY DEGREE IN TOURISM

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DECLARATION
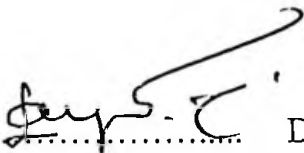
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I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original work and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

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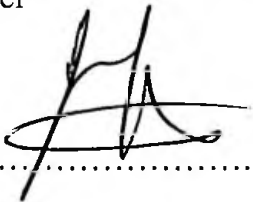
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ABSTRACT

Ghana is said to have the distinctive peculiarity of delivering poor service and anecdotal evidence suggests that hotel customers, both domestic and international guests have in one way or the other experienced shortfalls in the quality of services offered. Guests have expressed varied needs and expectations during their stay but hotels have not responded adequately. This study examined the gap between guests' expectations and perceptions of service quality and also the dimensions of service quality in hotels. The study further explored the perceptual interface between guests and service providers. The study gathered cross-sectional data using questionnaires from 172 hotel guests, 197 frontline employees and 125 management staff. Factor analysis was employed to extract the dimensions of service quality while the standard multiple regression was used to analyse the predictive dimensions of service quality. The findings of the study reveal that guests perceived service quality to be far below their expectations. The results also indicate that guests and service providers use different sets of factors to assess service quality. There were significant differences between guests and service providers' expectations and perceptions of service quality. It is recommended that hotel managers should pay more attention to the tangible, empathy and the reliability aspects of service because customers have the highest expectations scores on these dimensions. Hotels must re-assess guests' expectations from time to time in terms of products and services. Employee training programmes in hotels should pay particular attention to "interpersonal communication" and "customer care" factors.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

To Nana and Eyram for your love and support.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AAA	-	American Automobile Association
AMA	-	Accra Metropolitan Assembly
ANOVA	-	Analysis of Variance
GAR	-	Greater Accra Region
GDP	-	Gross Domestic Product
GHA	-	Ghana Hoteliers Association
GTA	-	Ghana Tourism Authority
ILO	-	International Labour Organization
ISO	-	International Standards Organization
LSD	-	Least Significant Difference
SPSS	-	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
UAE	-	United Arab Emirate
UK	-	United Kingdom
UNWTO	-	United Nations World Tourism Organization
USA	-	United States of America
VFR	-	Visiting Friends and Relatives
VIF	-	Variance Inflation Factor
WTO	-	World Tourism Organization
WTTC	-	World Travel and Tourism Council

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the study

The service sector is increasingly becoming important both domestically and internationally. Services contributed a total of 66.7 per cent of world Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the year 2011 (WTTC, 2011). However, many service sector businesses have had to contend with intense competition and rapid changes in order to achieve competitive advantage and efficiency (UNWTO, 2010). These businesses have to seek ways of differentiating their services from others in the market. Companies that search for the most effective ways to incorporate the best service methods and processes tend to be winners in the long term in terms of favourable customer perceptions (Wahid, Mohamed & Zahari, 2012).

Services are difficult to manage due to certain inherent characteristics such as physical intangibility, simultaneity (in production/consumption and the joint effort of the employee and customer in the delivery of the service) leading to the variability of service encounters (Amenumey, 2007). This variability stems from three main sources: the service provider, the customer and the surroundings. According to Desmet, Van Looy and Van Dierdonk (2003) as

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cited in Amenumey (2007), variability makes quality control difficult and has implications for how service is delivered.

The intangibility and inseparability elements of the service encounter require some form of employee involvement even in a highly standardized tayloristic situation (Lashley, 1999). According to Amenumey (2007), with employees involved, the issue of variability in quality of service delivery can potentially increase. The personal interaction between consumers and service providers is at the heart of most service experiences and it has been termed as the "service encounter" in the marketing literature (Czepiel, Solomon, Suprenant & Gutman, 1985; Shostack, 1987; Carev, 2008; Hersh, 2010).

The service encounter has become the focus of attention in service quality research. The research on service encounters and service quality by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985; 1988) suggests a number of factors that may influence consumers' satisfaction with services. These factors pertain to the service outcome and the manner in which employees deliver service to consumers.

Consumers and service providers participate in the service encounter like actors on stage reading from a common "service script" which represents each party's expectations of their own behaviour as well as the anticipated complementary behaviour of each other (Smith & Houston, 1983). Their roles encompass a set of learned behaviours appropriated to the particular service setting and depended on situational cues such as each other's attitudes and behaviours.

The complex nature of services, coupled with the growing prominence of the services sector has also increased the need for better service quality. Therefore, service quality is increasingly recognized as one of the key strategic values of organizations in both the manufacturing and service sectors (Lewis, 1991; Vijayadurai, 2008; Ukwayi, Eja & Unwanede, 2012; Amissah, 2013). The delivery of high service quality has a number of advantages:

- It allows organisations to distinguish themselves from their competitors by increasing sales and market shares (Lewis, 1989; Newman & Cowling, 1996; Woodruff, 1997; Mack, Mueller, Crotts & Broderick, 2000; Lau, Akbar & Yong, 2005; Crick & Spencer, 2011; Lee, 2014);

- It results in the satisfaction and retention of customers and employees, thus reducing turnover rates (Taylor & Baker, 1994; Teas, 1994; Vavra, 1997; Oh, 1999; Skogland & Siguaw, 2004, Tang & Tang, 2012; Wong & Fong, 2012);

- It leads to repeat purchase behaviour and brand loyalty and enables an organisation to attract new customers through positive word-of-mouth, (Lewis, 1991; Leon, Schiffman & Lazer, 2000; Newman, 2001; Caruana, 2002; Wang Lo & Hui., 2003, Wilkins, Merrilees & Herington, 2010; Yong, Jou & Cheng, 2011; Prentice, 2013).

Hotel services are an important part of the services industry (Mishkin, 2001). And they are described as a synthetic service industry because severe competition results in little variation of facilities. As such service quality has

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been identified as one of the main drivers of successful hotel business operation. Service quality delivery to hotel guests has become a central theme in the global hotel business (Ladhari, 2008). In this highly competitive hotel business, service quality becomes one of the most important elements for gaining a sustainable competitive advantage in the market place (Markovic & Raspor, 2010). According to Baker and Fesenmaier (1997) and Iglesias and Guillien (2004), the global hotel industry has over the years ensured service quality at all levels as a differentiation tool to establish competitive positioning and to improve return on investment. Baker and Crompton (2000) and Zeithaml and Bitner (2000) have also argued that there is a positive correlation between quality service and business profits. Service quality plays a vital role in customer satisfaction since it reduces costs, increases sales and encourages repeat business in hotels (Barsky & Labagh, 1992; Walker & Braunlich 1996; Yi and Jeon, 2003, Peter & Nicole, 2006).

Generally, hotel guests require a high quality experience from their stay in a hotel. They expect quality service, product, atmosphere, entertainment and value for money. It has also been stated that it does not matter how much effort is put into producing quality service, it is the perception of customers that is paramount (Johns, 1996; Knuston, 2000; Getty & Getty, 2003, Kumar, Smart, Maddern & Maull, 2008; Mola & Jusoh, 2011). This argument is buttressed by Mack, Mueller, Crotts and Broderick (2000) who stress that it is important for businesses to talk to their customers to find out what their expectations are and make strenuous efforts to retain them in order to sustain profits. The main

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responsibility of hoteliers is the delivery of quality service to their guests (Hsieh, Lin & Lin, 2008).

But a study by Briggs, Sutherland and Drummond (2007) revealed major inconsistencies in service quality performance across the hotel sector. Their study further suggested that most customers are not in fact overly demanding and are satisfied with a personal service that represents value for money and provides accurate information. The main difference between excellent and poor service for them relates to the absence of the personal touch and how the staff deal with their complaints (Briggs, Sutherland & Drummond, 2007). Keating and Harrington (2003) suggested that many quality programmes fail as a result of the lack of commitment on the part of senior and middle level management, and front-line employees. Mei, Dean and White (1999), Raymond and Choi (2001) and Markovic and Raspor (2010), on the other hand, studied the factors influencing service quality and found the problem centered on employees.

Front-line employees play a very important role both in service and products (Reynose & Moores, 1995) because they have contact with customers directly and give them service. The behaviour and attitude of frontline employees usually influences the customers' perception and feeling of service quality at the hotel they choose. The behaviour and attitude of frontline employees in hotels is shaped by their perceptions of service quality and their understanding of what hotel customers expect (Yee, Yeung & Cheng, 2010).

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Managers in the service industry are under increasing pressure to demonstrate that their services are customer-focused and that continuous improvement is being delivered. Given the financial and resource constraints under which service organisations must manage, it is essential that customer expectations are properly understood and measured (Shanin & Dabestani, 2010). Delivering quality service is a major challenge facing hospitality managers (Lazer & Layton, 1999, Carev, 2008), especially hotel managers because most services are characterized by an encounter between three parties; the customer, the frontline staff and the organisation represented by the manager. This interaction defines quality service in the mind of the customer. This encounter is called the "moment of truth" by Richard Norman (King & Cichy, 2006).

The brief encounter, "a moment of truth", is when the customer evaluates the service and forms an opinion on its quality. It is during this moment of truth that the service provider has the opportunity to influence the customer's perception of service quality. The power enjoyed by customers has raised their expectations and these expectations often determine whether they will stay at a particular hotel or not. According to Cooper, Fletcher, Fyfall, Gilbert and Wanhill (2008), customers are travelling more widely, returning with new ideas and new standards regarding accommodation demands. This has led to the study of stakeholders (customers, frontline staff and managers) perceptions of service quality relevant in the marketing literature.

Edvardsson, Thomasson and Qvretveit (1994) posit that stakeholders' perceptions of service quality may differ between employee, manager and the customer. The differences in perception may be due to various reasons. Managers and employees generally do not like to mention deficiencies in the quality of their services. In other words, they usually do not downplay the work and services they have delivered (Grandey, 2000).

In contrast, they may have a tendency to exaggerate the quality of their services (Koyuncu, Burke, Astakhova, Eren & Cetin, 2014). As a result, the customer's perceptions of service quality may be ignored. Such differences among the stakeholders' approaches may be one of the reasons for different service quality perceptions. However, it should be noted that the differences in perceptions of quality presented can create barriers to achieving the desired level of service quality (Tsaur & Lin, 2004). In this context, it can be posited that the perceptions of stakeholders in the hotel business with regard to service quality performance become important.

There may be various reasons why customers have lower levels of service quality perception. Employees may have a higher quality perception of the services they deliver compared to customers' perception. Managers may determine inadequate quality standards. This may lead to ignorance of customers' quality perceptions. This may be a negative consequence of long term employed employees emotional labour experiences. The productivity of long term employed employees experiencing emotional labour experiences may fall as they get indolent (Tsai & Yang, 2010). Consequently, customers

perceptions of service quality may fall below the level of both managers' and employees' perceptions.

However, Berry, Will and Carbone (2006) stated that, it is one of the manager's responsibilities to anticipate customers' demands and expectations and convey them to employees. As a result, it can be said that determining the existence of a service quality perception difference among customers, managers and employees is a requirement for success in a highly competitive hotel industry. Therefore, individual hoteliers must find ways to make their products and services stand out among the competition. To achieve this, hoteliers must understand their customers' needs and wants and then deliver their services in a way to meet these needs or exceed them. As Sureshchander, Rajendran and Anatharaman (2002) stated, in order to improve service quality, the hotel industry needs to know which service attributes might affect the choice intention of customers. Failure to give the necessary attention to these attributes might result in a customer's negative evaluation of the hotel services and may ruin the chance of that guest returning to the hotel.

Statement of the problem

Service quality is one of the most researched topics in the marketing literature. Despite the vast amount of research done in the area of service quality, quality related issues have received very little research attention within the hotel industry in Ghana especially, Accra. According to Mensah (2009), hospitality businesses in Ghana find it very challenging in providing their

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guests with quality service because there seems to be a paucity of credible data on service quality in Ghana's hospitality industry, making it difficult to fashion out an appropriate management intervention to address the problem. Also, there has been little attempt to link service quality to the organizational characteristics of facilities providing services to customers and the characteristics of the customers patronizing the facilities (Mensah, 2009).

Most of the studies on service quality have produced a number of classifications of services that emphasised the service receiver's or customer's perspective (Rathmell, 1974; Chase, 1978; Sasser, Olson & Wyckoff, 1978; Gro¨nroos, 1979, 2000; Lovelock, 1985; Schmenner, 1986; Shostack, 1987; Vandermerwe & Chadwick, 1989; Saleh & Ryan, 1991; Akan, 1995; Edvardsson, 1996; Robledo, 2001; Alexandris, Dimitriados & Markata, 2002; Antony, Antony & Ghosh, 2004; Kang & James, 2004; Salazar, Costa & Paulo, 2010; Ukwayi, Eja & Unwanede, 2012; Browning, So & Sparks, 2013; Prentice, 2014). Nonetheless, very few researchers have emphasised the importance of the interaction between actors in a service encounter (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985; Brown & Swartz, 1989; Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry, 1990; Echeverri, 1999; Svensson, 2002; Qin, 2005). More so, most research in the field of service marketing ignore the service provider's perspective, and there have been too few studies that attempted to explore the concept of the service encounter beyond the service receiver's perspective (Anthanassopoulos, 1998; Tsang & Qu, 2000 Tam & Wong, 2001; Svensson,

2002; Choi & Chu, 2000, 2001; Luk & Layton, 2002; Dedeke, 2003; Mola and Jusoh, 2011; Bondzi-Simpson, 2012).

Furthermore, the few studies on service quality in hospitality have been on quality dimensions in hotels, particularly, the criteria customers use to measure service quality in hotels in developed economies and not emerging tourist destinations like Ghana where service quality is important for the industry's success. Also, there is a lacuna of studies addressing relationships between stakeholders' characteristics and service quality expectations and perceptions as well as the dimensions of service quality.

The general perception that in the absence of world service leaders and /or a benchmark competition, the hotel industry had leisurely ticked over with an "anything goes" service attitude, thus, resulting in the endemic nature of the issue of service quality in hotels in Ghana (Akyeampong, 2007). Researchers like Appaw-Agbola and Afenyo (2011), Boakye and Bohene (2009) and Teye (1991) have alluded that Ghana has the distinctive peculiarity of delivering poor service. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that hotel customers, both domestic and international, have in one way or the other experienced shortfalls in the quality of services offered. Guests express varied needs and expectations during their stay but hotels in Ghana have not responded adequately (Bondzi-Simpson, 2012).

Anecdotal evidence also shows that the conservative nature of the Ghanaian population, who are disinclined to complain, has led to unprofessional, inefficient service standards being accepted as the norm.

Bondzi-Simpson (2012) intimated that there are service quality gaps in the delivery of services in hotels in the Central Region of Ghana. The study also showed that management of these hotels did not have accurate knowledge of what customer expectations were with regard to the dimensions of the quality of services provided. Another study by Amissah (2013) revealed that service quality is poor in hotels in Cape Coast and Elmina both major urban centres in Southern Ghana. It is against this backdrop that the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the dimensions of service quality from the perspectives of both guests and service providers?

2. Are there differences in the dimensions of service quality among socio-demographic, travel and work characteristics of guests and service providers?

3. What factors influence guests' and service providers' expectations of service quality?

4. What is the difference between guests' expectation of service quality and service providers' perception of guests' expectation of service quality in hotels?

5. What is the difference between guests' perception of actual service received and service providers' perception of actual service delivered?

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to assess service quality in hotels from the perspectives of both guests and service providers

The specific objectives are to:

i. Examine the gap between guests' expectations and perceptions of service quality (perceived service quality)

ii. Explore the perceptual interface between guests and service providers on service quality expectations and service performance in hotels (Gaps 1, 6, 7, 8, 9 & 10).

iii. Examine the possible implications of the interface on perceived service quality.

iv. Explore the differences between guests' profile and their expectations and perceptions of service quality.

v. Assess the dimensions of service quality in hotels.

vi. Examine the predictor(s) of overall service quality in hotels.

vii. Assess the dynamics of service quality dimensions among stakeholders.

Hypotheses of the study

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested

i. There is no significant difference between guests' expectation of service quality from their perception of actual service received (Gap 5).

ii. There is no significant difference between guests expectation and management perception of guests' expectation (Gap 1).

iii. There is no significant difference between frontline employees' and managements' perception of guests expectation (Gap 6).

iv. There is no significant difference between service providers' perception of guests' expectation and their perception of the actual service delivered.

v. There is no significant difference between guests' and management's perceptions of actual service delivered (Gap 7).

Significance of the study

The importance of service quality to emerging destinations cannot be over-emphasized as service quality is possibly the foremost determinant of success in the tourism and hospitality industry (Amissah, 2013). Proper maintenance of the building and comfortable indoor conditions for customers is essential (Parkan, 2005). The issue of service quality has always been a major concern to both customers and managers. Customers complain about poor service while managers also feel that they are doing their best to provide the best service to customers. A study by Zemke (1989) showed that managers are "obsessed" with listening to the changeable wishes, needs and expectations of their customers, and the wish to respond to them.

This study will first and foremost bring to the attention of managers or service providers whether they are providing quality service from their own perspective or from customers' perspective by identifying the service delivery

bottlenecks which are central to Ghana producing satisfied customers and eventually the success of the hotel industry.

Secondly, it will identify the importance customers attach to the dimensions of service quality so that service providers can improve on those dimensions to ensure satisfaction. It will provide hotels with appropriate measures to improve service delivery and standards not only from the tangible aspects in Ghana's hotel industry. The study will also contribute to providing safe and secured environment for tourists who crave for quality.

Finally, the result of the study is expected to contribute to filling existing research gaps and to provide firms with appropriate measures to improve service delivery and standards in Ghana's hospitality industry. It will form the base or provide the needed information for monitoring service quality in hotels in Ghana. The conclusions of the study could be a basis for future research in service quality in Ghana. Academia and industry can use the findings and recommendations to improve service quality in Ghana.

Profile of the study area

The study area is the Accra Metropolis in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. Accra doubles as the capital and seat of government and the most prominent commercial city in Ghana (Grant & Yankson, 2003). Prior to Accra becoming the capital, Cape Coast served as the capital of the then Gold Coast Colony. Accra became the capital of the then Gold Coast Colony in 1877 and

has remained so to date. Accra has the most diversified economy in relation to any other area in Ghana (Grant & Yankson, 2003). It is the headquarters to many international organizations and enterprises and home to all the diplomatic missions in Ghana. This has made it an "epi-centre" when it comes to the establishment of high quality commercial accommodation in Ghana (Akyeampong, 2007). These accommodation facilities do not only serve foreign patrons coming for both business and leisure purposes but serve the needs of locals as well. Over the years, the Greater Accra Region, and for that matter Accra, has had the highest concentration of all the categories of hotels. This fact is supported by the 2009 hotels list of Ghana compiled by the then Ghana Tourist Board. Akyeampong (2007) gives credence to this fact by stating that "Accra not only leads in terms of numbers but also possesses all the different types found in the national stock (p.139).

This makes Accra an ideal location to conduct a study on hotels in Ghana since it offers the diversity and the mix needed to collate divergent information that this study will use. Figure 1 is a map of Accra showing the distribution of the various star-rated hotels.
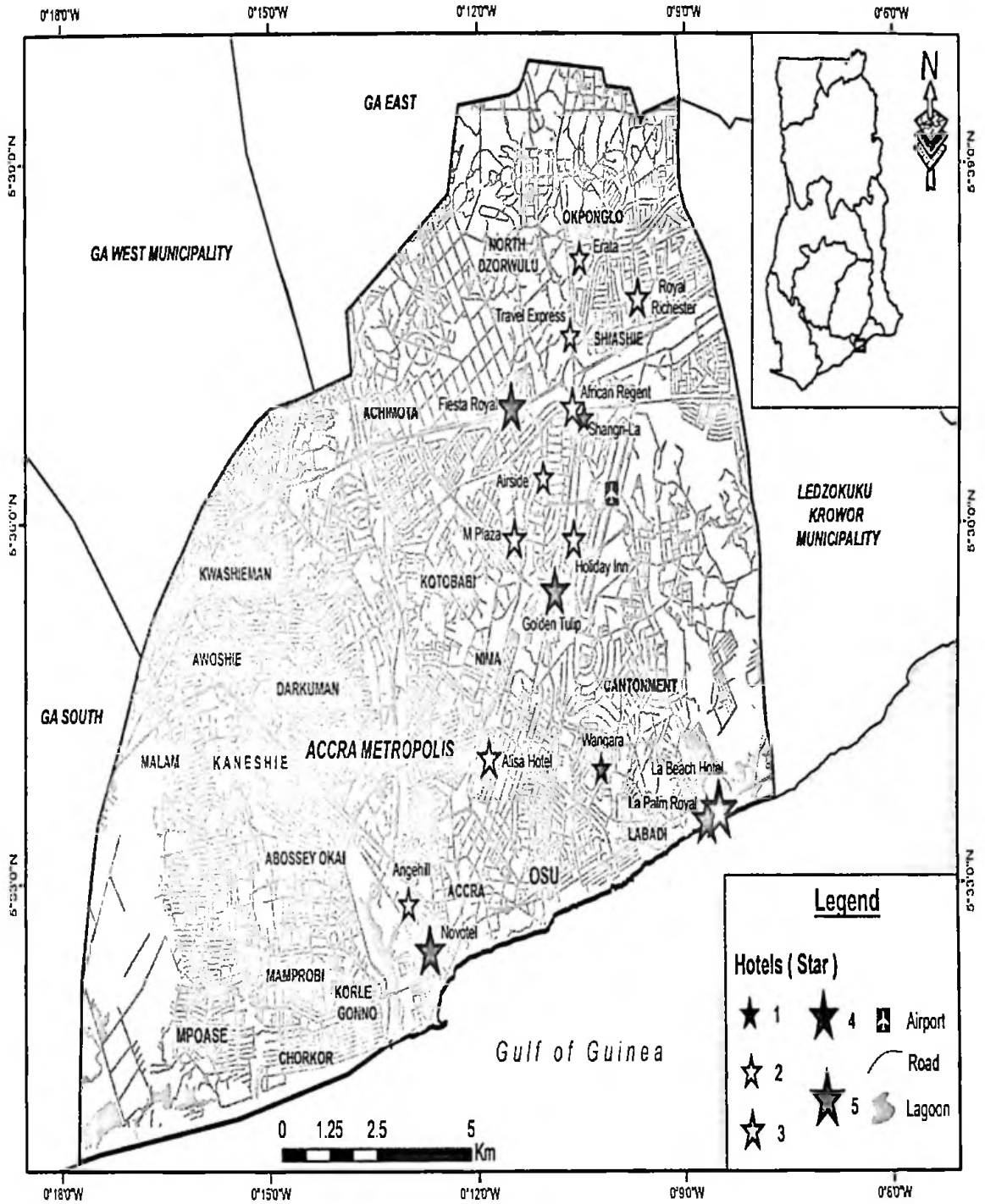
Figure 1: Map of the Study Area

Source: Geography Information System Centre, Department of Geography and

Regional Planning, University of Cape Coast, 2013

Thesis outline

The study was organised into eight chapters. Chapter One dealt with the introduction of the study which covers the background information, profile of the study area, the statement of the problem and objectives of the study. Chapter Two focuses on a review of related literature on the topic while Chapter Three looks at empirical issues and various models on service quality as well as the conceptual framework guiding the study. The research methodology comprising of the research design, sampling issues and data collection and analysis are presented in Chapter Four. Findings from the field are presented in the next three chapters. Chapter Five discusses respondents' characteristics and the level of guests' expectations of service quality while Chapter Six looks at stakeholders perceptions of service quality in hotels in Accra. Chapter Seven presents the differences in guests and service providers' perceptions of service quality; Chapter Eight examines the dimensions of service quality as well as the relative importance of these dimensions. Chapter Nine captures the summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

Summary

Chapter One discussed the introduction of the study. It delved into issues such as the background of the study, statement of the research problem and objectives of the study. The significance of the study as well as the hypotheses was also presented in the chapter. Finally, the profile of the study area and chapter organization was discussed as well.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES OF SERVICE QUALITY

Introduction

This chapter looks at the literature related to service quality. Issues discussed in the chapter include the definitions of key concepts used in the study such as service, quality and service quality; concept of service quality, customer expectations in service quality, the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction, and service quality in the hospitality and tourism industry. The role of frontline employees in delivering quality service, the dimensions or factors of service quality, various theories and models of service quality are also discussed in this chapter.

Definitions of service

The term service has been defined in various ways. Sasser, Olsen and Wyckoff (1978) defined service as a commodity that cannot be stored or disappeared in use or as activities that require personal contact while Cateora and Graham (2005) described a service as intangible and having intrinsic value, resulting from a process, a performance or an occurrence that only exists while it is being created. Kotler and Keller (2006), on the other hand, defined service as any act, performance or deed that one party can offer to another

which is essentially intangible and does not result in the ownership of anything. Gronroos (2006) defined it as "an activity or a series of a activities of a more or less intangible nature that normally, but not necessarily, takes place in the interaction between the customer and service employees and / or physical resource or goods and or systems of the service provider, which are provided as solutions to customer problems". Zeithaml and Bitner (2000) also described services as "including all economic activities whose output is not a physical product or construction, is generally consumed at the time it is produced and provides added value in forms (such as convenience, amusement timeless, comfort or health) that are essentially intangible concerns for its first purchaser".

This study adopted the definition of a service as an activity or series of activities of more or less intangible nature that normally, but not necessarily, take place in interactions between customers and service employees and/or physical resources or goods and/or systems of the service provider, which are provided as solutions to customer problems (Fitzsimmons & Fitzsimmons, 2000).

Characteristics of a service

Although many approaches to quality apply equally to good and services, there are conceptual differences between the two. These differences have been explored in details by scholars such as Edvardsson, Thomasson and Qvretveit (1994), Bergman and Klefsjo (2003) and Gummesson (1995).

According to Bagherian (2007), some of the important differences can be noted as follows:

- Services are not tangible as goods and it can therefore be difficult to explain, specify and measure the contents of a service.

- Because services are more abstract than goods, services are perceived and evaluated more subjectively.

- The customer often plays an active role in creating a service.

- A service is often consumed at the same time as it is created; it cannot be stored or transported.

- The customer does not become the owner of any tangible property after delivery of a service.

- Services often consist of a series of consequential activities; this makes it difficult or impossible for the consumer to test them before the purchase.

- Services often consist of a system of sub-services, but the customer usually evaluates the whole and not the separate parts (Bagherian, 2007, pp. 77).

A related issue that complicates the quality of service is their heterogeneous character. This means that the experience of a particular service can differ from time to time. Services are heterogeneous because both the consumer and the service provider have a significant influence on the production and delivery process (Gronroos, 1990). A service is intangible and heterogeneous; its production, distribution, and consumption are simultaneous

processes; it is an activity or a process; it is a core value created in buyer-seller interactions; customers participate in its production; it cannot be stored; and there is no transfer of ownership when it is sold (Groonroos, 2000). These characteristics indicate that there are significant interactive qualities in service encounters – that is, services are produced, distributed, and consumed in an interactive process which involves the perspectives of both the service provider and the service receiver. It is thus especially important that services be properly designed from the beginning because they cannot be stored, exchanged or redone (Edvardsson, 1996).

Definitions of quality

From the review of literature on quality, it emerges that early research efforts only concentrated on defining and measuring the quality of tangible goods and products. Gronroos (1990) notes that product quality is traditionally linked to the technical specifications of goods, with most definitions of quality arising from the manufacturing sector where quality control has received extensive attention and research.

Reeves and Bednar (1994) identified six different definitions of quality namely value, conformance to specifications, conformance to requirements, fitness for use, loss of avoidance and exceeding customers' expectations. Quality has also been defined as conformance to requirements (Crosby, 1979); conformance to design (Chase, Kumar & Youngddahl 1992); design and

conformance to quality characteristics that are of interest to customers when evaluating the product offered (Bolton & Drew, 1991).

According to Juran (1992), quality is fitness for use while Garvin (1984) measured quality by counting the incidence of 'internal' failures (those observed before a product leaves the factory) and external failures (those incurred in the field after a unit had been installed). These product-based definitions of quality may be appropriate to the goods-producing sector; however, knowledge about the quality of goods is insufficient to understand service quality (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1985).

Definitions of service quality

Attempts have been made to distinguish between product quality and service quality. Services are generally described in terms of four unique attributes: intangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability and perishability (Bateson, 1977; Lovelock, 1985; Gronroos, 1990; Zeithaml & Bitner, 1996). According to Mei *et al.*, (1999), in the hospitality industry, other attributes such as imprecise standards and fluctuating demands have been identified. Service quality has been linked to the success of hospitality businesses (Kotler, 2003). It has also been argued that service quality is the great differentiate among service providers (Parasuraman *et al.,* 1985; Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000, 2003), there has been no agreed definition of service quality. Juran (1985) stated that the quality of a product or service is determined by its fitness for use by internal and external customers. Gundersen, Heide and

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Oslon (1996) also argued that a customer's experience is a product of both the tangible and intangible aspects, whereas Crompton and Mackay (1989) saw service quality as the attributes of the service itself and those attributes develop positive perceptions of the service. These definitions suggest that service quality is subjective. There is no universal definition for it.

However, there is another school of thought that holds that every service has a product component. Gronroos (1992) distinguished between technical quality and functional quality as components of the service image delivery. Technical quality is what the consumer actually receives from the service provider such as the quality of the food served in a restaurant. Functional quality, on the other hand, is how the technical component of the service is delivered to the consumer.

Kotler (2003) identified a third component of quality, societal (ethical) quality. According to him, societal quality is credence quality, which consumers cannot evaluate in advance of purchase. In this light, hospitality businesses concerned about quality service must combine, balance and juggle the tangible and intangible product (Ribeiro, 2003 as cited in Mensah, 2009). Table 1 below depicts some of the various definitions of service quality in the literature.

Table 1: Definitions of service quality

Author/Year	Definition of service quality
Gronroos (1984)	Customers' perception of actual service performance and prior expectations of customers for service and consumer perception through comparison
Zeithaml (1988)	Customers' evaluation on overall superiority of excellence of service
Parasuraman *et al.* (1988)	A form of the attitude different from of an objective quality of a customer's judgment on overall superiority or excellence of a specific service.
Bojanic (1991)	Customers' evaluation on superiority and excellence of products and services.
Bitner and Hubert (1994)	Consumers' overall impression on relative inferiority or superiority of the organization and its services.
Asubonteng, McCleary and Swan (1996)	The difference between customers' expectations for service performance prior to the service encounter and their perceptions of the service received.
Robinson (1999)	Is an attitude or global judgment about the superiority of a service, although the exact nature of this attitude is not agreed.
Hernon and Whitman (2001)	Service quality focuses on the interaction between the customer and the service provider.

Table 1 (Continued)

Bitner, Booms and Tetreault (1990) as cited in Kassim & Bojei, 2002)	The consumer's overall impression of the relative inferiority or superiority of the organization and its services. The customer formulates his perception of service quality when he interacts with the personnel of the organization. Service quality is highly dependent on the performance of employees.
Lehtinen and Lehtinen (1982 as cited in Kang & James, 2004)	Service quality entails physical quality, interactive quality and corporate or quality. Physical quality relates to the tangible aspects of the service. Interactive quality involves the interactive nature of service and refers to the two-way flow that occurs between the customer and the service provider, or a representative, and also includes both automated and animated interactions.
Palmer (2010)	The standard of service delivery expressed in terms of the extent to which customers' expectations are met.

Source: Review of literature

Concept of service quality

The subject of service quality is wide and varied. The concept of service quality has been greatly developed by many researchers. It was established after there had been a growing interest in the quality of services provided. Garvin (1984) was among the first scholars who examined the quality concepts to cover both goods and services. He explained perceived quality as the subjective perception of quality through indirect measures of

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quality comparison. Much current service quality research is rooted in expectancy-disconfirmation theory (Bolton & Drew, 1991; Oliver, 1993) which holds that customers perceive service quality as the difference between the actual service performance and their expectations. Disconfirmation is positive when service performance exceeds expectations and negative, when the opposite is the case.

Based on the perceived service quality concept, Parasuraman *et al.* (1985) applied premises from other previous studies to form their model of service quality gaps. The model explored that a consumer had difficulty in evaluating service quality rather than goods quality, that a perception of service quality was developed from a comparison of consumer expectation with actual service performance; also quality evaluation involved the evaluation of both the process and outcome of service delivery. Therefore, service quality gap denotes the gap between customer's expectations or what the service should provide, and the customer's perception of what the service actually provides (Shahin & Dabestani, 2010).

The assessment of service quality is made during the service delivery process. Customer satisfaction with a service quality, according to Fitzstimmons & Fitzsitmmons (1999), can be defined by comparing perceptions of the service received with the expectations of the service desired. When expectations are exceeded, service is perceived to be of exceptional quality and also a pleasant surprise. When expectations are confirmed by perceived service, quality is satisfactory. Antony, Antony, Kumar & Cho

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(2007) also stated that service quality involves the concept of meeting and exceeding the expectations of the customer. Presbury, Fitzgerald and Chapman (2005) observed that though service quality is what differentiates hospitality businesses, there is no agreed definition for it. However, it is accepted or agreed that service quality is dependent on the guests' needs and expectation.

According to Ekinci, Dawes and Massey (2008), quality is simply conformance to specifications; positive quality is when a service meets or exceeds preset standards or promises. If expectations exceed performance, then perceived quality is less than satisfactory, hence, customer dissatisfaction occurs (Parasuraman *et al.,* 1985; Lewis & Mitchell, 1990).

Service quality is a concept that has aroused considerable interest in the marketing research literature because of the difficulties in its definitions and measurements with no consensus emerging on either (Wisniewski, 2001).

One of the commonly used definitions of service quality is the extent to which a service meets customers' expectations (Asubonteng, McCleary & Swan, 1996, Wisniewski & Wisniewski, 2005). Definitions of service quality have revolved around the idea that it is the result of the comparism between customer's expectations about a service and their perceptions of the service (Lihtinen & Lehtinen, 1982; Parasuraman *et al.,* 1985).

It is widely accepted in the literature that service quality is dependent on consumers' needs and expectations, and whether the level of service meets these needs and expectations. Services quality has, thus, been distinguished as

a "gap" between customers' expectations and the performance they actually received (Parasuraman *et. al.*, 1985).

The service encounter

Hotel services are characterized by an encounter between a service provider and a customer. This encounter, which defines the quality of the service in the mind of the customer, has been called the "moment of truth" (Normann, 1991). According to Fitzstimmons and Fitzsitmmons (1998), this brief encounter is a moment in time when the customer is evaluating the service and forming an opinion on its quality. Every moment of truth involves an interaction between a customer and a service provider; each has a role to play in an environment staged by the service organisation.

A customer experiences many encounters with a variety of service providers and each moment of truth is an opportunity to influence the customer's perceptions of the service quality. Moments of truth are critical in achieving a reputation for superior quality. According to Jan Carlson's philosophy, an organisation exists to serve the front-line workers who have direct contact with customers. His revolutionary thinking stood the old organization chart on its head and placed the customer-encounter personnel (formerly at the bottom) now at the top of the chart. He intimates that it has now become everyone else's responsibility to serve frontline personnel who in turn served the customer. Changing the organisational chart showed a move to refocus on satisfying the customer and managing moments of truth.

The Role of the customer, manager and employee in service quality

In service quality the customer is the determinant of the level of service quality that is submitted (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). If the customers are pleased with the quality of the services provided, they will choose the business again and will promote the business within their immediate surroundings. In fact, Cronin and Taylor (1992), Boulding, Kalra, Staelin and Zeithaml (1993), Baker and Crompton (2000) and Gonzalez, Comesaia and Brea (2007) reaffirm this claim that customers who are satisfied with the business service quality are more likely to choose that business again. In the same way, Harrison-Walker (2001) and Chowdhury (2011) expressed that customers with the highest levels of perception of service quality contribute to the business image positively via word-of-mouth communications.

Managers are responsible for knowing customers' expectations and passing them on to their employees (Berry, Parasuraman & Zeithaml, 1988). Since they are in charge of their employees, managers first need an accurate perception of the quality of service offered. Indeed, managers will not be able to transmit/transfer a situation to their employees if they do not understand it properly.

Employees, however, are the bridge between customers and the hotel business. Employees have a direct influence over customers' perceptions of service quality (Paulin, Ferguson & Payaud, 2000). Chen, Ekinci, Riley, Yoon and Tjelflaat (2001) and Tsaur and Lin (2004) as well as Chao, Fu and Lu (2007) revealed that one of the influencing factors of customers perceptions of

service quality is the employees. Employees who have higher service quality perceptions than customers may not meet their customers' expectations (Wang, 2011). This is why determining how employees perceive service quality becomes critical.

Apart from the issues mentioned above, how customers perceive the quality of services is also important for managers because managers develop their own service quality standards regarding customers' evaluations and make employees meet these standards. However, managers and employees who think that the quality of the services they deliver is better than customers' perceptions may not strive to improve the quality of their service performance. In other words, their work motivation and performance decrease (Grandey, 2000).

From this point of view, managers are primarily supposed to guide employees as they examine customers' service quality performance perceptions. Thus, it can be said that the comparison of employees and managers perceptions regarding their services with customers' perceptions is a requirement for success. Moreover, it is important to know that the service quality perceptions of employees and managers may differ to a degree. But managers who have higher service quality perceptions than their subordinates are incapable of leading their employees to reach the desired level of service quality. Managers are supposed to perceive the quality of services more accurately than employees since they are the auditors of employees. Likewise, it would be impossible for managers to transfer things they did not perceive

accurately to their subordinates. That is why it becomes highly important to determine whether managers service quality perceptions differ from the perceptions of subordinates and customers. As Berry *et al.* (1988) stated, managers are responsible for knowing about the expectations of employees and customers.

Measuring service quality

While there may be general agreement that the evaluation of services is more subjective than that of tangible products, there has been less agreement about how to operationalise service quality as a construct (Gabbott & Hogg, 1997; Cronin & Taylor, 1992, 1994; Dabholkar, Sherpherd & Thorpe, 2000). Firms throughout the world use a combination of methods to assess customers' perceptions of service quality. Asher (1996) suggested that service transactions are subjectively judged and that service quality depends on the degree to which a customer's perceived expectations have been met. Customers decide when they are satisfied (Bagherian, 2007).

Parasuraman *et al.* (1985, 1986) measured service quality by separately scoring customers' perceptions of expectations and performance and subtracting the former from the latter. Using factor analysis, they demonstrated five empirical components, which usually denoted tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy, that are variously described as dimensions (Parasuraman *et al.,* 1985; 1986) or determinants (Johnston, 1995) of service quality.

A substantial number of other researchers have sought to confirm this result, and although some have managed to find a five-factor pattern, a substantial number have failed. Parasuraman *et al.* (1991) were themselves unable to replicate their own work in a later study, which produced six factors (two apparently closely related) rather than the expected five.

Parasuraman *et al.* (1988, 1991) proposed a gap theory, which states that customers' assessment of overall service quality is determined by the degree and direction of the gap between their expectations and perceptions of performance levels. Specifically, they suggested that perceived service quality can be determined by calculating the difference between expectations and perceptions of actual service performance.

Service quality in the tourism industry

Kandampully and Suhartanto (2000) emphasized that quality will be the main driving force of the tourism industry as travel businesses strive to meet the competitive challenges of the future. According to the World Tourism Organisation (2003), quality in tourism can be defined as '....the satisfaction of all the legitimate product and service needs, requirements and expectations of the consumer, at an acceptable price in conformity with the underlying quality determinants like safety and security, hygiene, accessibility, transparency, authenticity and harmony of the tourism activity concerned with its human and natural environments. This definition is in accordance with other observations on the nature of quality. For example, Bergman and Klefsojo (2003) define the

quality of a product as its ability to satisfy or preferably exceed the needs and expectations of the customers and noted that this quality should be aimed at the needs of the customer, present and future.

According to Yin, Zhu and Gan (2005) and Bask and Markku (2013), there are at least five factors that describe and influence the tourism product:

1. Tourism is dominated by services; this means, consumption occurs in interaction with the suppliers of those services

2. Demand for tourism is significantly influenced by seasonal variations including climatic seasons and the timings of vacations, a consequence of this is that, many staff members are hired for only short periods.

3. The tourism industry consists of a mixture of private sector businesses and public sector organisations. As a result, the industry operates within two systems that have different requirement, rules and forms of control.

4. The tourism industry is fragmented. It consists of many small companies working in various business areas including lodging, travel, food and leisure.

5. Tourism consists of a number of ingredients experienced over time and it is seldom the case that one has control over all components.

These factors mean that tourism quality is a complex concept. Swarbrooke and Horner (2001) likened it to a jigsaw puzzle that must fit

together perfectly to satisfy the tourist. Despite the difficulties, satisfying the tourism customer is important not only because it leads to positive word of mouth recommendation and repeat customers, but also because lack of satisfaction leads to complaints and dealing with complaints can be expensive, time consuming and injurious to a destination's or a company's reputation (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2001).

The term 'experience' has become increasingly popular within tourism as entertainment options have increased rapidly in number and variety. Bitner (1992) and Mossberg (2007) have both related experiences to service quality. Bitner (1992) used the expression "servicescape" to describe the customers over all perception of the services offered while Mossberg (2007) developed this further with specific reference to tourism. According to him, these "experience areas" can include several destinations over extended geographical distances and quite long periods of time because an "experience" can include sub-components while still being regarded as a single entity. Quality is judged subjectively by consumers and it is, therefore, a difficult concept to assess and measure. It is even more complicated in tourism experiences because quality in this setting includes many interactions with a variety of providers.

Service quality in the hospitality industry

The hotel business has evolved over the years from the provision of limited overnight service to a more sophisticated product designed to meet the overall needs of its guests (Soliman & Alzaid, 2002). This change came about

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as a result of factors such as the desire of the industry to increase guests' satisfaction, the intense global competition in the industry, the complex nature of the hotel environment and the fast pace of change. The industry continues to make every effort to satisfy its customers because it recognizes that they are the key to success as well as a prerequisite for survival in today's competitive world. Service quality that leads to customer satisfaction is therefore considered to be a very important objective pursued by all hospitality establishments in recent times (Soliman & Alzaid, 2002; Crick & Spencer, 2011).

Quality of guests' experience is the antecedent to both satisfaction and perceived value (Petrick, 2004). This statement is supported by several empirical studies that found that price and quality perceptions influence value perceptions (Matzler, Renzl & Rothenberger, 2006). It is also clear that quality has both a moderate and direct effect on behavioral intentions (Petrick, 2004), such as repurchase intentions. Therefore, satisfaction is a direct result of quality, which is stressed by Caruana, Money and Berthon (2000) as cited in Petrick (2004). Research shows that service quality is more important than price in differentiating between hospitality companies such as hotels and cruise lines. It is also more important for promoting guest loyalty (Matzler, Renzl & Rothenberger, 2006). There is a clear distinction between satisfaction and quality, which is worth mentioning for clarity purposes. Quality in hospitality is a measure of the hospitality provider's performance, while satisfaction is a

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global measure of how the provider's performance (the service experience) makes the guest feel (Petrick, 2004).

