A cursory appraisal of quality service delivery in medium scale hotels in developing cities: Focus on Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria

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Abstract

There are no emblematic and fundamental criteria to assess quality services without consumers' feedback to disclose whether the services rendered are equivalent to the payment. This study sought to assess the quality service delivery in selected hotels in Ado-Ekiti; and examine the measures to sustainably improve customer services in hospitality industry. The questionnaire used was scrupulously adopted by scholars in the fields of hospitality, tourism and marketing as a verifiable instrument for data acquisition along with direct observation. Equity theory was adopted to assess the level of customers' satisfaction. The study population comprised the customers that have stayed for three or more days in the selected hotels and 510 copies of questionnaire were distributed for this research, but 450 copies were recovered, utilised and analysed using figures, percentage and tables. Secondary sources of data were also incorporated to authenticate the reliability of the findings. Findings revealed that the level of quality service delivery in these hotels is low in some aspects. The respondents recommended rebranding services, in-service training, staff remunerations, prioritisation of the customers, conducive facilities, regular market survey, security services and frequent evaluation of services to improve sustainable quality service delivery in the hospitality industry.

Keywords: *Quality service delivery; hotel; hospitality industry; guests; staff; Ado-Ekiti.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The new generation hospitality industry like hotels is characterised with a high level of quality service delivery to entice the customers and at the same time sustaining the benefits that can be accrued from it. As stated by Kanchana and Sharma (2017, p. 1616) having quality service delivery "is a growing concern for many service firms. Today, service firms are paying more attention, than ever, to the needs and expectations of the customers by consistently improving the quality of service provided to their customer". Quality service delivery in hotel operations includes technical quality which reflects on the 'what' of service quality and functional or process quality which reflects on the 'how' of service quality (Vitkiene, 2004; Anyanwu, 2018). Kinderis et al (2011) noticed that technical quality is what the customers receive during their stay in the hotel and there is no one opinion in which technical or functional quality is more important than the other as they complement each other to achieve better services. Anyanwu (2018) noted that customers often appreciate the professionalism and skilful attributes of hotels' employees in every aspect especially in meeting their demands with total satisfaction. However, some hotel experts suggest considering what is more appreciated by a customer (Kinderis et al., 2011). Since guests participate in the delivery and consumption of services, they interact closely with various service aspects in organizations. This knowledge allows them to assess critically the services provided by organizations. Hence, exceptional service plays an indelible and critical role in adding value to the overall service experience in the hotels (Anyanwu, 2018).

It is apparent that out the three indispensable needs of human: food, accommodation and dress, hospitality industry provides two: food and accommodation (Le Na, 2010, Nwankwo & Agbasiere, 2021). Hospitality industry is the parasol for the service industries including, but not restricted to, hotels, restaurants and casinos. Hotel, which is popularly referred to as a "home away from home" (Le Na, 2010), is the centre of this research. Ado-Ekiti has been characterised with rapid growth since the creation of Ekiti-State in 1996. Apart from the dominant government jobs, most other modern sources of income for the people are through accommodation services like hotel, bars, restaurants, relaxation centres, etc (Oloidi, 2014). The hospitality industry, especially hotel operation, is one of the popular investments across the State. There are over 100 licensed modern hotels in Ado-Ekiti in which they are distinguishable by their names, logos, and the quality of services; and even though they perform comparable functions, yet they are exercised in different ways to involve in the competitive set. According to Anyanwu and Amaechi (2018, p. 29) "competition has become so intense in the hospitality sector given the sophisticated nature of the consumers that, capturing their attention and making them develop a positive attitude towards the company, products are seemingly becoming difficult especially in a developing country such as Nigeria."

Quality service is the level of measures put on board to satisfy customers in the competitive market, and that is why any profit-oriented company like hospitality industry holds on to high-quality services to ensure that customers' satisfactions are met. According to (Kofi et al, 2013), one of the most concise significances of "quality" is the ability to use it since it consists of those features that meet consumers' needs. Quality service is one of the major priorities of the hospitality industry. To maintain this, well-architecturally designed buildings are constructed in an accessible environment with attractive furniture and fittings, and other modern facilities and enticing services at the front-desk to arrest the attention of the pedestrians and the customers. Functional departments like reception, restaurants, lodging, restaurant, bars, kitchen, security, laundry, playground, entertainment, gym, etc. are usually equipped with international standard to keep both the old and new customers with satisfaction. According to Kandampully and Hu (2007), to achieve customers' satisfaction and loyalty, there must be improvement and sustainability in the level of quality service delivery which can be used to assess the standard of the sector. According to disconfirmation theory, the satisfaction of customers is related to the size and direction of the disconfirmation experience that occurs because of comparing service performance against expectations (Ekinci & Sirakaya, 2004).