Generally, hotel guests require a high quality experience from their stay in a hotel. They expect quality service, product, atmosphere, entertainment and value for money. It has also been stated that it does not matter how much effort is put into producing quality service, it is the perception of customers that is paramount (Getty & Getty, 2003). Baker and Crompton (2000) as well as Zeithaml and Bitner (2000) have also argued that there is a positive correlation between quality service and business profits. This argument is buttressed by Mueller, Crotts and Broderick (2000) who stressed that it is important for businesses to talk to their customers, to find out what their expectations are and make strenuous efforts to retain them in order to sustain profits. Choi and Chu (2001) also suggested that to be successful in the industry, hoteliers must provide guests with service satisfaction.

Guests' experience in hotels is greatly influenced by the type of service they receive at the hotel in which they stay. Therefore, hotels have to strive to deliver to their guests not only their products and services, but also quality and satisfaction that may lead to long-lasting survival and profitability. As observed by Ramsaran-Fowder (2008), providing quality service improves guest satisfaction which is believed to lead to increased visitation, repeat purchases, customer loyalty and relationship commitment. It is also believed that highly satisfied guests spread positive word-of-mouth which in turn influences guests' expectations (Qin, 2005).

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The hotel service

"Now it was night. With the hotel, the cycle of another inn keeping day had run its course. This had diþ ered from most, but beneath unprecedented events, routines had continued. Reservations, receptions, administration, housekeeping, garage, treasure, kitchens . . . all combined in a single, simple function. To welcome the traveller, sustain him, provide him with rest and speed him on. Soon, the cycle would begin again'' (Hailey, 2000). This simple quotation highlights the cyclical and multi-functional nature of hotel operations and the hypothesis that a systemic approach is highly suitable (Erto & Vanacore, 2002; Ingram & Roberts, 2000). The hotel is a system whose vital aim is to satisfy and hopefully delight) the customer. Each identifiable subsystem (reception, room, bathroom, restaurant, support services) concurs to realize this aim by means of a peculiar process. The customer actively participates in several service processes and affects the result in terms of quality and added value. Edvardsson (1998) highlights that a company (here a hotel) does not sell services, but opportunities for services. As a consequence, the most central goal of a service provider (here the owner, the management and the staff) is to guarantee the best and right service preconditions for well-functioning processes and the corresponding outcomes desired by the customer.

The role of frontline employees in delivering service quality in hotels

Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry (1990) suggested that the provision of high-quality services has become essential to survival for all sectors, including the hospitality industry. Service provision is inevitably social in nature involving interaction between customers and employees. Therefore, many highly competent personnel are required. Employees in hotels need to be "performers" rather than workers (Yoon & Suh, 2003) and skilful in terms of interaction with customers (Nikolich & Sparks, 1995), as their behaviour is a determinant of customers' perceptions of the quality of service they receive. As Darby and Daniel (1999, p. 278) claim:

> *Front line personnel are normally the key to clients' perceptions of the delivery of high quality services because they have a major influence on forming expectations and controlling customer experiences and as such they cannot be separated from the focal point of the actual service.*

In terms of a hotel, front-line personnel include not only those working at the reception, but at the restaurant, the bar, even on the floors. In fact, several researchers have concluded that the quality of interaction between customer and contact employees significantly influences the former's perceptions of service quality (Schneider, White & Paul, 1998; Bitner, Faranda, Hubbert & Zeithaml 1997; Schneider & Bowen, 1985; Schneider et

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al., 1998). The key role of contact employees is further reinforced by the fact that within the hospitality service industry, the majority of output is characterized by intangibility, heterogeneity, and simultaneous production and consumption (Gronroos, 1997).

Models of service quality

Various models have been developed to find, measure and assess service quality. Among them are the Technical functional quality model by Gronroos (1984), Internal service quality model (Frost & Kumar, 2000), GAP model (Parasuraman *et al.,* 1985), Extended Gap model by Luk & Layton, (2002) and the Service quality model by Zeithml *et al*, (1989). Each model is discussed in detailed in the following sections.

Technical and functional quality model (Gronroos, 1984)

A firm, in order to compete successfully must have an understanding of consumer perception of the quality, and the way service quality is influenced by different factors. Managing perceived service quality means that the firm has to match the expected service and perceived service to each other so that consumer's satisfaction is achieved. The author identified two components of service quality, technical quality and functional quality:

1. Technical quality is the quality of what a consumer actually receives as a result of his/her interaction with the service firm and is important to him/her and to his/her evaluation of the quality of service.

2. Functional quality is how a customer gets the technical outcome. This is because it shapes the views of services received by the customer. To him, image is very important to service firms and this can be expected to build up mainly by technical and functional quality of service including the other factors (tradition, ideology, word of mouth, pricing and public relations).
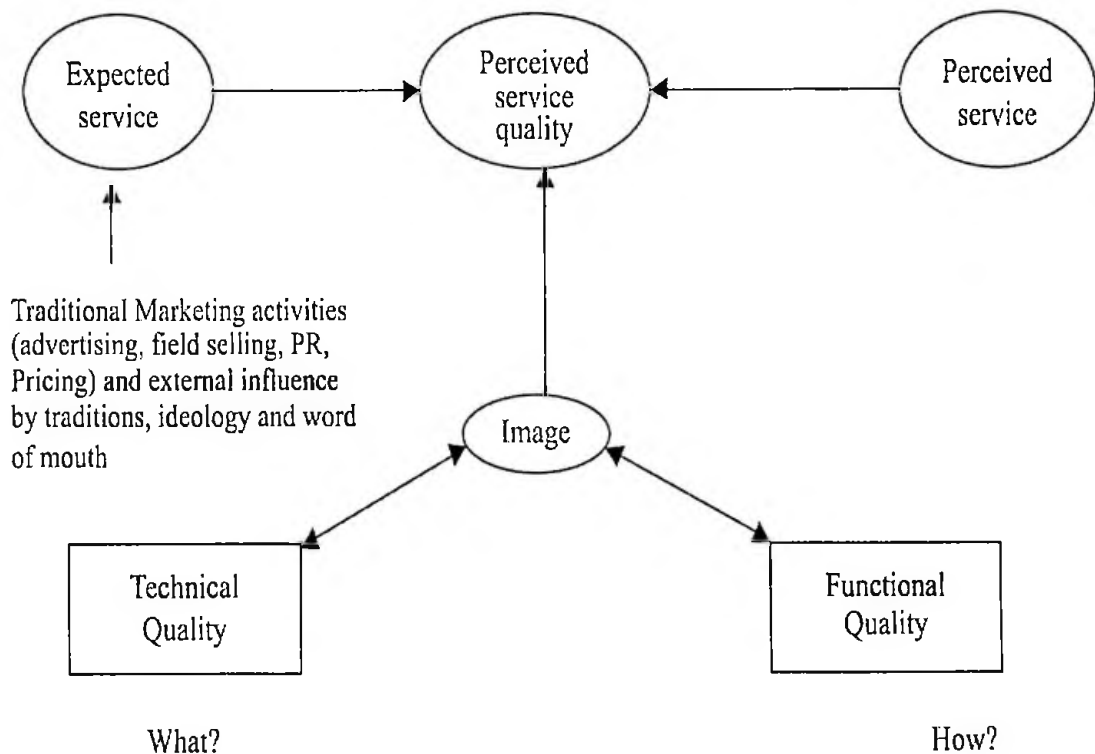
Figure 2: Service quality model

Source: Gronroos, 1984

Internal service quality model (Frost and Kumar, 2000)

The two authors developed an internal service quality model based on the GAP model (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). The model (Figure 3) evaluates the

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dimensions, and their relationships that determine service quality among internal customers (front-line staff) and internal suppliers (support staff) within a large service organization.
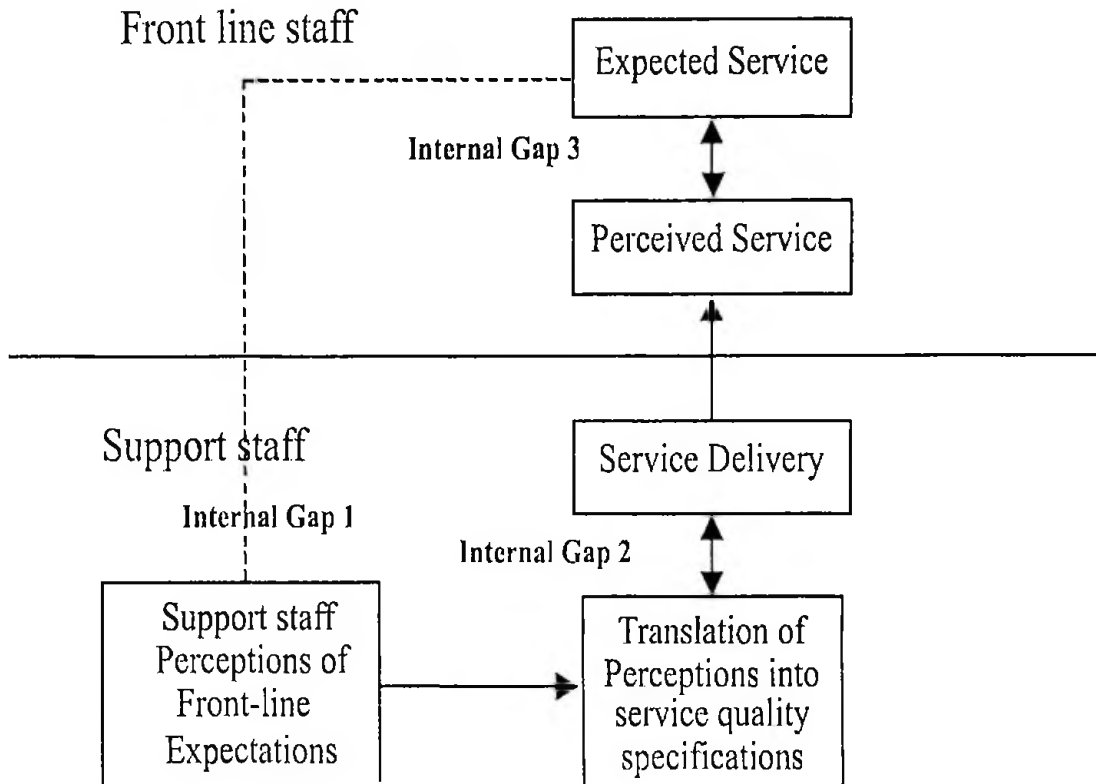
Figure 3: Internal service quality model

Source: Frost and Kumar, 2000

The internal gap 1 shows the difference between support staff's perception of service quality (internal supplier) and frontline staff's expectation of service quality (internal customers). Internal gap 2 is the significant difference between service quality specifications and the service actually delivered resulting in an internal service performance gap and internal

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gap 3 is the gap which focuses on the front-line staff (internal customers). The gap is based on the difference between front-line staff's expectations and perceptions of support staff's (internal supplier) service quality.

The GAP model (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985)

Much of the recent research on service quality has been carried out within the framework of the service quality gap model developed from the extensive work of Parasuraman *et al.* (1985, 1988, and 1991). The service quality gap model was derived from the magnitude and direction of five "gaps" (Figure 1) which are:

1. Gap between customers' expectations and management's perceptions (also known as knowledge gap). This gap may result from a lack of understanding of what customers expect from a particular service due to the absence of a proper marketing research orientation.

2. Gap between management's perception and service quality specifications (service standards gap). This gap shows the disparity between management's knowledge of client's expectations and the process of service producing resulting from an inadequate commitment to service quality, a perception of unfeasibility, inadequate task standardisation and the absence of goal setting.

3. Gap between service quality specification and service delivery (performance gap). This gap is the consequence of role ambiguity and conflict, lack of teamwork and poor technology. Even when guidelines

or specifications exist for performing excellent service, its delivery may not be up to standard due to poor performance.

4. Gap between service delivery and external communications (communications gap). Customer expectations are established by promises made by a service provider's promotional messages. This gap results from inconsistencies between the quality image portrayed in promotional activities and the actual quality of services delivered.

5. Gap between consumer's expectation and perceived service. This gap depends on size and direction of the four gaps associated with the delivery of service quality on the marketer's side (Parasuraman *et al.* (1985, 1988, and 1991)).

According Brown and Bond (1995), "the gap model is one of the best received and most heuristically valuable contributions to the services literature". The model identifies four key internal discrepancies or gaps relating to managerial perceptions of service quality and tasks associated with service delivery to customers. The first four gaps (Gap 1, Gap 2, Gap 3 and Gap 4) are identified as functions of the way in which service is delivered whereas Gap 5 suggests the gap between customers' expectations and their perceptions of actual performance and drives the perception of service quality.
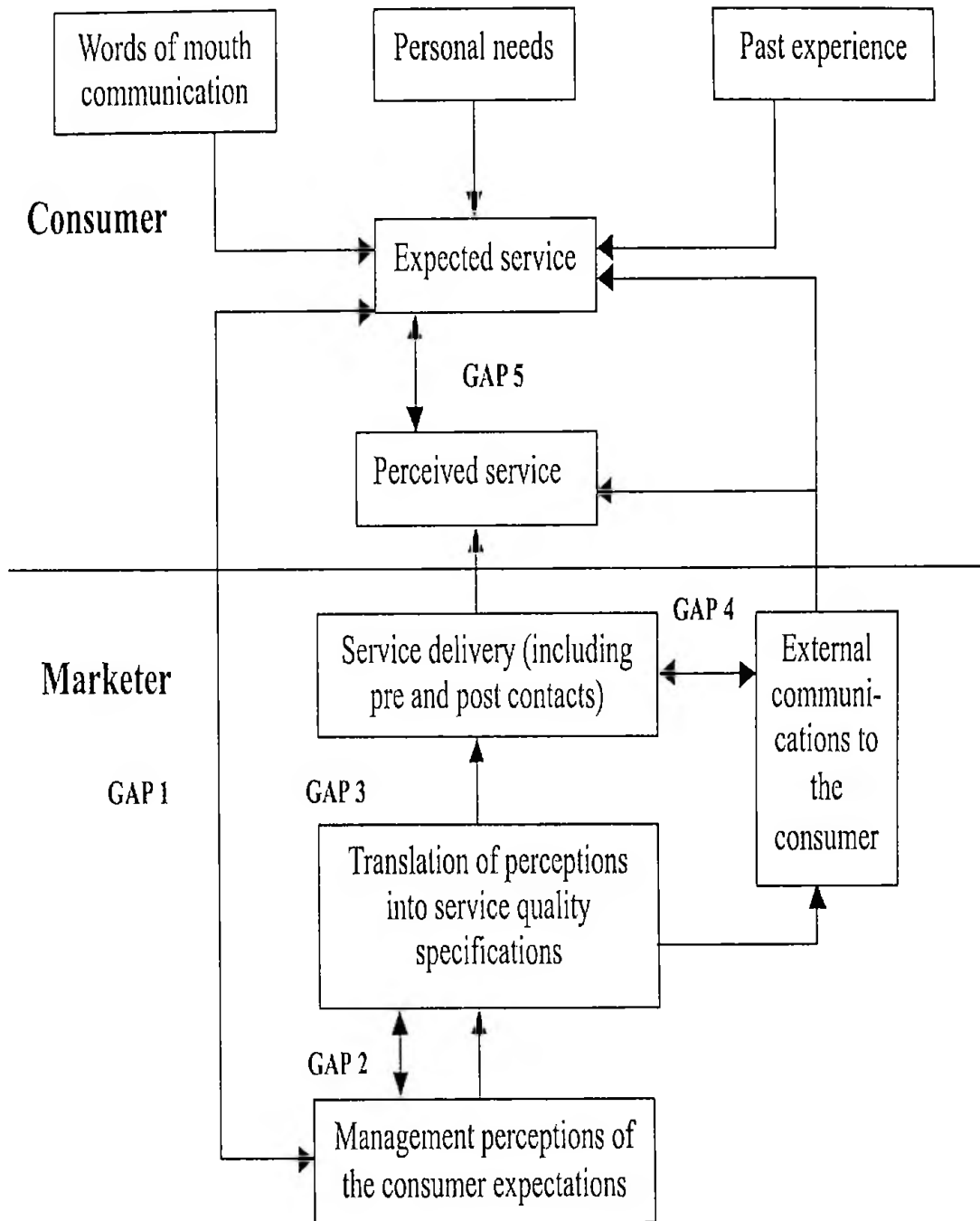
Figure 4: Gap analysis model

Source: Parasuraman et al., 1985

Extended gap model (Luk and Layton, 2002)

While Parasuraman *et al.* (1988) identified five gaps that can result in unsuccessful service delivery; majority of the literature has focused on the fifth gap, which is the difference between customer's expectation and perception of service quality. This study is not limited to the five gaps as Luk & Layton (2002) and Shahin, Dehghan and Albadvi (2006) addressed more gaps. There are two additional gaps that have been identified which were not included in the original service quality model (Lewis, 1987; Luk & Layton, 2002). These gaps are labelled as Gap 6 and Gap 7. Figure 5 depicts the extended gap model with the two additional gaps.

Gap 6 is the discrepancy in the perceptions of customers' expectations of service quality between hotel guests and frontline staff and Gap 7 is the gap between customer expectations of frontline staff and management perceptions of such expectations. Given that gap 5 is a function of gap 1 [Parasuraman *et. al*, 1985), it is logical to assume that as well as gap 1; the presence of these new gaps could also ultimately lead to the occurrence of gap 5 for several reasons (Luk & Layton, 2002).

First, the occurrence of gaps 6 and 7 will enlarge the service delivery gap. Front-line employees holding strong faith in their knowledge of customer expectations will tend to deliver the service deviated from the specifications that were translated on the basis of the management's understanding of customer expectations.
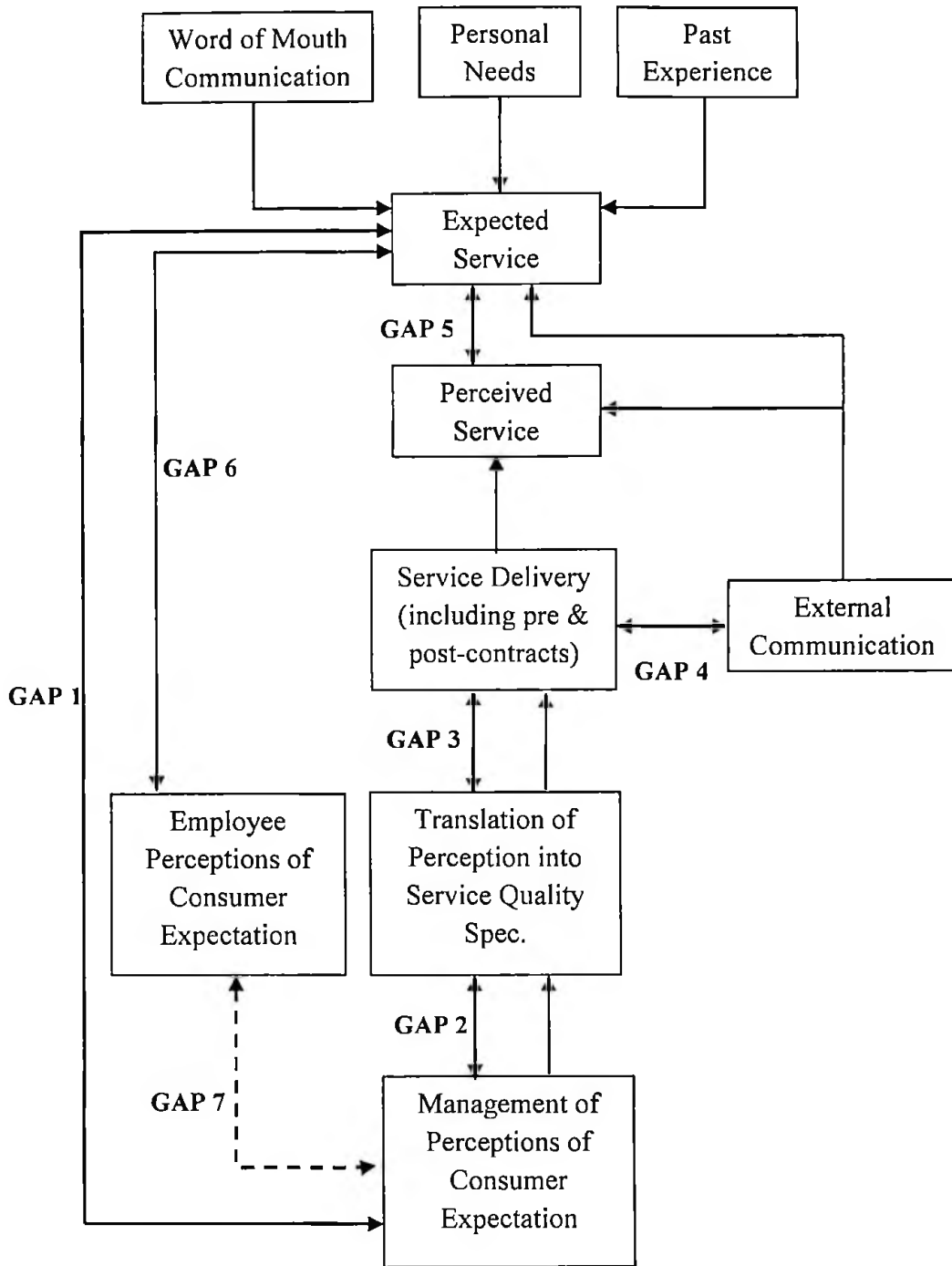
Figure 5: The Extended Gap Model

Source: Luk & Layton, 2002

Second, "when providers and consumers are operating under different perceptions there is a higher likelihood of a low quality evaluation resulting in dissatisfaction" (Brown & Swartz, 1989: 193). Zeithaml *et al.* (1985) also

identified two additional gaps that were not included in the original gaps proposed by Parasuraman *et al.* (1985). These gaps are labelled as gap 6 and gap 7 in Figure 6.
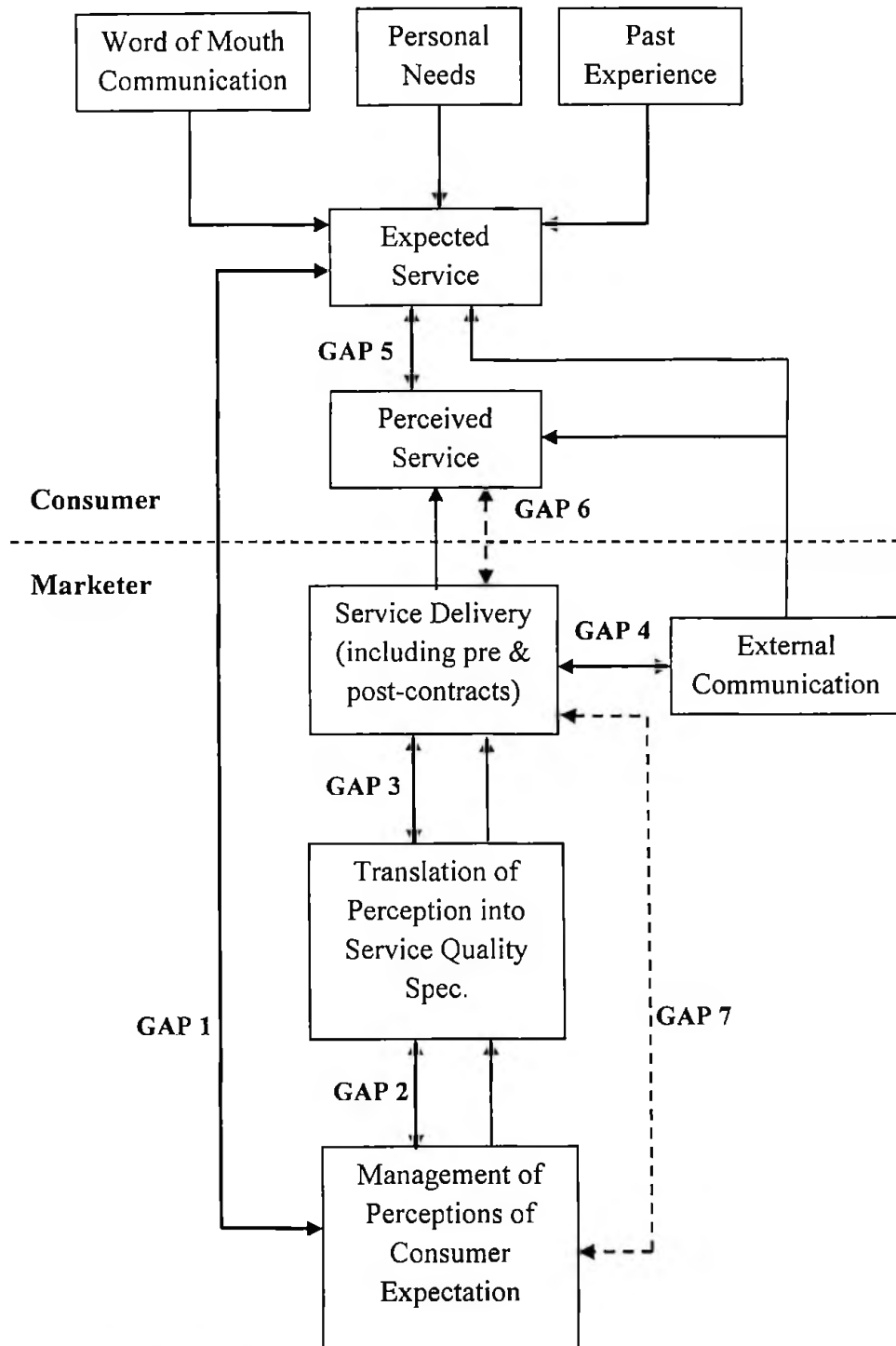
Figure 6: Service Quality Model

Source: Zeithaml et al., 1985

Gap 6 is the difference between consumer expectations of service and what management believes they deliver. This gap according to Zeithaml et al. (1985), is pertinent to the simple question, "Do managers overestimate their organisation's service delivery in meeting consumers' expectations in the hotel industry"? As mentioned in the literature review, some studies (Lewis, 1987; Coyle & Dale, 1993; Tsang & Qu, 2000) found that managers in the hotel industry tended to be very self-assured and they believed they knew best. Thus, they perceived their service delivery as being more successful than customers perceived it to be, in most cases.

Gap 7 is the difference between management perceptions of consumer expectations and management's perception of its service delivery. This gap measures the internal situation: ``Does management believe they deliver as much as they believe customers expect?'' Measuring management perceptions of service quality is just as important as measuring consumers' perceptions, because management perceptions of service quality directly affect service quality standards. Measurement of the gap (Gap 7) between management perceptions of consumer expectations and employees' perceptions of an organization's service quality delivery could bring to light whether or not management has confidence in meeting customers' expectations.

Summary

This chapter looked at the literature related to service quality. Issues discussed in the chapter included the definitions of service, quality and service

quality; concept of service quality, customer expectations in service quality, the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction and service quality in the hospitality and tourism industry. The role of frontline employees in delivering quality service and the dimensions or factors of service quality were discussed in this chapter. Finally, service quality models and theories were also discussed.

CHAPTER THREE

EMPIRICAL ISSUES IN SERVICE QUALITY

Introduction

Chapter Three discusses empirical issues in the study of service quality in the hotel industry. It examines various topics such as the development of the SERVQUAL instrument, variations of the instrument, advantages and criticisms of the instrument. Validity of service quality measures, applications of SERVQUAL in different service industries including the hospitality and tourism industries are also presented in this chapter. Also the difference in guests' expectations and service providers' perceptions of guests' expectations, tools and techniques used in service quality studies and some key findings from previous studies are presented in this chapter. The chapter ends with a discussion of the conceptual framework underpinning the work.

Development of the SERVQUAL instrument

Service quality has been the most researched area of service marketing (Fisk, Brown, & Bitner, 1993). A key point in the service marketing literature began with a series of interviews conducted in the 1980s (Parasuraman *et. al.*, 1985). They undertook an exploratory investigation of service quality by beginning with a series of focus group interviews with consumers and

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executives at four nationally recognized service firms. The researchers were attempting to gain insights into the following areas:

- Service quality attributes as perceived by service firm managers and consumers.

- Common problems and tasks associated with providing high quality service to customers.

- Differences in consumer and service marketers' perceptions of service quality.

- The feasibility of combining consumer and marketer perceptions into one service quality model viewed from the consumer's perception (Parasuraman *et al.,* 1985).

As a result of their research, Parasuraman *et al.,* (1985) concluded that service quality is based on the difference between what the consumer expects, and what they actually receive. Others have used the same definition (Sasser, Olsen, & Wychoff, 1978). Parasuraman and his fellow researchers suggest that service quality must be measured as the difference between the sum of customers' expectations and perceptions of actual performance levels for a set of service attributes (Parasuraman *et al.,* 1985; 1991a). They identified exceeding customer expectations as a way to maximize quality. The higher the performance-minus-expectation score is, the higher the level of perceived service quality.

The SERVQUAL instrument emerged from the Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml research as an often used measure of service quality. This

instrument has been adapted and used in many other service industries. Examples of instruments used include, but are not limited to, industries such as retail (Hui & Toffoli, 2006), local government (Wisniewski, 2001), library service (Cook & Thompson, 2000), hospital service (Lam, 1997), shipping (Durvasula, Lysonski, & Mehta, 2004), and information systems (Jiang, Klein, & Crampton, 2000; Kettinger & Lee, 1997), where the applicability of the instrument has been studied and researchers (Jiang, Klein & Carr, 2002; Jiang *et al.,* 2000; Kettinger & Lee, 1997; Pitt, Watson & Kavan, 1997) argue that it has great potential.

History of service quality assessment

The 1985 Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml article, resulting from in-depth interviews, identified a group of five key gaps that exist with regard to executives' perception of service quality. This began the modern service quality discussion in the marketing discipline. The gaps identified in the 1985 article and a definition of each follows.

Gap1:   Difference between consumer expectations and management perceptions of consumer expectations.

Gap2: Difference between management perceptions of consumer expectations and service quality specifications.

Gap 3: Difference between service quality specifications and the service actually delivered.

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Gap 4: Difference between service delivery and what is communicated about the service to consumers.

Gap 5: Difference between consumer expectations and perceptions of actual service.

The focus groups used in the 1985 article revealed a common set of criteria used in evaluating service quality. These criteria were labelled "service quality determinants" and a brief description of each is as follows:

Reliability involves honouring promises, delivering service on-time, and maintaining a consistent level of performance and dependability. Responsiveness is the willingness of an employee to perform a service in a timely manner. Competence is the possession of the needed skills and knowledge to attain a service goal. Access is the convenience and ease of contacting a service provider. Courtesy involves appearance, politeness, respect, consideration and friendliness of the service provider. Communication is the information, including cost, service level, and problem resolution processes, provided to the service customer (Parasuraman *et al.,* 1985; 1991a).

Credibility of the service provider revolves around keeping the customers' best interest in mind. Credibility entails trustworthiness, believability and honesty. The eighth of the ten determinants is security and is concerned with minimizing or eliminating danger and risk. Understanding/knowing the customer involves taking the time to recognize the needs of the customers, as well as providing individual attention. Lastly,

tangibles include the physical presence of the service such as facilities, personnel appearance, and equipment (Parasuraman *et al.,* 1985; 1991a).

After assessing the determinants and gaps associated with service quality, an instrument was produced which contained 97 items related to expectations of service a customer would expect within a particular service category and 97 items related to a customer's perception of the actual service quality that was received during the last service encounter with a particular service provider (Parasuraman, *et al.,* 1988). The 97 items were constructed based on the ten service quality dimensions determined earlier. The instrument was administered to 200 adult respondents in a large shopping mall. The respondents were segmented across five service categories – appliance repair and maintenance, retail banking, long distance telephone, securities brokerage, and credit cards. The above five service categories were chosen because they were representative of service in general (Lovelock, 1983).

Measurement items were calculated by comparing perceived performance of the service provider and customer expectations. The famous equation, Q=P-E was derived from Gap 5, where Q= perceived service quality, P= perceived service, and E= expected service. According to the equation, the key to maximizing service quality is in maximizing the perceived service – expected service gap. The resulting items were then plotted in rank order by correlation for each dimension. Items with low correlations were removed from the instrument (Parasuraman *et al.,* 1985; 1991a).

An iterative process was undertaken until a final set of 54 items was revealed. Factor analysis was then performed to further investigate. Thirty-four items emerged from the factor analysis representing seven distinct dimensions. Five of the 10 original dimensions remained tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, understanding/knowing customer, and access. The remaining five dimensions, communication, credibility, security, competence, and courtesy, collapsed into two distinct factors labelled D4 and D5 (Parasuraman, *et al.,* 1988).

To further evaluate the instrument, a second sample was selected from a shopping centre in another part of the country. An analysis of the survey data ultimately resulted in a 22 item SERVQUAL after 12 items were removed due to low correlation scores and poor factor loadings. Factor analysis resulted in five factors. The factors Tangibles, Reliability, and Responsiveness remained the same as in the previous analysis. Two new factors were established by collapsing previously established factors together. Assurance evolved as a result of combining D4 and D5, while Empathy emerged from the combining of Understanding/Knowing the Customer and Access (Parasuraman *et al.,* 1985; 1991a).

Items representing the original dimensions of communication, credibility, security, competence, courtesy, understanding/knowing customer, and access, ultimately loaded in the dimensions Assurance and Empathy. Although SERVQUAL resulted in five distinct factors, each of the original 10

dimensions is represented in the instrument. A brief description of the five dimensions follows (Parasuraman, *et al.,* 1988):

Tangibles represent the physical facilities, equipment and appearance of personnel and presence of users. The tangible aspect of a service is one of the few dimensions that potential service patrons can know and evaluate in advance. Reliability refers to the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. Promises made through an organisation's promotional efforts can contribute to customers' expectations. Consistency of performance at the highest standard is crucial to reliability. Responsiveness is the willingness to help customers and provide prompt attention. Hotel guests expect their requests to be handled quickly and accurately. Assurance indicates courteous and knowledgeable employees who convey trust and confidence. Assurance contains elements of the hotel's credibility, competence and security. The empathy dimension includes caring and individual attention to users. Empathy expresses an understanding of customers' needs and wants.

Quantitative tests on the data across multiple industries and stages revealed high reliability in the instrument. Further, a consistent factor was developed, even after returning to the stage one data, removing the 12 items displaced in stage two, and reanalyzing the data. Further tests provide statistical support for validity of the instrument. Ultimately, a 22-item scale was developed, with good reliability and validity that could be used to measure and understand service quality (Parasuraman, et al., 1988).

Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml continued their work into the 1990s with success as well. A zone of tolerance, or the difference between a customer's adequate level of service and their desired level of service, was later discovered (Zeithaml *et al.,* 1993). Evaluating the zone of tolerance required the addition of another SERVQUAL section or column, namely the minimal level of service required. This newer conceptual SERVQUAL model was based on the following two propositions:

1. Customers assess service performance based on two standards: what they desire and what they deem acceptable.

2. A zone of tolerance separates desired service from adequate service (Parasuraman *et al.,* 1985).

In essence, the zone of tolerance is the area in which customers tolerate service levels. As long as customers are in this zone, they are accepting of the level of service currently being received. This zone is apt to fluctuate depending on a number of factors such as price (Zeithaml *et al.,* 1993). For example, an increase in the price of a service may not affect the desired level of service required by a customer although the price increase could require a higher level of adequate service, thus decreasing the size of the zone of tolerance.

Variations of the SERVQUAL instrument

The SERVQUAL instrument is one of the premiere instruments used to measure perceived service quality by customers (Lam, Wong & Yeung, 1997;

Van Dyke, Prybutok, & Kappelman, 1999; Newman, 2001). It has a rich tradition in the marketing literature and has been validated numerous times in a variety of situations.

The original version of SERVQUAL (Parasuraman *et al.,* 1988) consists of two sections, both containing 22 questions. The first section measures service expectations of companies within certain industry. The second section measures the customers' perception about a particular company in that industry.

Several changes were made to the original instrument in 1991. The modifications included:

1. The "should" terminology which contributed to unrealistically high expectation scores. Thus slightly different wording was used to alleviate this potential problem. The revised wording focused on what customers would expect from companies that deliver excellent service. An example of an original and updated item follows. Original item 2. Their physical facilities should be visually appealing. Revised item 2. The physical facilities at excellent telephone companies will be visually appealing.

2. On the perception side of the scale, slight wording changes were made to make items more consistent with the revised expectation items.

3. In the original SERVQUAL format, six of the 22 items were negatively worded. Empirical tests revealed that the negatively worded items could potentially cause problems. Negatively worded items were re-worded in a positive format.

4. Two items were dropped and two were added. The items were substituted to more fully capture the dimensions and to incorporate suggestions made by managers who were involved in pretesting the instrument (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985).

The next SERVQUAL version, in 1994, (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1991) was based on the zone of tolerance concept (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1993). The calculation of the zone of tolerance is achieved by subtracting minimum service from the desired service rating. The addition of minimum service resulted in a third column (in addition to one for perceived service and one for expected or desired service), thus the "three-column format" of SERVQUAL.

The use of gap measures, inherent in all SERVQUAL versions, has been challenged by some researchers (Carr, 2002; Peter, Churchill & Brown, 1993). They argued that service quality, measured with the SERVPERF instrument, should be measured as perceived service quality only due to problems associated with the gap scoring, greater variance explanation with SERVPERF, and the smaller number of items used (Bolton & Drew, 1991; Churchill & Suprenant, 1982; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Cadotte, Woodruff & Jenkins, 1987). A comparison of the SERVQUAL and SERVPERF

instruments provided support for the superiority of SERVPERF (Cronin & Taylor, 1992).

Advantages of SERVQUAL

Several authors (Rohini & Mahadevappa, 2006) have listed the advantages of SERVQUAL as follows:

- It is accepted as a standard for assessing different dimensions of service quality.

- It has been shown to be valid for a number of service situations.

- It has been known to be reliable.

- The instrument is parsimonious in that it has a limited number of items.

- This means that customers and employers can fill it out quickly.

- It has a standardized analysis procedure to aid interpretation and results (Rohini & Mahadevappa, 2006).

Criticisms of the SERVQUAL instrument

Despite its popularity and wide application, SERVQUAL is subject to numerous criticisms, from both the conceptual and the operational aspects. Some researchers, Teas (1993) in particular, has attacked the SERVQUAL instrument "both theoretically and empirically" (Grapentine, 1998). Each of the listed dimensions has different features. Just as dimensions have different influence on the final service quality, so do these features have different influence on the grading of success of a single dimension?

Theoretical criticisms:

- Pattern objections: SERVQUAL is based rather on an affirmation pattern than on the pattern of understanding; it does not manage to tie in with proved economical, statistical and psychological theories.

- Gap model: there is little evidence that the consumer evaluates service quality in the sense of perception – expectation gaps.

- Direction to the process: SERVQUAL is directed to the process of service delivery and not to the result of service experience.

- Dimensionality: the five dimensions of SERVQUAL are not universal; the number of dimensions that encompass service quality is connected to the context; there is a high degree of inter-correlation between RATER dimensions. RATER is a mnemonic acronym where R = reliability, A = assurance, T = tangibles, E = empathy and R = responsiveness. No clear pattern of factors across industries has been established. Babakus and Boller (1992) were of the view that the dimensionality of service quality may depend on the type of services under study. Since dimensionality results have yet to be consistent between researches, it is important for researchers to continue to compare factor structures across different samples (Kettinger & Lee, 1997).

Operative criticisms:

– Expectations: the term 'expectations' has multiple meanings; in evaluating services consumers use standards instead of expectations; SERVQUAL cannot measure the absolute expectations of service quality.

– Content of the elements: four out of five elements cannot encompass the variability inside each dimension of service quality.

– Moment of truth: the consumer's rating of the service can vary from one to the next moment of truth.

– Polarity: the reverse polarity of the scale elements causes wrong reactions.

– Scale grading: Likert's scale with 7 ratings is inadequate.

– Dual administration: dual administration of instruments causes boredom and confusion.

The most important criticism of SERVQUAL was the usage of gap analysis results (difference between expectations and perception of the received service) in measuring service quality (Cronin & Taylor, 1992, 1994). Comparing the expectation-perception gaps with perception only, called SERVPERF, Cronin and Taylor (1994) concluded that measurement of service quality based only on perception was enough. Carman (1990) argued that SERVQUAL could not be a generic measure that could be applied to any service. It has to be customized to the specific industry.

Validity of service quality measures

Survey validity is concerned with the "extent to which a particular measure relates to other measures consistent with theoretically derived hypotheses concerning the concepts that are being measured" (Carmines & Zeller, 1979, p. 23). Specifically, convergent validity measures the extent to which a measure correlates highly with other measures that are used to measure the same construct. Parasuraman *et al.* (1988) used ANOVA to investigate the instrument's convergent validity by examining the relationship between the SERVQUAL scores and an overall service quality rating of the firm being evaluated. Results indicated support for SERVQUAL's convergent validity across four independent samples. Discriminant validity measures the extent to which a measure is "novel and does not simply reflect some other variable" (Churchill, Jr., 1979). Cronin and Taylor (1992), in their study of service quality across four industries (banking, pest control, dry cleaning, and fast food), showed that the three service quality scales (SERVQUAL, SERVPERF, and overall service quality items) correlated more closely with one other that with measures of overall service quality, satisfaction, and purchase intention.

Based on the convergent and discriminant validity tests performed, it has been suggested that caution should be exercised when using the SERVQUAL instrument. A consistent pattern of validity is yet to be established. Moreover, it appears that the perception scores provide a better

means of measuring service quality (Brady & Cronin, 2001; Cronin *et al.,* 1992; Cronin & Taylor, 1994).

The gap nature of the scores produced with the SERVQUAL instrument is another area of concern (Peter *et al.,* 1993). Research indicates that the gap nature of the SERVQUAL scores tends to cause reliability and validity problems (Peter *et al.,* 1993). Reliability of difference or gap scores are dependent on their component scores' reliability and their correlation to each other. The reliability of difference scores is decreased as the correlation of the component scores increase. However, SERVQUAL is still regarded as the leading measure of service quality (Lam & Woo, 1997; Mittal & Lassar, 1998). Asubonteng *et al.,* (1996) concluded in their study that until a better but equally simple model emerges, SERVQUAL will predominate as a service quality measure. Alexandris, Dimitriadis and Markata (2002) also reported that SERVQUAL is a good approach for assessing practical issues of service quality in the hotel industry.

Applications of SERVQUAL in other service industries

The development of SERVQUAL framework marked an important point in service quality research. Several researchers attempted to apply this framework to myriad industries and sectors including healthcare services (Rohini & Mahadevappa, 2006; Ramsaran-Fowdar, 2007). An examination of the literature on services similar to hotels like banking, healthcare and other service sectors would shed light on the various factors of service quality, which

would impact the customers' perception of service quality and their satisfaction.

Applications of SERVQUAL to banking

Al-Tamimi and Amiri (2003) applied SERVQUAL framework to UAE banks in Dubai and Abu Dhabi to determine that all the dimensions had a significant impact on overall service quality. Gan, Clemes, Linsombunchai and Weng (2006) used only three dimensions of the SERVQUAL model, namely; reliability, assurance and responsiveness, in their study on customers' choice in electronic and non-electronic banking organizations. Several authors (Sureshchander, Rajendran & Anatharaman 2002) developed their own instrument to measure service quality.

Applications of SERVQUAL to healthcare

Brown and Swartz (1989) evaluated medical services from both the provider and customer perspectives by conducting a gap analysis and revealed that physician interaction was the most significant independent variable influencing customer satisfaction. Tucker and Adams (2001) used caring, empathy, reliability and responsiveness as service quality dimensions of the US hospital services in their study. Curry and Sinclair (2002) tested the applicability of SERVQUAL model to healthcare services. They found that the patients appreciated the services even though the gap scores were slightly negative which indicated that negative score was because of higher expectation

and not due to lower perception. Jabnoun and Chaker (2003) compared the service quality perceptions of patients between private and public hospitals in the UAE. They found reliability, responsiveness, supporting skills, empathy and tangibles to be the dimensions of the service offered and also discovered that private and public hospitals significantly differed in terms of all these dimensions except supporting skills.

Applications of SERVQUAL in other service sectors

Natalisa and Subroto (2003) employed SERVQUAL dimensions in their study on airline service quality in Indonesia, and determined that assurance had the strongest effect on customer's satisfaction. Mai (2005) examined the differences in student satisfaction in higher education between UK and the USA. The students in UK rated most of the service quality attributes significantly less than their USA counterparts. Chen and Lee (2006) used importance-performance analysis to determine the quality attributes leading to students' satisfaction in dormitory services. This study showed that management of the dormitories could increase its students' satisfaction if it provided television programmes and lowered its fee. Tsoukatos and Rand (2006) customized SERVQUAL and applied to Greek insurance industry, and found that dimensionality of service quality was different from that proposed by Parasuraman *et al.* (1988). All the non-tangible factors merged together to form a single dimension whereas tangibles form another dimension.

Application of SERVQUAL in hospitality and tourism

One of the earliest works in the hotel industry was an exploratory study by Akan (1995) that examined the relevance of SERVQUAL (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985) in Turkey hotels. The study identified new dimensions (such as accuracy or speed of service, solutions to problems, communication and transactions), and determined their importance to the customers. Alexandris *et al.* (2002) also applied SERVQUAL framework in Greece hotels, and found that tangibles received the highest mean value followed by the assurance-dimension. Akama and Kieti (2003) measured tourist satisfaction in Kenya. They used SERVQUAL instrument to operationalize service quality, and considered two additional dimensions, namely, price and perceived value, apart from the five SERVQUAL dimensions. Lau *et al,.* (2006) in their study on luxury hotels in Malaysia used SERVQUAL scale to evaluate the hotel services, and found that the tangibility factor was of utmost importance in hospitality services. A study by Nadiri and Hussain (2005) in North Cyprus revealed a two dimensional structure of service quality comprising tangibles and intangibles, instead of five dimensions. Table 2 depicts some examples of applications of the SERVQUAL scale in the lodging industry, especially hotels.

Table 2: Examples of applications of the SERVQUAL scale in hotels

Researchers and year of study	Focus	Comments
Knuston et al.(1992)	Hotels and motels	Modified SEVQUAL scale called LODGSERV(26 items)
Fick and Ritchie (1991)	Airlines, hotels, restaurants, ski areas	Modified SERVQUAL scale(33items) Modified SERVQUAL scale(19 items)
Getty and Thompson (1994)	Lodging industry	Modified SERVQUAL scale called LODGQUAL
Saleh and Ryan (1991)	Hotels	Modified SERVQUAL scale(33 items)
Akan(1995)	Hotels	Modified SERVQUAL scale (30 items)
Patton et al.(1994)	Hotels	Application of LODGSERV
Gabbie and O'Neill(1996, 1997)	Hotels	Modified SERVQUAL scale perceptions only
Suh, Lee, Park & Shin (1997)	Hotels	
O'Neil, Williams, MacCarthy & Groves (2000)	Hotels	Modified SERVQUAL scale (35 minutes)
Qu and Tsang (2000)	Hotels	Modified SERVQUAL scale called HOLSTAT
Ingram and Daskalakis (1999)	Hotels	Modified SERVQUAL scale(21 items)
Wong & Sohal (2002)	Hotels	Modified SERVQUAL scale (27 items)
Juwaheer & Ross (2003)	Hotels	Modified SERVQUAL scale (39 items)

Sources: Based on literature review

The difference between guests' expectations and their perceptions of service quality

Juwaheer and Ross (2003) in a study of hotel guest perceptions in Rohini & Mahadevappa, 2006Mauritius concluded that the overall customers' perceptions of service quality provided by the hotel industry were below guests' expectations. Renganathan (2011) also found out in his study in India that perceptions of service quality were far lower than that of expectations. Tsang and Qu (2000) compared tourists' actual perceptions of service quality with their expectations, using the paired t-test; they found a statistically significant difference on 21 of the 35 attributes examined. Their results indicated that, overall, the hotels were not doing a good job in meeting tourists' expectations. The biggest gaps were on attributes like "quietness of room", "adequacy of fire safety facilities", "staff performing services right the first time", "cleanliness of room" and "reasonable room rate/value for money". And the overall service quality provided by the hotel industry in China fell below tourist expectations. Juwaheer and Ross (2003) studied hotel guests' perceptions of service quality in Mauritius and intimated that the perception scores of all the nine dimensions of service quality were higher than the expectation scores. It was revealed that hotels in Mauritius were not meeting their guests' expectations of service quality.

A study by Mohsin and Lockyer (2010) found statistically significant differences in importance and performance evaluation responses of the hotel guests. Mohsin, Hussain and Khan (2011) explored service quality in luxurious

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hotels in Pakistan. The results of their study indicated that expectation scores were far above the perception scores of service quality. Panuel and Zumman (2013) examined the gap between service quality expectation and perception of walk-in guests of economic hotels in Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh. Their results showed that guests' expectation exceeded the perceived level of service shown by the perception scores. Markovic and Raspor (2010) study in Croatia also revealed high expectations of hotel guests regarding service quality. They found that 'reliability,' 'empathy and competence of staff,' 'accessibility' and 'tangibles' are the key factors that best explained customers' expectations of hotel service quality.

Most service quality studies in the hotel industry have revealed similar findings (Nadiri & Hussain, 2005; Lau *et al.*, 2005; Alexandris *et al.*, 2002; Zeithaml *et al.*, 1998; Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988; Czepiel *et al.*, 1985; Choi & Chu, 2000; Karatepe & Avci, 2002; Atilgan, Ekinci & Aksoy, 2003; Arasli, Katircioglu & Mehtap-Smadi, 2005; Mohsin & Lockyer, 2010; Mohsin, Hussain & Khan, 2011; Ukwayin, Eja & Unwanede, 2012; Faizan, Khan & Rehman, 2012; Browning, So, Kam & Sparks, 2012). Alin (2010), on the other hand, revealed a positive gap between customers' expectations and perceptions which means that perceptions were higher than expectations.

The difference in guests' expectations and service providers' perceptions of guests' expectations

A number of studies have shown that there are considerable differences in expectations of service quality between customers and management in the hotel industry. Nightingale (1985) posited very strong evidence that management perceptions of service quality frequently differ from the perceptions of customers, colleagues and staff. Lewis (1987) measured the service quality gap in the hotel industry, comparing management perceptions of guest expectations and the actual expectations of the guests themselves, and found that, for the most part, management believed that guests expected more than they in fact did. Nel and Pit (1993) had a similar result as Lewis (1987) and found that management had a reasonably good understanding of customer expectations. Luk and Laytion (2002) study also revealed a gap between hotel guests, service providers (frontline staff) and managements' perceptions of guests' expectations of service quality in the hotel industry. Tsang and Qu (2000) again made a similar finding to support this.

Dimensions of service quality in the hotel industry

Mei, Dean and White (1999), examined the dimensions of service quality in the hospitality industry by extending the SERVQUAL scale to include eight new items that specifically pertained to the hospitality industry, which they referred to as HOLSERV. Specifically, their study sought to test the reliability and validity of a customized SERVQUAL scale; establish the

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number of dimensions of service quality in the hospitality industry; and determine which dimension is the best predictor of overall service quality. Hotel guests were used as the research units to obtain data from five hotels. To establish the validity of the HOLSERV scale, a confirmatory analysis was performed. Factor analysis was also performed to explore the dimensions of service quality in the hospitality industry and the results subjected to varimax rotation. Key findings of the study were that service quality is represented by three dimensions in the hospitality industry, relating to employees (behaviour and appearance), tangibles and reliability, and the best predictor of overall service quality is the dimensions referred to as "employees". The findings also showed that the one-column format questionnaire provides a valid and reliable, but much shorter, survey.

Shahin and Dabestani (2010) in their study using correlation analysis, sought to assess the service quality gaps based on expectations and perceptions of guests in a four-star hotel in Isfahan, Iran. The gaps were measured based on a comprehensive set of service quality dimensions. The key findings emerging from the study were that almost all of the service quality gaps came out positive and "price" was observed to be a service quality dimension that has the highest positive value. "Communication" was also observed as having the highest correlation with other service quality dimensions.

Juwaheer and Ross (2004) studied international tourists' perceptions of hotels in Mauritius by using a modified SERVQUAL approach. Specifically, the study aimed to develop the underlying dimensions of hotel service quality

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or hotel service factors; examine the relative impact of the derived hotel factors in influencing the overall level of service quality; and determine the specific dimensions of service quality which have the greatest impact on the choice intentions (probability of returning). Using a principal component factor analysis with a varimax rotation technique, this study identified nine hotel factors out of 39 hotel attributes, and determined the levels of satisfaction among international tourists and their overall evaluation of service quality prevailing in the hotels. Results from a regression analysis suggested that the overall level of service quality is primarily derived from the 'reliability' factor.

In a study on the measurement of service quality in the hotel industry by Yilmaz (2009), the main objective was to measure hotel service quality performance from the customer perspective. To do so, a performance-only measurement scale (SERVPERF) was administered to 234 customers who stayed in 3-star, 4-star and 5-star hotels in Cappadocia in Turkey. The results of the study demonstrated that SERVPERF was a reliable and valid tool to measure service quality in the hotel industry. The instrument consisted of four dimensions, namely "tangibles", "assurance-responsiveness", "empathy", and "reliability". An exploratory factor analysis was performed in order to assess the dimensionality of the instrument. The principal component analysis with varimax rotation was also employed. Regression analysis was then used to investigate the relative importance of the four service quality factors in predicting overall service quality. Among the key findings were that hotel customers were expecting more improved services from hotels in all service

quality dimensions; hotel customers have the lowest perception scores on tangibles; and empathy is the most important dimension in predicting hotel customers' overall service quality evaluation.

Nadiri & Hussain (2005) studied the perceptions of service quality in North Cyprus hotels. This study aimed at diagnosing the applicability of the perceived service quality measurement scale to European customers in a new emerging North Cyprus market. They used non-probability, convenience sampling technique to select the study sample, which consisted of European tourists visiting North Cyprus hotels. Data was collected using a survey instrument adopted from Parasuraman *et al.* (1988) and means, standard deviation and frequencies were calculated. Regression analysis was also employed to observe the causal effect of independent variables to customer satisfaction. Reliability issues were tested and the dimensionality of scale was confirmed through an exploratory factor analysis. Among the key findings was that only two dimensions (tangibles and intangibles) were identified. The results also revealed that tangibles and intangibles exert a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction.

In another study conducted by Lau *et al.* (2005) on service quality in luxury hotels in Malaysia, the specific objectives were to determine the service quality attributes that constitute fundamental service quality dimensions in evaluating hotel operations; examine and compare the relative importance attached by customers in terms of their expectations and perceptions by type of hotels; and identify the role of service quality towards customer satisfaction in

the hospitality industry. To be able to measure these, the researchers applied a modified version of the SERVQUAL model, but maintained the five SERVQUAL dimensions. The systematic sampling method was used to select the study sample. The reliability of the instrument was tested by using the Cronbach alpha reliability test, and statistical tools such as means, ANOVA and regression analysis were used to analyse the data. The findings indicated, as whole, that the hotel customers' perceptions of service quality provided by the hotel industry were lower than their expectations, and the gaps between customers' expectations and perceptions were significant.

Markovic and Raspor (2010) sought to examine customers' perceptions of service quality. The specific objectives were to assess the perceived service quality of hotel attributes and to determine the factor structure of service quality perception. A modified SERVQUAL scale was used to assess service quality perceptions from the perspective of domestic and international tourists. Data were collected in 15 hotels in the Opatija Riviera (Croatia), using a self-administered questionnaire. Descriptive statistical analysis, exploratory factor analysis and reliability analysis were conducted. The study results indicated the rather high expectations of hotel guests regarding service quality. 'Reliability', 'empathy and competence of staff', 'accessibility' and 'tangibles' were the key factors that best explained customers' expectations of hotel service quality.

Akbaba (2006) investigated the service quality expectations of business hotels' customers and examined whether the quality dimensions included in the SERVQUAL model applied in an international environment; search for any

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additional dimensions that should be included in the service quality construct; and measure the level of importance of each specific dimension for the customers of the business hotels. The findings of this study confirmed the five-dimensional structure of SERVQUAL. However, some of the dimensions found and their components were different from SERVQUAL. The five service quality dimensions identified in this study were named as "tangibles", "adequacy in service supply", "understanding and caring", "assurance", and "convenience". The findings showed that business travellers had the highest expectations for the dimension of "convenience" followed by "assurance", "tangibles", adequacy in service supply", and "understanding and caring".

The research findings also confirmed that although the SERVQUAL scale was a very useful tool as a concept, it needed to be adapted for the specific service segments and for the cultural context within which it was used. Table 3 shows some of the factors or dimensions of service quality from previous studies as discussed above.

Table 3: Dimensions of service quality from literature

Researcher (s) and year of study	Objective of evaluation	Instrument	Dimensions	Relative Importance of dimensions
Parasuraman et al., (1988)	Services	SERVQUAL	5 Dimensions: Tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy	Not applicable
Mei et al. (1999)	Hotels	Modified SEVQUAL scale	3 Dimensions: Employees, tangibles and reliability	Employees
Raymond and Choi (2001)	Hotels	Modified SERVQUAL scale	7 Dimensions: Staff service quality, room qualities, general amenities, business services, value and IDD facilities	Staff service quality, room qualities and value
Juwaheer and Ross (2003)	Hotels	Modified SERVQUAL scale	2 Dimensions: Assurance and reliability	Assurance and Reliability

Table 3 (Continued)

Nadiri & Hussain (2005)	Hotels	Adopted SERVQUAL scale	2 Dimensions: Tangibles and Intangibles	Tangibles and intangibles
Akbaba (2006)	Hotels	Modified SERVQUAL scale	5 Dimensions: Tangibles, adequacy in service supply, understanding and caring, assurance and convenience	Not applicable
Vijayadurai (2008)	Hotels	Modified SERVQUAL scale	Service delivery, Tangibles, Reliability, Assurance, Responsiveness, Empathy, Service product and Social responsibility.	Not applicable
Shahin & Dabestani (2010)	Hotels	Modified SERVQUAL scale		Price and communication
Markovic & Raspor (2010)	Hotels	Modified SERVQUAL scale	4 Dimensions: Reliability, empathy and competence of staff, accessibility and tangibles	Not applicable
Amissah, 2013	Hotels	Adopted SERVQUAL scale	4 Dimensions: Empathy, reliability, tangibility and assurance	Empathy and reliability

Source: Literature Review

Demographic characteristics and service quality

Kotler (2003) noted that demographic characteristics were one of the most popular and well-accepted bases for segmenting consumers. Demographic information is often the most accessible and cost effective way to identify a target market. Demographic characteristics are easier to measure than any other segmentation variables; they are invariably included in psychographics and socio-cultural studies because they add meaning to the findings (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004). These variables are the most popular bases for distinguishing customer groups (Kotler 2003). Several researchers found that tourists' images differed according to different demographic characteristics (Walmsley &Young, 1998; Baloglu, 1997; MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997; Walmsley & Jenkins, 1993). Skogland & Siguaw (2004) proposed that demographic variables positively influenced customer satisfaction.

The literature suggests that hotel managers should not overlook the importance of the effect of demographic factors on customer perceptions of behavioural intentions, satisfaction, service quality, value, image, and the dimensions of service quality (Al-Sabbahy & Ekinci, 2004; Shergill & Sun, 2004; Skogland & Siguaw, 2004). According to Renganathan (2011), demographic variables like age, sex, income, highest qualification, are the significant predictors of hotel guests perceptions and expectations for the SERVQUAL dimensions tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy.

Indeed, in consumer behaviour literature, personal characteristics are one of the major factors determining consumer decision-making and subsequent behaviours. Therefore, it is logically assumed that customers with different individual characteristics have different reasons for behaving the way they do. For example, demographic variables such as age and education have been found to exert an important influence on the overall perception of service quality (Kim & Lough, n.d). Also, Customers with higher income have selected ambience and comfort level as their determinant selection variables (Kivela, 1997).

Abdullah and Hamdan (2012) proved that age, marital status, gender, ethnicity, occupation and monthly income influenced how Malaysians and other foreign guests in Malaysia selected their hotel accommodation. In addition, Raza et. al. (2012) proved that in Romania gender has no significant difference in terms of frequency of visit and overall satisfaction, while satisfaction varies with different income groups. Socio-economic status may also affect customer satisfaction and that of loyalty. In the study of Iyiade (2009), high socio-economic hotel guests in Nigeria were found to spend more during their stay in the hotel, but they are not easily satisfied and thus have low loyalty level.

Mattila, Grandey and Fisk (2003) and Snipes, Thompson and Oswaild (2006) argue that there can be gender differences in customer perceptions about service quality. Similarly, Sanchez-Hernandez et al. (2010) found differences between men and women in the association of perceptions of

service quality with customer evaluation. Butler, Sharon & Turner (1996) showed that females perceived a higher level of hospital service quality than males. The literature also explains the differences in consumption behaviour related to gender, through differences either biological, attitudinal or personality traits of masculinity and femininity distinguishing male from female (Fisher & Arnold, 1994). While referring to literature, very few studies were found concerning service quality perceptions and occupation. However, observations made by researchers such as, Tsang and Qu (2002) in China; Nadiri and Hussain (2005) in Cyprus and Yilmaz (2009) indicate that hotel guests are mostly professionals. For example, Yilmaz (2009) in a study on service quality in the hotel industry in Cappadocia, found out that most of the hotel clients were professionals.

Conceptual framework of the study

The conceptual framework guiding this research is based on the Composite service quality model which is a fusion of Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry's (1988) Gap model; Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons' (1998) Perceived service quality model; Service quality model by Zeithml *et al.*, 1990 and Luk and Layton's (2002) Extended gap model. A composite framework combining some aspects of existing frameworks (perceived service quality model, service quality model, gap model and extended gap model) was developed for the study. In this sense, a comprehensive framework incorporating all the relevant variables as constructs pertaining to the study

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was expounded. Thus, a conceptual framework for hotel service quality, based on the literature review and discussions is presented in Figure 7.

The Gap model was selected because Gap 5 (the expectations-perceptions gap) is relevant to the current study. The perceived service quality model was also selected because it has variables relevant to the current study such as perceived service quality, service quality dimensions, satisfaction and factors (customers socio-demographic characteristics, word-of-mouth and past experience) influencing expectations. Furthermore, the service quality model and the extended gap model were selected because of the variables of frontline and managements' perceptions of customers' expectations (gaps 6 and 7), which are also relevant to the current study.

Therefore, in developing the conceptual framework for the study, the relevant aspects of the four models, as discussed in Chapter Two, were adopted for the study. The framework conceptualizes service quality to be influenced by the difference between expected service and perceived service, based on the five service quality dimensions (Parasuraman *et al.,* 1988).

The first four gaps (Gap 1, Gap 2, Gap 3 and Gap 4) affect the way in which service is delivered, and the existence of these four gaps leads to the extent of Gap 5. In other words, the extent of Gap 5 depends on the size and direction of the first four gaps. However, Gap 2, Gap 3 and Gap 4 are not relevant to the research scope of the present study.
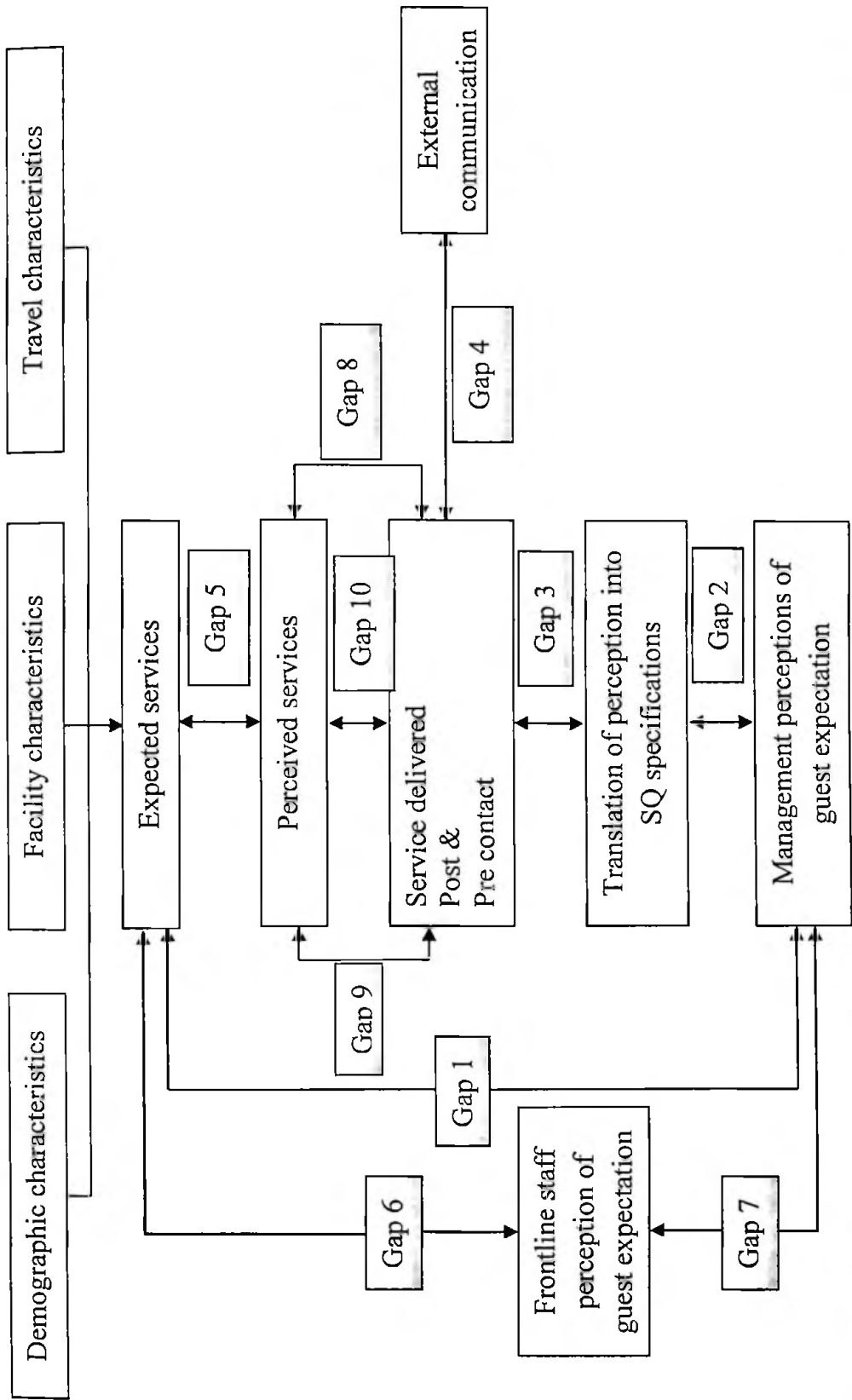
Figure 7: Composite Service Quality Framework
Source : Adapted from Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry's (1988); Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons' (1998); Zeithml *et al.*, 1990 and Luk and Layton (2002)

The principal focus of this study is Gap 5 and Gap 1 from the Gap model (Parasuraman *et al.,* 1988), the two additional gaps (Gap 6 and Gap 7) which are identified in the extended gap model by Luk and Layton (2002) and gaps 6 and 7 from the service quality model (Zeithaml *et al.,* 1988) renumbered as gaps 8 and 9 respectively.

Each of these gaps (Gap 5, Gap 1, Gap 6, Gap 7, Gap 8 and Gap 9) is discussed and elaborated in the following sections and presented as the conceptual framework in Figure 7.

Gap 5: Perceived Service Quality Gap

Measurement of the gap (Gap 5) between consumers' expectations and their perceptions of service quality delivery has become the principal focus of much research in the marketing literature. An analysis of this gap may provide management with important insights about how well their service performance meets or exceeds the expectations of consumers. According to Tsang and Qu (2000), a study of Gap 5 is an extremely useful tool for management in monitoring the service delivery in the hotel industry. Thus, it was important to test guests' perceptions (actual experience) to see whether service quality provided by the hotel industry in Ghana was meeting, exceeding or falling below guests expectations

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Gap 1: Management's perceptions of customer expectations (Understanding Gap)

This gap is pertinent to a critical question: "Do managers understand what guests expect from service quality in the hotel industry in Ghana?" Management perceptions about what customers expect from service quality should ideally be congruent with the expectations expressed by customers (Tsang & Qu, 2000). According to them, most senior management executives have the authority and responsibility for setting service priorities and for designing and developing service quality standards, so, if they do not fully understand what customers expect, they might trigger a chain of bad decisions, resulting in poor perceived service quality.

Gap 6 is the difference between consumer expectations of service quality and what frontline employees believe guests expect. This gap is important in addressing frontline employees understanding of what customers expect from a service delivery in order to meet customer expectations of service quality in the hotel industry. Frontline service providers may misunderstand exactly what customers want (Mohr & Bitner, 1991). According to Luk and Layton (2002), Hebert (1995) found a significant gap between frontline service personnel and customers' expectations on service encounter. To him, such discrepancies can jeopardize the interactions between these two parties and thus, result in poor service quality delivery. Although frontline service personnel deliver service in accordance with an organisation's service

specifications, they may modify the delivery process of the specifications based on their understanding of what guests expect.

Gap 7 measures the difference between frontline employees' and management's perceptions or understanding of customer expectations. This gap measures the internal situation of understanding. Derrick *et al* (1989) as cited in Luk and Layton (2002) investigated the perceptions of quality across three levels of employees (senior management executives, middle management staff and frontline staff) in a number of industries. Their findings revealed that although there was similarity in the perception of service quality at each level of employees within organizations, a consensus on the meaning of quality was lacking. George and Tan (1993) also found a gap in the perceptions of restaurant employees and management on the level of importance of some selected service quality attributes.

Gap 8 is the difference between consumer perception of service quality delivered and what frontline employees believe they deliver. This gap is pertinent to the simple question, "Do frontline employees understand what customers expect from a service delivery in order to meet customer expectations of service quality in the hotel industry?"

Gap 9: The difference between consumer expectations of service quality and what managers believe they deliver. This gap, like gap 8, also answers the simple question, "Do managers understand what customers expect from a service delivery in order to meet customer expectations of service quality in the hotel industry?" Some studies (Lewis, 1987; Coyle & Dale,

1993) found that employees and managers in the hotel industry tended to be very self-assured and they believed they knew best. Thus, they perceived their service delivery as being more successful than customers perceived it to be, in most cases.

Gap 10 also measures the difference between frontline employees' perceptions and management perceptions of service performance. This gap measures the internal consistency: "Does management believe they deliver as much as frontline staff believes?" Measuring management and frontline personnel's perceptions of service quality is just as important as measuring consumers' perceptions because management and frontline service providers' perceptions of service quality directly affect service quality standards and delivery process. Measurement of this gap (Gap 10) between management and frontline staffs' perceptions of their performance will help in finding out whether their organization is really delivering up to or exceeding guests' expectations.

These seven gaps (Gap 5, Gap 1, Gap 6, Gap 7, Gap 8, Gap 9 and Gap 10) could provide better insights for hotel managers to evaluate and identify service quality problems. By understanding the extent and direction of these three gaps, managers would be able to identify whether their services were exceeding, meeting or falling below customers' expectations, and would gain clues about how to close any gaps.

Summary

The chapter discussed some of the empirical issues in the study of service quality in the hotel industry. Topics such as the development of the SERVQUAL instrument, variations of the instrument, advantages and criticisms of the instrument were presented. The validity of service quality measures, applications of SERVQUAL in different service industries as well as the hospitality and tourism industries were also presented in the chapter. Also the difference in guests' expectations and service providers' perceptions of guests' expectations, tools and techniques used in service quality studies and dimensions of service quality from previous studies were elaborated in this chapter. The chapter concluded with a discussion of the conceptual framework of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology used in this study. It describes the methods and procedures used in conducting the research. The chapter also covers the research design, study area, data sources and types, target population, sampling size and procedures. The chapter further looks at the research instruments, data collection process and analysis, ethical issues and problems (logistical), and limitations (method and instruments) encountered on the field. The conceptual framework underlining the work is also presented in this chapter.

Research philosophy

This study employed the positivist approach in social science. Positivism is affiliated to quantitative social science research which is based on the principle of objectivity. Quantitative research is, therefore, the main approach in positivism. In understanding the social world, positivists regard the reality as objective and as such can be understood by systematic enquiry and investigation through the generation of theory. Over the years, positivism has been challenged by other emerging schools of thought including symbolic interactionism, phenomenology, philosophical hermeneutics and ethno-

methodology. The theoretical basis of positivism, especially its methodology and its perception of social reality has been questioned. The main criticism against positivism is that the mathematical and statistical methods were suitable for the natural sciences but not the social sciences.

According to the positivist philosophy, reality is 'out there' and can, thus, be perceived through the experiences of the senses. It is reductionistic in character; in that, the intent is to reduce ideas into small, discrete set of variables that can help to explain causes and effects in the study of any phenomenon. As a social phenomenon, service quality involves both causes and effects which can be measured quantitatively. For instance, data on background, expectations and perceptions can be obtained using survey questionnaire and the results can be obtained through the use of both descriptive and inferential statistics.

According to Healy and Perry (2000), positive social scientists are united in their attempt to understand and explain the sensory world in objective, logical, factual, and observational terms. This is on the ground that the social world is ordered and governed by strict, natural and unchangeable laws since all members of a society share the same meaning of reality (Sarantakos, 1997; 2005). For example, through the study of a particular group of people, a pattern of behaviour could be predicted. Such behaviour, thus, becomes the reality of life for those people. As summed up by Babbie (2007), "positivism has generally represented the belief in a logically ordered, objective reality that we can come to know better and better through science".

Research design

Research design refers to the overall strategy that you choose to integrate the different components of a study in a coherent and logical way thereby ensuring you will effectively address the research problem; it constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data (Sekaran, 2003). Creswell (2007) also postulates that research design is a systematic plan to study a scientific problem while Bryman (2004) posits that it provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data. To him, the types of research design include experimental, case study, longitudinal, comparative and cross-sectional. The current study employed the cross-sectional design. This design, according to Bryman (2004), entails the collection of data on more than one case and at a single point in time in order to collect a body of quantitative or quantifiable data in connection with two or more variables, which are then examined to detect patterns of association. Thus, the study was descriptive, correlational and exploratory research techniques. Descriptive research attempts to describe a problem or service (Creswell, 2005) and attempts to answer questions of what, where, when and how. In this study, service quality dimensions or attributes were described from customers and service providers' perspectives. Correlational research, on the other hand, establishes or discovers the relationship or interdependence between two or more variables. The study attempted to establish the relationship between guests' socio-demographic characteristics, their expectations of service quality and the organizational characteristics and

knowledge of guests' needs and wants. It is also exploratory because very little is known empirically in the area of service quality in hotels in the study area.

This study investigated the relationships among the research constructs, using survey as a method of investigation. The variables of the study were socio-demographic and organizational characteristics of guests and service providers respectively as well as service quality factors which include tangibles, overall room values, front office services, responsiveness, empathy, food and beverage services and availability of other services. The hypotheses of the study were established based on literature and the conceptual framework, and they were set up to check whether the relationships between variables in the framework are supported or not

Sources of data

Both primary and secondary data was used for the study. Primary data was collected from the field through the use of survey questionnaires. The secondary data were obtained from The Ghana Tourism Authority, Hoteliers Association of the study areas and the study hotels. And secondary information were sourced from published and unpublished works, books, journals, magazines, newspapers, company documents and the internet.

Target population

Target population is the population about which a researcher ideally would like to generalize the results (Welman & Kruger, 2005). The target

population for the study was all-star-rated hotel guests, managers and frontline employees in the study area. The population included guests in selected hotels who had stayed for at least 24 hours at the time the study was conducted, frontline employees (waiters and front desk agents) and managers (General Manager, front office manager, food and beverage manager) of the selected hotels

Sample size and sampling procedure

Sampling is concerned with the selection of a subset of individuals from within a statistical population to estimate characteristics of the whole population (Creswell, 2007). Sampling is widely used for gathering information about a population. In sampling, the population from which the sample is drawn should be defined (Pallant, 2005). A population can be defined as including all people or items with the characteristic one wishes to understand. Because there is very rarely enough time or money to gather information from everyone or everything in a population, the goal becomes finding a representative sample (or subset) of that population (Bryman, 2004). A well-chosen sample can usually provide reliable information about the whole of the population to any desired degree of accuracy. In some instances, sampling is an alternative to a complete census, and may be preferable mainly because of its cheapness and convenience (Sarantakos, 2005)

The sample of the study was drawn from all the registered hotels in Accra. The Ghana Tourism Authority's list of registered hotels in Ghana formed the

population of the study. As at 31st December 2010, there were a total of 142 registered star-rated hotels in Accra (Table 4).

Table 4: List of registered star-rated hotels in Greater Accra

Class of Hotel	Population (Number of Hotels)	Sampled Hotels	Frontline Staff	Management and Supervisory Staff
1 Star	58	29	126	58
2 Star	71	36	219	127
3 Star	8	8	105	61
4 Star	4	4	102	72
5 Star	1	1	42	38
Total	142	78	594	356

Source: GTA, 2011

A multi-stage sampling technique was employed for the study. This means that different sampling methods were employed at different stages. First, there was a division of the population into strata using the GTA classification of hotels by star-rating (i.e. 1 star, 2 star, 3 star, 4 star and 5 star). Budget hotels and guest houses were not included on the basis that most service quality research works studied luxury and top rated hotels. Secondly, the sample frame for each of the stratum was extrapolated from the GTA list of registered hotels in Accra.

Thirdly, the proportional (50 per cent) stratified random sampling technique was used to select 65 (29 and 36) from the 1-star and 2-star hotels respectively to ensure that they were adequately represented. In addition, all

hotels in the three, four and five star categories were selected due to the small size of the population. That is, a census was used to purposively select all the 3-5 star hotels. The individual samples from each stratum together constituted the sample size for the study (78). Then, a preliminary survey was conducted to get the total number of service providers (frontline staff, management and supervisory staff) from these 78 hotels by asking human resource managers or managers to indicate the number of supervisors, managers and service contact personnel (frontline staff) in their hotels.

The estimation of the sample size for service providers was based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for the determination of sample size from a given population. From Table 5, a population of 594 and 356 yields 232 frontline staff and 182 managers respectively. More service providers (frontline staff and managers) were sampled because of the quantitative nature of the study which requires relatively large sample size for robust analysis like regression and factor analysis. Also because of the comparison between the three groups namely; guests, frontline staff and management staff, relatively close numbers were sampled.

Table 5: determining sample size from a given population

N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S
10	10	100	80	280	162	800	260	2800	338
15	14	110	86	290	165	850	265	3000	341
20	19	120	92	300	169	900	269	3500	246
25	24	130	97	320	175	950	274	4000	351
30	28	140	103	340	181	1000	278	4500	351
35	32	150	108	360	186	1100	285	5000	357
40	36	160	113	380	181	1200	291	6000	361
45	40	180	118	400	196	1300	297	7000	364
50	44	190	123	420	201	1400	302	8000	367
55	48	200	127	440	205	1500	306	9000	368
60	52	210	132	460	210	1600	310	10000	373
65	56	220	136	480	214	1700	313	15000	375
70	59	230	140	500	217	1800	317	20000	377
75	63	240	144	550	225	1900	320	30000	379
80	66	250	148	600	234	2000	322	40000	380
85	70	260	152	650	242	2200	327	50000	381
90	73	270	155	700	248	2400	331	75000	382
95	76	270	159	750	256	2600	335	100000	384

Note: "N" is population size and "S" is sample size.

Source: Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

Service providers were proportionately distributed to the various classes of hotels as shown in Table 6. According to Hair, Anderson, Tatham and Black (1998), reliable results estimates can be attained from samples that are between 100 respondents and 150 respondents. Pallant (2005) also stressed that 100-150 sample size is adequate for quantitative studies. In view of these assertions, 200 guests were sampled from the 78 hotels.

Table 6: Sampled frontline employees, managers and guests

Class of hotel	Target population		Sampled		
	Frontline staff	Management & Supervisory staff	Frontline staff n (%)	Management & Supervisory staff n (%)	Guests
1 Star	126	58	49 (21)	29 (16)	30 (15)
2 Star	219	127	86 (37)	66 (36)	40 (20)
3 Star	105	61	42 (18)	31 (17)	40 (20)
4 Star	102	72	39 (17)	36 (20)	50 (25)
5 Star	42	38	16 (7)	20 (11)	40 (20)
Total	594	356	232 (100)	182 (100)	200(100)

Source: Fieldwork, 2012

The 200 sampled guests were disproportionately allocated to the various categories or classes of hotels as shown on Table 6. Convenience sampling method was employed to survey the 200 guests available and willing to participate in the study.

Development of research instruments

Communicating service quality begins with an understanding of the aspects of service quality that are most important to customers (Brochado & Marques, 2007). Accordingly, attempt was made to list service attributes essential in assessing the service quality of hotels. The relevant literature and survey instruments developed by past studies provided the basis for developing the questionnaire for this study. In addition, hotel managers, employees, hotel guests as well as hospitality experts in academia were asked to list or indicate the general determinants of service quality that may relate to any service in a hotel.

Seven major service criteria relevant to Ghanaian hotels were identified. The major service criteria included Overall Room Values, Front Office Services, Food and beverage services, Availability of Other facilities and Services, Tangibles, Responsiveness and Empathy. First, Overall Room Values were sub classified into twelve different categories: cleanliness, atmosphere, comfort, quality and sufficiency of room fixtures, size of a guest room, availability of complimentary items, quietness, adequate lighting, and price. As suggested by the American Automobile Association Tour Book for evaluating the lodging service, cleanliness of a guest room, comfortable beds and bedding, room atmosphere (e.g. adequate illumination at each task area and pleasant decoration), and quality or sufficiency of room fixtures (e.g. towels, hangers, and a hair drier) were included. As a tangible, the size of a guest room was added to the list because according to Min and Min (1996), the

compactness of a room may impose some psychological restraints on the room occupant's sense of privacy. Price was included because it is generally known to be one of the most important extrinsic cues for service quality (Kotler, 2005).

Second, front-office services were subdivided into nine attributes. These included courtesy, recovery from service failures (i.e. handling of complaints), responsiveness such as convenience of reservation, promptness of check-in/ check-out, and hotel/tour guide information, and tangibles like variety/quality of sports/recreational facilities (e.g. swimming pools, and aerobic exercise rooms) together with efficiency of a business centre (e.g. fax machines, personal computers, and copiers). Courtesy involves politeness and friendliness of hotel staff and other contact personnel. Since the hotel service is rendered in interaction with customers, courtesy of the contact personnel is an important service quality indicator. Furthermore, when guests have specific problems with a hotel in the form of an unclean room, poor temperature control, or poor phone service, their problems should be resolved in a proper manner. Simmerman (1992) stressed that proper complaint handling would retain or even build customer loyalty. Accordingly, handling of complaints was included as a hotel service attribute.

Thirdly, food and beverage services were categorized into nine attributes which included availability of eating and drinking facilities, availability of room service, prompt food service, elegant banquet service, high quality of food in restaurant (s), reasonable restaurant/bar prices, variety of

drinks and wine list, prompt food service and a high degree or level of hygienic food.

Finally, the availability of other facilities and services included six attributes made up of up-to-date and modern safety facilities, adequacy of fire safety facilities, availability of all year-round swimming pool, availability of business centre, availability of conference or meeting room facilities, and availability of sauna and health facilities.

Tangibles (15 attributes), responsiveness (8 attributes) and empathy (13 attributes) were recognised by Parasuraman *et al.* (1988) as three of the five most important service dimensions, they consequently included. In all, a total of 82 service quality attributes were developed in the questionnaire to identify and analyse service gaps between the perceptions of guests on one hand and hotel managers and front line employees on the other.

The questionnaire was divided into three parts; the first part was designed to measure the respondents' expectations regarding service quality in the sampled hotels. Respondents were to indicate the level of expectations of statements with responses that ranged from (1) very low expectation to (5) very high expectation or on a 5-point Likert scale. The second part of the questionnaire was also designed to examine the respondents' perceptions of service quality actually provided by the hotels. Again, the respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with statements with responses that ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree (on a 5-point Likert scale).

The third part of the questionnaire consisted of respondents' socio-demographic and classification questions such as age, gender, education level, income, religion, income among others. The instrument was named HOTQUAL.

Reliability and validity of the research instrument

There are two major criteria for evaluating measurements, these are reliability and validity. These are the two most important criteria that are used to determine the goodness of an instrument (Yilmaz, 2009). Reliability is the degree to which measures are free from error and therefore yield consistent results. Thus, reliability is obtained when similar results are presented over time and across the similar situations (Zikmund, 2000). According to Babbie (2007), in order to obtain high reliability, the results should be independent of the researcher and the respondents. There are many ways to test construct reliability. Some studies (Sekaran, 2003; Ko and Pastore, 2005; Yilmaz, 2009) used Cronbach's alpha. According to Kline (2005), Cronbach's alpha is the most commonly reported estimate of reliability. This study accordingly used the Cronbach's alpha to test construct reliability. Cronbach's alpha values that are above 0.7 provide evidence for reliability while items with alpha values of less than 7 were dropped from the instrument. The overall reliability was 0.91, at a quite high level. Also, the reliability scores calculated for each of the seven factors were quite high. This shows that there was a good internal consistency among the items within each factor.