The service in the hotel is of low quality or poor when the customers are not satisfied with the services, and high when they are satisfied with the services paid for. The aspect of quality service is an essential factor that determines the interrelationships between the hotel management, facilities, products and customers. High-quality service delivery, which has now emerged as a fundamental organizational strategy for survival because of marketing competitive pressure, is usually expressed to attract customers and strategically compete with other counterparts within the same industry. It has become domineering for hotel establishments to put quality service delivery into considerations to sustain within the dynamic economic and technological advancement, and the competitive nature of the sector (Kamdampully & Hu, 2007; Chang, 2008; Anyanwu, 2018). Due to inescapable functions of the hospitality industry across the globe, the sector now experiences a high level of competitions and technological advancement to meet sustainable service delivery because the knowledgeable and discerning customers are eagerly demanding for good products and services than before (Anyanwu, 2018, O'Neil, 2001). The impressions of the customers are directly or indirectly measured through services rendered by the staff in the hotels, that is why first impressions by the customers last long and determine whether to continue or discontinue patronising the hotel because quality service is often judged by customers and not by the organization itself (Charles, 2014) The different measures to consider by hospitality operators to meet and ensure standard services

and attractive environment for both the employees and the customers as recommended in this research are tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and security.

Now that the consumers are demanding for higher quality in products and services than ever before, the quest for service quality is undoubtedly the utmost critical consumer trend of the new era. The connotation between service performance and service quality has a hugely important role to play in management and marketing for service operations such as hotels and restaurants (Heskett & Sasser, 2010). Quality has been recognized as a strategic tool for attaining efficiency and business performance. Service quality is therefore considered as the extent to which the needs or expectations of the customers are met in a service encounter. Thus, it is predicted that customers will assume quality as 'low' if performance does not meet their expectations and as 'high' when performance meets or outstrips expectations (Suman & Garg, 2012). However, to satisfy guests' needs reflects the value (or quality) of the product or service to the customer, including the economic cost, safety, reliability, and maintainability. Therefore, a customer's evaluation of service quality and the resulting level of satisfaction are perceived to affect bottom-line measures of business success (Kofi et al, 2013). Customers who are the patronisers of products often evaluate service quality delivery based on what they want by comparing their discernments of service experiences with their expectations of what the service performance should be.

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There are several kinds of research on quality service delivery centred on hospitality and tourism sectors across the continents of Europe, Africa, Asia and America, but few have been done and documented in Nigeria, particularly in Ekiti State where new generation hotels are established perhaps without regular assessment or evaluation of their quality service delivery, in which its consequence can lead to a reduction in the number of the customers. This is one of the issues that are needed to be addressed to strengthen the relationship between the staff and the customers and improve on the level of production and services. The assessment of quality service delivery by the customers summarises their judgement as regards to the facilities, attributes of staff and the standard of the services rendered. Even though modern hotels in Ado-Ekiti are rendering similar hotel services to the customers, yet, it is presumed that the quality service delivery still distinguishes one from the other. This indicates that customers' feelings and interests towards goods and services in the hospitality industry are different; and apparently, some hotels seem to be more patronised than the other based on the level of quality service. These impressions are caused by many issues which brought forth the assessment of quality service delivery in some selected hotels in Ado-Ekiti to comparatively evaluate the proficiency of the staff, nature of the environment, and the relationship with the customers; and then point out different measures to attain sustainable quality service delivery. The gap to fill in this research is the issue of assessing sustainable quality service delivery in selected hotels in Ado-Ekiti which will serve as a pacesetter for further research. Also, it is an exertion to identify important measures to upgrade the level of quality services in the hospitality industry.

1.2 Research Questions/Objectives

The level of industrial growth for the hotel industry in parts of Nigeria needs to be monitored to maintain consistency. It is worthy to note that there is a thin line between quality service delivery and level of patronage. These variables function on each other to maintain balance in the hotel industry. Significant, critical and periodic appraisal in line with the current trend in the industry has been identified as among the approaches to maintaining sustainable growth and increased profit in the hotel industry. The ever-rising curve on the number of hotels in