Validity is defined as the extent to which a scale fully and unambiguously captures the underlying unobservable construct it is intended to measure (Parasuraman et al., 1985; Sekaran, 2003). There are several forms of validity. They are face, convergent, construct and discriminate validity. In assessing the face validity of an instrument, it was necessary to see how the items on an instrument were selected (Cavana, Corbett & Lo, 2007; Yilmaz, 2009). For this study, the items were selected from the literature as well as responses from hotel guests, service providers and academia. Furthermore, the items of the instrument were pre-tested. As Fonell and Larcker (1981) and Pallant (2005) intimated, the level of variance extracted is a measure of construct validity. The higher the variance extracted, the more valid the measure. In this study, the instrument used yielded a high level of variance extracted (84.29 for guests and 87.28 for service providers). Also, the alpha value for the overall scale (0.91) indicated that convergent validity was met. So the instrument can be considered to be reliable and valid.

Pre-testing of the research instrument

A pre-test is a small test of single elements of a research instrument that is predominantly used to check the mechanical structure of an instrument (Sarantakos, 2005). Czaja (1998) as cited in Mensah (2012) postulate that pre-testing is undertaken to address five critical issues: respondents' comprehension, burden and interest; interviewer tasks; questionnaire issues; sampling as well as coding and analysis. Pre-testing of the instrument was

conducted on thirty (30) hotel guests in Cape Coast and Elmina between 16th August and 13th September, 2011. This exercise was very useful because it gave the researcher the opportunity to delete and modify some items, which would have otherwise affected the content validity and reliability of the research. In all, 24 attributes were removed from the instrument. Besides, it threw light on some of the probable problems that were to be encountered during the actual study. The actual field work took place from June to December, 2012.

Field survey

Three field assistants were engaged to assist the fieldwork, which was undertaken from the 1st of June to the 19th of December, 2012 in Accra. The questionnaire was mostly self-administered because, according to Armstrong and Overton (1977) as cited in Mensah (2012), self-administered questionnaires yield relatively high response rates and avoid non-response bias associated with mailing questionnaires to respondents. Telephone and personal calls were made to the sampled hotels. The purpose of the study was then explained to hotel managers. Managers who agreed to allow their hotels partake in the study were asked to inform staff and guests of the impending study. Managers and frontline staff on duty at the time were given questionnaires to complete. Though the questionnaires were mostly self-administered, on a number of occasions, the field assistants had to administer the questionnaires to most frontline staff through interviewing. Some

respondents completed the questionnaires instantly while others asked field assistants to collect the completed questionnaires at a later date. This method, according to Oppenheim (1992), ensures a high response rate, accurate sampling and minimal interviewer bias.

In the case of hotel guests, the convenience sampling method was employed. Individual guests were approached in the hotel lobbies. Concerning those in groups, the group leader was approached and the purpose of the research was explained to them. Some of the hotels refused to allow such a study be conducted on their premises, as they claimed it was their company policy, since they see such exercises as harassment of their guests. For such hotels, questionnaire administration was done outside the hotels, especially, on guests' tour buses and the car parks. The questionnaires were subsequently administered to guests who accepted to partake in the study. To avoid problems of double response, guests were first asked if they had already taken part in the study. Also, care was taken not to sample all or majority of people from a group.

Challenges encountered on the field

During the data collection, a number of challenges were encountered. There was a difficulty in meeting hotel managers for permission or consent to administer the questionnaires on their premises. Most of the hotel managers, usually, did not stay in their offices for long hours; hence, it was difficult getting some of them. Though their telephone numbers were taken and

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meetings were scheduled with them, during which they agreed on scheduled dates and time for the questionnaires to be brought and when to pick them up, some managers did not hand over the questionnaires on the said dates. This led to the retrieval of some questionnaires only after several visits and phone calls. Some managers were not willing to co-operate because they were of the view that the study had no direct benefit to their hotels and that it might also expose their weaknesses to the larger society. Besides, some hotel managers refused to participate or let their customers and employees participate in the study. Their reason being that past researchers never gave feedback regarding the outcome of the studies conducted at their facilities. This misconception was however overcome through persuasion and educating them on the benefits of the study and the importance of knowing how the customers felt about their services.

It is worth mentioning that some employees felt lazy completing the questionnaire which, ordinarily, should not have lasted more than 15 minutes. However, some respondents asked the researcher and her assistants to call at other times. In a number of instances, the questionnaires had either been misplaced or taken away by some respondents the following day and therefore, needed to be replaced. There was an instance when a particular hotel misplaced the entire batch of questionnaires and the researcher had to send another set at additional cost. There was also unwillingness of some respondents to respond to questionnaires as they considered this as an invasion of their privacy especially because they had little time to spare. The next challenge encountered was the refusal of some guests to take part in the study citing lack

of time as their reason. To overcome this challenge, the researcher tactfully implored guests and gave them enough time to complete the questionnaire at their own convenience. Even though this option delayed the data collection process, it seemed to be the best option given the situation. These challenges, however, had no significant influence on the findings of the study.

Response rate

A total of 185 and 350 questionnaires from guests and service providers respectively were returned from the field but 172 and 332 were considered useful for the analysis of the study. Mensah (2012) observes that the response rate of a survey is critical to the quality of the data. Tables 7 and 8 illustrate the response rate of the sampled respondents (guests and service providers respectively).

Though, 414 service providers made up of 232 frontline staff and 182 management staff were sampled, 332 (197 frontline staff and 135 management staff) questionnaires were considered useful and appropriate for analysis. This represented a response rate of 80 percent (85 percent for frontline staff and 74 per cent for management staff) as shown in Table 7. Also a total of 172 questionnaires out of the 200 sample for guests, representing 86 per cent, were considered appropriate as presented in Table 8.

Table 7: Sample and response rate for service providers

Class of Hotel	Target population		Sampled		Response rate	
	Frontline Staff	Management and Supervisory Staff	Frontline Staff n (%)	Management and Supervisory Staff n (%)	Frontline Staff n (%)	Management and Supervisory Staff n (%)
1 Star	126	58	49 (21)	29 (16)	48 (98)	27 (93)
2 Star	219	127	86 (37)	66 (36)	56 (65)	37 (56)
3 Star	105	61	42 (18)	31 (17)	40 (95)	30 (97)
4 Star	102	72	39 (17)	36 (20)	34 (85)	32 (89)
5 Star	42	38	16 (7)	20 (11)	12 (75)	16 (80)
Total	594	356	232 (100)	182 (100)	197 (85)	125 (74)

Source: Fieldwork, 2012

Table 8: Sample and response rate for hotel guests

Class of hotel	Sample		Response rate	
	frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1 Star	30	15	21	70
2 Star	40	20	26	65
3 Star	40	20	38	95
4 Star	50	25	47	94
5 Star	40	20	40	100
Total	200	100	172	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2012

Ethical considerations

The ethical dimensions of every research and how they are addressed are imperative to talk about. This research took into account the issues of informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality. Neuman (2007) posits that researchers must not coerce anyone into participating in research. Participation must be voluntary at all times. Informed consent was sought from respondents and facility owners, before undertaking the research. The purpose of the study was explicitly made known to them, but respondents who declined participation were not forced or influenced to do so.

Secondly, the issue of anonymity was also ensured. Anonymity protects privacy by not disclosing a participant's identity after information is

gathered. Respondents were assured of their anonymity since names and other personal details were not associated with specific responses given.

To Neumann (2007), even if a researcher cannot guarantee anonymity, he or she should always protect participant confidentiality. For this study, respondents were assured of their confidentiality; the information they provided was not to be divulged to any third party other than its intended purpose, which was an academic exercise.

Data analysis and presentation

The study employed quantitative methods of analysing data. The data from the field were analysed using the 'Statistical Package and Service Solution (SPSS), version 17 software. The SPSS software serves as a useful tool for transforming responses from a population of study into figures through coding. The data were coded and entered into the SPSS software for analysis. The data were carefully edited to remove all outliers or extreme values which could have affected the validity of the results.

Descriptive statistical presentations which involved organising and summarising the data were undertaken as a prelude to the analysis and generalisation of results from the study. Some of these descriptive statistical cues included mean, standard deviation, cross-tabulations and frequencies which were presented to display respondents' characteristics and agreement with service quality statements

Inferential statistical measures such as independent samples t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to test for differences in service quality dimensions among guests and service providers. The t-test was used when the independent variables had only two categories while ANOVA was employed for those with more than two categories. Mean scores are deemed significant at a $p \leq 0.05$. Where differences exist, the Fisher's least significant difference (LSD) method, one of the post-hoc or posterior procedures (Pallant, 2005) was carried out to identify where differences exist among the various groups in more than two groups while the Cohen (1988) eta square value was computed to examine the extent or size of the difference in only two groups. To examine the relationship between level of expectations and background, organisational and work characteristics, Chi-Square was also used. Factor analysis was used to examine the factors influencing service quality. In all, 58 statements or items were subjected to factor analysis, and the data were rotated using the Principal Component Analysis (PCA). The paired-sampled and independent sampled t-tests were employed to test for significant differences between stakeholders' expectations and perceptions of service in the hotel industry in Accra, Ghana.

Summary

This chapter discussed the methodology used for the study and the procedures that were followed to collect data from the field. In brief, it looked at the research design, study philosophy, sampling procedures and sample size,

development of the research instruments and ethical issues considered. The pre-test, actual data collection and challenges encountered on the field work were also presented. The concluding part of the chapter highlighted the methods of data processing and analysis of the study. The next chapter presents the results and discussions of service quality from guests' perspective.

CHAPTER FIVE

STAKEHOLDERS CHARACTERISTICS AND THEIR
EXPECTATIONS OF SERVICE QUALITY IN HOTELS

Introduction

Demographic variables are the most popular bases for distinguishing customer between groups. Consumer wants, preferences and usage rates are often associated with demographic variables since they are easy to measure (Kotler, 2003). Customers' expectations are formed by many uncontrollable factors like consumers' background characteristics such as age, sex, educational level among others (Brink & Berndt, 2005). This chapter discusses the antecedents of service quality expectations in hotels from both guests' and service providers' perspectives. Issues discussed include the socio-demographic profile of guests and service providers, travel characteristics of guests and employment characteristics of service providers. The relationship between background characteristics and expectations of service quality of guests are also presented in this chapter.

Socio-demographic profile of hotel guests

The literature suggests that hotel managers should not overlook the importance of the effect of demographic factors on customer perceptions of

behavioural intentions, satisfaction, service quality, value, image, and the expectations of service quality (Al-Sabbahy & Ekinci, 2004; Shergill & Sun, 2004; Skogland & Siguaw, 2004). Table 9 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents for the study. Results from Table 9 indicate that the sample of hotel guests (172) contained more males (63 per cent) than females (37 per cent). This contradicts Juwaheer and Ross (2003) finding in Mauritius where the sample of guests included more women (50.4 per cent) than men (49.6 per cent) but supports Tsang and Qu (2000) sample of guests in China where there were more males (65 per cent) than females (35 per cent).

As evident in Table 9, more than 80 per cent of the respondents had a university, college or graduate education. This confirms most service quality studies where guests tended to have higher levels of education. For example, Juwaheer and Ross (2003) found that 59.3 per cent of guests had tertiary education. Tsang and Qu (2000) indicated that more than 70 per cent of the respondents had a university, college or graduate education. Karatepe and Avci (2002) also found in their study in New Delhi that a little above 50 percent of the respondents held university first degrees. But the opposite is of Nadiri and Hussain (2005) in North Cyprus which came out that 45.3 per cent of the respondents had formal tertiary education, defined as a minimum of an undergraduate degree.

Table 9: Profile of hotel guests

Socio-demographic characteristic	N(172)	Percentage
Sex		
Male	108	62.7
Female	64	37.3
Age		
30 years and below	58	34.0
31-50	102	58.9
51+	12	7.1
Religion		
Buddhist	3	1.6
Christian	133	77.8
Hindu	8	4.8
Muslim	280	15.8
Occupation		
Professionals & business executives	123	71.4
Artisan	23	13.2
Civil servant	17	10.3
Student	9	5.1
Marital status		
Not married	98	57.0
Married	74	43.0
Education		
Secondary education	31	17.5
Tertiary education	141	82.5
Continent of origin		
Europe	36	20.8
North America	39	23.3
Asia	16	8.8
Africa	76	44.0

Table 9 (continued)

South America	5	3.1
Hotel rating		
1 star	21	12.0
2 star	26	15.0
3 star	38	22.0
4 star	47	28.0
5 star	40	23.0
Travel party		
Alone	99	57.6
1-5 persons	55	31.9
6 persons and above	18	10.5
Length of stay		
< 1 week	67	38.6
1-2 weeks	56	32.6
2-3 weeks	30	18.2
> 3 weeks	19	10.6
Purpose of visit		
Business	93	53.7
VFR	15	8.8
Vacation	52	30.1
Other	12	7.4
Repeat stay		
Yes	79	45.8
No	93	54.2
Travel exposure		
Travel experience	143	83.1
No travel experience	29	16.9

Source: Fieldwork, 2012

Table 9 also shows that the majority of respondents (59 per cent) fell within the age group of 31-50, followed by below 30 (34 per cent) and 51 and above (7 per cent). This confirms Karatepe and Avci's (2002) study in New Delhi more than half of the respondents fell in the age categories of 28-37 and 38-47.

Yilmaz's (2009) study revealed that more than half or the majority of guests were between the ages of 18-44 and Mohsin and Lockyer (2010) also found that the largest number of respondents (67 per cent) were within 31-50 years old. Results from Table 9 depict that more than half (57 per cent) of guests were unmarried while 43 per cent were married, and most (78 per cent) of them were Christians. In terms of occupation, about 72 per cent of the respondents were professionals, executives or salesmen and only 5 per cent were students. This finding is in line with Tsang and Qu (2002), Nadiri and Hussain (2005) and Yilmaz (2009) results which indicated that majority of their respondents were professionals or "career people".

Most of the respondents were from various African countries (44 per cent), America (23 per cent) or Europe (21 per cent) and the rest of the respondents were from Asia and South America. This further buttresses Tsang and Qu's (2002) study in China which revealed that most of the respondents were domestic visitors but contradicts Nadiri and Hussain (2005) and Yilmaz (2009) findings that most of their respondents were from Europe. About 54 per cent of the respondents indicated that the main purpose of their stay was business followed by vacation (30 per cent). This contradicts Juwaheer and

Ross (2003) study where majority (85 per cent) of guests were staying in the hotel for leisure purposes followed by business. Results from Table 9 revealed that 28 per cent of guests stayed in 4 star hotels, 24 in 5 star hotel, 22 in 3 star, whiles and 14 and 12 per cent stayed in 2 and 1 star hotels respectively. The majority of the respondents were travelling in groups of 1-5 (75 per cent) with more than 38 per cent of them staying in the hotel for less than one week, 33 per cent staying between one and two weeks. About 46 per cent of the respondents were first time visitors in the hotel with 54 per cent being repeat visits.

Level of guests' expectations of service quality

Guests were asked to indicate their level of expectation of service quality from the hotels. Results from Table 10 indicate that majority (61 per cent) of guests had very high expectations from the hotels. Thirty-two per cent had high expectations with only 4 per cent expecting moderate service from the hotels. The remaining 3 per cent had very low to low expectations of service quality from hotels.

Table 10: Level of guests' expectations of service quality

Level of Guests Expectation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Low	2	1.0
Low	3	2.0
Moderate	7	4.0
High	55	32.0
Very High	105	61.0
Total	172	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2012

Relationship between expectations of service quality and socio-demographic characteristics of hotel guests

The conceptual framework proposed that demographic characteristics relate to customers expectation of service quality. Therefore, the level of guests' expectations of service quality was explored in relation to the background characteristics of hotel employees. To examine this relationship, Chi-Square was used. Level of service quality was the dependent variable while guests' background characteristics formed the independent variables. Table 11 shows the distribution across social groupings together with the relationship between guests' socio-demographic background and travel characteristics and expectations of service quality. Table 11 shows that significant relationships exist between guests' expectations and some socio-demographic variables of guests: age, occupation and level of education

From Table 11, it can be noted that there were significant relationships between six (6) socio-demographic characteristics (age, occupation, place of origin, level of education, length of stay, and hotel category) and overall expectations of the hotel guests. As regards the age categories, guests between the ages of 31 to 40 formed the largest group with very high expectations. On the other hand, guests who were 51 years and over was the smallest group with very high level of expectation. Significant relationship established at p=0.000 between the guests' age and the level of expectations that the guests have.

Table 11: Relationship between guests' profile and their level of expectations

Socio-demographic characteristics	n	Overall Expectations					
		Very low (%)	Low (%)	High (%)	Very high (%)	χ^2 Statistic	P-Value
Sex							
Male	108	100	75.0	58.3	61.6	2.218	0.528
Female	64	0.0	25.0	41.7	38.4		
Marital status							
Married	98	100.0	80.0	63.2	55.1	3.994	0.262
Unmarried	74	0.0	20.0	36.8	44.9		
Age							
18-20	21	0.0	10.0	21.4	4.8		
21-30	32	0.0	70.0	42.9	22.9		
31-40	71	0.0	0.0	14.3	42.9	58.334	0.000*

Table 11 (continued)

41-50	31	0.0	10.0	21.4	25.7		
51 and above	12	100.0	10.0	0.0	3.8		
Occupation							
Professional & business executive	123	0.0	0.0	12.5	11.4		
Artisan	23	75.0	57.1	87.5	74.3		
Civil servant	17	25.0	0.0	0.0	12.9	29.193	0.001*
Students	9	0.0	42.9	0.0	1.4		
Place of origin							
Europe	36	52.4	0.0	0.0	1.7		
N America/Canada	39	9.5	41.7	20.8	18.3		
Asia	16	0.0	0.0	4.2	4.3	90.624	0.000*
Africa	76	4.8	58.3	62.5	.9		
S America/Caribbean	5	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.7		
Level of education							
High school	31	0.0	33.3	9.1	18.3		
Diploma	32	0.0	55.6	13.6	15.1	24.420	0.004*
Undergraduate	70	0.0	11.1	59.1	49.5		
Post graduate	39	100.0	0.0	18.2	17.2		
Monthly income							
Less than $500	1	-	0.0	0.0	8.3		
$500-999	2	-	0.0	100.0	8.3		
$1000-1999	2	-	33.3	0.0	8.3	11.111	0.195

Table 11 (continued)

	N					χ²	p
$2000-3999	6	-	66.7	0.0	33.3		
$4000 and above	5	-	0.0	0.0	41.7		
Length of stay							
< 1 week	67	-	75.0	47.1	30.3		
1-2 weeks	56	-	0.0	4.8	41.6	28.203	0.002*
2-3 weeks	30	-	20.0	38.1	13.9		
More than 3 weeks	19	-	0.0	9.5	11.9		
Repeat visit							
First visit	79	0.0	33.3	47.8	47.7	2.629	0.452
Repeat visit	93	100.0	66.7	52.2	52.3		
Purpose of visit							
Business	93	-	20.0	62.5	54.0		
VFR	15	-	0.0	12.5	9.0	10.719	0.097
Vacation	52	-	60.0	12.5	31.0		
Other	12	-	20.0	12.5	6.0		
Size of travel party							
Alone	99	-	-	-	-		
1-5 persons	55	100.0	100.0	63.6	90.0		
6-9 persons	13	0.0	0.0	18.2	2.5	7.213	0.302
20 and above	5	0.0	0.0	18.2	7.5		
Hotel category							
1 star	21	0.0	0.0	15.8	1.8		
2 star	24	0.0	0.0	10.5	7.2		

Table 11 (continued)

3star	38	90.5	40.0	47.4	33.3	49.827	0.000*
4 star	47	9.5	0.0	26.3	30.6		
5 star	42	0.0	60.0	0.0	27.0		

*Significance level ≤ 0.05

Source: Fieldwork, 2012

In the case of occupation, there was a significant relationship (p=0.001) between the occupation of a hotel guest and the level of his or her expectations. Professionals and business executives were the group that expected very high services form service providers (74.3 per cent) whiles students were the least group that expected very high services from the service providers. Guests from the Middle East formed the largest group (40.9 per cent) of those who expected very high services from service providers, followed by guests who originated from North America / Canada. Africans, however, formed the smallest group (0.9 per cent) who expected very high services. A significant relationship (p=0.000) was noticed between a guest's place of origin and his or her level of expectation.

In the same way, there was a significant relationship (0.004) between a guest's level of education and their level of expectation. Guests with undergraduate degree were the majority (49.5 per cent) with very high expectations whiles their counterparts with diploma formed the smallest group (15.1 per cent). Interestingly, guests with post-graduate level of education were next to the smallest group (17.2 per cent). Significant relationships were found

between some of the travel characteristics and expectations of service quality by guests. The variables were length of stay and place of origin. Table 11 shows these relationships with their Chi-square values.

With respect to the travel characteristics of guests, the chi-square goodness of fit test showed that there was significant relationship between guests' length of stay and guests' overall expectations (p=0.002). However, there were no significant relationship between all other travel characteristic and the overall employee expectation. For the purpose of visit, a little over half (54 per cent) of the guests had very high expectations followed by guests on vacation (31 per cent). However, guests who were in for other purposes formed the least group of 6 per cent. It was noted that there was a relationship between how long a guest stayed in a hotel and the level of expectations he or she would have. Guests who stayed for one to two weeks were the majority (40.4 per cent) having very high expectation whiles guests staying for six to seven days formed the least group (3.0 per cent). About half (50.1 per cent) of guests with very high expectation were first time visitors whiles the other (49.5 per cent) were repeat visitors. There was no significant relationship found between the status of visit and the guests' expectation (p= 0.415).

Likewise, no significant relationship was found between travel party and expectations of guests (p=0.302). Among the categories of travel party, employees with one to five persons formed the clear majority (90 per cent) of guests who had very high expectations, followed by 20 persons and over (7.5 per cent) then six to nine persons (2.5 per cent). Significant relationship also

existed between the category of hotel and the expectations of the guests (0.000). It was noted that there was an increase in the number of guests with very high level of expectation as the star rating rises (1.8 per cent, 7.2 per cent, and 33.3 per cent). The number, however, reduces from 4-star hotels (30.6 per cent) and 5-star hotels (27.0 per cent). Inserting these significant variables in the conceptual framework, it can be said that guests' age, occupation, place of origin, level of education, length of stay, and hotel category relate to their level of expectations of service quality.

Differences in guests' expectations of service quality across their background characteristics

The independent t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to test for significant differences between the various socio-demographic variables and expectations of service quality. The t-test was used in cases which the independent variables had only two categories while ANOVA was employed for those with more than two categories. Mean scores are deemed significant at a $p \leq 0.05$. Where differences exist, the Fisher's least significant difference (LSD) method, one of the post-hoc or posterior procedures (Pallant, 2005) was carried out to identify where differences exist among the various groups in more than two groups. The results are presented in Table 12.

Table 12: Differences in guests' expectations of service quality across their profile

Socio-demographic background	N	Mean	F value	Sig level
Sex				
Male	108	4.51		
Female	64	4.56	1.72	0.797
Age				
30 years and below	58	4.16		
31-50	102	4.86*	15.23	0.000*
51+	12	3.46*		
Marital status				
Not married	98	4.38	2.277	0.024*
Married	74	4.74		
Educational level				
Secondary education	31	4.43		
Tertiary education	141	4.59	0.713	0.477
Religion				
Buddhists and Hindus	11	4.83		
Christian	133	4.72*	6.13	0.001*
Muslim	28	3.85*		
Occupation				
Professionals/Business Executives	123	4.83*		

Table 12 (continued)

Artisans	23	4.53	7.20	0.000*
Civil servants	17	4.52		
Students	9	2.35*		
Purpose of visit				
Business	93	4.713		
VFR	15	4.711	1.930	0.128
Vacation	52	4.432		
Other	12	4.145		
Continent of origin				
Europe	36	4.39		
North America	39	4.59		
Asia	16	4.32	0.53	0.716
Africa	76	4.16		
South America	5	4.95		
Length of stay (weeks)				
< 1	67	4.368*		
1-2	56	4.900*	4.176	0.007*
2-3	30	4.441		
>3	19	4.843		
Repeat stay				
Yes	79	4.639	2.083	0.151
No	93	4.407		

Table 12 (continued)

Travel party				
Alone	99	4.21		
1-5 persons	55	4.37		
6 persons and above	18	3.46	0.512	0. 142
Exposure				
Travel experience	143	4.567	0.141	0.708
No travel experience	29	4.492		
Hotel rating				
1-star	7	4.31		
2-star	11	4.46		
3-star	71	3.61*	5.18	0.001*
4-star	38	4.64*		
5-star	37	4.69		

*significant at 0.05

Source: Fieldwork, 2012

Evidence from Table 12 indicates that though, females had higher expectations (M= 4.56) than their male counterparts, the study found no significant difference between their expectations of service quality in the hotel industry in Accra. Results from Table 12 show that age plays a significant role in guests' expectations of service quality. For instance, middle aged (31-50 years old) guests had higher expectations of service quality than those below 30 years and those who were 51 years old and above. Marital status was also

found to be significant in guests' expectations of service quality. Results from Table 12 indicate that married guests had higher expectations of service quality than their unmarried counterparts. Though those who had obtained tertiary education had higher expectations than those with only secondary education, there was no significant difference between respondents' expectations of service quality in the hotels they visited.

The results from Table 12 also indicate that there is a statistically significant (F= 0.001) difference between the expectations of guests with different religious affiliations. It is evident that Buddhists had the highest (M= 4.83) expectations, followed by Christians (M= 4.72) with Muslims having the least (M= 3.85) expectations of service quality. Guests occupation was found to be statistically significant (F= 0.001) with their expectations of service quality. For instance, it was revealed that professionals/business executives had higher expectations (M= 4.83) than artisans (M= 4.53) and civil servants (M= 4.52). It must be noted that students had the very least (M= 2.35) expectations regarding service quality in the study hotels.

The purpose for which guests were staying in the hotels was found not to be significant relative to their expectations of service quality in the hotels. Although, those staying for business and visiting friends and relatives (VFR) had the same expectations of service quality, their expectations were found to be higher (M=4.713 and M=4.711 respectively) than those staying for vacation and other purposes. Guests from South America had the highest (M= 4.95) expectations of service quality, followed by those from North America (M=

4.59), Europe (M= 4.39) and Asia (M= 4.32) with guests from Africa having the least (M= 4.16) expectations of service quality from hotels. However, there were no statistically significant differences in these expectations.

From Table 12, it is evident that there was no significant difference between guests' length of stay in a hotel and their expectations of service quality. For example, guests staying between one and two weeks had very high (M=4.90) expectations of service quality, followed by those staying for more than three weeks (M=4.84), then those staying between two and three weeks (M=4.44) and those staying for less than one week had the least expectations of service quality in hotels. Even though, guests staying in the hotels for the first time had lower expectations (M= 4.41) than those on repeat visit (4.64), the study found no significant difference between the two groups of guests. The study again found no significant difference between the expectations of guests staying with 1-5 persons and those staying with more than 6 persons in a hotel. But guests staying with 1-5 persons were found to have higher (M= 4.37) expectations of service quality than those staying with 6 persons or more (M= 3.46).

Also guests who had stayed in a hotel before tend to have a higher (4.57) expectations than those who had not stayed in a hotel before (4.49). There was also a significant difference between the expectations of guests staying in the various classes of hotels. For instance, guests staying in lower class hotels had higher expectations of service quality than those staying in the high class hotels (4 and 5 star hotels). This may be because guests staying in

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the high class hotels were mostly foreigners who might not expect much from emerging destination or economy like Ghana. The rating the hotels was found to be significant with guests' expectations of service quality. Guests who stayed in 4-star and 5 star hotels tend to have higher (M= 4.64 and M= 4.69 respectively) than those who stayed in 1-star and 2-star hotels. Surprisingly, those who stayed in 3 star hotels had the least (M= 3.61) expectations regarding service quality. Again, it can be concluded that guests' age, length of stay, occupation, religion, marital status and the class of hotel predict guests expectations of service quality.

Socio-demographic profile of service providers

Just as guests' background characteristics relate to their expectations of service quality, it is expected that the characteristics of service providers will relate to their understanding of guests expectations. Table 13 depicts the socio-demographic and work characteristics of service providers.

From Table 13, there were more females (53 per cent) than males (47 per cent). This finding strengthens the observation made by Lucas (2004) and International Labour Organisation (2001) that female employees dominate the workforce of the hotel industry but contradicts Tsang and Qu's (2000) finding of more males than females in China.

Table 13: Profile of service providers

Item/Variable	N	Per cent (%)
Sex		
Male	145	46
Female	169	54
Total	314	100
Age		
30 years and below	107	40
31-50	98	36
51+	64	24
Total	269	100
Religion		
Christianity	296	98
Islam	36	2
Total	332	100
Marital status		
Married	116	37
Not married	194	63
Total	310	100.0
Educational level		
Secondary	68	23
Tertiary	224	77
Total	292	100

Table 13 (continued)

Nationality		
Ghanaian	287	91
Non-Ghanaian	28	9
Total	315	100.0
Monthly income (GHC)		
Below 200	44	15
200-500	183	62
501-700	30	10
701-900	10	4
Above 900	27	9
Total	294	100
Department		
Front office	156	48
Food & Beverage	68	21
Housekeeping	42	13
Accounts & Administration	52	17
Security	4	1
Total	322	100
Number of years worked in hotel industry		
Less than I	29	8.7
1-5	156	47.0
6-10	66	19.9

Table 13 (continued)

11-15	19	5.7
16-20	9	2.7
21 and above	24	7.2
Total	303	100.0
Number of years worked in this hotel		
Less than 1	45	13.6
1-5	183	55.1
6-10	34	10.2
11-15	10	3.0
16-20	7	2.1
21 and above	24	7.2
Total	303	100.0
Number of years worked at current position		
Less than 1	19	5.7
1-5	248	74.5
6-10	15	4.5
21 and above	8	2.4
Total	290	87.3
Current position		
Management	135	40.7
Frontline staff	197	59.3
Total	332	100.0

Table 13 (continued)

Formal training in hospitality & tourism		
Yes	199	67.0
No	98	33
Total	297	100.0
Hotel category		
1 star	75	22.6
2 star	93	28.0
3 star	70	22.1
4 star	66	19.9
5 star	28	8.4
Total	332	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2012

With regard to the ages of respondents, 40 per cent were 30 years and below, 36 per cent were within 31-50 age category and 24 per cent can be considered as the late adults (51years and above). This finding indicates that more than half of service providers were young and it collaborates the International Labour Organisation (2001) report that the industry is characterised by young workers, who are less than 35 years old.

Service provider's religious affiliations indicated that majority were Christians accounting for 98 per cent whilst those in the Islamic group constituted minority respondents (2 per cent). Conceivably, Christian majority in the study could be attributed to the fact that the southern sector of Ghana is

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largely dominated by Christians. On marital status, Table 13 shows that a greater proportion (63 per cent) of the respondents were not married, probably single, divorced, widowed or cohabitating while 37 per cent were married.

Service providers educational status revealed that majority (77 per cent) of them had completed tertiary education while 23% also had up to secondary education. Per their monthly income levels, most of them (62 per cent) had monthly income of between GH¢ 200-500 and only 9.0 per cent had income above GH¢ 900. However, 15 per cent said they were receiving below GH¢ 200. With reference to the nationality of the service providers, Ghanaian nationals overwhelmingly outnumbered their non-Ghanaian counterparts. The Ghanaians constituted 98 per cent while the non-Ghanaians were only 2 per cent. It is evident from Table 13 that 56 per cent of the employees worked in the front office section, 24 per cent were in the food and beverage department, 18 per cent in accounts and administration and only 2 per cent working in the security section.

With reference to the number of years the respondents had worked in the hotel industry, a greater number of them accounting for 47 per cent had worked in the industry about 1 to 5 years, 20 per cent had worked about 6 to 10 years and the least (3 per cent) had worked about 16 to 20 years. The researcher proceeded to find out the number of years the respondents had worked in that particular hotel. The results from Table 13 show that 55 per cent of them had worked in the hotel about 1 to 5 years, 14 per cent had been working for less than a year in the hotel while 2 per cent had worked in the

hotel about 16 to 20 years. Also, majority of the respondents constituting 74 per cent had worked in their current position about 1 to 5 years with only 2 per cent working for about 21 and above years. Those who had worked for less than one year in their current position was 8 per cent and 5 per cent had worked about 6 to 10 years.

Fifty-nine per cent of respondents currently hold management and supervisory positions in the surveyed hotels, overseeing the day-to-day running of the facilities whilst 41 per cent were frontline staff. Nearly two thirds of the respondents (67 per cent) had formal training, specifically in hospitality and tourism while 33 per cent had never had any hospitality and tourism training, but perhaps in the field of other disciplines.

Summary

Guests and service providers' characteristics have been discussed. Issues that emerged were that the sampled hotel guests were mostly males, young, single and well educated. Most of the guests were professionals and business executives mainly from Africa, North America and Europe. Most of the guests were staying in the hotels alone and for business purposes for less than one week. For most of them it was a repeat stay in the hotel. Most guests had very high expectations. There were statistically significant relationships between guests' age, occupation, level of education, place of origin, length of stay as well as the hotel category on one hand and level of expectation on the other hand. Also there were significant differences among guests' expectations

of service quality and their background characteristics. As the conceptual framework proposed, these variables were found to predict or influence guests expectations of service quality. With regard to service providers, most of them were females, below 30 years and unmarried. Majority were Christians and well educated Ghanaians and work in the front office department.

CHAPTER SIX

STAKEHOLDERS PERCEPTIONS OF SERVICE QUALITY IN HOTELS

Introduction

Definitions of service quality have revolved around the idea that it is the result of the comparison between customers' expectations about a service and their perceptions of the service (Lihtinen & Lehtinen, 1982, Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). It is widely accepted in the literature that service quality is dependent on consumers' needs and expectations and whether the level of service meets these needs and expectations. Service quality has, thus, been defined as a "gap" between customers' expectations and the performance they actually receive (Parasuraman *et. al.*, 1985). This chapter presents the results of the data in line with objective one of the study. It begins with a discussion of the perceived gap or gap 5 in the conceptual framework. This gap is the difference between guests' expectations and perceptions of service quality or actual service performance. The chapter further looked at the differences in guests perceptions of service quality across their background characteristics. The gap between service providers' understanding of guests' expectations and the perception of their service performance is also discussed in this chapter.

Guests' expectations and perceptions of service quality

Service quality is a vital determinant of customers' satisfaction and it directly affects an organisation's success, especially in a service industry as hotels. Since customers participate in the delivery and consumption of services, they interact closely with various aspects of the hotel. This knowledge gives them the opportunity to assess critically the services provided in these organisations (Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000). Customers assess service quality by comparing the services they receive with what they expected. Hence, service quality plays a critical role in adding value to the overall service experience (Lau *et al.*, 2005). To ensure a better assessment of service quality, there is the need to understand the factors guests use to measure service quality. Evidence suggests that service quality depends on a number of factors and also varies by study areas.

To measure the factors that are responsible for service quality in hotels in the Accra Metropolis, a combination of issues from the literature and views from hotel guests, service providers as well as academia were considered. The issues that emerged were grouped under seven main factors, namely: tangibles, overall room values, food and beverage, empathy, reliability, responsiveness and availability of other hotel services. A five-point Likert scale question format ranging from 1 being strongly disagreed to 5 being strongly agreed was used. Hotel guests, management and frontline staff were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement to each of the factors. Table 14 shows the

explanatory variables used to measure hotel guests expectations and perceptions of service quality.

Table 14: Guests' expectations and perceptions of service quality

Statement	Expectations			Perceptions		
	% in Agreement	Mean	Std Error Mean	% in Agreement	Mean	Std Error Mean
Hotel service quality attributes						
Tangibles						
Should have a clean environment	80.3	4.23	0.11	61.6	3.78	0.10
Should have attractive outside appearance	79.7	4.17	0.11	58.2	3.68	0.10
Should have an attractive interior decor	76.7	4.11	0.11	62.2	3.67	0.10
Should have modern looking equipment	77.9	4.11	0.11	60.4	3.66	0.10
Should have modern and comfortable furniture	79.1	4.18	0.11	57.5	3.59	0.10
Staff should appear neat and professional	80.8	4.22	0.11	60.5	3.64	0.10
Lobby area should be attractive and comfortable	75.6	4.20	0.11	61.6	3.67	0.09
Should have adequate parking space	75.6	4.14	0.10	55.8	3.55	0.10

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Table 14 (continued)

Should have physical visible facilities (buildings)	78.5	4.15	0.10	67.4	3.71	0.10
Appealing materials associated with the service	79.1	4.15	0.10	59.3	3.67	0.10
Overall score	*79.8*	*4.19*	*0.11*	*58.1*	*3.53*	*0.10*
Overall room values						
Clean and comfortable rooms	79	4.19	0.11	62.8	3.55	0.10
Clean and hygienic bathrooms and toilet	79	4.79	0.43	57.5	3.67	0.10
The lighting in the rooms should be adequate	79.1	4.17	0.10	60.5	3.60	0.10
The fixtures in rooms should be sufficient	77.3	4.12	0.10	46.5	3.37	0.10
The rooms should be welcoming	78.4	4.18	0.10	51.1	3.45	0.10
Easily accessible	78.5	4.15	0.11	47.1	3.35	0.11
Offer complementary items(soap, shampoo, towel)	77.9	4.20	0.10	59.1	3.61	0.10
Overall score	*80.1*	*4.23*	*0.12*	*61.2*	*3.65*	*0.10*

Table 14 (continued)

Front office services

Convenient and efficient reservation/booking system	79.1	4.20	0.10	53	3.45	0.09
Staff should be polite	79.1	4.17	0.11	64.5	3.65	0.09
Efficient check in procedure	79	4.13	0.11	56.4	3.54	0.09
Efficient check out procedure	77.3	4.19	0.10	57	3.57	0.09
Staff should perform services right the first time	77	4.12	0.11	48.3	3.36	0.09
Staff should be well trained and knowledgeable	77.4	4.12	0.11	50	3.45	0.09
Staff should be skilful and experienced	76.4	4.10	0.11	50	3.44	0.09
Staff should have good communication skills	77.3	4.15	0.11	49.4	3.47	0.09
Efficient telephone and internet system	76.8	4.11	0.11	50.6	3.46	0.09
Accurate billing system	77.9	4.13	0.11	41.3	3.29	.095
Handle guests complaints efficiently	79.7	4.14	0.11	48.9	3.39	0.09

Table 14 (continued)

Accurate information about hotel services	79	4.21	0.10	47.7	3.34	0.09
Advanced and accurate information about prices	77.4	4.13	0.10	48.8	3.47	0.09
Knowledgeable in hotel offerings	77.3	4.13	0.10	48.8	3.36	0.09
Overall score	*78.9*	*4.19*	*0.11*	*46.5*	*3.37*	*0.09*
Responsiveness						
Staff should show a sincere interest guests problems	78.5	4.12	0.11	55.2	3.41	0.09
Always be willing to help their guests	77.9	4.10	0.11	51.8	3.41	0.09
Never be too busy to respond to your request	77.4	4.09	0.11	55.3	3.32	0.09
Readily available to provide services	76	4.12	0.11	51.8	3.52	0.09
Staff should provide prompt service without delays	76.2	4.11	0.11	55.3	3.53	0.09
Overall score	*77.2*	*4.12*	*0.11*	*53.2*	*3.46*	*0.09*

Table 14 (continued)

Empathy							
Staff should be friendly	77.3	4.16	0.11	51.4	3.49	0.09
Staff should be courteous and respectful	77.4	4.17	0.10	36.6	2.88	0.11
Behaviour of staff should instil confidence in you	75.5	4.07	0.10	56.4	3.47	0.09
You feel safe in your transactions	76.2	4.17	0.10	51.3	3.45	0.11
Staff should call guests by name	70.3	3.98	0.11	48.3	3.41	0.09
Convenient operating hours	73.8	4.16	0.11	49.2	3.42	0.09
Staff should understand guests specific needs	75	4.12	0.10	49.4	3.39	0.09
Staff should listen to guests complaints	76.7	4.15	0.10	47.6	3.38	0.09
Give their guests special attention	75	4.14	0.10	48.2	3.45	0.09
Have their guests best interest at heart	77.3	4.15	0.11	52.9	3.46	0.09
Recognise their customers as guests	76.2	4.17	0.10	50.1	3.42	0.99

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Table 14 (continued)

Overall score	*76.7*	*4.16*	*0.12*	*51.2*	*3.23*	*0.99*
Food and Beverage Services					
Good eating and drinking facilities	77.3	4.15	0.11	51.7	3.47	0.09
Should provide variety of food and drinks	75	4.08	0.11	51.8	3.50	0.10
Should offer room service	76.2	4.12	0.11	48.8	3.39	0.10
Should offer prompt food service	75.6	4.13	0.11	41.3	3.29	0.09
Should offer high quality and hygienic food	76.7	4.16	0.11	51.7	3.53	.093
Prices of food and drinks should be reasonable	75.5	4.02	0.11	46.6	3.26	0.10
Overall score	*77.6*	*4.12*	*0.11*	*49.4*	*3.40*	*0.10*
Availability of other facilities					
Variety and quality of sports /recreational facilities	73.9	3.94	0.11	50.4	3.25	0.10
An efficient business centre	75	4.00	0.11	39.5	3.24	0.10

Table 14 (continued)

Up-to-date and modern safety facilities	75.6	4.03	0.11	46.5	3.39	0.10
Adequate fire safety facilities	76.8	4.06	0.11	46.5	3.43	0.09
All year round swimming pool	68.1	3.82	0.11	47	3.46	0.09
Overall score	*74.0*	*3.98*	*0.11*	*48.9*	*3.37*	*0.10*
Total Overall	*77.8*	*4.53*	*0.11*	*49.4*	*3.64*	*0.11*

Scale: 1-2.49=Low, 2.50-3.49=Moderate, 3.50-5.0=High

Source: Fieldwork, 2012

Evidence from Table 14, indicates that overall, most (77. 8%) of the guests had very high expectations of service. Of them, about 68 per cent to 80 per cent had expectations mean scores ranging from 3.2 to 3.5, which can be considered as high. For instance, 79.8 per cent of respondents had very high (4.19) expectation of tangible dimension, 80.1 per cent (4.23) of respondents had very high expectation of overall room dimension, and 78.9 per cent (4.19) had very high expectation of front office services dimension. Also, 76.7 per cent (4.16) respondents had high expectation of empathy dimension while 77.6 per cent (4.12) respondents had a high expectation of food and beverage services dimension and 78.8 per cent (4.53) expects very high availability of other facilities dimension. On the other hand, less than half (36.6% to 49.4%) perceived the overall service delivered to be moderate (from M= 3.3 to 3.8). Individually, 58.1 per cent (3.53) had high perception of tangible dimensions, 61.2 per cent (3.65) of the respondents were of high perception of overall room values dimension, 46.5 per cent (3.37) had a moderate perception of front office services dimension, 53.2 per cent (3.46) were of a moderate perception of responsiveness dimension, 51.2 per cent (3.23) perceived empathy as a moderate dimension, 49.4 per cent (3.40) perceived food and beverage services dimensions and 49.4 per cent (3.64) perceive availability of other facilities as a high dimension.

Guests expectations versus perceptions of service quality (gap 5- perceived service quality)

A customer assesses quality by his/her perception of the way in which the service is performed (Solomon *et al.,* 1985; Juwaheer & Ross, 2003; Al Khattab, 2011). As a result, service quality has been defined as the outcome of a comparison between expectations of a service and what is perceived to be received (Czepiel *et al.,* 1985; Choi & Chu, 2000). The gap between expectations and perceptions determines the level of service quality from a customer's perspective. Table 15 lists the mean scores of the expectations and perception scales for each of the 58 service quality attributes and the mean gap (perceptions minus expectations). The paired t-test was used to test the significant mean difference (gap) between customers' perceptions and expectations of service quality.

A total of 54 attributes had relatively high expectations scores (M>4.00) and three had expectations score of M<4.00. The three are "calling guests by their names", "variety and quality of sporting/recreational facilities" and "all year round swimming pools". Individually, from Table 15, the tangibles dimension had the largest gap (-0.4). Items that recorded serious short fall were "attractive outside appearance" (-0.72); "visually appealing physical facilities" (-0.60) and "modern and comfortable furniture" (-0.58) while "appealing service materials" (-0.37); "clean environment" (-0.44) and "attractive interior décor" had the smallest gaps. This suggests that hotels are

striving to meet guests' expectations of these service attributes with small gaps while they are failing in those attributes that recorded   high gaps.

Table 15: Gap Analysis for Guests (Perceptions minus Expectations)

Attributes	Expectation mean	Perception mean	Gap (per-exp.)	t-value
Tangibles				
Clean environment	4.22 (1.49)	3.78 (1.42)	-0.44	6.63*
Attractive outside appearance	4.17 (1.50)	3.45 (1.34)	-0.72	6.91*
Attractive interior decor	4.11 (1.51)	3.66 (1.37)	-0.45	5.77*
Modern looking equipment	4.11 (1.51)	3.64 (1.37)	-0.47	5.82*
Modern and comfortable furniture	4.17 (1.45)	3.59 (1.34)	-0.58	7.79*
Staff appear neat and professional	4.22 (1.44)	3.68 (1.37)	-0.54	7.44*
Attractive and comfortable lobby area	4.19 (1.44)	3.67 (1.29)	-0.52	6.92*
Adequate parking space	4.15 (1.40)	3.67 (1.37)	-0.48	6.85*
Visually appealing physical facilities	4.15 (1.41)	3.55 (1.34)	-0.60	7.19*
Appealing associated service	4.15 (1.36)	3.78 (1.44)	-0.37	6.51*
Overall score	4.23(1.24)	3.82 (1.25)	-0.41	5.21*
Overall room values				
Clean and comfortable rooms	4.20 (1.45)	3.53 (1.33)	-0.67	8.67*
Clean and hygienic bathrooms and toilets	4.85 (1.74)	3.55 (1.31)	-1.30	2.92*
The lighting in the room should be adequate	4.20 (1.41)	3.67 (1.32)	-0.53	7.24*

Table 15 (continued)

The fixtures in the room should sufficient	4.14 (1.41)	3.66 (1.38)	-0.48	6.21*
The room should be welcoming	4.21 (1.40)	3.62 (1.38)	-0.59	7.29*
Easily accessible	4.21 (1.38)	3.38 (1.42)	-0.83	8.96*
Offer complementary items	4.24 (1.34)	3.45 (1.39)	-0.79	9.24*
Efficient business centre	4.00 (1.46)	3.39 (1.33)	-0.61	5.91*
Overall score	4.21(1.35)	3.82 (1.30)	-0.39	6.21*
Front office services				
Efficient reservation/booking system	4.20 (1.39)	3.45 (1.25)	-0.75	9.01*
Staff should be polite and friendly	4.18 (1.46)	3.66 (1.24)	-0.52	7.03*
Efficient check in procedure	4.13 (1.48)	3.54 (1.24)	-0.59	7.15*
Efficient check out procedure	4.19 (1.41)	3.57 (1.24)	-0.62	7.93*
Staff should perform services right the first time	4.11(1.47)	3.36 (1.28)	-0.75	8.74*
Staff should be well trained and knowledge	4.12(1.51)	3.44(1.25)	-0.68	8.06*
Staff should be skilful and experienced	4.10 (1.49)	3.47 (1.23)	-0.63	7.38*
Staff have good communication skills	4.15 (1.45)	3.46 (1.23)	-0.69	8.56*
Efficient telephone and internet system	4.11 (1.46)	3.29 (1.24)	-0.82	9.19*
Accurate billing system	4.14(1.47)	3.34(1.44)	-0.80	10.44*

Table 15 (continued)

Handle guests complains	4.13(1.46)	3.40(1.27)	-0.73	7.32*
Accurate information about hotel services	4.21 (1.39)	3.47 (1.25)	-0.74	8.91*
Advanced and accurate information about prices	4.13 (1.44)	3.36 (1.27)	-0.77	8.92*
Overall score	4.22(1.34)	3.83(1.30)	-0.39	7.43*
Responsiveness				
Show sincere interest in solving guest problems	4.12(1.49)	3.36(1.24)	-0.76	8.69*
Always be willing to help guests	4.11(1.53)	3.40(1.23)	-0.71	8.34*
Never too busy to respond to your request	4.09(1.51)	3.41(1.22)	-0.68	7.65*
Readily available to provide services	4.14(1.47)	3.42(1.21)	-0.72	8.00*
Provide prompt services without delays	4.13(1.51)	3.42(1.21)	-0.71	7.65*
Overall score	4.15(1.31)	3.77(1.12)	-0.38	7.10*
Empathy				
Staff should be friendly	4.15(1.47)	3.57(1.24)	-0.58	6.92*
Staff should be courteous and respectful	4.18(1.43)	3.55(1.23)	-0.63	8.45*
Behaviour of staff should instil confidence	4.05(1.44)	3.47(1.20)	-0.58	7.19*
You feel safe in your transaction	4.16(1.43)	3.49(1.27)	-0.67	8.41*

Table 15 (continued)

Staff should call guests by name	3.96(1.53)	2.86(1.47)	-1.10	9.06*
Convenient operating hours	4.16(1.45)	3.48(1.31)	-0.68	8.74*
Staff should understand guests specific needs	4.13(1.42)	3.43(1.30)	-0.70	8.42*
Staff should have time to listen to guests	4.15(1.37)	3.39(1.29)	-0.76	9.50*
Give guest special attention	4.15(1.41)	3.39(1.28)	-0.76	8.40*
Have their guests best interest at heart	4.16(1.43)	3.46(1.24)	-0.70	8.31*
Recognise their customers as guests	4.17(1.37)	3.48(1.27)	-0.69	8.72*
Overall score	4.19(4.21)	3.89(1.31)	-0.30	6.24*
Food and beverage services				
Good and eating drinking facilities	4.16(1.46)	3.49(1.24)	-0.67	8.37*
Should provide variety of food and drinks	4.08(1.51)	3.51(1.30)	-0.57	6.79*
Should offer room service	4.13(1.45)	3.40(1.32)	-0.73	9.21*
Should offer prompt food service	4.15(1.49)	3.31(1.26)	-0.84	9.05*
Should offer high quality and hygienic food	4.16(1.48)	3.54(1.21)	-0.62	7.58*
Food and drinks prices should be reasonable	4.02(1.51)	3.27(1.40)	-0.75	6.52*
Overall score	4.21(1.46)	3.93(1.21)	-0.28	5.78*

*Significant difference at 0.05

Source: Fieldwork, 2012

From the overall room values dimension, "clean and hygienic bathrooms and toilets" (-1.31) had the highest gap followed by "easily accessible rooms" (-0.83) and "offering of complimentary items in rooms" (-0.79). On the other hand, "sufficient fixtures in rooms" had the smallest gap (-0.48) in the overall room values dimension. Front office services dimension recorded a moderate gap of -0.39 and from this dimension, "efficient telephone and internet system" (-0.82); "accurate billing system" (-0.80) and advanced and accurate information" (-0.77) were the topmost attributes that fell short of guests' expectations whilst "polite and friendly" (-0.52) was the least serious attribute. Under the responsiveness, "showing sincere interest in solving guests problems" (-0.76); readily available to provide services" (-0.72) and all the other service attributes in the dimension recorded relatively high gaps though the overall gap of -0.38 was relatively low. The most serious attributes under empathy that require critical attention is "staff calling guests by name" (-1.10). These days' hotel services are so personalized that staff relate to guests on a first name level but Ghanaians tend to be formal in their business dealings by calling guests "Sir" or "Madam". This result proved that guests want to be called by their names when they stay in hotels in Accra. Hotels are also not meeting their guests expectations in "offering prompt food and beverage services" (-0.84) and "offering reasonable prices for food and drinks" (-0.75). This finding suggests that prices of food and drinks in hotels are expensive. Finally, the overall gap for availability of other facilities and services was the smallest (-0.20) among all the dimensions. The items in this dimension

recorded relatively lower gaps ranging from -0.69 to -0.48. All these indicate that hotels in Accra are not doing well in the tangibles dimension but seem to be closing the gap in the availability of other facilities and services. The most critical service quality attributes are "clean and hygienic bathrooms and toilets"; "staff calling guests by name"; easily accessible guestrooms"; "accurate billing system" and "efficient telephone and internet system".

In sum, all the perception scores were consistently lower than the expectation scores. Thus, resulting in the negative gaps which indicated that hotel guests in Accra perceive service delivery to be lower than what they expected. Relating this to the conceptual framework, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between hotel guests' expectations of service quality and their perceptions of the actual service delivered is rejected. Consequently, it can be said that there is a statistically significant difference between guests' expectations and their perceptions of service quality. This finding reaffirms the conceptual framework and confirms most service quality studies in hotels (Juwaheer & Ross, 2003 in Mauritius; Mohsin, Hussain & Khan, 2011 in Parkistan; Faizan *et al.*, 2012; Panuel & Zumman, 2013 in Bangladesh) that guests' expectations were far above the perception scores but contradicts Alin (2010) study in Austrialia, which revealed a rather positive gap between customers' expectations and perceptions.

Differences in guests' perceptions of service quality

Though the literature is silent on the relationship between the characteristics of customers and their perceptions of service quality, anecdotal evidence suggests that there are differences in perceptions of service quality among customers with different background characteristics. The study therefore sought to explore the differences in hotel guests' perceptions of service quality against their characteristics. Table 16 depicts the differences. Both the independent t-test and ANOVA were used to test for significant differences between groups.

Regarding the sex of guests and their perceptions of service quality in hotels in Accra, it was revealed that there is a significant (F= 0.05) difference between males and females perceptions of service quality. Females, thus, perceived service quality to be higher (M= 3.80) than their male counterparts (M= 3.22). Though results from Table 16 indicate that guests between the ages of 30 and 50 years perceived service quality to be higher (3.819) than those who were 30 years and below (3.610) on one side and those above 50 years old on the other side there was no significant difference between their perceptions of service quality. In other words, it can be said that the middle aged guests perceived service quality to be a bit higher than the young and older guests. However, there was no significant difference between the perceptions of service quality in hotels among the various age groups.

Table 16: Differences in guests' perceptions of service quality across their profile

Socio-demographic characteristic	N	Mean	F value	Sign level
Sex				
Male	108	3.22	0.512	0.052*
Female	64	3.80		
Age				
30 years and below	58	3.61		
31-50	102	3.82	0. 758	0. 471
51+	12	3.77		
Marital status				
Not married	98	3.77		
Not married	74	3.71	0.122	0.728
Educational level				
Secondary education	31	3.21		
Tertiary education	141	3.91	5.419	0.022*
Religion				
Buddhists & Hindus	11	3.68		
Christian	133	3.87*	5.98	0.001*
Muslim	28	2.99*		
Occupation				
Professional/Business Executives	123	3.54		

Table 16 (continued)

Artisans	23	4.15*		
Civil servants	17	4.24	6.59	0.000*
Students	9	2.16*		
Purpose of visit				
Business	93	3.75		
VFR	15	3.82	0.09	0.971
Vacation	52	3.71		
Other	12	3.64		
Continent of origin				
Europe	36	3.40		
North America	39	3.68		
Asia	16	3.37	0.71	0.588
Africa	76	3.73		
South America	5	3.60		
Length of stay (weeks)				
< 1	67	3.71		
1-2	56	3.99	2.79	0.042*
2-5	30	3.49*		
>3	19	4.21*		
Repeat stay				
Yes	79	3.59	1.227	0.222
No	93	3.77		

Table 16 (continued)

Travel party size				
Alone	99	3.82*		
1-5 persons	55	3.65		
6 persons and above	18	2.86*	7.49	0.008*
Travel Exposure				
Travel experience	143	3.72	1.01	0.316
No travel experience	29	3.96		
Hotel rating				
1-star	7	3.93*		
2-star	11	3.54		
3-star	71	3.33	9.13	0.000*
4-star	38	3.16		
5-star	37	2.88*		

*significant at 0.05

Source: Fieldwork, 2012

With regard to marital status of hotel guests, there was no significant difference between the perception of service quality by both married and unmarried guests. Both groups perceived hotel service quality to be moderate. Guests who had attained tertiary education perceived service quality to be higher (3.91) than those with secondary level education (3.21). Statistically, there was a significant difference between both guests with secondary education and those who had attained tertiary level education. Religion,

however, was significant (F= 0.001) in guests perceptions of service quality in hotels. Christians perceived service quality to be higher (M= 3.87) than Buddhists (M= 3.68) and Muslims (M= 2.99). Results from Table 16 show that professionals and business executives had the lowest (M= 2-16) perceptions regarding service quality in hotels. Conversely, civil servants and artisans perceived service quality to be higher (M= 4.24 and M= 4.15 respectively) than students (M= 3.54).

Guests staying in hotels with the sole purpose of visiting friends and relatives (VFR) perceived the service in the hotels to be higher (3.82) than those staying in the hotel for business, vacation and other purposes such as education, among others. There was no significant difference between the perceptions of service quality for all the guests visiting for various purposes. Though, guests from the African continent perceived service quality to be higher (M= 3.73) than guests from other continents, there was no statistically significant difference between their perceptions of service quality in hotels.

In terms of guests' length of stay, there was a significant difference in the perception of service quality between guests staying in hotels for shorter periods (less than one week) and those staying for longer periods (more than three weeks). For example, evidence from Table 16 indicates that guests staying for less than one week perceived service quality to be lower (3.71) than those staying for more than three weeks (4.21). Although those who were staying in the hotel for the first time perceived service quality to be higher (3.77) than those who were repeating their stay (3.58), there was no

statistically significant difference between the two categories of guests. Travel party size was also found to be significant with guests' perceptions of service quality because persons were staying in the hotels alone or with up to five persons and those staying with six persons or more. Those staying alone in the hotels had higher (3.82) perceptions of service quality than with guests staying with a relative smaller number of people (1-5 persons) and those staying with more people (6 or more persons).

On whether guests have stayed in a hotel before or not, it is evident from Table 16 that, guests who had no prior hotel experience perceived service quality to be higher (3.96) than those who had prior experience. There was however no significant difference between the two groups of guests. Table 16 also indicates that guests who lodged in 1-star hotels had the highest (M= 3.93) perception of service quality, followed by those in 2-star hotels (M= 3.54), 3-star hotels (M= 3.33), 4-star hotels (M= 3.16) and then 5-star hotels (M= 2-88). In other words, the higher the star rating of a hotel, the lower perceptions of service quality by guests.

Service providers' understanding of guests' expectations and the former's perception of their performance

To evaluate service providers' perceptions of hotel guests expectations of services in the Accra Metropolis, the same seven factors namely, tangibles, overall room value, food and beverage services, empathy, reliability, responsiveness and availability of recreational facilities used to assess hotel

guests expectations of service quality were employed to draw a five-point scale format questionnaire. Both management staff and frontline employees were asked to indicate their level of agreement and disagreement with each of the 58 items under the seven factors. Table 17 depicts the descriptive presentation of service providers' understanding of guests' expectations.

Evidence from Table 17 indicates that majority of the respondents (98.8 per cent) were in agreement that a hotel staff should appear neat and professional, with another 98.2 per cent agreeing to the statement that a hotel's lobby area should be attractive and comfortable. The means of the other tangible attributes range from 4.89 to 4.77 for expecting a clean hotel environment and attractive outside appearance. Overall, the majority (96.5 per cent) of service providers agreed that tangibles dimension influence their understanding of guests' expectations of service quality with a mean of 4.69.

Furthermore, almost all the respondents (98.6 per cent) agreed (mean= 4.81) that their expectations of service quality in hotels was influenced by their quest for clean and comfortable guestrooms, clean and hygienic bathrooms and toilets, adequate lighting in the rooms, sufficient fixtures in room, a welcoming and easily accessible rooms and availability of complementary items such as soaps, clean towels among others in guestrooms (overall room values).

Table 17: Service providers' understanding of guests' expectations and the former's perception of their performance

Statement	Expectation			Perception		
	% in Agreement	Mean	Std Error Mean	% in Agreement	Mean	Std Error Mean
Hotel service quality attributes						
Should have a clean environment	97.9	4.89	0.02	98.5	4.85	0.02
Should have attractive outside appearance	97.2	4.77	0.03	97.8	4.63	0.03
Should have an attractive interior décor	96.1	4.65	0.03	79.2	4.40	0.04
Should have modern looking equipment	95.1	4.57	0.03	85.6	4.20	0.04
Should have modern and comfortable furniture	92.5	4.57	0.03	88.6	4.20	0.04
Staff should appear neat and professional	98.8	4.89	0.19	94.8	4.57	0.03
Lobby area should be attractive and comfortable	98.2	4.73	0.03	92.9	4.39	0.04
Should have adequate parking space	96.1	4.52	0.03	92.5	4.35	0.04
Should have physical visible facilities (buildings)	97.5	4.63	0.03	86.7	4.12	0.05
Appealing materials associated with the service	93.8	4.49	0.04	83.5	4.13	0.05

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Table 17 (continued)

Overall score	96.4	4.69	0.02	95.9	4.39	0.03
Overall room values						
Clean and comfortable rooms	100.0	4.95	0.11	97.3	4.57	0.03
Clean and hygienic bathrooms and toilet	100.0	4.93	0.01	97.3	4.64	0.03
The lighting in the rooms should adequate	97.9	4.63	0.03	91.4	4.37	0.04
The fixtures in rooms should be sufficient	95.3	4.48	0.03	86.4	4.20	0.04
The rooms should be welcoming	100.0	4.80	0.02	92.7	4.44	0.04
Easily accessible	96.9	4.61	0.03	93.9	4.45	0.04
Offer complementary items(soap, shampoo, towel)	99.7	4.79	0.02	94.5	4.53	0.04
Has visually appealing brochures and pamphlets	98.5	4.53	0.03	92.3	4.33	0.04
Overall score	98.6	4.81	0.02	96.5	4.51	0.03
Front office services						

Table 17 (continued)

Convenient and efficient reservation/booking system	98.8	4.81	0.02	95.0	4.55	0.04
Staff should be polite and friendly	92.5	4.82	0.02	95.4	4.61	0.03
Efficient check in procedure	98.8	4.76	0.02	94.5	4.53	0.04
Efficient check out procedure	99.1	4.82	0.02	94.5	4.52	0.04
Staff should perform services right the first time	95.5	4.76	0.02	88.4	4.25	0.04
Staff should be well trained and knowledgeable	74.4	4.62	0.03	90.9	4.33	0.04
Staff should be skilful and experienced	86.1	4.92	0.03	86.3	4.43	0.05
Staff should have good communication skills	83.7	4.56	0.01	88.9	4.48	0.04
Efficient telephone and internet system	98.8	4.74	0.04	92.3	4.49	0.04
Accurate billing system	97.0	4.86	0.03	85.9	4.38	0.05
Handle guests complaints efficiently	97.9	4.83	0.02	90.9	4.47	0.04
Accurate information about hotel services	98.2	4.83	0.02	89.0	4.39	0.04

Table 17 (continued)

Advance and accurate information about prices	96.6	4.73	0.03	92.0	4.44	0.04
Knowledgeable in hotel offerings	96.6	4.64	0.03	93.9	4.39	0.04
Overall score	*98.8*	*4.81*	*0.02*	*97.4*	*4.57*	*0.03*
Responsiveness						
Staff should show a sincere interest guests problems	96.3	4.74	0.03	92.6	4.46	0.04
Always be willing to help their guests	99.4	4.79	0.02	94.8	4.53	0.03
Never be too busy to respond to your request	98.2	4.64	0.03	89.9	4.31	0.04
Readily available to provide services	98.9	4.68	0.03	94.5	4.41	0.04
Staff should provide prompt service without delays	99.1	4.68	0.03	87.5	4.23	0.04
Overall score	*99.5*	*4.71*	*0.03*	*94.8*	*4.42*	*0.03*
Empathy						
Staff should be friendly	98.2	4.81	0.03	96.3	4.54	0.03

Table 17 (continued)

Staff should be courteous and respectful	98.2	4.85	0.02	95.7	4.61	0.04
Behaviour of staff should instil confidence in you	97.3	4.65	0.03	95.1	4.51	0.04
You feel safe in your transactions	98.2	4.63	0.03	98.2	4.64	0.03
Staff should call guests by name	89.7	4.35	0.05	80.7	4.04	0.06
Convenient operating hours	97.2	4.56	0.03	91.9	4.46	0.04
Staff should understand guests specific needs	100.0	4.68	0.03	92.4	4.43	0.04
Staff should listen to guests complaints	100.0	4.76	0.02	95.4	4.51	0.04
Give their guests special attention	97.6	4.71	0.03	91.5	4.52	0.04
Have their guests best interest at heart	98.6	4.63	0.03	96.0	4.52	0.04
Recognise their customers as a guest	100.0	4.68	0.03	94.4	4.44	0.04
Overall score	*99.8*	*4.71*	*0.03*	*94.9*	*4.50*	*0.03*

Food and Beverage Services

Table 17 (continued)

Good eating and drinking facilities	100.0	4.84	0.02	94.8	4.53	0.04
Should provide variety of food and drinks	97.5	4.71	0.03	92.3	4.50	0.04
Should offer room service	93.8	4.53	0.04	96.0	4.66	0.03
Should offer prompt food service	97.3	4.58	0.03	86.1	4.29	0.05
Should offer high quality and hygienic food	93.8	4.83	0.02	97.2	4.71	0.03
Food and drinks prices should be reasonable	95.7	4.44	0.03	91.7	4.44	0.04
Overall score	93.7	4.79	0.02	97.0	4.63	0.03
Availability of other facilities						
Variety and quality of sports /recreational facilities	84.2	4.18	0.04	58.5	3.46	0.07
An efficient business centre	96.9	4.58	0.03	69.6	3.83	0.06
Up-to-date and modern safety facilities	99.4	4.68	0.03	76.1	4.00	0.05

Table 17 (continued)

Adequate fire safety facilities	99.1	4.84	0.02	93.6	4.52	0.04
All year round swimming pool	89.2	4.20	0.05	63.0	3.44	0.08
Overall score	*97.5*	*4.55*	*0.03*	*64.3*	*3.86*	*0.05*

Source: Fieldwork, 2012

Front office services are one of the pivotal roles of a hotel in its interactions with guests. As many as 98.8 per cent of the service providers also indicated (mean=4.81) that front office services including accurate billing system, efficient handling of guests' complaints, accurate information about hotel services efficient check-in and check-out procedures among others influenced their expectations of service quality in hotels in Accra. The responsiveness dimension examined hotel staff's willingness to help guests, showing sincere interest in guests promptness and always available to provide service. The data in Table 17 suggest that almost all (99.5 per cent) of the service providers were in agreement that their expectations were informed by these attributes.

Empathy means understanding and being sensitive to guests needs in a hotel. Ninety-eight per cent of hotel service providers regarded empathy as an influencing factor of guests' expectations of service quality in Accra with all (100 per cent) of them agreeing (mean=4.71) that hotel guests should call guests by names, having guests interests at heart, understand guests' special needs and friendliness of staff among others. Food and beverage services are very crucial to hotel operations. According to Stutts and Wortman (2006), hotels provide food and beverage services to guests in fulfilling one of the basic needs of human beings (physiological need). The results from Table 17, once again, depict that as many as 93.7 per cent of the respondents agreed (mean= 4.79) that providing food and beverage services was an important factor in their expectations of hotel service quality. The items considered

important are good food and drinking facilities (100 per cent with a mean of 4.68), provision of variety of food and drinks (97.5 per cent, mean= 4.71), availability of room service (93.8 per cent, mean= 4.53), prompt food service (97.3 per cent, 4.58), high quality and hygienic food (93.8 per cent, mean=4.83).

Table 17 also shows that most (97.5 per cent, mean= 4.55) of the service providers were of the opinion that the availability of other facilities such as variety and quality of sports or recreational facilities (84 per cent, mean=4.18), an efficient business centre (96.9 per cent, mean= 4.58), availability and up-to-date and modern safety facilities (99.4 per cent, mean= 4.68), adequate fire safety facilities (99 per cent, mean=4.84) and availability of an all-year round swimming pool (89 per cent, mean=4.20)

Service providers' perception of guests' expectations versus service providers' perception of actual service delivered (internal evaluation gap)

This gap measures service providers' perception of guests' expectations and their perception of the hotel's service delivered. According to Tsang and Qu (2000), the measurement of this gap is as important as measuring guest's perceptions because service providers perceptions of service quality affect service standards and brings to bear as to whether management has confidence in meeting guests expectations or not. Table 18 presents the results of difference between these variables.

Table 18: Gap Analysis for Service Providers' Perceptions of Guests' Expectations and their Perceptions of the Service Performance

Attributes	Expectation (mean)	Perception (mean)	Gap (per-exp)	t-value
Tangibles				
Clean environment	4.91(1.20)	4.85(1.22)	-0.06	2.19*
Outside appearance should be attractive	4.79(1.20)	4.63(1.21)	-0.16	4.31*
Attractive interior décor	4.67(1.22)	4.39(1.22)	-0.28	6.75*
Modern looking equipment	4.59(1.23)	4.20(1.20)	-0.39	8.40*
Modern and comfortable furniture	4.60(1.21)	4.20(1.30)	-0.40	7.38*
Hotel staff should appear neat and professional	4.92(1.30)	4.57(1.22)	-0.35	9.68*
Attractive and comfortable lobby area	4.74(1.31)	4.38(1.33)	-0.36	8.12*
Adequate parking space	4.54(1.33)	4.12(1.32)	-0.42	8.67*
Visible physical facilities	4.64(1.30)	4.36(1.20)	-0.28	6.70*
Materials associated with service should be appealing	4.49(1.21)	4.15(1.32)	-0.34	6.46*
Overall score	4.71(1.19)	4.42(1.22)	-0.29	9.57*
Overall room values				
Clean and comfortable rooms	4.95(1.22)	4.57(1.31)	-0.38	11.56*
Clean and hygienic bathrooms and toilets	4.94(1.21)	4.65(1.33)	-0.29	9.15*
The lighting in the rooms should be adequate	4.62(1.03)	4.37(1.32)	-0.25	6.17*

Table 18 (continued)

Sufficient fixtures in rooms	4.47(1.08)	4.23(1.30)	-0.24	5.36*
Welcoming rooms	4.79(1.28)	4.43(1.20)	-0.36	9.79*
Easy accessibility to hotel	4.60(1.22)	4.44(1.20)	-0.16	3.16*
Offer complementary services	4.80(1.01)	4.53(1.03)	-0.27	6.27*
Efficient business centres	4.57(1.22)	3.83(1.24)	-0.74	11.95*
Overall score	4.75(1.33)	4.46(1.24)	-0.29	10.69*
Front office services				
Convenient and efficient reservation system	4.83(1.22)	4.55(1.24)	-0.28	8.18*
Efficient check in procedure	4.82(1.02)	4.54(1.03)	-0.28	7.24*
Efficient check out procedure	4.77(1.04)	4.52(1.03)	-0.25	7.76*
Efficient telephone and internet system	4.82(1.00)	4.38(1.20)	-0.44	9.46*
Accurate billing system	4.75(1.05)	4.47(1.24)	-0.28	5.47*
Advance and accurate information about prices	4.63(1.00)	4.39(1.03)	-0.24	5.37*
Staff should be friendly	4.93(1.05)	4.61(1.25)	-0.32	9.44*
Staff should perform services right the first time	4.56(1.25)	4.25(1.23)	-0.31	6.07*
Staff should be well trained and knowledgeable	4.76(1.22)	4.43(1.23)	-0.33	5.95*
Staff should be skilful and experience	4.87(1.36)	4.48(1.20)	-0.39	9.49*

Table 18 (continued)

Staff should have good communication skills	4.84(1.22)	4.49(1.03)	-0.35	8.04*
Handle guest complains efficiently	4.73(1.24)	4.39(1.24)	-0.34	5.89*
Accurate information about hotel services	4.64(1.36)	4.44(1.20)	-0.20	3.92*
Overall score	4.77(1.34)	4.49(1.34)	-0.28	9.39*
Responsiveness				
Show sincere interest in solving guest problems	4.76(1.30)	4.46(1.30)	-0.30	7.90*
Always be willing to help guests	4.79(1.15)	4.53(1.33)	-0.26	7.92*
Never be too busy to respond to request	4.64(1.18)	4.31(1.31)	-0.33	7.28*
Readily available to provide services	4.67(1.02)	4.42(1.30)	-0.25	6.14*
Staff should provide prompt service without delays	4.68(1.24)	4.22(1.28)	-0.46	10.94*
Overall score	4.71(1.23)	4.38(1.09)	-0.33	10.33*
Empathy				
Staff should be friendly	4.93(1.32)	4.61(1.02)	-0.32	9.44*
Staff should be courteous and respectful	4.84(1.09)	4.61(1.20)	-0.23	6.11*

Table 18 (continued)

Behaviour of staff should instil confidence in you	4.66(1.14)	4.51(1.30)	-0.15	3.57*
Guests feel safe in their transactions	4.62(1.31)	4.63(1.23)	0.01	0.52
Staff call guests by name	4.35(1.37)	4.04(1.24)	-0.31	6.81*
Convenient operating hours	4.56(1.26)	4.48(1.26)	-0.08	1.79
Staff understand guest specific needs	4.68(1.24)	4.43(1.02)	-0.25	6.40*
Staff have time to listen to guest complains	4.77(1.05)	4.51(1.24)	-0.26	6.59*
Give guests special attention	4.72(1.30)	4.52(1.15)	-0.20	4.73*
Have their guests best interest at heart	4.64(1.45)	4.51(1.23)	-0.13	3.00*
Recognise customers as guest	4.68(1.25)	4.44(1.26)	-0.24	6.08*
Overall score	4.68(1.15)	4.48(1.30)	-0.20	6.88*
Food and beverage services				
Good eating and drinking facilities	4.84(1.22)	4.56(1.30)	-0.28	6.89*
Should provide variety of food and drinks	4.70(1.40)	4.51(1.22)	-0.19	4.50*
Offer room services	4.52(1.45)	4.65(1.30)	0.13	3.22
Offer prompt food services	4.56(1.23)	4.31(1.44)	-0.25	4.74*
Offer high quality hygienic food	4.83(1.34)	4.70(1.36)	-0.13	4.10*

Table 18 (continued)

Reasonable prices of food and drinks	4.42(1.30)	4.43(1.15)	0.01	-1.36
Overall score	4.45(1.20)	4.43(1.31)	-0.02	20.06*
Availability of other facilities				
Variety and quality of sports/recreation facilities	4.18(1.22)	3.46(1.30)	-0.72	8.89*
Efficient business centre	4.57(1.30)	3.83(1.20)	-0.74	11.95*
Up to date modern safety facilities	4.69(1.35)	4.01(1.30)	-0.68	12.15*
Adequate fire safety facilities	4.85(1.16)	4.53(1.20)	-0.32	8.28*
All year round swimming pool	4.18(1.40)	3.47(1.20)	-0.71	8.03*
Overall score	4.49(1.19)	3.89(1.18)	-0.60	11.68*
Total gap	4.73(1.25)	4.46(1.15)	-0.27	9.69*

*(significant) t-test two tailed probability ≤ 0.05; standard deviations are in parenthesis; a negative gap indicates that service providers perceived that their service delivery did not meet their guests' expectations; a positive gap indicates that service providers perceived that service delivery exceeded guests' expectations. Eta square value of 0.01=small effect; 0.06=moderate effect and 0.14=large effect (Cohen, 1988).

Source: Fieldwork, 2012

As shown in Table 18, a comparison of the mean scores between service providers perceptions of guests' expectations and the hotels' level of service delivery, using a paired-sample t-test, indicates a statistically significant difference on 54 of the 57 attributes examined. Of all the attributes, only three attributes (guests feel safe in the hotel=0.01; hotel offers room service=0.13 and reasonable food and drinks prices=0.01) had a positive mean gap.

This implies that hotel service providers believed they were not doing well in meeting guests' expectations. The biggest gaps were "hotels operate efficient business centre" (-0.74, Sig. 0.05); "hotel has all year swimming pool" (-0.71, Sig. 0.05); "hotel offers a variety and quality recreational facilities (-0.71, Sig. 0.05); "hotel has up-to date modern safety equipment (-0.68) and "hotel staff provide prompt service without delays" (-0.46). These attributes are related to the availability of other facilities provided by hotels. Service providers need to pay particular attention to these attributes by putting in effort to improve them. Overall, there was a significant decrease from hotel service providers knowledge of guests expectations (M=4.73, SD=1.25) to their perception of the services they delivered (M=4.46, SD=1.15). The eta square statistic (0.35) indicates a large difference.

With this, we fail to accept the null hypothesis that states that there is no significant difference between service providers understanding of guests' expectations and their perceptions of the actual service they delivered. This shows that service providers perceive the actual service delivered to guests to

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be lower than what they perceive guests to expect which supports Tsang and Qu (2000) and contradicts Wei *et al.* (1989) and Choy *et al.* (1986) findings that service providers in the hotel industry in China underestimate their hotel's service delivery in relation to what they think guests expect. In other words, service providers (management and frontline staff) acknowledge that their service delivery falls short of what their guests expect.

Summary

Issues that were discussed in this chapter included guests' expectations and perceptions of service quality in the hotels in Accra together with the gap between these expectations and perceptions which measured perceived service quality. The chapter further looked at the differences in guests perceptions of service quality across their background characteristics. How service providers perceive guests' expectations of service quality and how service providers also perceive their performance in meeting guests' expectations were examined in the chapter. Finally, the chapter presented the differences between service providers' perceptions of guests' expectations and their perception of the services delivered.

CHAPTER SEVEN

PERCEPTION GAPS IN SERVICE QUALITY IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY

Introduction

Stakeholders' perceptions of service quality according to Edvardsson, Thomasson and Qvretveit (1994) may differ between employee, manager and the customer. The differences in perception may be due to various reasons. Managers and employees generally do not like to mention deficiencies in the quality of their services. In other words, they tend not to degrade the work and services they have delivered (Grandey, 2000). In contrast, they may have a tendency to exaggerate the quality of their services (Baker, Mapes, New & Szwejczewski, 1997). As a result, the customer's perceptions of service quality may be ignored. This chapter discusses the differences (Gaps) in customers, frontline staff and management's expectations and perceptions of service quality. It first analyses the gap between customers' expectations and service providers' perception or knowledge of these expectations, then emphasise the gap between customers' perceptions of service quality and service providers' perception of their delivery. The chapter further examines the gap between frontline staff and management's perceptions of customers' expectations and their perceptions of delivery. Finally, perceptions of actual service delivered

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between guests, management and frontline staff are also presented in this chapter.

Perception gaps in guest expectations: guests versus managers and frontline staff

Several studies have proposed that significant variations exist between hotel guests expectations of service quality and service providers perceptions or knowledge of these expectations and this is due to the lack of understanding what guests really expect or proper research into guests expectations (Luk & Layton, 2002; Tsang & Qu, 2000). Table 19 provides an overview of the mean scores and standard deviations of the measures between responses for guests' expectations and service providers' knowledge of the expectations. To detect the significant differences, the t-test was computed.

Guests' expectations and Management expectations (Understanding gap - Gap 1)

It is important for both managers and guests to have a consistent expectation and evaluation for a successful transaction to occur. According to Luk and Layton (2002), insufficient knowledge of customer expectations creates the gap between management's perceptions of guests' expectations and the actual expectations of the guests. The results of Table 19 show that managers believe guests expect more than the guests themselves expect.

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Table 19: Perception gaps in guest expectations: Guests versus managers and frontline staff

Attributes	Management Expectation (mean)	Frontline Expectation (mean)	Guests' Expectation (mean)	Gap 1 (Mexp -Gexp)	Gap 7 (Fexp- Gexp)	Gap 8 (Fro- Mgt.)	Gap 1 t-value	Gap 7 t-value	
Tangibles									
Clean environment	4.86(0.47)	4.90(0.29)	4.17(1.49)	0.69	0.72	0.04	4.86*	5.27*	
Outside appearance should be attractive	4.65(0.56)	4.82(0.42)	4.11(1.50)	0.54	0.71	0.17	3.59*	6.32*	2
Attractive interior decor	4.65(0.57)	4.56(0.56)	4.10(1.51)	0.55	0.46	-0.09	3.94*	6.22*	1
Modern looking equipment	4.45(0.63)	4.62(0.55)	4.17(1.45)	0.28	0.45	0.17	2.55*	4.49*	2
Modern and comfortable furniture	4.49(0.64)	4.54(0.62)	4.22(1.43)	0.27	0.32	0.09	2.42*	3.98*	0
Hotel staff should appear neat and professional	4.82(0.44)	4.91(0.27)	4.20(1.35)	0.62	0.71	0.09	2.75*	3.39*	1
Attractive and comfortable lobby area	4.62(0.54)	4.72(0.47)	4.14(1.40)	0.48	0.58	0.10	3.34*	6.66*	1.
Adequate parking space	4.42(0.64)	4.52(0.53)	4.45(1.39)	-0.03	0.07	0.10	2.24*	5.87*	1.3
Visible physical facilities	4.55(0.55)	4.65(0.53)	4.16(1.40)	0.39	0.49	0.10	3.18*	3.78*	1.5

Table 19 (continued)

Materials associated with service should be appealing	4.38(0.87)	4.47(0.74)	4.15(1.39)	0.23	0.32	0.09	1.84	4.62*
Overall score	4.59(0.42)	4.73(0.34)	4.21(1.39)	0.38	0.52	0.14	3.34*	4.45*
Overall room values								
Clean and comfortable rooms	4.90(0.30)	5.00(0.00)	4.19(1.45)	0.71	0.79	0.10	5.55*	2.88*
Clean and hygienic bathrooms and toilets	4.88(0.31)	4.95(0.21)	4.79(5.69)	0.09	0.16	0.07	2.19*	4.10*
The lighting in the rooms should be adequate	4.54(0.66)	4.61(0.48)	4.17(1.41)	0.37	0.44	0.07	2.79*	7.35*
Sufficient fixtures in rooms	4.44(0.66)	4.44(0.55)	4.11(1.42)	0.33	0.33	0.00	2.42*	7.68*
Welcoming rooms	4.74(0.43)	4.78(0.41)	4.16(1.42)	0.58	0.62	0.04	4.47*	4.40*
Easy accessibility to hotel	4.63(0.48)	4.59(0.56)	4.61(1.44)	0.02	-0.02	-0.04	3.84*	2.97*
Offer complementary services	4.78(0.42)	4.75(0.43)	4.14(1.37)	0.64	0.61	-0.03	4.74*	5.73*
Efficient business centres	4.23(0.41)	4.65(0.34)	4.20(1.22)	0.03	0.45	0.42	5.55*	2.88*

Table 19 (continued)

Overall score	4.69(0.31)	4.75(0.25)	0.38	0.44	0.06	2.39*	.32*
Front office services							
Convenient and efficient reservation system	4.72(0.51)	4.85(0.35)	0.53	0.66	0.13	4.15*	3.16*
Efficient check in procedure	4.67(0.53)	4.84(0.35)	0.51	0.68	0.17	5.99*	5.46*
Efficient check out procedure	4.66(0.51)	4.82(0.38)	0.53	0.69	0.16	4.04*	5.99*
Efficient telephone and internet system	4.72(0.51)	4.90(0.29)	0.54	0.72	0.18	3.79*	5.77*
Accurate billing system	4.65(0.76)	4.81(0.38)	0.54	0.70	0.16	2.80*	6.47*
Advance and accurate information about prices	4.52(0.64)	4.66(0.47)	0.40	0.54	0.14	4.51*	6.68*
Staff should be friendly	4.88(0.32)	4.94(0.23)	0.78	0.84	0.06	4.89*	6.19*
Staff should perform services right the first time	4.52(0.78)	4.54(0.77)	0.37	0.39	0.02	4.46*	6.43*
Staff should be well trained and knowledgeable	4.72(0.44)	4.73(0.44)	0.61	0.62	0.01	4.61*	6.13*
Staff should be skilful and experience	4.81(0.38)	4.85(0.35)	0.69	0.73	0.04	3.77*	4.66*

Table 19 (continued)

Staff should have good communication skills	4.70(0.45)	4.91(0.28)	0.57	0.78	0.21	3.25*	6.12*
Handle guest complains efficiently	4.57(0.80)	4.79(0.40)	0.37	0.59	0.22	3.12*	6.93*
Accurate information about hotel services	4.60(0.64)	4.65(0.50)	0.48	0.53	0.05	3.12*	3.71*
Staff perform services at promised time	4.56(0.52)	4.66(0.25)	-0.03	0.07	0.10	3.22*	5.51*
Overall score	4.67(0.37)	4.79(0.23)	0.50	0.62	0.12	3.21*	4.67*
Responsiveness							
Show sincere interest in solving guest problems	4.70(0.52)	4.75(0.48)	0.57	0.62	0.05	4.37*	6.96*
Always be willing to help guests	4.76(0.42)	4.77(0.43)	0.63	0.64	0.01	5.06*	6.25*
Never be too busy to respond to request	4.65(0.57)	4.61(0.55)	0.58	0.52	-0.04	3.85*	4.74*
Readily available to provide services	4.63(0.52)	4.59(0.53)	0.49	0.45	-0.04	3.90*	6.14*
Staff should provide prompt service without delays	4.59(0.53)	4.71(0.45)	0.48	0.60	0.12	4.45*	5.46*

Table 19 (continued)

Overall score	4.66(0.37)	4.71(0.36)	0.55	0.60	0.05	3.14*	0.60
Empathy							
Staff should be friendly	4.78(0.46)	4.80(0.45)	0.60	0.62	0.02	4.63*	0.62
Staff should be courteous and respectful	4.74(0.53)	4.88(0.31)	0.53	0.67	0.14	5.18*	0.67
Behaviour of staff should instil confidence in you	4.50(0.58)	4.73(0.47)	0.41	0.64	0.23	2.62*	0.64
Guests feel safe in their transactions	4.63(0.48)	4.58(0.57)	0.44	0.39	-0.05	4.80*	0.39
Staff call guests by name	4.55(0.52)	4.06(1.27)	0.55	0.06	-0.49	2.88*	0.06
Convenient operating hours	4.59(0.49)	4.51(0.64)	0.41	0.33	-0.08	3.74*	0.33
Staff understand guest specific needs	4.71(0.45)	4.67(0.46)	0.57	0.53	-0.04	4.59*	0.53
Staff have time to listen to guest complains	4.73(0.44)	4.76(0.42)	0.75	0.60	0.03	4.71*	0.60
Give guests special attention	4.75(0.43)	4.68(0.56)	0.60	0.53	-0.07	4.73*	0.53
Have their guests best interest at heart	4.64(0.48)	4.59(0.55)	0.47	0.42	-0.05	3.85*	0.42

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Table 19 (continued)

Recognise customers as guest	4.69(0.46)	4.63(0.48)	4.63(0.48)	0.51	0.45	-0.06	4.05*	0.45
Overall score	4.67(0.31)	4.66(0.32)	4.66(0.32)	0.51	0.50	-0.01	4.16*	0.50
Food and beverage services								
Good eating and drinking facilities	4.85(0.35)	4.84(0.36)	4.84(0.36)	0.69	0.68	-0.01	5.65*	0.68
Should provide variety of food and drinks	4.68(0.53)	4.67(0.53)	4.67(0.53)	0.61	0.60	-0.01	4.14*	0.60
Offer room services	4.52(0.55)	4.48(0.74)	4.48(0.74)	0.38	0.34	-0.04	2.88*	0.34
Offer prompt food services	4.61(0.48)	4.49(0.61)	4.49(0.61)	0.43	0.31	-0.12	3.40*	0.31
Offer high quality hygienic food	4.79(0.40)	4.85(0.39)	4.85(0.39)	0.61	0.67	0.06	5.68*	0.67
Reasonable prices of food and drinks	4.41(0.66)	4.38(0.58)	4.38(0.58)	0.37	0.34	-0.03	2.82*	0.34
Overall	4.65(0.34)	4.62(0.39)	4.62(0.39)	0.51	0.48	-0.03	5.65*	0.48
Availability of other facilities								

Table 19 (continued)

Variety and quality of sports / recreation facilities	4.03(0.88)	4.28(0.68)	4.28(0.68)	0.08	0.33	0.25	3.31	0.33
Efficient business centre	4.56(0.54)	4.55(0.60)	4.55(0.60)	0.54	0.53	-0.01	3.98*	0.53
Up to date modern safety facilities	4.57(0.49)	4.76(0.45)	4.76(0.45)	0.52	0.71	0.19	3.91*	0.71
Adequate fire safety facilities	4.70(0.50)	4.92(0.26)	4.92(0.26)	0.64	0.89	0.22	6.28*	0.89
All year round swimming pool	4.14(0.95)	4.28(0.73)	4.28(0.73)	0.32	0.46	0.14	2.14*	0.46
Overall score	4.40(0.48)	4.55(0.40)	4.55(0.40)	0.43	0.58	0.15	3.31	0.58
Total gap	4.58(0.25)	4.73(0.25)	4.73(0.25)	0.38	0.53	0.15	2.98*	0.53

*(significant) t-test two tailed probability ≤ 0.05; standard deviations are in parenthesis; Gap 1: a negative gap indicates that management staff's understanding of guests expectations was lower than that of guests; a positive gap indicates that guests expectations exceeded that of management. Gap 7: a negative gap indicates that frontline staff's understanding of guests expectations was lower than that of guests; a positive gap indicates that frontline staff's understanding of expectations exceeded that of guests. Gap 8: a negative gap indicates that frontline staff's understanding of guests expectations was lower than that of management staff; a positive gap indicates that frontline staff's understanding of expectations exceeded that of management.

Source: Fieldwork, 2012

"Responsiveness" obtained the highest gap (0.55) followed by "empathy" (0.51) and "food and beverage services" (0.51). "Tangibles" and "overall room values" had the lowest gaps of 0.38 each. This means that managers perceive guests expectations of service quality to be far above what guests expect themselves in the above dimensions. In other words, hotel managers place more importance on all the dimensions than their guests expect.

By using the independent t-test, 55 of the 57 service attributes were significant at < 0.05 level. The expectation scores as perceived by the managers were higher than tourists' expectations in 55 out of the 57 attributes. In addition, the overall Gap 1 (Understanding gap) score was 0.38 (Sig. 0.05), which would indicate that the hotel managers tend to have a reasonably good understanding of tourists' expectations. However, this finding contrasts with past studies (Wei *et al.*, 1989; Choy *et al.,* 1986; Tsang & Qu, 2000; Luk & Layton, 2002) which concluded that managers in the hotel industry did not have a good understanding of guests' expectations because of the difference in customs and lifestyle. This could be explained by the fact that managers had done enough research by analysing the suggestions from guests on how to improve service and also by regularly interacting with guests to find out what they expect. Generally, from the results of positive Gap 1 scores, it can be concluded that Gap 1 did not seem to be a major problem area of service quality in the hotel industry in Accra.

Guests expectations and frontline staff perceptions of those expectations (Gap7)

As shown in Table 19, it is evident that frontline staff's understanding of guests' expectations is relatively higher compared to what guests expect from hotels in Accra. This is shown by a positive total gap of 0.53. In addition, all the seven factors recorded positive gaps, which show that service delivery staff generally had higher expectations than guests' in terms of tangibles, overall room values, front office service and empathy among others. Attributes that had the biggest gaps included 'adequate fire safety facilities' (0.89), 'staff being friendly' (0.84), 'staff having good communication skills' (0.78), 'staff being skillful and experienced' (0.73), ' efficient telephone and internet system' (0.72), ' clean environment' (0.72), 'attractive outside appearance' (0.71) and 'accurate billing system' (0.70) while the smallest gaps came from 'easy accessibility to hotel' (-0.02), 'staff calling guests by name' (0.06), 'adequate parking space' (0.07) and 'staff perform services at promised time' (0.07). Statistically, there was a significant (t= and p=0.05) difference in guests' expectations and frontline staff's perception of guests' expectations. This, therefore, suggests that the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference between guests' expectations and frontline staff's perception of guests' expectations is rejected. This means that service delivery staff like managers had a reasonably good understanding of guests' expectations of service quality by their hotels. The findings further buttressed Luk and Layton (2002) assertion that service delivery personnel in Chinese

hotels had a better understanding of guests' expectations but contradicts Hebbert's (1995) claim.

Management and frontline perceptions of guests' expectations of service quality (gap 8)

Luk and Layton (2002) posit that measurement of gap 8 helps to understand the areas of incongruity, which will provide explanations for substandard service and insights for modifying service quality and delivery strategies that can increase the likelihood of guest satisfaction. Evidence from Table 19 shows that there are statistically significant differences in the understanding of guests' expectations by management staff and frontline staff on less than half (23) of the attributes of service quality. However, 34 of the 57 attributes were statistically insignificant. The results show that there are statistically significant differences in three (tangibles=2.75, Sig. 0.05; front office services=2.99, Sig. 0.05 and availability of other services and facilities=2.75, Sig. 0.05) of the 7 dimensions of service quality. Collectively, the hypothesis stating that there are no significant differences in management staff and frontline staff's understanding of guests' expectations is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis that there is statistically significant difference (t=3.35, Sig. 0.05) between management staff and frontline staff's understanding of guests' expectations of service quality is maintained.

The overall gap between management staff and frontline staff's understanding of guests' expectations is 0.15 which indicates a positive gap

meaning that frontline staff has a better understanding of guests' expectations than management staff. This could be elucidated by the fact that, frontline staff interact face-to-face with guests as such they are the first to hear from the guest when the he or she is not pleased with the service. However, 20 of the attributes have negative gap scores which point to the fact that management staff has a better understanding of these attributes than frontline staff. This collaborates with the findings by Nightingale, 1986; Lewis, 1987; Nel & Pitt, 1993, Tsang and Qu, 2000 but contradicts Luk and Layton's (2002). Interestingly, these negative gaps were mostly in the "empathy" and "food services" dimensions. This implies that management understands guests' expectations of "empathy" and "food services" much better than their subordinates. The biggest gaps are mostly found in "front office services" and "availability of other services and facilities" whilst the smallest gaps were in the "food and beverage services" dimension. These expectation gaps identified also reaffirms the conceptual framework as a basis for this study

Perception gaps in actual service delivered: Guests versus frontline staff and managers

The measurement of the perception gaps between guests, managers and frontline staff is pertinent in finding out how service providers think they performed in their organizations' service delivery in meeting customer expectations of service quality in hotel industry. As mentioned in the literature review, some studies (Lewis, 1987; Coyle & Dale, 1993) found that managers

in the hotel industry tended to be very self-assured and they believe they knew best. Thus, they perceived their service delivery as being more successful than customers perceived it to be, in most cases. The following section discusses each of the perception gaps. The differences between the groups are presented in Table 20.

Guests' perceptions and management perceptions of actual service delivered (Gap 6)

As shown in Table 20, the mean perception scores along each of the 58 service quality attributes were computed for both guests and managers. The mean perception score for guests was subtracted from that of managers and it was revealed that all the perception scores for managers were higher than the perception scores for guests. Thus, resulting in the positive gaps between guests and managers perceptions of service delivered. This indicates that hotel managers in Accra perceived their service delivery to be higher than hotel guests perceived it to be. The biggest gaps (>0.90) from tangibles were "the outside appearance of the hotel is attractive" (1.08), "the hotel has clean environment" (0.97) and "the hotel has attractive interior décor" (0.95) while the smallest gaps were "hotel staff appear neat and professional" (0.43) and "adequate parking space" (0.53).

Table 20: Perception gaps in actual service delivered: Guests versus managers and frontline staff

Attribute	Management Perception (mean)	Frontline Perception (mean)	Guests' Perception (mean)	Gap 6 (M per.- G per.)	Gap 9 (F per.- G per.)	Gap 10 (M per.- F per.)	Gap 6 t-value	Gap 9 t-value	Gap t-value
Tangibles									
Clean environment	4.75	4.91	3.78	0.97	1.13	-0.16	8.31*	10.1*	3.37*
Outside appearance should be attractive	4.75	4.64	3.67	1.08	0.97	0.11	9.66*	8.89*	1.88
Attractive interior decor	4.61	4.43	3.66	0.95	0.77	0.18	8.07*	6.72*	2.57*
Modern looking equipment	4.35	4.19	3.65	0.70	0.54	0.16	5.72*	4.61*	1.95*
Modern and comfortable furniture	4.21	4.27	3.58	0.63	0.62	0.16	5.11*	6.07*	0.77
Hotel staff should appear neat and professional	4.09	4.65	3.63	0.43	1.02	-0.56	3.40*	9.01*	6.03*
Attractive and comfortable lobby area	4.42	4.24	3.66	0.76	0.58	-0.02	6.79*	7.09*	0.26
Adequate parking space	4.19	4.17	3.66	0.53	0.51	0.02	4.18*	4.17*	0.20

Table 20 (continued)

Visible physical facilities	4.31	4.31	3.55	0.76	0.76	0.00	5.96*	6.73*	0.03
Materials associated with service should be appealing	4.40	4.07	3.70	0.70	0.37	0.30	5.57*	2.93*	3.51*
Overall score	4.40	4.38	3.65	0.75	0.73	0.02	6.27*	6.63*	2.06
Overall room values									
Clean and comfortable rooms	4.08	4.52	3.52	0.56	1.00	-0.44	3.94*	8.86*	4.18*
Clean and hygienic bathrooms and toilets	4.53	4.60	3.55	0.98	1.05	-0.07	8.62*	9.78*	1.21
The lighting in the rooms should be adequate	4.52	4.74	3.66	0.86	1.08	-0.22	7.51*	10.0*	3.58*
Sufficient fixtures in rooms	4.50	4.48	3.65	0.85	0.83	0.02	7.21*	7.33*	0.33
Welcoming rooms	4.21	4.31	3.60	0.61	0.71	-0.10	4.54*	5.97*	0.97
Easy accessibility to hotel	4.04	4.54	3.36	0.68	1.18	-0.50	5.05*	10.1*	5.72*
Offer complementary services	4.27	4.61	3.44	0.83	1.17	-0.34	6.49*	10.2*	4.46*
Efficient business centres	4.31	4.21	3.44	0.87	0.85	-0.09	5.51*	7.44*	3.97

Table 20 (continued)

Overall score	4.30	4.50	3.52	0.78	0.99	-0.20	6.10*	8.71*	3.05
Front office services									
Convenient and efficient reservation system	4.50	4.52	3.45	1.05	0.07	-0.02	9.56*	10.0*	0.31
Efficient check in procedure	4.75	4.73	3.53	1.22	1.20	0.02	11.7*	11.7*	0.27
Efficient check out procedure	4.44	4.64	3.56	0.88	1.08	-0.20	7.54*	10.1*	2.58*
Efficient telephone and internet system	4.19	4.59	3.29	0.90	1.30	-0.40	7.04*	12.3*	4.10*
Accurate billing system	4.30	4.55	3.38	0.92	1.17	-0.25	.53*	10.6*	2.73*
Advance and accurate information about prices	4.37	4.57	3.35	1.02	1.22	-0.20	7.41*	11.4*	2.78*
Staff should be friendly	4.33	4.56	3.54	0.79	1.02	-0.23	6.93*	9.51*	3.29*
Staff should perform services right the first time	4.41	4.63	3.36	1.05	1.27	-0.22	9.15*	12.0*	3.11*
Staff should be well trained and knowledgeable	4.37	4.46	3.44	0.93	1.02	-0.09	7.89*	9.56*	1.09
Staff should be skilful and experience	4.07	4.58	3.46	0.61	1.12	-0.51	4.97*	10.4*	5.87*

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Table 20 (continued)

Staff should have good communication skills	4.15	4.60	3.45	0.70	1.15	-0.45	5.86*	11.1*	5.54*
Handle guest complains efficiently	4.34	4.53	3.34	1.00	1.19	-0.19	8.33*	11.0*	2.26*
Accurate information about hotel services	4.15	4.44	3.47	0.68	0.97	-0.29	5.17*	8.88*	2.78*
Staff perform services at promised time	4.37	4.36	3.44	0.93	0.92	0.01	7.80*	8.47*	0.12
Overall score	4.27	4.55	3.49	0.78	1.12	-0.22	7.70*	10.5*	2.63
Responsiveness								
Show sincere interest in solving guest problems	4.34	4.49	3.36	0.98	1.13	-0.15	8.16*	10.8*	1.78
Always be willing to help guests	4.23	4.52	3.40	0.83	1.12	-0.29	6.72*	10.7*	3.20*
Never be too busy to respond to request	4.23	4.58	3.41	0.82	1.18	-0.35	7.15*	11.6*	4.53*
Readily available to provide services	4.75	4.68	3.41	1.34	1.27	0.07	13.0*	12.7*	1.33
Staff should provide prompt service without delays	4.27	4.45	3.31	0.96	1.14	-0.18	8.20*	10.7*	2.21*

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Table 20 (continued)

Overall score	4.37	4.54	3.38	0.99	1.17	-0.18	8.65*	11.3*	2.61*
Empathy									
Staff should be friendly	4.33	4.56	3.55	0.78	1.02	-0.23	6.93*	9.91*	3.29*
Staff should be courteous and respectful	4.08	4.31	3.53	0.55	0.78	-0.23	4.62*	7.38*	2.71*
Behaviour of staff should instil confidence in you	4.21	4.69	3.46	0.75	1.23	-0.51	6.23*	12.5*	6.04*
Guests feel safe in their transactions	4.09	4.69	3.48	0.61	1.21	-0.60	5.29*	11.7*	8.42*
Staff call guests by name	4.75	4.79	2.88	1.87	1.91	-0.04	15.6*	16.4*	0.77
Convenient operating hours	4.30	4.67	3.47	0.83	1.20	-0.37	6.78*	11.1*	4.64*
Staff understand guest specific needs	4.35	4.04	3.42	0.93	0.62	0.31	7.65*	4.86*	2.98*
Staff have time to listen to guest complains	4.26	4.53	3.38	0.88	1.15	-0.27	7.29*	10.5*	3.35*
Give guests special attention	4.51	4.53	3.38	1.13	1.15	0.30	9.95*	10.7*	4.22*
Have their guests best interest at heart	4.06	4.56	3.44	0.62	0.12	-0.50	4.82*	10.8*	5.26*

Table 20 (continued)

Recognise customers as guest	4.37	4.59	3.48	0.89	1.11	-0.22	7.48*	10.3*	2.79*
Overall score	4.30	4.54	3.40	0.90	1.14	-0.22	7.51*	10.5*	4.04*
Food and beverage services									
Good eating and drinking facilities	4.75	4.58	3.47	1.28	1.11	0.17	12.2*	10.5*	2.75*
Should provide variety of food and drinks	4.21	4.52	3.50	0.71	1.02	-0.31	5.98*	9.29*	3.86*
Offer room services	4.38	4.52	3.39	0.99	1.13	-0.14	8.27*	10.2*	1.79
Offer prompt food services	4.26	4.64	3.28	0.98	1.36	-0.38	8.10*	12.8*	4.69*
Offer high quality hygienic food	4.40	4.60	3.52	0.88	1.08	-0.20	7.48*	10.5*	2.77*
Reasonable prices of food and drinks	4.30	4.74	3.25	1.05	1.49	-0.44	8.70*	13.2*	6.99*
Overall	4.38	4.60	3.40	0.98	1.20	-0.22	8.45*	11.1*	3.80*

Availability of other facilities

Table 20 (continued)

Variety and quality of sports / recreation facilities	3.63	3.35	3.24	0.39	1.05	0.28	4.43*	11.22*	2.25
Efficient business centre	3.86	3.80	3.40	0.43	0.40	0.06	4.78*	9.98*	1.89
Up to date modern safety facilities	3.83	4.11	3.43	0.40	0.68	-0.28	5.86*	11.12*	3.44*
Adequate fire safety facilities	4.40	4.62	3.46	0.96	1.26	-0.21	8.43*	10.67*	4.44*
All year round swimming pool	3.75	3.33	3.36	0.39	-0.03	0.45	5.51*	11.74*	4.47*
Overall score	3.96	4.24	3.92	0.04	0.32	0.10	3.46*	7.23*	2.28*
Total gap	4.29	4.66	3.96	0.33	0.07		6.36*	12.65*	

*(significant) t-test two tailed probability ≤ 0.05; standard deviations are in parenthesis; a negative gap indicates that frontline staff's understanding of guests expectations was lower than that of management staff; a positive gap indicates that frontline staff's understanding of expectations exceeded that of management. *(significant) t-test two tailed probability ≤ 0.05; standard deviations are in parenthesis; a negative gap indicates that frontline staff's understanding of guests expectations was lower than that of management staff; a positive gap indicates that frontline staff's understanding of expectations exceeded that of management. *(significant) t-test two tailed probability ≤ 0.05; standard deviations are in parenthesis; a negative gap indicates that frontline staff's understanding of guests expectations was lower than that of management staff; a positive gap indicates that frontline staff's understanding of expectations exceeded that of management.

Source: Fieldwork, 2012

The only attribute in overall room values that recorded the largest gap (>0.90) was "the hotel has clean and hygienic bathrooms and toilets" (0.98) and the smallest was "clean and comfortable rooms" (0.56).

Front office services had the highest number of attributes with big gaps (>0.90). They are "efficient check-in process" (1.22), "convenient and efficient reservation system" (1.05), "advance and accurate information about prices" (1.02), "efficient handling of guests complaints" (1.00), "staff perform services at promised time" (0.93), "accurate billing system" (0.92) and "efficient telephone and internet system" (0.90) while the rest had moderate gaps (0.6-0.8). Attributes such as "staff are always readily available to provide services" (1.34), "staff show sincere interest in solving guests problems" (0.93) and staff provide prompt service without delays" (0.99) had the biggest gaps in the responsiveness dimension with none of the attributes having small gaps. Under the empathy dimension, the largest gaps were found in "staff call guests by their names" (1.87), "staff give guests special attention" (1.13) and staff understand guests specific needs (0.93) while "guests feel safe in their transactions (0.61) and "staff have guests best interest at heart (0.62) had the smallest gaps (<7). "The hotel has good eating and drinking facilities" (1.28), "high quality and hygienic food" (1.05), room services (0.99) and hotel offers prompt food service" (0.98) recorded the largest gaps while the rest of the attributes recorded moderate gaps. Finally, only the availability of adequate fire safety facilities had the biggest gap (0.94) while the rest recorded the smallest gaps ranging from 0.39 to 0.46.

Using independent t-test, all the 58 service quality attributes exhibited a significant (p<0.5) difference in the mean scores between guests perceptions of service delivered in the hotel industry in Accra and what hotel managers believed they delivered. Overall, there was a statistically significant difference between guests and managers perceptions of actual service delivered. As a result, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between guests and managers perceptions of actual service delivered is rejected and the alternative hypothesis that there is a significant difference between guests perception of service delivery and managers perception of service performance is not rejected. This buttresses Tsang and Qu (2000) study which revealed that hotel managers in China were very self-assured and overestimate their organisations' performance in meeting tourists' expectation of service quality in the hotel industry.

Guests' perceptions and frontline staff's perceptions of actual service delivered (Gap 9)

A gap analysis was performed to compare frontline staff and guests' perceptions of actual service delivered. Results from Table 20 also revealed that all 58 service attributes have significant mean differences between frontline staff perceptions and guests' perceptions, suggesting that the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between guests' perception of service quality and frontline staff perception is rejected. All attributes had high perception mean scores (M>4.00) for frontline staff than

guests (M<4). This resulted in the positive gaps because the mean scores of guests were subtracted from the mean scores for frontline staff. It is interesting to note that almost all the gaps (32) had very high gaps (>1.00).

Management and frontline perceptions of service performance (Gap 10)

From Table 20 the mean perception scores of both management staff and frontline staff perceptions of actual service delivered for each of the 58 service quality attributes. The mean perception score of frontline staff was subtracted from that of management staff. A total of 42 service attributes for frontline staff were higher than that of management staff. This resulted in the negative gaps with 20 of the 58 had mean scores for managers higher than frontline staff. Overall, frontline staff perception of actual service performance was higher (4.36) than managers perception score (4.04), yielding a negative gap of -0.32. This finding points to the fact that frontline staff perceive their organisations' service performance to be far above what their managers perceive it to be.

By using independent t-test, 46 of the 58 service attributes showed significant differences between managers and frontline staff perception of service performance. On the whole, there was a statistically significant difference between managers and frontline staff's view of their hotels service performance. This gives the basis to reject the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between managers and frontline staff's perceptions of actual service delivered to guests and hence, the refusal to reject the alternative

hypothesis that there is a significant difference between managers and frontline staff's perceptions of service quality. The eta square, however, suggests that the magnitude of the difference is very small (0.03). These findings attest to the perception gaps identified in the conceptual framework.

Effects of all the other gaps on perceived service quality (Gap 5)

The literature reviewed and the conceptual framework of the study established that gap 5 is a function of the other gaps (Gaps 1, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10). So to examine how these gaps affect the perceived service quality (gap 5), a standard multiple regression was done with each of the other gaps being treated as independent variables and gap 5 as the dependent variable. The results are shown in Table 21.

The beta values give the direction of the effect of the gaps on perceived service quality. Thus, from Table 21, the negative beta values (-0.08, -0.26, -0.08 and -0.18) suggest that the larger the gap, the greater the effect on perceived service quality. On the other hand, the positive beta values (0.315, 0.139 and 0.216) mean that the effects are minimal. The R2 values also level and strengthen the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables. From Table 21, the R2 values ranging from 0.02 to 0.10 suggest that there is a very weak relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable (perceived service quality gap).

Table 21: Effects of all the other gaps on perceived service quality (Gap 5)

Simple Regression Models	Independent Variables	Dependent Variable	Beta	R2	F-value	p-value
Model 1	Guests' expectation vrs. Managements' expectation (Gap 1)	Perceived service quality (Gap 5)	-0.08	0.020	.355	0.55
Model 2	Guests' expectation vrs. Frontline's expectation	Perceived service quality (Gap 5)	0.260	0.068	4.061	0.049
Model 3	Management and Frontline's expectations	Perceived service quality (Gap 5)	0.315	0.099	6.160	0.016
Model 4	Guests expectations and service providers perception of actual service delivered	Perceived service quality (Gap 5)	0.139	0.019	1.108	0.297
Model 5	Guests' perception vrs. Managements' perception (Gap)	Perceived service quality (Gap 5)	0.076	0.060	0.328	0.569
Model 6	Guests' perception vrs. Frontline's perception	Perceived service quality (Gap 5)	-0.175	0.034	1.770	0.189

Table 21 (continued)

| Model 7 | Management and Frontline's Perceptions | Perceived service quality (Gap 5) | 0.216 | 0.047 | 2.745 | 0.103 |

The F-values and P-values indicate that the effects of the other gaps on perceived service quality gap are all statistically not significant with the exception of only gap 6. It can therefore be said that apart from gap 6, all the other gaps influence the perceived service quality gap (gap 5). This is in line with Luk and Layton (2002) findings that expectation gaps between guests, service providers and managers influence room service quality but found out that the relationship between the gaps and room service quality were moderately strong.

Summary

The chapter has focused on the interface between hotel guests, frontline service personnel and managers perceptions of expectations and perceptions of actual service delivered. It was realized that there were statistical differences between the perceptions of expectations and service delivered between these three groups of people, but the gaps between guests and frontline staff and guests and managers tend to be bigger than the gaps between managers and frontline service personnel. On the effects of the other gaps on gap 5, it came

out that all the gaps with the exception of gap 7 (gap between managers and frontline staff perception of guests' expectation) directly affect the perceived service quality.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DIMENSIONS OF SERVICE QUALITY IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY IN ACCRA

Introduction

Service quality plays a critical role in adding value to the overall service experience, and evidence suggests that service quality depends on a number of factors and also varies from industry to industry (Markovic & Raspor, 2010; Shahin & Dabestani, 2010; Lau, Akbar & Yong, 2005; Nadiri & Hussain, 2005; Mei, Dean & White, 1999; Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1988). Therefore, to ensure a better assessment of service quality in hotels, there is the need for service providers to understand the dimensions guests use to measure service quality. Not much has been done to determine other factors beside the five dimensions of service quality (tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy) identified by Parasuraman, *et al.* (1988) that influence hotel guests' expectations of service quality in Ghana, specifically, Accra. This chapter examines the underlying dimensions of service quality and the relative influence of these dimensions on the overall level of service quality from both guests and service providers. The chapter further discusses the dynamics of these dimensions among stakeholders in the hotel industry in Accra.

Dimensions of Service Quality

Service quality is a vital determinant of customers' satisfaction and it directly affects an organisation's success, especially, in a service industry like hotels. Since customers participate in the delivery and consumption of services, they interact closely with various aspects of the hotel. This knowledge gives them the opportunity to assess critically the services provided in these organisations (Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000). Customers assess service quality by comparing the services they receive with their desired service. Hence, service quality plays a critical role in adding value to the overall service experience (Lau *et al.*, 2005). To ensure a better assessment of service quality, there is the need to understand the factors used to measure service quality. Evidence suggests that service quality depends on a number of factors and also varies from study areas.

To further understand the underlying structure of the dimensions that account for service quality in Accra after assessing the general responses of the various explanatory dimensions and their influence on service quality in Chapter Six, factor analysis was used to derive the dimensions that influenced service quality in hotels in Accra. According to Pallant (2005), factor analysis is a 'data reduction' technique that takes a bulky set of data and looks for a way to reduce it or summarize, using a smaller set of factors or components. This was to enable identification of how the specific factors put together interact to influence overall service quality. Fifty-eight (58) items on the customer expectations that influence overall service quality were subjected to

Principal Component Analysis (PCA). An inspection of the correlation matrix for both guests and service providers' expectations of service quality revealed the presence of many coefficients of 0.3 and above, indicating that the data do not violate the correlation strength assumption. The Kaiser-Meyer-Oklin measure of sampling adequacy value for guests was 0.941 and 0.841 for service providers. These values exceeded the recommended value of 0.6 and the results of Barlett's Test of Sphericity were 7590.47 for guests and 17542.5 for service providers. These were found to be significant at p-values of 0.000 for guests and 0.001 for service providers. All these were less than the recommended value 0.05, thus supporting the factorability of the correlation matrices.

More importantly, the Cronbach's alpha was employed to test the reliability of the scale used and the degree to which the variables under a major construct contributed in explaining a factor. Pallant (2005) recommends that in order to determine the degree to which all items under the construct effectively measure it, the Cronbach' alpha coefficient should be more than 0.7. Therefore alpha values from 0.7 to 1 could be said to be highly reliable.

After the factors were subjected to a 'rotation' in order to be presented with components represented by a number of strongly loaded variables, the PCA, employing the varimax rotation led to the reduction of the 58 variables loaded to four main underlying constructs or dimensions made up of 32 and 35 variables or service attributes that explained guests' and service providers'

perception of service quality in the study hotels.. Tables 22 and 23 show the results of the factor analysis for guests and service providers respectively.

Table 22: Dimensions of Service Quality in hotels from Guests Perspective

Factor	Variables included in the factor	Loadings	Eigenvalues	% of Variance Explained	Cronbach's alpha
1	*Factor I: Tangibles*		26.475	45.646	0.913
	The rooms should be welcoming	0.780			
	Rooms should be easily accessible	0.793			
	Clean and hygienic bathrooms and toilets	0.964			
	Clean and comfortable rooms	0.834			
	Attractive outside appearance	0.757			
	Materials associated with the service should be visually appealing	0.753			
	An attractive interior décor	0.799			
	Modern looking equipment	0.784			

Table 22 (continued)

	Modern and comfortable furniture	0.783		
	Attractive and comfortable lobby area	0.876		
	Adequate parking space	0.779		
	Sufficient fixtures in rooms	0.775		
II	*Factor II: Empathy*		10.025	24.525	0.898
	Staff should be willing to help guests	0.771		
	Never be too busy to respond to guest request	0.762		
	Staff should appear neat and professional	0.763		
	Staff perform services right the first time	0.788		
	Staff are well trained and knowledgeable	0.780		
	Staff should be skilful and experienced	0.786		
	Staff should have good communication skills	0.775		
	Staff should be polite and friendly	0.758		
III	*Factor III: Reliability*		6.690	11.534	0.931
	Efficient telephone and internet system	0.758		
	Accurate billing system	0.687		
	Efficient business centre	0.785		

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Table 22 (continued)

	Variety and quality of sports/recreational facilities	0.788		
	Efficient check in procedure	0.784		
	Efficient check out procedure	0.783		
	Accurate information about hotel services	0.747		
	Accurate information on prices	0.780		
IV	*Factor IV: Availability of Other Services*		*1.501*	*2.588*	*0.902*
	Offer complementary items (soap, shampoo, towels and sheets	0.756		
	All year round swimming pool	0.645		
	Prices of food and drinks are reasonable	0.792		
	High quality and hygienic food	0.719		
Total				84.293

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy = 0.941

Bartlett's test of Sphericity = 7590.47, P = 0.000

Source: Fieldwork, 2012

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Dimensions of service quality in hotels in Accra from guests' perspective

Results of the factor analysis as presented in Table 22 indicate that four main factors (made up of 32 service attributes) namely; tangibles, empathy, reliability and availability of other services and facilities influence guests' assessment of service quality in hotels in Accra. The four (4) uncorrelated factors together explained 84.3 per cent of the total variance of guests' perception of service quality.

Factor 1: Tangibles

Factor 1 labelled as tangibles, has the highest number (12) of items which measure the physical aspects of hotel service. This factor has a combination of attributes from both tangibles and overall room value factors (17 items). The factor accounts for a greater percentage (26.47 which is 45.65 per cent) of the total variance. Clean and hygienic hotel bathrooms and toilets; attractive and comfortable lobby area; clean and comfortable guestrooms had the highest loadings (0.965; 0.876; 0.834) on this factor while attractive outside appearance (0.753) and visually appealing service materials (0.757) had the lowest loadings. This finding is consistent with the findings of Lau *et al,.* (2005) and Shanin and Dabestani (2010). This could be explained by the fact that hotel products are intangible and as such guests use those aspects of the service they can see to assess the hotels' service quality

Factor 2: Empathy

Factor 2 measured empathy delivering the service. Competence items including performing the service right at the first time (0.788), skillful and experienced staff (0.786) had the highest loadings while empathy items like politeness and friendliness (0.758) and willingness to assist guests (0.762) had lower loadings. This factor explains 20.025 which is 34.525 per cent of the total variance as shown in Table 22. The finding is similar to what Markovic and Raspor (2010) discovered in the Croatian hotel industry where issues relating to employees behaviour and appearance were found as the number one factor of the three dimensions of service quality. It further confirms Akbaba (2006) findings in Turkish hotels.

Factor 3: Reliability

The third factor, reliability looked at efficient check-in and check-out services (0.784 and 0.783 respectively), efficient business centre (0.785), variety and quality of sports/recreational facilities (0.788) and accurate billing system with the lowest loading (0.687). Reliability factor accounted for 6.690, which is 11.534 per cent of the total variance. This supports the assertion made by Juwaheer (2004) that the overall level of service quality is primarily derived from the 'reliability' factor.

Factor 4: *Food and beverage services*

The last factor (Factor 4) relates to food and beverage issues. This factor explained 1.501 of the variance, representing 2.588 per cent of the total variance. It included issues such as reasonable food and beverage prices (0.792), high quality and hygienic food (0.719) and offer of room service (0.645). This finding gives credence to Juwaheer and Ross (2003) in Mauritius, Ramanathan and Ramanathan (2010) in the UK and Mohsin and Lockyer (2010) in India, all of whom found that hotel guests use food and beverages services to measure service quality.

Dimensions of service quality in hotels: perspectives from service providers

The factor analysis resulted in four (4) factor-solutions which collectively accounted for 44.81 (87.28 per cent) of the total variance explained. Conceivably, 12.72 per cent of other factors explained service providers' expectations. However, the four major underlying dimensions contributed differently to the explanation of the total variance of service providers understanding of guests' expectations of service quality. The factors with their loadings, eigenvalues, percentage of variance explained and Cronbach's alpha are presented in Table 23.

Table 23: Dimensions of Service quality in hotels: Perspectives from service providers

Factor	Variables included in the factor	Loadings	Eigenvalues	% of variance explained	Cronbach Alpha
	Tangibles				
	Modern and comfortable furniture	0.731			
	Outside appearance should be attractive	0.740			
	Modern looking equipment	0.749			
	Attractive interior décor	0.678			
	Efficient business centres	0.626			
I	Welcoming rooms	0.608			
	Materials associated with service should be appealing	0.583			
	Efficient check out procedure	0.551			
	Adequate parking space	0.546	19.35	39.05	0.912
	Attractive lobby area	0.597			

Table 23 (continued)

Up to date modern safety facilities	0.513			
Responsiveness				
Staff should always be willing to help guests	0.765			
Staff should be courteous and respectful	0.726			
Staff should be friendly	0.710			
Adequate fire safety facilities	0.659			
Give guests special attention	0.622			
Offer high quality hygienic food	0.636			
Never be too busy to respond to request	0.590			
Readily available to provide services	0.590	14.01		
Staff should provide prompt service without delays	0.590			
Have their guests best interest at heart	0.582	27.01	0.899	

II

Table 23 (continued)

	Should provide variety of food and drinks	0.547	
	Good eating and drinking facilities	0.526	
	Show sincere interest in solving guest problems	0.525	
	Front office services		
	Accurate information about hotel services	0.820	
	Handle guests complaint efficiently	0.816	
	Accurate billing system	0.813	
III	Efficient telephone and internet system	0.741	7.09	13.63	0.885
	Advanced and accurate information about prices	0.651	
	Efficient check in procedure	0.573	
	Overall room values		
	Adequate room lighting	0.526	

Table 23 (continued)

Factor	Item				
	Clean and comfortable rooms	0.615			
	Staff should perform services right the first time	0.614			
IV	Clean and hygienic bathrooms and toilets	0.599	4.36	7.59	0.844
	Staff should be well trained and knowledgeable	0.423			
Total				87.28	

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy = 0.841; Bartlett's test of Sphericity = 17542.5, P = 0.001

Source: Fieldwork, 2012

Factor one labelled as "Tangibles" consisted of issues measuring th

aspects of the service that could be seen, touched and felt. These included

furniture, fixtures and fittings, check-out procedures, parking space and sa

facilities constituting 11 statements or variables. This factor explained 1

(39.05 per cent) of the total variance of the issue of service qua

Individually, the variables loaded in ascending between (0.513-0.731). Fa

two measured Responsiveness, as a dimension of service quality. It was on

the dimensions that explained service providers expectation of service qu

in the hotels surveyed. The thirteen (13) variables under the construct toge

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(tangibles: 7.95, responsiveness: 7.93, front office efficiency: 7.04 and o

room values: 3.32).

Factor one labelled as "Tangibles" consisted of issues measuring those aspects of the service that could be seen, touched and felt. These included the furniture, fixtures and fittings, check-out procedures, parking space and safety facilities constituting 11 statements or variables. This factor explained 19.35 (39.05 per cent) of the total variance of the issue of service quality. Individually, the variables loaded in ascending between (0.513-0.731). Factor two measured Responsiveness, as a dimension of service quality. It was one of the dimensions that explained service provider's expectation of service quality in the hotels surveyed. The thirteen (13) variables under the construct together explained 14.01 (27.01 per cent) of the total variance. This factor also had its variables loading between 0.525-0.726 as presented in Table 23

Factor three termed as "front office services" appeared to have relatively explained 7.09 (13.63 per cent) of the total variation. Factor loadings ranged from a low of 0.526 to a high of 0.820. In effect, the way and manner in which services were responsibly delivered in the hotels contributed to the service providers' expectations. Last but not the least was Factor four called "overall room values" which explained 4.36 (7.59 per cent) of the total variance. It measured overall room values as a service quality dimension to providers' expectation of service quality. The eigenvalues for all four (4) uncorrelated factors decreased closely in magnitude from factor one to four (tangibles: 7.95, responsiveness: 7.93, front office efficiency: 7.04 and overall room values: 3.32).

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Predictors of overall service quality

Regression analysis was used to investigate the relative importance of the four service quality factors extracted with factor analysis from both guests and service providers in predicting overall service quality. The four service quality factors from these two groups were used as independent variables and overall service quality as the dependent variable in the analysis. Results in Tables 24 and 25 indicate that the regression model was statistically significant. Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and tolerance values were examined to test the multi-collinearity in the model. Generally, a tolerance value of less than 0.10 or a VIF value of greater than 10 indicates significant multi-collinearity problem (Hair et al., 1998). Since all VIF values were less than 10 and tolerance values were greater than 0.10, there was no evidence of multi-collinearity.

Predictors of guests overall service quality

From Table 24, the four factors explained approximately 89 percent of the variance in guests overall service quality. "Tangibles" was the most important factor (Beta= 0.349) in predicting guests overall service quality in hotels. Three of the factors made statistically significant contribution to overall service quality that means that the three factors were best predictors of overall service quality from guests' perspective. These are tangibles ($t=5.44$; $p=0.000$), reliability ($t=5.599$, $p=0.000$) and availability of other services ($t=4.328$; $p=0.000$).

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Table 24: Predictors of guest overall service quality

Predictor Variable	Beta	t-value	p-value	Tolerance	VIF	Upper	Lower
Tangibles	0.349	5.444	0.000*	0.25	4.784	-0.232	-0.035
Empathy & competence	0.134	2.547	0.062	0.41	2.303	0.241	0.516
Reliability	0.312	5.599	0.000*	0.31	3.262	0.030	0.238
Availability of other services	0.158	4.328	0.000*	0.88	1.356	0.000	0.228
Overall service quality	-.0133	-2.675	0.008	0.25	40.784	Lower	Upper

*$p<0.001$; $R^2= 0.893$; Adjusted $R^2= 0.863$; F-value= 2140.064

Source: Fieldwork, 2012

Predictors of service providers' overall understanding of guests expectations of service quality

From the Table 25, front office services made the largest statistical contribution to service quality (beta= 0.387), followed by tangibles and responsiveness. The four factors together explained 67 per cent of variance in overall service quality. Front office services (t=9.806, p=0.000), tangibles (t=9.213; p=0.000) and responsiveness (t=8.581, p=0.000) statistically made a significant contribution to overall service quality. Meaning, these three factors are best predictors of overall service quality from service providers' perspective

Table 25: Predictors of Service Providers' Overall Service Quality

Predictor Variable	Beta	t-value	p-value	Tolerance	VIF	Upper	Low
Tangibles	0.362	9.213	0.000*	0.98	1.012	-0.232	-0.0:
Responsiveness	0.346	8.581	0.000*	0.98	1.018	0.241	0.5|
Front office efficiency	0.387	9.806	0.000*	0.99	1.014	0.030	0.2:
Overall room values	0.063	1.738	0.083	0.88	4.356	0.000	0.2|
Overall service quality		-0.415	0.000			Lower	Upp

*$p < 0.001$; $R^2 = 0.671$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.665$; F-value= 127.238

Source: Fieldwork, 2012

Dimensional dynamics among stakeholders' perceptions of service quality

Most studies suggest that hotel managers should not overlook the importance of demographic factors on customer perceptions of service quality and the dimensions of service quality (Shergill & Sun, 2004; Skogland & Siguaw, 2004). According to Renganathan (2011), demographic variables like age, sex, income, highest qualification are significant predictors of the hotel guests perceptions and expectations for the SERVQUAL dimensions tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Table 26 depicts the results of the differences in the dimensions of expectations across socio-demographic and travel characteristics of guests while Table 27 presents those of service providers.

Table 26: Dynamics of service quality dimensions across guests' background characteristics

Socio-demographics	N	Tangibles	Empathy & Competence	Reliability & Accuracy	Food and Beverage Services
Age (years)					
30 and below	58	4.22	4.40	4.42	4.15
31-50	102	4.87*	4.85*	4.93*	4.81*
50+	12	3.30*	3.25*	3.15*	3.20*
		F = 12.52,	F = 10.48,	F = 14.98,	F = 11.65,
		P = 0.001	P = 0.001	P = 0.001	P = 0.001
Sex					
Male	108	4.55	4.59	4.57	4.38
Female	64	4.72	4.64	4.80	4.58
		t = 1.13,	t = 0.28,	t = 1.75,	t = 1.16,
		P = 0.261	P = 0.779	P = 0.083	P = 0.247
Occupation					
Professionals & Business Executives	123	4.51	4.57	4.57	4.43
Artisans	23	4.53	4.53	4.54	4.46
Civil servants	17	4.88	4.88*	4.80*	4.80*
Students	9	3.00	2.40*	2.50*	2.00*
		F = 2.34,	F = 7.07,	F = 5.33,	F = 6.90,
		P = 0.079	P = 0.001	P = 0.002	P = 0.001
Religion					
Buddhist	3	4.78	4.91*	4.75	4.80*
Christian	133	4.78	4.80	4.78	4.67
Hindu	8	4.95*	4.60	4.88*	4.50
Muslim	28	3.89*	3.94*	4.06*	3.78*
		F = 58,	F = 5.46,	F = 4.55,	F = 5.19,
		P = 0.001	P = 0.002	P = 0.005	P = 0.002

Table 26 (continued)

Marital status					
Not married	98	4.53	4.55	4.55	4.27
Married	74	4.73	4.68	4.80	4.70
		t = 1.38,	t = 0.88,	t = 1.91,	t = 2.79,
		P = 0.168	P = 0.379	P = 0.059	P = 0.006*
					eta²=0.043
Level of education					
Secondary	22	4.50	4.47	4.62	4.38
Tertiary	100	4.66	4.66	4.64	4.49
		t = 0.77,	t = 0.86,	t = 0.11,	t = 0.45,
		P = 0.444	P = 0.389	P = 0.908	P = 0.652
Continent of origin					
Europe	36	4.25	4.26	4.38	4.25
North America	39	4.38	4.41	4.43	4.29
Asia	16	4.43	4.23	4.69	4.38
Africa	70	4.51	4.52	4.50	4.30
South America	5	4.89	4.92	4.96	4.60
		F = 0.57,	F = 0.59,	F = 0.43,	F = 0.09,
		P = 0.683	P = 0.670	P = 0.784	P = 0.984

Travel Characteristics

Travel party					
1-5 persons	154	4.41	4.43	4.46	4.34
6 persons and above	18	3.61	3.66	3.50	3.16
		t = 1.69,	t = 1.58,	t = 2.07,	t = 2.73,
		P = 0.106	P = 0.127	P=0.050*	P = .012*
				eta²=0.025	eta²=0.04

Marital status appears in italics at top.

Table 26 (continued)

Length of stay					
< 1 week	67	2.45*	2.47*	2.51*	2.37*
1-2 weeks	56	4.93*	4.90*	4.97*	4.83*
2-3 weeks	30	4.69	4.83	4.74	4.39
> 3 weeks	19	4.85	4.57	4.85	4.71
		F = 3.56,	F = 2.61,	F = 3.58,	F = 2.86,
		P = 0.016	P = 0.055	P = 0.016	P = 0.039
Purpose of visit					
Business	93	4.71	4.71	4.76	4.58
VFR	15	4.72	4.63	4.83	4.83
Vacation	52	4.64	4.62	4.60	4.46
Other	12	4.40	4.66	4.66	4.10
		F = 0.46,	F = 0.10,	F = 0.48,	F = 1.37,
		P = 0.714	P = 0.958	P = 0.698	P = 0.254
Repeat stay					
Yes	79	4.69	4.75	4.77	4.56
No	93	4.54	4.46	4.55	4.36
		t = 1.01,	t = 1.83,	t = 1.52,	t = 1.50,
		P = 0.315	P = 0.069	P = 0.132	P = 0.252
Travel exposure					
Travel experience	143	4.62	4.64	4.68	4.47
No travel experience	29	4.63	4.64	4.66	4.50
		t = 0.42,	t = 0.01,	t = 0.06,	t = 0.12,
		P = 0.967	P = 0.992	P = 0.952	P = 0.907

Scale: 1-2.49 = Low Expectations, 2.50-3.49 = Moderate Expectations, 3.50 - 5.0 = High Expectations. *significant at 0.05; Eta square value of 0.01=small effect; 0.06=moderate effect and 0.14=large effect (Cohen, 1988).

Source: Fieldwork, 2012

Dynamics of service quality dimensions across guests' background characteristics of guests

Dimensions of Service Quality by Age

A one-way between group analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of age on the variations of guests' expectations for the various dimensions of service quality. Respondents were divided into three groups according to their age (Group 1: 30 years and below; Group 2: 31 -50 years; and Group 3: above 50 years). Results from Table 26 indicate that there were statistical differences at $p \geq 0.5$ in all four factors of guest's expectations of service quality. Tangibles (F= 12.52; p= 0.001); Empathy (F= 10.48; p=0.001); Reliability (F= 14.98; p=0.001) and Food and beverage services (F= 11.65; p=0.001). The post-hoc comparison using Fisher's LSD test indicates that guests between the ages of 31-50 had higher expectations than those below 30 years and above 50 years in all the dimensions.

Dimensions of Service Quality by Gender

An independent- samples t-test was conducted to compare the dimensions of guests' expectation of service quality for both males and females. From the results in Table 26, there were no statistically significant differences between the male and female respondents' perception of guests' expectations regarding the four main factors of service quality. That is,

Tangibles (t= 1.13; p= 0.261); Empathy (t= 0.28; p=0.779); Reliability (t= 1.75; p=0.085); Food and Beverage Services (t= 1.16; p=0.247).

Dimensions of Service Quality by Occupation

A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to examine the differences in the dimensions of guests' expectations of service quality between businessmen/women, artisans, civil servants and students. Evidence from Table 26 shows that there were no statistical differences at a $p \geq 0.5$ in the expectations of service quality among professionals and business executives, artisans, civil servants and students. Empathy (F= 7.07; p=0.001); reliability (F= 5.33; p=0.002); food and beverage services (F= 6.90; p=0.001). However, there was no statistically significant difference in tangibles (F=2.34; p=0.079) as a factor of guests' expectations of service quality among the occupation groupings. Students had the least expectation across all the dimensions and professionals and business executives the highest in all the four dimensions. Surprisingly, there was a significant difference between the two on the tangible dimension.

Dimensions of Service Quality by Religion

From the one-way analysis of variance conducted on religion and guests' expectation of service quality, the results from Table 26 show that there were statistically significant differences in the expectations for the four main factors of service quality among the four religious groupings (Buddhists,

Christians, Hindu and Muslims). Factor I (F= 58; p= 0.001); Factor II (F= 5.46; p=0.002); Factor III (F= 4.55; p=0.005); Factor IV (F= 5.19; p=0.002). Muslims had the least expectations across all the dimensions. Hindus had the highest expectation in tangibles while Buddhists had higher expectations than Christians in empathy, and food and beverage dimensions

Dimensions of Service Quality by Marital Status

Marital status was found to be significant in food and beverage dimension. In other words, married and unmarried respondents had different expectations in only food and beverage (t= 2.79, p= 0.006). Nonetheless, there was no statistically significant difference in the expectation of married and unmarried respondents with Factor I (t=1.38, p=0.168), Factor II (t= 0.88, p=0.389), and Factor III (t= 1.91, p=0.059).

Dimensions of Service Quality by Level of Education

Respondents did not show any statistical significant differences in their expectation of quality service in terms of their level of education, in all four main factors of guest's expectation of service quality at p ≥ 0.5 Factor I (t= 0.77, p=0.444), Factor II (t=0.86, p=0.389); Factor III (t= 0.11, p=0.908); Factor IV (t= 0.45, p=0.652). In all, guests with tertiary education had higher expectation than their counterparts with secondary education.

Dimensions of Service Quality by Continent of Origin

A one-way between group analysis of variance was also conducted to explore the variations of guest's expectations of service quality by the continent of origin of the respondents. Respondents were divided into five groups according to their continent of origin (Group 1: Europe; Group 2: North America; Group 3: Asia; Group 4: Africa; and Group 5: South America). There were no statistical differences at $p \geq 0.5$ in all four factors of guest's expectations of service quality. Factor I (F= 0.57; p= 0.683); Factor II (F= 0.59; p=0.670); Factor III (F= 0.43; p=0.784); Factor IV (F= 0.09; p=0.984). Generally, guests originating from South America had higher expectations than the rest while those from Europe had the least expectations in three dimensions (tangibles, reliability and food and beverage services). Guests with the least expectation for empathy were from Asia.

Dimensions of Service Quality by Travel Party

Respondents who travelled with 1-5 persons and those with 6 persons and above showed statistically significant differences in their views on empathy and food and beverage. (Empathy is t= 2.07, p=0.050; food and beverage is t= 2.73, p= 0.012). On the other hand, there were no statistically significant differences in the views on factors I and II. Factor I (t=1.69, p= 0.106); Factor II (t=1.58, p=0.127). Generally, guests staying for 1-2 weeks had higher expectations than those staying for less than one week.

Dimensions of Service Quality by Length of Stay

From the result of the one-way analyses of variance conducted to explore the variations of guest's expectations of service quality by respondents' length of stay, there were four groups in relation to their length of stay (Group1: less than 1 week; Group 2: 1-2 weeks; Group 3: 2-3 weeks; Group 4: more than 3 weeks). Table 26 shows that there were statistical differences at $p \geq 0.5$ in three of the dimensions (Tangibles is F= 3.56 and p= 0.016; Reliability is F= 3.58 and p=0.016; Food and beverage is F= 2.86 and p=0.039) of guest's expectations of service quality with the exception of Empathy (F= 2.61and p=0.055).

Dimensions of Service Quality by Purpose of Visit

From the result of the one-way analyses of variance in Table 26 conducted to explore the variations of guest's expectations of service quality by respondents' purpose of visit. There were four groups in relation to respondents' purpose of visit (Group1: travel for business; Group 2: travel to visit family and friends; Group 3: travel for vacation and Group 4: travel for other purposes). There were no statistical differences at $p \geq 0.5$ in all factors of guest's expectations of service quality. Factor I (F= 0.46; p= 0.714); Factor II (F= 0.10; p=0.958); Factor III (F= 0.48; p=0.698); Factor IV (F= 1.37; p=0.254). Surprisingly, guests visiting friends and relatives had higher expectations in three of the dimensions (reliability, food and beverage as well as tangibles) than those on business and vacation purposes.

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Dimensions of Service Quality by Repeat Stay

Respondents who wish to have repeat visit and those who do not want to have repeat visit have no statistically significant differences in their views on all the dimensions regarding guests' expectations to service quality. Factor I (t= 1.01, p=0.315); Factor II (t= 1.83, p= 0.069. Factor III (t=1.52, p= 0.132); Factor IV (t=1.50, p=0.252). However, guests visiting the hotel for the first time had higher expectations of service quality than those on repeat visit.

Dimensions of Service Quality by Travel Exposure

Respondents who have travel exposure and those who do not have any travel exposure had no statistically significant differences in their views concerning factors regarding guests' expectations to service quality. Factor I (t= 0.42, p=0.967); Factor II (t= 0.01, p= 0.992. Factor III (t=0.06, p= 0.952); Factor IV (t=0.12, p=0.907).

Variations in dimensions of service quality among service providers

The main dimensions of service quality from service providers' perspectives include tangibles, responsiveness, front office efficiency and overall room values. To give a better interpretation of the results, the following five-point Likert scale was used (1-1.49 = strongly disagreed, 1.50-2.49 = disagree, 2.50-3.49 = neutral, 3.50-4.49 = agree, 4.50-5.0 = strongly agree). Table 27 presents the results.

Table 27: Variations in dimensions of service quality among service providers

Socio-demographic	N	Factor I	Factor II	Factor III	Factor IV
Sex					
Male	145	2.72	2.21	2.01	2.76
Female	167	2.76	2.99	3.00	2.75
		t= 7.12,	t=1.20,	t =2.13,	t= 0.08,
		P = 0.185	P = 0.016*	P = 0.000*	P = 0.888
			eta² =0.004	eta² =0.014	
Age					
Below 31	107	2.61	2.97*	2.99	2.85*
31-50	31	2.68	2.81	2.95	2.23
51+	162	2.78	2.12*	2.89	2.21*
		F= 1.98.	F= 5.12,	F= 1.66,	F= 4.14,
		P = 0.160	P = 0.024	P = 0.198	P = 0.043
Religion					
Christianity	296	2.24	2.98	2.97	2.10
Islam	36	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
	332	t= 1.22,	t= 0.29,	t= 0.32,	t= 1.01,
		P = 0.003*	P = 0.553	P = 0.523	P = 0.019*
		eta² =0.004			
Marital status					
Married	128	2.71	2.97	2.22	2.73
Not married	194	2.75	2.09	3.00	2.76
	332	t = 0.63,	t = 1.65,	t = 2.87,	t = 0.40,
		P = 0.120	P = 0.001*	P = 0.000*	P = 0.391
			eta²=0.008	eta²=0.002	

Table 27 (Continued)

Educational level					
Secondary	108	2.65	2.27	3.00	2.81
Tertiary	224	1.97	2.99	2.35	2.31
		t= 1.61, P = 0.016 eta²=0.008	t= 1.20, P= 0.017 eta²=0.004	t= 1.23, P = 0.013 eta²=0.005	t= 1.11, P = 0.015 eta²=0.003
Nationality					
Ghanaian	307	2.73	2.98	2.91	2.75
Non-Ghanaian	8	3.65	3.12	3.10	3.01
		t= 8.63, P = 0.001* eta²=0.192	t= 0.33, P = 0.740	t= 2.19, P = 0.059	t= 1.16, P = 0.245
Monthly income (GHC)					
Below 200	44	2.88	2.97	3.01	2.79
200-500	183	2.73	3.10	2.95	2.76
501-700	30	2.50	3.00	3.11	2.60
701-900	10	2.60	3.14	2.87	2.90
Above 900	27	2.88	2.96	3.21	2.85
		F= 3.11, P = 0.16	F= 1.76, P = 0.138	F=0.861, P= 0.488	F= 0.882, P = 0.475
Department					
Front office	158	2.73	2.99	3.24*	2.69
Food & Beverage	68	2.75	3.22	3.20	2.84

Table 27 (Continued)

	N				
Accounts & Administration	52	2.69	2.95	2.05*	2.75
Security	4	3.14	3.19	3.24	3.21
		F=0.438, P = 0.726	F= 1.98, P = 0.116	F= 6.22, P = 0.001*	F= 1.09, P = 0.353
Industry Tenure					
Less than I	29	2.72	2.96	3.02	2.79
1-5	156	2.77	3.22	3.06	2.69
6-10	66	2.82	2.98	2.86	2.74
11-15	19	2.63	2.88	3.21	2.89
16-20	9	3.00*	3.31	3.17	2.77
21 and above	24	2.37*	2.89	3.22	2.96
		F=3.34, P = 0.006	F=3.54, P = 222	F= 3.68, P = 0.321	F= 1.04, P = 0.393
Organisational Tenure					
Less than 1	45	2.05*	2.97	3.21*	2.77
1-5	183	2.14	2.98	2.99	2.71
6-10	34	2.70	2.96	2.05*	2.67
11-15	10	3.23*	3.00	3.06	3.00
16-20	7	3.18	3.00	3.21	2.71
21 and above	24	2.37	3.00	3.12	2.95
		F= 3.33, P= 0.006	F= 0.316, P = 0.903	F= 6.24, P = 0.001	F=1.11, P = 0.358
Positional Tenure					
Less than 1	19	2.58	2.94	3.24	2.89
1-5	248	2.77	2.98	2.96	2.72
6-10	15	2.66	3.23	3.33	2.80

Table 27 (Continued)

21 and above	8	2.63	3.11	3.26	2.87
		F= 1.10,	F= 0.83,	F= 0.28,	F= 0.64,
		P= 0.367	P = 0.477	P = 0.843	P = 0.589
Current position					
Management	135	2.73	2.97	2.18	2.67
Frontline staff	197	2.71	3.12	3.19	2.81
		t= 0.13,	t= 1.87,	t= 2.24,	t= 1.76,
		P= 0.894	P = 0.62	P = 0.026*	P = 0.080
				eta² =0.014	
Formal education in hospitality & tourism					
Yes	199	2.11	2.72	2.95	2.72
No	98	2.83	2.78	3.12	2.78
		t= 2.03,	t= 0.87,	t= 1.56,	t= 0.87,
		P=0.043*	P = 0.384	P = 0.12	P = 0.384
Hotel category					
1 star	75	2.59*	2.99	2.92	2.72
2 star	87	2.77	2.98	2.99	2.80
3 star	76	2.84	2.99	3.12	2.67
4 star	66	2.86	3.17	3.41	2.91
5 star	28	4.52*	3.04	3.11	2.67
		F= 3.28,	F= 0.221,	F= 1.96,	F= 1.38,
		P = 0.012	P = 0.926	P = 0.099	P = 0.242

Scale: 1-2.49 = Low Expectations, 2.50-3.49 = Moderate Expectations, 3.50 - 5.0 = High Expectations. *significant at 0.05
Eta square value of 0.01=small effect; 0.06=moderate effect and 0.14=large effect (Cohen, 1988).

Source: Fieldwork, 2012

An independent-samples t-test was carried out to compare the service quality expectations of service providers' scores for gender. With regard to tangibles ($p=0.185$, $t=7.12$) and overall room values ($p=0.888$, $t=0.08$), there were no significant differences in service quality expectations between male and female service providers as shown in Table 27. However, there were significant differences in the service quality expectation with respect to responsiveness ($p=0.016$, $t=1.20$) among males (M= 2.21) and females and (M=2.99], likewise front office efficiency ($p=0.00$, $t=2.13$). The eta square (and 0.014) shows that the size of the effect was small.

With respect to religion, the results revealed that there was a significant difference between Christians (M= 2.24) and Moslems (M=3.00) in service quality expectations in terms of tangibles ($p=0.003$, $t=1.22$). While the Christians agreed that tangibles influenced quality service expectation, their counterparts were indifferent. Similarly, overall room values ($p=0.019$, $t=1.01$) presents significant difference between the two religious affiliations while there was no significant difference in responsiveness and front office efficiency.

Furthermore, Table 27 shows that there was a statistically significant difference in responsiveness ($p=0.001$, $t=1.65$) and front office efficiency ($p=0.000$, $t=2.87$) as dimensions of service providers' service quality expectation between married (M=2.97) and unmarried (M=2.09). The eta square (0.008) is indicative that the size of the difference between married employees and the responsiveness dimension is moderate. More so, on service

providers level of education, the results showed that there was a statistically significant difference across all the factors (tangibles; $p=0.016$, $t=1.61$, eta=0.008); (responsiveness; $p=0.017$, $t=1.20$, eta=0.004), (front office efficiency; $p=0.013$, $t=1.23$, eta=0.005) and overall room values; $p=0.015$, $t=1.11$, eta=0.003). The effect sizes across all the dimensions were minimal to moderate.

Also, with service providers' age and variations across factors, the ANOVA findings revealed that there were no statistically significant differences across service providers of age 30 years and above, (31-50) and >51 with regards to tangibles ($p=0.160$, $F=1.98$) and front office efficiency ($p=0.198$, $F=1.66$) at $p \leq 0.05$. This suggests that across the age groupings, views on the dimensions were not different. On the contrary, responsiveness ($p=0.024$, $F=5.12$) and overall room values ($p=0.043$, $f=4.14$) present significant differences among the age groupings (30 years and below; 31-50; +51) at $p \leq 0.05$. A post-hoc comparison showed significant differences in the mean scores between respondents who are over 50 years and those less than 31 years for both responsiveness and overall room values.

Variations in the expectations of service quality among service providers in terms of monthly income levels showed no statistical significant difference among the various income groupings. Across all the various factors, they were all indifferent as shown with the mean values at (3= neither agree nor disagree), F-ratio at $p \leq 0.05$ level.

To sum up, there were no significant difference among the various departments regarding the various factors causing variations in service quality expectation of service providers except for front office efficiency (p=0.001,F=6.22). Post-hoc test revealed that those employees who work in accounts and administration disagreed that front office efficiency influenced their understanding of guests' expectations of service quality.

Likewise, the number of years a service provider has worked in the hotel industry were divided into various categories (less than 1; 1-5; 6-10, 11-15; 16-20 and 21 and above). The ANOVA results did not show any significant disparities with regard to the factors, particularly responsiveness, front office efficiency and overall room values across the various year categories, however, there were significant statistical variations in the various year categories in terms of tangibles (p=0.006, F=3.34). Those who had worked for 21 years and above disagreed that tangibles influenced their perceptions.

Lastly, among the hotel categories, there were significant differences at level $p \leq 0.05$ in tangibles (p=0.012, F=3.28) as a determinant to expectations of service quality among service providers. Post-hoc comparison with the LSD test indicated that the difference was between service providers from 5-star hotels and those from 1-star hotels. There were however no significant differences across the rest of the factors with respect to hotel rating as indicated on Table 27.

More to that, variation of factors between service providers in terms of the positions they are currently manning showed that there were no disparities between management and frontline staff. In relation to tangibles (p=, t=0.13), those in management positions presented a mean value of 2.73 whilst that of frontline staff recorded M= 2.71; responsiveness (p=, t=1.87) had management and frontline staff having mean readings of 2.97 and 3.12 respectively at p>0.05 as shown on Table 27. Drawing from the above, suffice it to say that irrespective of their current positions, they conceded that they were undecided about the various factors influencing expectations of service quality.

From the above discourse, it can be concluded that different sets of dimensions are used by stakeholders in assessing service quality in the hotel industry in Accra, Ghana. On the relative importance of these dimensions in predicting overall service quality, there were still differences in the dimensions. These raise concerns for satisfying guests because there is no apparent congruence between service providers and guests.

Summary

The chapter examined the dimensions of service quality from both hotel guests and service providers' point of view. In all, four (4) main underlying factor-solutions accounted differently for both guests and service providers' service quality in hotels in Accra. Tangibles, empathy and staff competence, reliability, and food and beverage services were found to be the dimensions or factors guests use to measure service quality. On the other hand,

service providers' assessment of service quality is influenced by tangibles, responsiveness, front office services and overall room values. Three factors (tangibles, empathy and reliability) came out as the best predictors of overall service quality from guests' perspective while a different set of three factors (tangibles, responsiveness and overall room values) were found to predict service providers perceptions of guests expectations.

CHAPTER NINE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Service quality is the difference between customers' expectations for service performance prior to the service encounter and their perceptions of the service received (Gronroos, 1984; Asubonteng, McCleary & Swan, 1996; Shahin, 2006). Service quality has received much attention over the years (Ekinci, Prokopaki & Cobanoglu, 2003; Akbaba, 2006). The key to sustainable competitive advantage lies in delivering high quality service that results in satisfied customers (Shemwell, Yavas & Bilgin, 1998; Chang & Yeh, 2002). The hotel sector is a synthetic service industry because severe competition results in little variation of facilities. Service quality has been identified as one of the main drivers of successful business operations. Hoteliers must find ways to make their products and services stand out among their competitors (Oh & Parks 1997; Hung, Huang & Chen, 2003). To achieve this, managers must understand their customers' expectations and then deliver their services in a way that meets or exceeds expectations.

There have been numerous studies on service quality, with most emphasising only the customers' perspective (Groonroos, 2000). Most research in the field of services marketing ignore the service provider's perspective (Dedeke, 2003; Svensson, 2002; Chow-Chua & Komaran, 2002; Tam & Wong, 2001). Very few researchers have only emphasised the importance of the interaction between actors in a service encounter (Svensson, 2002). The few studies on service quality in hotels have been on quality dimensions, particularly, the factors customers use to measure service quality in hotels in developed economies. Against this backdrop, the study sought to assess service quality in hotels in Accra. To achieve this, five specific objectives were set as follows:

i. Examine the gap between guests' expectations and perceptions of service quality (perceived service quality)

ii. Explore the perceptual interface between guests and service providers on service quality expectations and service performance in hotels (Gaps 1, 6, 7, 8, 9 & 10).

iii. Examine the possible implications of the interface on perceived service quality.

iv. Explore the differences between guests' profile and their expectations and perceptions of service quality.

v. Assess the dimensions of service quality in hotels.

vi. Examine the predictor(s) of overall service quality in hotels.

vii.   Assess the dynamics of service quality dimensions among stakeholders.

The following hypotheses were therefore formulated and tested:

i.   There is no significant difference between guests' expectation of service quality from their perception of actual service received (Gap 5).

ii.   There is no significant difference between guests' expectation and management perception of guests' expectation (Gap 1).

iii.   There is no significant difference between frontline employees' and managements' perception of guests expectation (Gap 6).

iv.   There is no significant difference between service providers' perception of guests' expectation and their perception of the actual service delivered.

v.   There is no significant difference between guests' and management's perceptions of actual service delivered (Gap 7).

The Conceptual Framework of the study was the Service Quality Model adapted from Zeithaml *et al.,* (1985); Parasuraman, *et al.,* (1988); Luk & Layton, (2002). The study utilized the cross-sectional research design (non-experimental), which describes and interprets what exists (Creswell, 2003) and the research philosophy was the positivist paradigm, which is based on quantitative methods. Both primary and secondary sources of data/information

were used. The target population was all hotel guests, managers and supervisors (Management), and frontline staff. A multi-staged sampling technique was employed for the study. From the GTA classification of hotels into 1-5 stars, a proportional stratified random sampling was used to select 65 (29 and 36) from the 1-star and 2-star hotels respectively and all hotels in the 3-5 star categories were selected due to the small size of the population giving a total of 78 hotels. Then, a preliminary survey was conducted to obtain the total number of service providers (frontline staff and management and supervisory staff) from the 78 hotels. Using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for sample size determination from a given population, a population of 594 and 352 gave 232 and 182 sample size respectively. To cater for non-response rate, 10% of the calculated sample size, which is approximately 23 and 18 were added to the calculated sample of frontline and management staff to give a total of 255 and 200 respectively. Managers were purposively selected while frontline employees were accidentally sampled for the study. According to Hair, Anderson, Tatham and Black (1998) and Pallant (2005), 100-150 sample size is adequate for quantitative studies. In view of this, 200 guests were accidentally sampled for the study.

Summary of major findings

Perceived service quality (Gap 1)

Overall, the perception score was lower than the expectation score, indicating that guests perceive that service delivered did not meet their

expectations. The paired t-test was used to test the significant mean difference (gap) between guests' perception and expectation of service quality (Hypothesis 1). At t=6.55; p=0.00, the null hypothesis that stated that there is no significant difference between hotel guests' expectations and perceptions of the actual service delivered was rejected and I failed to reject the alternative hypothesis. The eta square of 0.20 indicated that the magnitude of the difference was very large

Expectation gaps between guests, managers and frontline staff

- Gap 1: Management's perceptions of customer expectations (Understanding *Gap)*

  The expectation score (4.63) for management was greater than the expectation score (4.20) for guests resulting in a positive gap (0.43). There is an indication that management perceive guests' expectations to be higher than the guests themselves. At a t-value of 3.28 and a p-value of 0.02, the null hypothesis which states that, there is no significant difference between hotel guests' expectations of service quality and management's perception of guests' expectation was rejected and I again failed to reject the alternative hypothesis. The eta square of 0.06 meant the size of the gap was moderate.

- Gap 6: Frontline employees perception of customer expectations gap

Frontline staff's perception of guests' expectations (4.73) was greater than management's perception of guests expectations (4.63) and using an independent t-test, a comparison of the mean scores between frontline staff's perception of guests' expectations and management's perception of guests expectations, there was a statistically significant difference at t=3.35; p=0.04. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected but the eta square (0.03) indicated a small difference

A comparison of the mean scores between service providers' perceptions of guests' expectations and the hotel's level of service delivery, using a paired-samples t-test, indicated a statistically significant difference at t=9.69; p=0.00. It came out that service providers' perception of actual service delivered was lower than their perception of guests' expectations. This implies that they were not delivering service up to guests' expectations. The eta square of 0.22 meant the difference is very large.

- Gap 7: Management and frontline employees' perceptions of guests' expectations of service quality.

    The overall gap between management staff and frontline staff's understanding of guests' expectations indicated that frontline staff had better understanding of guest's expectations than management staff. There were statistically significant

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differences in the understanding of guests' expectations by management staff and frontline staff on less than half (23) of the attributes of service quality. However, 34 of the 57 attributes were statistically insignificant. Collectively, the hypothesis stating that there are no significant differences in management staff and frontline staff's understanding of guests' expectations was rejected and the alternative hypothesis that there is statistically significant difference (t=3.35, Sig. 0.05) between management staff and frontline staff's understanding of guests' expectations of service quality was maintained.

Perception gaps in actual service delivered: guests versus managers and frontline staff

- Gap 8: Frontline employees' and guests' perceptions of service performance gap

A gap analysis was performed to compare frontline staff and guests perceptions of actual service delivered. It was revealed that all the 57 attributes had significant mean differences between frontline staff perceptions and guests' perceptions, suggesting that the null hypothesis which stated that there was no significant difference between guests' perception of service quality and frontline staff perception was rejected.

- Gap 9: Management and guests' perceptions of service performance gap

Overall, management's perception of actual service delivered was greater than guests' perception of actual service received. This resulted in a positive gap (0.33) and gave the indication that management perceive actual service delivered to be higher than the service guests perceived to have received. At $t=8.04$; $p=0.01$, the null hypothesis that stated that there is no significant difference between management's perception of actual service delivered and guests' perception of actual service received was rejected and failed to reject the alternative hypothesis. The eta square of 0.18 meant the size of the difference was large.

- Gap 10: Management and frontline employees' perceptions of service (Performance Gap)

Overall, frontline staff's perception of actual service performance was higher than managers' perception score. By using independent t-test, it was revealed that 46 of the 58 service attributes exhibited significant differences between managers and frontline staff's perception of service performance. On the whole, there was a statistically significant difference between managers' and frontline staff's view of their hotels service performance. Based on this, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between managers and frontline staff's

perceptions of actual service delivered to guests was rejected and hence, the refusal to reject the alternative hypothesis that there is a significant difference between managers and frontline staff's perceptions of service quality. The eta square value of 0.03, however, suggested that the magnitude of the difference was very small.

Effects of the Interface on Perceived Service Quality

The study revealed that the effects of the other gaps on perceived service quality gap were all statistically not significant with the exception of only gap 6. It can, therefore, be said that apart from gap 6, all the other gaps influenced the perceived service quality gap (gap 5).

Guests' Characteristics and their Expectations of Service Quality

Guests with varied background characteristics exhibited differences in their expectations of service quality. Their age, marital status, religion, occupation, length of stay and the hotel rating influenced their level of expectations of service quality in hotels in Accra

Guests' Characteristics and their Perceptions of Service Quality

The highly associating profile variables with guests' perceptions of service quality were their sex, level of education, religion, occupation and length of stay. The travel party size and hotel rating also exerted significant differences in guests' perceptions as well.

Dimensions of Service Quality

To examine the factors or dimensions of service quality from both guests' and service providers' perspectives, 58 service attributes were subjected to factor analysis. The suitability and factorability of the data were checked. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy was found to be above the recommended value and the Bartlett's tests of Sphericity for the two groups were also found to be very significant. Four (4) main underlying factor-solutions accounted differently for both guests and service providers' service quality in hotels in Accra. Tangibles, empathy and staff competence, reliability and accuracy and food and beverage services were found to be the dimensions or factors used by guests to measure service quality. On the other hand, service providers' assessment of service quality was influenced by tangibles, responsiveness, front office services and overall room values.

Predictors of Overall Service Quality in Hotels in Accra

To ascertain the best predictor(s) of overall service quality, the four factors extracted with the factor analysis were used to run a standard multiple regression. Three factors (tangibles, empathy and reliability) came out as the best predictors of overall service quality from guests' perspective while a different set of three factors (tangibles, responsiveness and overall room

values) were found to predict service providers' perceptions of guests expectations.

Dynamics of Service Quality Dimensions in Hotels

In examining the differences in service quality dimensions among background characteristics of guests and service providers, the independent t-test and ANOVA were used. From the guests end, it was revealed that while tangibles differed among age groups, religion and length of stay of guests, empathy dimension varied among age, occupation and religion of guests. Reliability also varied by age, occupation, marital status, travel party size and length of stay of guests, and finally the food and beverage services dimension also differed by the age, occupation, religion, marital status, travel party size and length of stay of guests. Among service providers the tangibles factor varied among religion, educational level and nationality of service providers. There were also differences between those who had had formal training in hospitality and tourism or those who had no formal training, number of years one has worked in a particular hotel and the hotel category regarding tangibles dimension. Responsiveness dimension differed among sex, age, occupation, marital status and educational level of service providers. The front office efficiency factor also varied by sex, marital status, educational level, nationality, department and current position of service providers and the overall room values dimension also differed by the age, religion and educational level of service providers.

Conclusions

It can be concluded that guests with varied background characteristics exhibited differences in their expectations and perceptions of service quality. The study examined the dimensions of stakeholders use to measure service quality and the relative importance of the dimensions in influencing the overall service quality. There was a clear difference between the factors or dimensions guests and service provider use to assess service quality. The analysis of results points to several areas that need to be addressed by the management of the sampled hotels. The suggestions that follow are important not only in terms of attracting potential customers, but also in increasing the number of repeat customers. Studies have shown the primary importance of repeat customers for long-term financial performance in the hotel industry.

The findings of the study revealed that guests' expectations of service quality were influenced by four main factors, namely: tangibles like welcoming and clean guest rooms, clean and hygienic bathrooms and toilets, attractive and comfortable lobby areas; empathy and competence of staff such as staff performing services right, well trained and knowledgeable staff and skilful and experienced staff; reliability such as efficient check-in and check-out, accurate information of hotel services and price and efficient telephone and internet service and availability of other services factor like offering of complimentary items (soap, towels, among others), all year round swimming pool and reasonable prices of food and drinks. Among these factors, tangibles,

reliability and availability of other services were statistically significant in predicting overall service quality. Tangibles was the topmost factor that predicts all stakeholders overall assessment of service quality. Obviously, this finding has implications for management of hotel operations and it is suggested that by focusing on these factors, hotels can achieve high levels of customer satisfaction and improve overall level of service quality.

In general, the results have revealed that hotel customers expect improved services from hotels. Thus, hotel managers should take measures to improve service quality in their facilities regarding these service quality dimensions. The factor loadings within the various dimensions give important signals about service areas which need to be improved in the hotels. This might enable managers to better utilise their limited resources and to embrace more effective marketing strategies. Specifically, hotel managers should pay more attention to the tangible, empathy and competence as well as the reliability aspects of service quality because customers have the highest expectations scores on these dimensions.

With regard to improvement of the dimensions, hotel managers should focus on specific items (improvement areas) related to these dimensions. These areas include frontline staff welcoming guests warmly and providing clean and hygienic bathrooms and toilets, attractive and comfortable lobby areas, staff performing services right, well trained and knowledgeable staff, skilful and experienced staff, efficient check-in and check-out, accurate information of hotel services and price and efficient telephone and internet service, offer of

complimentary items (soap, towels, among others), all year round swimming pool and reasonable prices of food and drinks.

The study established that guests' expectations of service quality were far above their perceptions of the service they had received. This means that guests perceived that service delivered did not meet their expectations. According to the findings of the study, all the gaps were relatively high; the largest discrepancy between expectations and perceptions of guests was in terms of the "responsiveness" and "front office services" dimension. Interactions between the customer and the service organization lay at the heart of service delivery and people who delivered the service were of key importance to both the customer they served and the employer they represented. To the customer, the employee exemplifies the service (Arasli, Mehtap-Smadi & Katircioglu, 2005). Tsang and Qu (2000) posited that the larger the gap, the more serious the service quality shortfall from the point of view of guests. Guests clearly expect efficient telephone and internet services as well as accurate billing system. They also want a high degree of interaction with the hotel staff that are sensitive to their needs and show sincere interest in solving their problems, prompt service delivery and will not tolerate delays in response times.

This has implication for management of hotels. Assessment of this gap is critical because it helps to identify service shortfalls in the hotel industry. Zeithaml *et al.* (1993) intimated that poor performance by service firms is primarily due to not knowing what their customers expect from them. Hence,

hotels in Accra can be said not to be customer focused. Also, their products are not tailored to meet guest demand. They are in a "de facto cartel-like" position (Smid & Zwart, 2002) and exploit this situation with a "take it or leave it" attitude towards the hotel services they offer (Arasli *et al*, 2005). This "de facto cartel-like" status enjoyed by hotels in Accra faces the risk of breaking down, especially, in the present time that there is a strong competition from multinational and franchise hotels, some of these hotels may be forced to close down from too much competition and high operating costs related to maintenance. If the hotels in Accra do not comprehend and fulfil customer requirements, and therefore enhance service quality, some will not be able to survive the competition and will be faced with a loss of clientele and a deterioration of quality over the coming years. These perceptions could be caused by a number of factors, including:

a) Understaffing;

b) Inefficient operational procedures;

c) Staff in need of training;

d) Management not understanding customer desires;

e) Lack of service commitment by management and frontline staff; and

f) Some combination of the aforementioned.

It can also be concluded that different sets of dimensions were used by stakeholders in assessing service quality in the hotel industry in Accra, Ghana. On the relative importance of these dimensions in predicting overall service

quality, there were still differences in the dimensions. These raise concerns for satisfying guests because there was no apparent congruence between service providers and guests.

The study again revealed significant differences between guests, managers and frontline employees' expectations and perceptions of service quality in the hotel industry in Accra. There were statistically significant differences between all stakeholders' expectations and perceptions of service quality. Frontline staff had better understanding of guest's expectations than management staff and the guests themselves. Frontline staff also perceived actual service delivered to be higher

The differences were also found to significantly influence guests' perceived service quality. Apart from the gap between management and guests' perceptions (gap 6), all the other gaps influenced the perceived service quality gap (gap 5). These gaps identified by this study can be crystalised into a proposed framework of hotel service quality as presented in Figure 8. Elements in the framework are presented as follows:

Guests' expectations of service quality are influenced by their demographic variables (such as their age, marital status and occupation), the facility characteristic like the class of hotel and their travel characteristic like the length of stay.

Gap 1 is the difference between customers' expectations and management's perceptions (also known as knowledge gap). This gap may result from a lack of understanding of what customers expect from a particular service due to the

absence of a proper marketing research orientation. The study found that managers understand what guests expect from service quality in the study hotels. Management perceptions about what guests expect from service quality was far above the expectations expressed by guests.

Gap 2 is the difference between management's perception and service quality specifications (service standards gap). This gap shows the disparity between management's knowledge of client's expectations and the process of service producing resulting from an inadequate commitment to service quality, a perception of unfeasibility, inadequate task standardisation and the absence of goal setting.
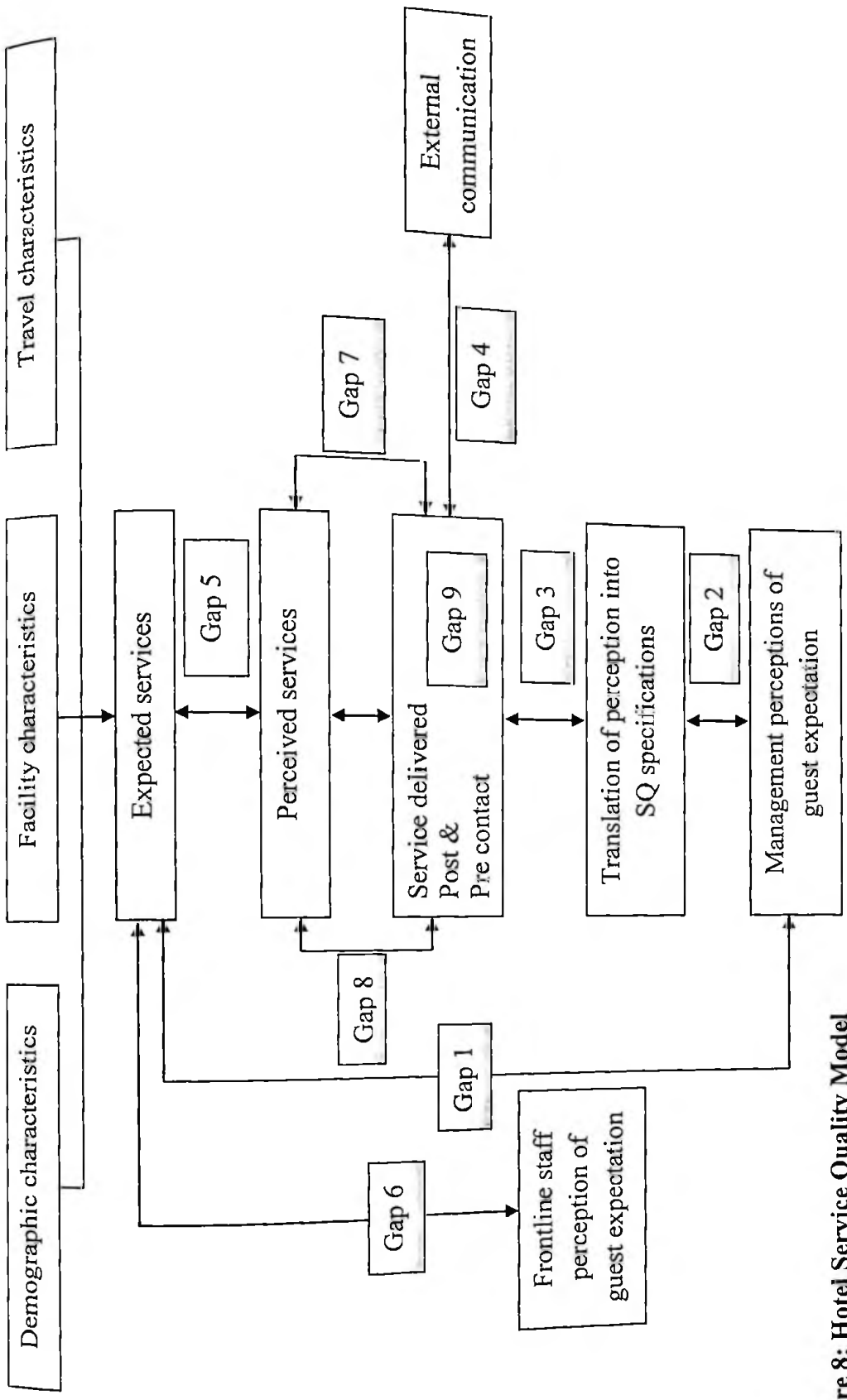
Figure 8: Hotel Service Quality Model
Source: Author's construct

Gap 3 measures the difference between service quality specifications and service delivery (performance gap). This gap is the consequence of role ambiguity and conflict, lack of teamwork and poor technology. Even when guidelines or specifications exist for performing excellent service, its delivery may not be up to standard due to poor employee performance.

Gap 4 is the gap between service delivery and external communications (communications gap). Customer expectations are established by promises made by a service provider's promotional messages. This gap results from inconsistencies between the quality image portrayed in promotional activities and the actual quality of services delivered. Gaps 2 to 4 were not measured in this study

Gap 5 is the difference between consumer's expectation and perceived service. This gap depends on size and direction of the four gaps associated with the delivery of service quality on the marketer's side (Parasuraman *et al.* (1985, 1988, and 1991)). An analysis of this gap in the study has provided management with important insights about how well their service performance meets or exceeds the expectations of their guests. By testing this gap it can be said that guests' perceptions (actual experience) service quality provided by the hotel industry in Accra was far below their expectations.

Gap 6 is the difference between guests' expectations of service quality and what frontline employees believe guests expect. This gap addressed frontline employees understanding of what customers expect from a service delivery in order to meet customer expectations of service quality in the hotel

industry. Frontline service providers had a better understanding of guests' expectations than the guests themselves.

Gap 7 is the difference between guests' perception of actual service received and what frontline employees believe they had delivered. This gap showed that frontline employees exaggerated their service performance in relation to what customers perceived to have been delivered in the hotel industry.

Gap 8: measured the difference between guests' perceptions of service quality and what managers believe they deliver. This gap, like gap 8, also showed that managers over exaggerated their service performance in relation to what customers perceived to have been delivered in the hotel industry. They perceived their service delivery as being more successful than customers perceived it to be.

Gap 9 also measured the difference between frontline employees' perceptions and management perceptions of service performance. It was realised that frontline staff believe they deliver more than management believes. Measuring management and frontline personnel's perceptions of service quality is just as important as measuring consumers' perceptions because management and frontline service providers' perceptions of service quality directly affect service quality standards and delivery process.

These six gaps (Gap 5, Gap 1, Gap 6, Gap 7, Gap 8 and Gap 9) will provide better insights for hotel managers to evaluate and identify service quality problems. By understanding the extent and direction of these three

gaps, managers should be able to identify whether their services were exceeding, meeting or falling below customers' expectations, and would gain clues about how to close any gaps.

The most complicated situation in perception differences is when the service quality perceptions of employees and managers are higher than that of the customers. Generally, these kinds of unintended situations originate from employees emotional labour and surface acting (Hochschild, 2003) because employees and managers may tend to behave fallaciously for the sake of their company's reputation even though they do not believe in it. Alternatively, people may pretend to have performed better than their actual performance. These are the cases where both managers and employees do not have an objective point of view. However, this may cause indolence and ignorance in employees with long term employment intentions. In fact, Wang (2011) stated the possibility of long term employees being overcome by complacency can be higher. Therefore, the service quality required cannot be obtained under these circumstances.

The biggest differences between the service quality perceptions of managers-employees and guests may be due to various reasons such as unresponsive and unwilling hotel service personnel, their commitment to the company, pay, emotional labour and job satisfaction. While Lam and Chen (2012) stated that service quality is affected by job satisfaction Wei and Yan (2010) suggested that the productivity of people who have long term emotional labour experience decreases.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study adds to the growing service quality literature, especially, in the hotel industry. It also adds to the plethora of knowledge by building on the works of previous researchers like Parasuraman *et al.* (1985); Lewis (1987); Mohr & Biter (1991); Coyle & Dale (1993), Hebbert (1995), Zeithaml *et al*, (1988); Tsang & Qu (2000) and Luk & Layton (2002).

One significant contribution of this work is the development of a scale for measuring service quality in hotels in Accra which can be replicated the entire country. A number of scales have already been developed (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988 and Luk & Layton, 2002), but this scale was first developed from the interview with guests, hoteliers and academia. The responses were grouped into seven main dimensions of service quality. The results of the exploratory factor analysis yielded four key factors that service providers should focus on, namely; tangibles, empathy and staff competence, reliability and accuracy and finally, food and beverage services. Table 28 portrays the HOTQUAL scale in relation to the others from the literature.

More so, while earlier works on service quality focused on the customer, this work has gone further to provide a comprehensive and holistic framework by addressing service providers' (managers and frontline employees) understanding of guests' expectations and their perceptions of the services they deliver. This supports the proper understanding and measurement of service quality in the hotel industry.

Table 28: Comparison of dimensions of service quality from literature and this study

Researcher (s) and year of study	Objective of evaluation	Instrument	Dimensions	Relative Importance of dimensions
Parasuraman et al., (1988)	Services	SERVQUAL	5 Dimensions: Tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy	Not applicable
Mei et al. (1999)	Hotels	Modified SEVQUAL scale	3 Dimensions:Employees, tangibles and reliability	Employees
Raymond and Choi (2001)	Hotels	Modified SERVQUAL scale	7 Dimensions:Staff service quality, room qualities, general amenities, business services, value and IDD facilities	Staff service quality, room qualities and value
Juwaheer and Ross (2003)	Hotels	Modified SERVQUAL scale	2 Dimensions: Assurance and reliability	Assurance and Reliability
Nadiri & Hussain (2005)	Hotels	Adopted SERVQUAL scale	2 Dimensions: Tangibles and Intangibles	Tangibles and intangibles

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Table 28 (continued)

Akbaba (2006).	Hotels	Modified SERVQUAL scale	5 Dimensions: Tangibles, adequacy in service supply, understanding and caring, assurance and convenience	Not applicable
Vijayadurai (2008)	Hotels	Modified SERVQUAL scale	Service delivery, Tangibles, Reliability, Assurance, Responsiveness, Empathy, Service product and Social responsibility.	Not applicable
Markovic & Raspor (2010)	Hotels	Modified SERVQUAL scale	4 Dimensions: Reliability, empathy and competence of staff, accessibility and tangibles	Not applicable
Amissah (2013)	Hotels	Adopted SERVQUAL scale	4 Dimensions: Empathy, reliability, tangibility and assurance	Empathy and reliability
Current Study (2014)	Hotels	Modified SERVQUAL scale (32 items named HOTQUAL)	4 Dimensions: Tangibles, empathy and competence, reliability and accuracy, and availability of other services	Tangibles, reliability and accuracy and availability of other services

Source: Literature and Fieldwork, 2012

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The study also adds to the literature on how guests' characteristics (such as socio-demographics and travel characteristics) influence their expectations and perceptions of service quality. This informs service providers that different guests expect and perceive different service attributes. As such, services should be personalised to suit a particular guest to ensure satisfaction.

Contribution to practice

The study has highlighted some of the areas of service quality that practitioners or managers can focus to improve upon their services. A modified scale with four (4) dimensions to measure service quality performance by hoteliers has been developed. Also, the 48 service attributes in the 4 dimensions of service quality emanating from the factor analysis could serve as a yardstick for the assessment of service quality by hotels. Areas which guests had the least perceptions have been identified and hotel managers can channel their limited resources into these areas to improve on the quality of their services.

Implications of the study

Theoretical implications

In terms of the theoretical implications, the findings of this study indicate that the proposed research framework adequately describes the concept of service quality in the hotel industry. Specifically, the overall fit of the framework was good and the hypothesized gaps/differences and

relationships were confirmed. All gaps depicted in the conceptual framework were statistically significant with the exception of one. Some of the 7 sub dimensions identified in this study were similar in content to those factored by other researchers who have focused on hotel studies (Nadiri & Hussain, 2005; Akbaba, 2006; Vijayadurai, 2008; Shanin & Dabestani, 2010; Markovic & Raspor, 2012; Amissah, 2013).

The results of this study reaffirm the use of the Gap model such as those developed by Parasuraman *et al.* (1988), Zeithaml *et al.* (1988) and Luk and Layton (2002), and conceptualise and measure service quality in the context of hotel services. However, the four primary dimensions identified in this study may not be general for those service industries outside the hotel sector, or for different cultures. In addition, the service quality attributes from the dimensions identified need to be confirmed using appropriate qualitative and quantitative analyses because they may vary across industries and cultures. Overall, the findings of this study have expanded the research of service quality by providing a conceptual framework and measurement scale for the hotel industry in Ghana, specifically Accra.

The sub-dimensional attributes support the view that the dimensionality of the service quality construct depends on the service industry under investigation and adds support to the claims that industry and culture-specific measures of service quality need to be developed (Brady & Cronin, 2001; Clemes, Ozanne & Walter, 2001; Clemes *et al.*, 2007).

Managerial implications

There are several implications for practitioners in managerial positions. From a managerial perspective, the dimensions identified in this study provide an improved understanding of how guests assess service quality in the hotel industry in Ghana, especially Accra. The four generic dimensions (tangibles, empathy and competence, reliability and food and beverage services) explain common facets of service delivery systems in the hotel industry. Therefore, practitioners can analyse their service operations at both the dimension level (formulating management strategies) and the sub-dimension level or attributes level (framing daily management tactics). This provides a more flexible and expanded method of application to various levels of service quality of hotels. The results provide practitioners with the strategic concepts for the improvement of the daily operation and the tools for performance evaluation. The gap analysis in this study enables practitioners to identify the most and the least important dimensions underlying guests' perceptions of service quality.

According to the comparative importance or predictive power of the dimensions, practitioners can allocate different weights to the dimensions and efficiently use their limited resources (human and financial resources). For example, the results of this study indicate that guests perceive clean environment, and neat and professional employees attributes as more important sub-dimensions of tangibles than the attractive interior décor and modern equipment sub-dimensions in the hotel industry. Therefore, practitioners should allocate more resources to improve and keep the hotel environment and

employees clean than provide an attractive interior décor and modern equipment for their guests.

Based on feedback from guests, practitioners should reframe their management strategies and tactics to redesign the service delivery system. The efforts made to improve service quality may increase customer satisfaction and their favourable behavioural intentions, and they can provide an opportunity for practitioners to remain competitive in a currently saturated market. As pointed out by Brady and Cronin (2001), a high level of service quality is associated with several key organizational outcomes, including high market share (Buzzell & Gale, 1987), improved profitability relative to competitors (Kearns & Nadler, 1992), enhanced customer loyalty, the realization of a competitive price premium and an increased probability of purchase (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1996). Furthermore, service quality is positively related to customer satisfaction (Anderson & Sullivan, 1993; Cronin & Taylor, 1992) and corporate image (Clemes *et al.*, 2009; Grönroos, 1984; Wu *et al.*, 2011), though the causal order of these relationships has produced controversy. Therefore, the study of service quality can provide hotels with a powerful instrument to obtain their strategic goals.

Recommendations

The study examined the dimensions of hotel guests' expectations of service quality or hotel service factors and the relative importance of the dimensions in influencing the overall level of service quality. The analysis of

results points to several areas that need to be addressed by the hotels' management team. The suggestions that follow are important, not only in terms of attracting potential customers, but also in increasing the number of repeat customers.

1. Hotel managers should take measures to improve service quality provided by the hotels in all service quality dimensions. The factor loadings within these dimensions give important signals about service areas that need to be improved in the hotels. Specifically, hotel managers should pay more attention to the "tangible", "empathy" and "reliability" aspects of the service quality because customers have the highest expectations scores on these dimensions.

2. Hotel managers should focus on specific items (improvement areas) related to these dimensions. These areas include staff welcoming guests, clean and hygienic bathrooms and toilets, attractive and comfortable lobby areas, staff performing services right, well trained and knowledgeable staff, and skilful and experienced staff, efficient check-in and check-out, accurate information of hotel services and price and efficient telephone and internet service, offer of complimentary items (soap, towels, among others), all year round swimming pool and reasonable prices of food and drinks.

3. Hotels also need to re-assess guests' expectations from time to time in terms of products and services and thus, provide client specific services. The hotel sector also needs to invest in telephone and internet

services as well as employee training programmes that will provide employees with an understanding of service culture and service excellence. Employee training programs should pay particular attention to "interpersonal communication" and "customer care" factors, in order to meet customers' expectations for "staff showing sincere interest in solving their problems" and "providing prompt service".

4. Managers of hotels have to put in extra effort to minimize the gaps between guests and frontline staff's expectations and perceptions (Gaps 7 and 9) by training employees and treating them as internal clients so that they understand and appreciate how the hotel works in order to satisfy and motivate employees to satisfy customers (Kotler, 2005).

5. Also, employees need to be empowered to instil confidence in guests. This can be achieved by giving them the authority and responsibility to operate when managers are not around.

6. More so, in order to benefit from service quality, business owners and managers should have the control and the ability to modify employees' unresponsive, unwilling and insensitive behaviour.

7. Hotels need to redefine their corporate image to one that emphasizes service quality by introducing standards for service excellence.

8. Management of hotels must improve tangible materials associated with a service to improve the standards in the industry.

9. The Ministry of Tourism and its implementing body, Ghana Tourism Authority, must also strengthen their monitoring systems in the hotel industry.

Recommendations for future research

The primary dimensions identified in this study should be confirmed for other service industries through the use of appropriate qualitative and quantitative analyses. The attributes need to be confirmed using appropriate qualitative and quantitative analyses to ascertain contextual issues like culture and the changing importance of the dimensions over time.

Further studies in hotel in other geographical areas of the country would further enhance understanding of the constructs especially overall room values as well as food and beverage. In addition, studies that compare service quality in the various star-rated hotels, guest houses and budget hotels are also suggested and service quality in international hotels some of which are chains and franchised to explore the relationship between expatriates and local staff perceptions is encouraged.

A study that examines internal service quality is also encouraged. How frontline staff perceive their supervisors and the working environment all influence their behaviour towards customers. Also, since service quality is culturally sensitive, a study comparing tourists and locals' expectations and perceptions of service quality will bring out these cultural influences. The

relationship of socio-demographic characteristics and perception of service quality is also encouraged. It is encouraged that this HOTQUAL scale is used for further studies in the hotel setting.

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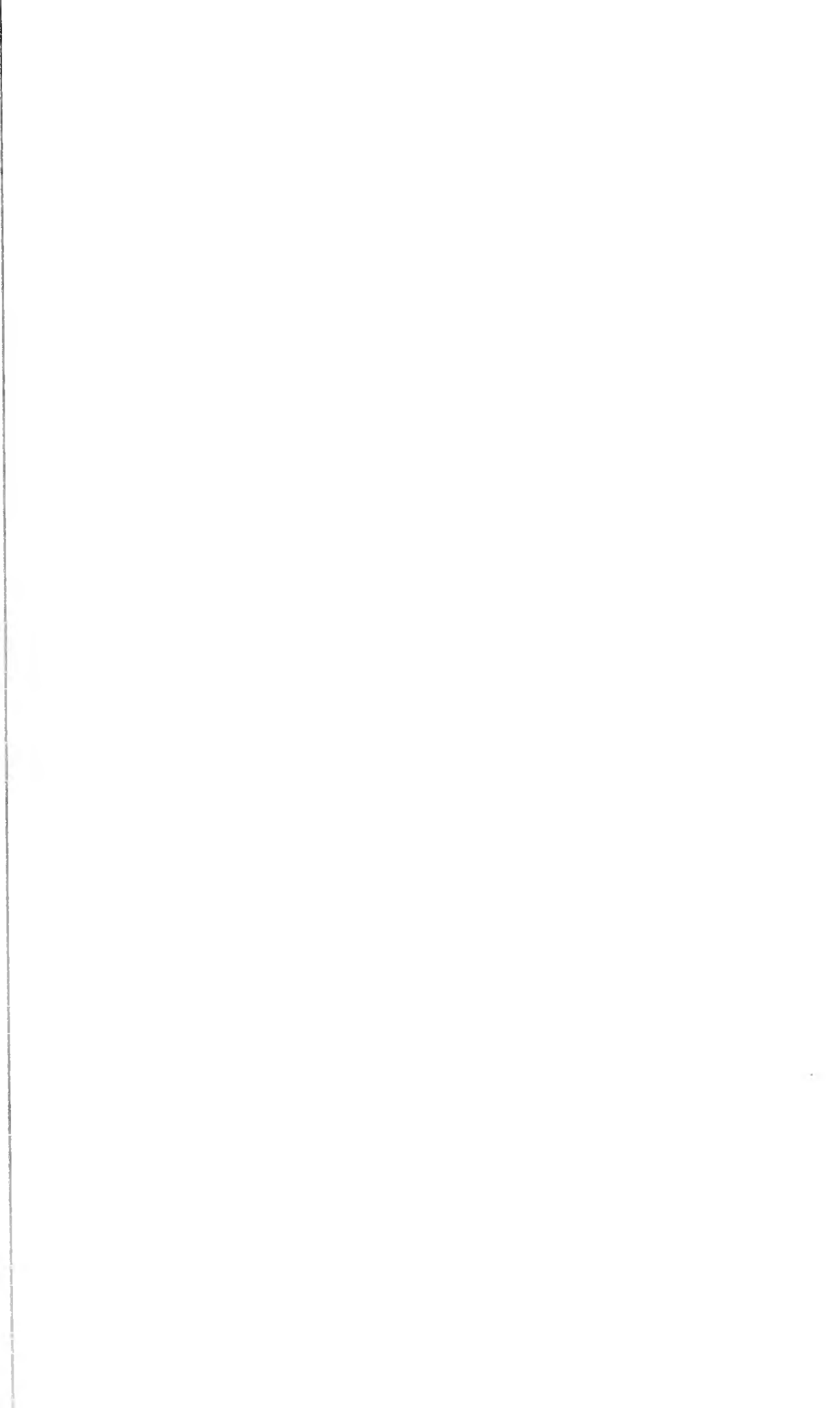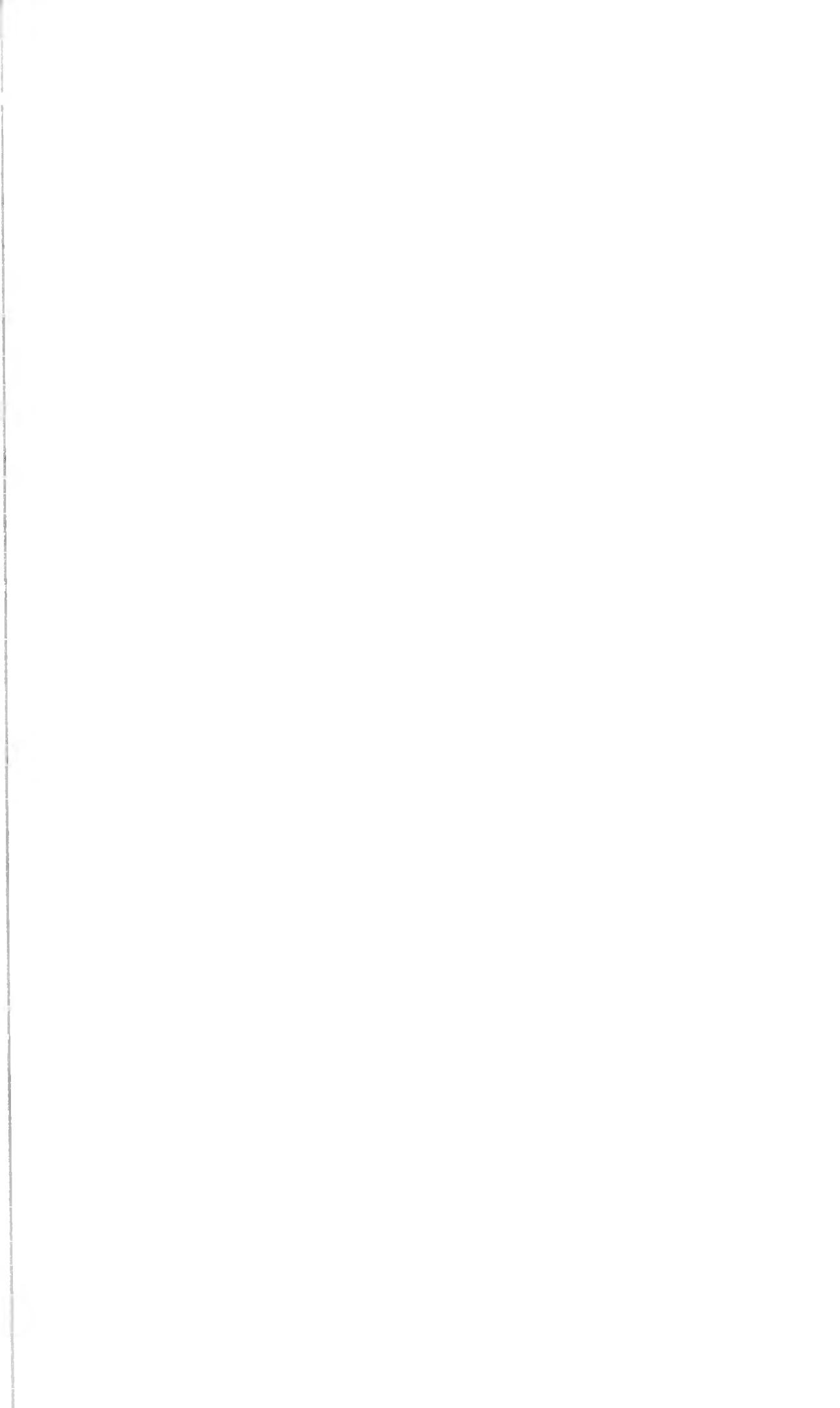
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

University of Cape Coast

Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management

SURVEY OF SERVICE QUALITY IN HOTELS IN GHANA

This questionnaire is part of a survey for the award of a PhD in Tourism from the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management at the University of Cape Coast. The objective of this research is to assess guests and service providers' perceptions of service quality.

The study is based on a selected sample, so your participation is critical. I shall therefore, be most grateful if you could spare a few minutes of your time to complete the following questionnaire. The results of this research will help to identify service quality related problems, to formulate proposals for hotel quality improvement and to determine clear standards for service delivery.

You are assured that any information that you provide shall be treated with strict confidentiality. Your anonymity is also guaranteed.

Thank you for your help.

STRUCTURE OF QUESTIONNAIRE

PART ONE: GUESTS EXPECTATIONS OF HOTEL SERVICES

PART TWO: GUESTS PERCEPTIONS OF HOTEL SERVICES

PART TWO: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

RESPONDENT IDENTIFICATION

HOTEL CATEGORY:

LOCATION OF HOTEL:

ROOM NUMBER:

FIELD VISITS

DATE:

TIME:

NUMBER OF VISITS:

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR HOTEL GUESTS

PART ONE: HOTEL PRODUCT/SERVICE QUALITY

The following statements relate to your expectations before visiting this hotel and the actual experience you had about this hotel. For each statement, please show ☑ the extent to which you agree that this hotel has the attribute described by the statement by ticking the appropriate box. **1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree.** You may tick any of the numbers in the middle that shows how strong your perceptions are. There is no right or wrong answer. What is important is a number that best shows your perceptions about this hotel:

Expectations questions
Please indicate the extent to which you agree to these statements with responses that ranged from (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree.

01. **Hotel/Service Quality Attributes Tangibles**	☑ Tick to show the extent to which you agree to these statements.				
	Strongly disagree ←——— Strongly agree ———→				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. An excellent hotel should have a clean environment					
2. The outside appearance of an excellent hotel should be attractive					
3. An excellent hotel should have an attractive interior decor					
4. An excellent hotel should have modern looking equipment					
5. An excellent hotel should have modern and comfortable furniture					
6. An excellent hotel's staff should appear neat and professional					
7. An excellent hotel's lobby area should be attractive and comfortable					

8. An excellent hotel should have adequate parking space					
9. An excellent hotel should have clean and comfortable rooms					
10. An excellent hotel should have clean and hygienic bathrooms and toilets					
11. The lighting in an excellent hotel room should be adequate					
12. The fixtures in an excellent hotel room should be sufficient					
13. The atmosphere in an excellent hotel should be welcoming					
14. An excellent hotel should be easily accessible					
15. An excellent hotel should offer complimentary items (soap, shampoo, towels and sheets)					
16. An excellent hotel should have visually appealing brochures, pamphlets					
To what extent would you agree that the above attributes are important for hotel service quality? Front Office Services	1	2	3	4	5
1. An excellent hotel should have convenient and efficient reservation/booking system					
2. An excellent hotel's staff should be polite and friendly					
3. An excellent hotel should have efficient check-in procedure					
4. An excellent hotel should have					

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efficient check-out procedure					
5. An excellent hotel's staff should perform services right the first time					
6. An excellent hotel's staff should perform services at the time promised					
7. An excellent hotel's staff should be well trained and knowledgeable					
8. An excellent hotel's staff should be skillful and experienced					
9. An excellent hotel's staff should have good communication skills					
10. An excellent hotel should have efficient telephone and internet system					
11. An excellent hotel should have accurate billing system					
12. An excellent hotel should handle guests complaints efficiently					
13. An excellent hotel should have accurate information about hotel services					
14. An excellent hotel should have advance and accurate information about prices					
To what extent would you agree that the above attributes are important for hotel service quality?	1	2	3	4	5
1. An excellent hotel's staff should show a sincere interest in solving your problems					
2. An excellent hotel's staff should always willing to help you					

3. An excellent hotel's staff should never be too busy to respond to your requests					
4. An excellent hotel's staff should be readily available to provide services					
5. An excellent hotel's staff should provide prompt service without delays					
To what extent would you agree that the above attributes are important for hotel service quality?					
1. An excellent hotel's staff should be friendly					
2. An excellent hotel's staff should be courteous and respectful					
3. Behaviour of an excellent hotel's staff should instill confidence in you					
4. You feel safe in your transactions with an excellent hotel					
5. An excellent hotel's staff should call guests by name					
6. An excellent hotel should have convenient operating hours					
To what extent would you agree that the above attributes are important for hotel service quality?	1	2	3	4	5
1. An excellent hotel's staff should understand your specific needs					
2. An excellent hotel's staff should have the time to listen to your complaints					
3. An excellent hotel should give you special attention					

	1	2	3	4	5
4. An excellent hotel should have your best interest at heart					
5. An excellent hotel should recognize you as a guest					
To what extent would you agree that the above attributes are important for hotel service quality? Food and beverage services	1	2	3	4	5
1. An excellent hotel should have good eating and drinking facilities					
2. An excellent hotel should provide variety of food and drinks					
3. An excellent hotel should offer room service					
4. An excellent hotel should offer prompt food service					
5. An excellent hotel should offer high quality and hygienic food					
6. An excellent hotel's food and drinks prices should be reasonable					
To what extent would you agree that the above attributes are important for hotel service quality?	1	2	3	4	5
1. An excellent hotel should have variety and quality of sports/recreational facilities					
2. An excellent hotel should have an efficient business centre					
3. An excellent hotel should have up-to-date and modern safety facilities					
4. An excellent hotel should have					

adequate fire safety facilities					
5.An excellent hotel should have all year-round swimming pool					

Overall, what is the level of your expectation from this hotel?

- a. Very Low
- b. Low   [ ]
- c. Moderate [ ]
- d. High   [ ]
- e. Very High [ ]
          [ ]
          [ ]

PART TWO: Perception Questions

Please indicate the extent to which you agree to these statements with responses that ranged from (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree.

01. Hotel/Service Quality Attributes Tangibles	☑ Tick to show the extent to which you agree to these statements.				
	Strongly Strongly disagree agree				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. The hotel has a clean environment					
2. Outside appearance of the hotel is attractive					
3. The hotel's interior design is attractive					
4. The hotel has modern looking equipment					
5. The hotel has modern and comfortable furniture					
6. Hotel staff appear neat and professional					

7. The lobby area is attractive and comfortable					
8. The hotel has adequate parking space					
9. My room is clean and comfortable					
10. The hotel has hygienic bathrooms and toilets					
11. The lighting in my room is adequate					
12. The fixtures in my room are sufficient					
13. The atmosphere in the hotel is welcoming					
14. The hotel is easily accessible					
15. The hotel offers complimentary items (soap, shampoo, towels and sheets)					
16. The hotel has visually appealing brochures, pamphlets					
To what extent would you agree that the above attributes are important for hotel service quality? Front Office Services	1	2	3	4	5
1. The hotel has convenient and efficient reservation/booking system					
2. Staff are polite and friendly					
3. The hotel has efficient check-in procedure					
4. The hotel has efficient check-out procedure					
5. Staff perform services right the first time					

6. Staff perform services at the time promised					
7. Staff are well trained and knowledgeable					
8. Staff are skillful and experienced					
9. Staff have good communication skills					
10. The hotel has efficient telephone and internet system					
11. The hotel has accurate billing system					
12. The hotel handles guests complaints efficiently					
13. There is accurate information about hotel services					
14. There is advance and accurate information about prices					
To what extent would you agree that the above attributes are important for hotel service quality?	1	2	3	4	5
1. Hotel staff show a sincere interest in solving your problems					
2. Staff are always willing to help you					
3. Staff are never too busy to respond to your requests					
4. Staff are readily available to provide services					
5. Hotel staff provide prompt service without delays					

To what extent would you agree that these attributes are important for hotel service quality?					
1. Staff are friendly					
2. Staff are courteous and respectful					
3. Behaviour of staff instills confidence in you					
4. You feel safe in your transactions with the hotel					
5. Staff call you by name					
6. The hotel has convenient operating hours					
To what extent would you agree that the above attributes are important for hotel service quality?	1	2	3	4	5
1. Staff understand your specific needs					
2. Staff have the time to listen to your complaints					
3. The hotel gives you special attention					
4. The hotel has your best interest at heart					
5. The hotel recognizes you as a guest					
To what extent would you agree that the above attributes are important for hotel service quality? Food and beverage services	1	2	3	4	5
1.The hotel has good eating and drinking facilities					
2. The hotel has variety of food and					

	1	2	3	4	5
4. An excellent hotel should have your best interest at heart					
5. An excellent hotel should recognize you as a guest					
To what extent would you agree that the above attributes are important for hotel service quality? Food and beverage services	1	2	3	4	5
1.An excellent hotel should have good eating and drinking facilities					
2. An excellent hotel should provide variety of food and drinks					
3. An excellent hotel should offer room service					
4. An excellent hotel should offer prompt food service					
5. An excellent hotel should offer high quality and hygienic food					
6. An excellent hotel's food and drinks prices should be reasonable					
To what extent would you agree that the above attributes are important for hotel service quality?	1	2	3	4	5
1. An excellent hotel should have variety and quality of sports/recreational facilities					
2. An excellent hotel should have an efficient business centre					
3.An excellent hotel should have up-to-date and modern safety facilities					
4.An excellent hotel should have					

	1	2	3	4	5
7. The lobby area is attractive and comfortable					
8. The hotel has adequate parking space					
9. My room is clean and comfortable					
10. The hotel has hygienic bathrooms and toilets					
11. The lighting in my room is adequate					
12. The fixtures in my room are sufficient					
13. The atmosphere in the hotel is welcoming					
14. The hotel is easily accessible					
15. The hotel offers complimentary items (soap, shampoo, towels and sheets)					
16. The hotel has visually appealing brochures, pamphlets					
To what extent would you agree that the above attributes are important for hotel service quality? Front Office Services	1	2	3	4	5
1. The hotel has convenient and efficient reservation/booking system					
2. Staff are polite and friendly					
3. The hotel has efficient check-in procedure					
4. The hotel has efficient check-out procedure					
5. Staff perform services right the first time					

	1	2	3	4	5
6. Staff perform services at the time promised					
7. Staff are well trained and knowledgeable					
8. Staff are skillful and experienced					
9. Staff have good communication skills					
10. The hotel has efficient telephone and internet system					
11. The hotel has accurate billing system					
12. The hotel handles guests complaints efficiently					
13. There is accurate information about hotel services					
14. There is advance and accurate information about prices					
To what extent would you agree that the above attributes are important for hotel service quality?	1	2	3	4	5
1. Hotel staff show a sincere interest in solving your problems					
2. Staff are always willing to help you					
3. Staff are never too busy to respond to your requests					
4. Staff are readily available to provide services					
5. Hotel staff provide prompt service without delays					

To what extent would you agree that these attributes are important for hotel service quality?					
1. Staff are friendly					
2. Staff are courteous and respectful					
3. Behaviour of staff instills confidence in you					
4. You feel safe in your transactions with the hotel					
5. Staff call you by name					
6. The hotel has convenient operating hours					
To what extent would you agree that the above attributes are important for hotel service quality?	1	2	3	4	5
1. Staff understand your specific needs					
2. Staff have the time to listen to your complaints					
3. The hotel gives you special attention					
4. The hotel has your best interest at heart					
5. The hotel recognizes you as a guest					
To what extent would you agree that the above attributes are important for hotel service quality? Food and beverage services	1	2	3	4	5
1. The hotel has good eating and drinking facilities					
2. The hotel has variety of food and					

drinks					
3. The hotel has room service					
4. The hotel offers prompt food service					
5. The hotel offers high quality and hygienic food					
6. The hotel's food and drinks prices are reasonable					

PART THREE: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

1. Nationality   ....

2. Country of Residence   ....

3. If living in Ghana, Town of residence

4. Gender (Please tick)   1. Male ☐   2. Female ☐

5. Age   ....

6. Religion   ....

7. Marital status (Please tick)
    1. Married ☐
    2. Single ☐
    3. Divorced ☐
    4. Separated ☐
    5. Widowed ☐

8. Number of children   ....

9. Level of education   ....

10. Occupation   ....

11. Monthly income ....

Travel Characteristics

1. Purpose of visit (Please tick)
   1. Business ☐
   2. Visiting friends, relatives ☐
   3. Vacation ☐
   4. Other (Please specify) ....

2. How long have/are you staying (ed) in this hotel? ....

3. Is this your first or repeat stay in this particular hotel? (Please tick)

   1. First stay ☐   2. Repeat stay ☐

4. How many people are with you?..

5. Number of children...............................

6. Number of adults......................................

7. Have you ever travelled to or lived in a foreign country? (Please tick)

   1. YES ☐   NO ☐

8. If yes, how long?...

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

University of Cape Coast

Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management

SURVEY OF SERVICE QUALITY IN HOTELS IN GHANA

This questionnaire is part of a survey for the award of a PhD in Tourism from the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management at the University of Cape Coast. The objective of this research is to assess guests and service providers' perceptions of service quality.

The study is based on a selected sample, so your participation is critical. I shall therefore, be most grateful if you could spare a few minutes of your time to complete the following questionnaire. The results of this research will help to identify service quality related problems, to formulate proposals for hotel quality improvement and to determine clear standards for service delivery.

You are assured that any information that you provide shall be treated with strict confidentiality. Your anonymity is also guaranteed.

Thank you for your help.

RESPONDENT IDENTIFICATION

HOTEL CATEGORY:

LOCATION OF HOTEL:

FIELD VISITS

DATE:

TIME:

NUMBER OF VISITS:

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MANAGERS AND FRONTLINE EMPLOYEES

The following statements relate to your perception of guests expectations and perceptions of services quality in this hotel. For each statement, please indicate the ☑ extent to which ou agree that this hotel has the attribute described by the statement by ticking the appropriate box. 1= strongly

disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree. You may tick any of the numbers in the middle that shows how strong your perceptions are. There is no right or wrong answer. What is important is a number that best shows your perceptions about this hotel:

Expectations questions

Please indicate the extent to which you agree to these statements with responses that ranged from (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree.

02. Hotel/Service Quality Attributes Tangibles	✍ Tick to show the extent to which you agree to these statements. Strongly disagree ← ← Strongly agree →				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. An excellent hotel should a clean environment					
2. The outside appearance of an excellent hotel should be attractive					
3. An excellent hotel should have an attractive interior décor					
4. An excellent hotel should have modern looking equipment					
5. An excellent hotel should have modern and comfortable furniture					
6. An excellent hotel's staff should appear neat and professional					
7. An excellent hotel's lobby area should be attractive and comfortable					
8. An excellent hotel should have adequate parking space					
9. An excellent hotel should have clean and comfortable rooms					
10. An excellent hotel should have clean and hygienic bathrooms and toilets					

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11. The lighting in an excellent hotel rooms should be adequate					
12. The fixtures in an excellent hotel rooms should be sufficient					
13. The atmosphere in an excellent hotel should be welcoming					
14. An excellent hotel should be easily accessible					
15. An excellent hotel should offer complimentary items (soap, shampoo, towels and sheets)					
16. An excellent hotel should have visually appealing brochures, pamphlets					
To what extent would you agree that the above attributes are important for hotel service quality? Front Office Services	1	2	3	4	5
1. An excellent hotel should have convenient and efficient reservation/booking system					
2. An excellent hotel's staff should be polite and friendly					
3. An excellent hotel should have efficient check-in procedure					
4. An excellent hotel should have efficient check-out procedure					
5. An excellent hotel's staff should perform services right the first time					
6. An excellent hotel's staff should perform services at the time promised					
7. An excellent hotel's staff should be					

well trained and knowledgeable					
8. An excellent hotel's staff should be skillful and experienced					
9. An excellent hotel's staff should have good communication skills					
10. An excellent hotel should have efficient telephone and internet system					
11. An excellent hotel should have accurate billing system					
12. An excellent hotel should handle guests complaints efficiently					
13. An excellent hotel should have accurate information about hotel services					
14. An excellent hotel should have advance and accurate information about prices					
To what extent would you agree that the above attributes are important for hotel service quality?	1	2	3	4	5
1. An excellent hotel's staff should show a sincere interest in solving guests problems					
2. An excellent hotel's staff should always be willing to help their guests					
3. An excellent hotel's staff should never be too busy to respond to your requests					
4. An excellent hotel's staff should be readily available to provide services					
5. An excellent hotel's staff should provide prompt service without delays					

To what extent would you agree that the above attributes are important for hotel service quality?	1	2	3	4	5
1. An excellent hotel's staff should be friendly					
2. An excellent hotel's staff should be courteous and respectful					
3. Behaviour of an excellent hotel's staff should instill confidence in you					
4. You feel safe in your transactions with an excellent hotel					
5. An excellent hotel's staff should call guests by name					
6. An excellent hotel should have convenient operating hours					
To what extent would you agree that the above attributes are important for hotel service quality?	1	2	3	4	5
1. An excellent hotel's staff should understand their guests specific needs					
2. An excellent hotel's staff should have the time to listen to guests complaints					
3. An excellent hotel should give their guests special attention					
4. An excellent hotel should have their guests best interest at heart					
5. An excellent hotel should recognise their customers as a guest					
To what extent would you agree that the above attributes are important for hotel service quality? Food and	1	2	3	4	5

beverage services					
1. An excellent hotel should have good eating and drinking facilities					
2. An excellent hotel should provide variety of food and drinks					
3. An excellent hotel should offer room service					
4. An excellent hotel should offer prompt food service					
5. An excellent hotel should offer high quality and hygienic food					
6. An excellent hotel's food and drinks prices should be reasonable					
To what extent would you agree that the above attributes are important for hotel service quality?	1	2	3	4	5
1. An excellent hotel should have variety and quality of sports/recreational facilities					
2. An excellent hotel should have an efficient business centre					
3. An excellent hotel should have up-to-date and modern safety facilities					
4. An excellent hotel should have adequate fire safety facilities					
5. An excellent hotel should have all year-round swimming pool					

Perception questions

Please indicate the extent to which you agree to these statements about this hotel with responses that ranged from (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree.

01. Hotel/Service Quality Attributes Tangibles	Tick to show the extent to which you agree to these statements.				
	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Our hotel should has a clean environment					
2. The outside appearance of our hotel is attractive					
3. Our hotel has an attractive interior décor					
4. Our hotel has modern looking equipment					
5. Our hotel has modern and comfortable furniture					
6. Our hotel's staff appear neat and professional					
7. Our hotel's lobby area is attractive and comfortable					
8. Our hotel has adequate parking space					
9. Our hotel has clean and comfortable rooms					
10. Our hotel has clean and hygienic bathrooms and toilets					
11. The lighting in our hotel rooms are adequate					

	1	2	3	4	5
12. The fixtures in our hotel rooms is sufficient					
13. The atmosphere in our hotel is welcoming					
14. Our hotel is easily accessible					
15. Our hotel offers complimentary items (soap, shampoo, towels and sheets)					
16. Our hotel has visually appealing brochures, pamphlets					
To what extent would you agree that the above attributes are important for hotel service quality? Front Office Services	1	2	3	4	5
1. Our hotel has convenient and efficient reservation/booking system					
2. Our hotel's staff are polite and friendly					
3. Our hotel has efficient check-in procedure					
4. Our hotel has efficient check-out procedure					
5. Our hotel's staff deliver services right the first time					
6. Our hotel's staff perform services at the time promised					
7. Our hotel's staff are well trained and knowledgeable					
8. Our hotel's staff are skillful and experienced					
9. Our hotel's staff have good communication skills					

	1	2	3	4	5
10. Our hotel has efficient telephone and internet system					
11. Our hotel has accurate billing system					
12. Our hotel handles guests complaints efficiently					
13. Our hotel has accurate information about hotel services					
14. Our hotel has advance and accurate information about prices					
To what extent would you agree that the above attributes are important for hotel service quality?	1	2	3	4	5
1. Our hotel's staff always show a sincere interest in solving guests problems					
2. Our hotel's staff are always willing to help guests					
3. Our hotel's staff are never be too busy to respond to guests requests					
4. Our hotel's staff are readily available to provide services					
5. Our hotel's staff provide prompt service without delays					
To what extent would you agree that the above attributes are important for hotel service quality?	1	2	3	4	5
1. Our hotel's staff are always friendly					
2. Our hotel's staff are always courteous and respectful					
3. Behaviour of our hotel's staff always					

	1	2	3	4	5
instill confidence in our guests					
4. Guests feel safe in your transactions with our hotel					
5. Our hotel's staff always call guests by name					
6. Our hotel has convenient operating hours					

To what extent would you agree that the above attributes are important for hotel service quality?	1	2	3	4	5
1. Our hotel's staff understand guests specific needs					
2. Our hotel's staff have the time to listen to guests complaints					
3. Our hotel gives guests special attention					
4. Our hotel has guests best interest at heart					
5. Our hotel always recognise customers as a guest					

To what extent would you agree that the above attributes are important for hotel service quality? Food and beverage services	1	2	3	4	5
1.Our hotel has good eating and drinking facilities					
2. Our hotel provides variety of food and drinks					
3. Our hotel offers room service					
4. Our hotel always offer prompt food service					

	1	2	3	4	5
5. Our hotel always offer high quality and hygienic food					
6. Our hotel's food and drinks prices are reasonable					
To what extent would you agree that the above attributes are important for hotel service quality?	1	2	3	4	5
1. Our hotel has variety and quality of sports/recreational facilities					
2. Our hotel has an efficient business centre					
3. Our hotel has up-to-date and modern safety facilities					
4. Our hotel has adequate fire safety facilities					
5. Our hotel has all year-round swimming pool					

PART THREE: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

1. Nationality   ....

2. Gender (Please tick)   1. Male ☐   2. Female ☐

3. Age   ....

4. Religion   ....

5. Marital status (Please tick)   1. Married   ☐

2. Single   ☐

3. Divorced   ☐

4. Separated   ☐

☐

5. Widowed

7. Level of education ....

8. Current job ....

9. Current Position ....

10. Department/section ....

11. Number of years worked in the hotel industry ....

12. Number of years worked in this hotel ....

13. Number of years worked at current position/job ....

14. Do you have any formal education in hospitality and tourism?
   1. Yes ☐   2. No ☐

15. Monthly income ....

Thank you for your support

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