Ado-Ekiti has called for ways of ensuring some level of consistency in this rise through periodic appraisal of quality service delivery. The principal questions to answer in this research are: What is the level of service delivery at hotels in Ado-Ekiti? And what are the measures to improve quality service delivery at hotels in Ado-Ekiti? However, this study is aimed at appraising the quality service delivery at hotels in Ado-Ekiti and examined the possible measures to improve sustainability of the newly growing hotel industry in Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria. The result will also motivate industrial growth in the wider hotel industry in Nigeria and other developing nations. The study has implications for increased and sustained industrial curve in the hotel industry in Nigeria. This research is anticipated to know the level of service delivery at hotels in Ado-Ekiti in which the result would uncover the strength and weakness of staff towards the guests and the attitude of the management to the staff. With the utilisation of tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and security as measures to improve service delivery in the hotels, the hotel operators would be inculcated on the major criteria to consider while recruiting their staff and the standard of goods and services to render in every department. This would also entrust in the hotel operators the attributes of staff welfarism and motivation to achieve quality service delivery.

1.3 The Study Area

Ado Ekiti with coordinates 7^0 37^1 N and 5^0 15^1 E is the Capital of Ekiti State in the southwestern part of Nigeria and the Headquarters of Ado Local Government Areas. The population in 2004 was 446,749 (Oloidi, 2014). The people of Ado Ekiti are mainly Yoruba, one of the three (3) major ethnic groups in Nigeria. Ado Ekiti is the centre of activities in Ekiti State. Various public and private enterprises operate in Ado-Ekiti include among others trading, hotel services, medical services, transportation services, banking; educational institutions, farming, as yam, cocoyam, maize, cassava, grains, cotton and tobacco, etc. are grown on abundance fertile soil. Where Ado Ekiti is presently situated is a land that according to oral traditions has been continuously inhabited or occupied by human communities since ancient generations without any evidence of further migration. Available research shows that, human societies of unknown antiquity occupied this present settlement about 11,000 years ago (Oloidi, 2014). Ado Ekiti annually enjoys two tropical climatic conditions: the rainy season, between April and October and the dry season which complementarily introduces what is popularly known as 'harmattan' and covers between November and March. The temperature of the area ranges between 21^0 C and 28^0 C, with a high relative humidity of about 1200 mm (Kayode, 2011). The two major air masses are: South West Trade Wind called The Tropical Maritime that marks the beginning of the rainy season and the end of the dry season, and North-East Trade Wind called the Tropical Continental marks the end of the rainy season and the commencement of the dry season. The vegetation of the area is basically of two zones namely: the tropical forest in the southern part, where there are abundant thick forests. The second vegetation zone is the semi-savannah. This occupies the northern peripheries of the State where trees are scanty and the grasses are not as tall like those in the southern part (Oloidi, 2014).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Framework

Quality of service is strategic in global management business discuss, to maintain balance in a competitive industry (Stanciu, 2007). One of the most concise significance of "quality" is the ability to use it since it consists of those features that meet consumers' needs (Kofi et al, 2013). Quality means "fitness for purpose or lack of deficiencies" (Anyanwu, 2018, P. 5). Anyanwu (2018) further note that service is a business activity with the aim

of generating value and meeting customer needs in an organization. Parasuraman (2000) presented a definition of service quality as the gradation of inconsistency between the expectations or demands of the customers/guests towards the services and the perceptions of the services rendered at the end. Also, as stated by Kanchana and Sharma (2017), quality of service delivery is one of the business targets of many service firms in the 21st Century. Incidentally, some service firms are paying more attention to business profit with less concern on the expectations of their customers. Quality of service delivery in hotel operations includes technical quality which reflects on the 'what' of service quality and functional or process quality which reflects on the 'how' of service quality (Vitkiene, 2004; Anyanwu, 2018). Although, guests receive technical quality while in the hotel, it does not make this kind of quality more important than the functional quality. Each of them has peculiar role in the hotel business (Kinderis et al, 2011). Anyanwu (2018) noted that customers often appreciate the level of professionalism of hotel employees in meeting their demands and satisfaction.

Quality is a strategic element of global management which determines the services competitiveness both domestically and internationally (Stanciu, 2007). One of the most concise significance of "quality" is the ability to use it since it consists of those features that meet consumers' needs (Kofi et al, 2013). Quality means "fitness for purpose or lack of any deficiencies" (Anyanwu, 2018, p. 5). According to Anyanwu (2018), service is seen as any economically-oriented activity that generates value and concurrently provides benefits for customers at specific times and places by bringing about the desired change in or on behalf of the recipient of the service. Parasuraman (2000) presented a definition of service quality as the gradation of inconsistency between the expectations or demands of the customers/guests towards the services and the perceptions of the services rendered at the end.

Hotel, on the other aspect, could be simplified as a symbolical structure, company or business entity that offers services like accommodation, food and beverage, and other service facilities for the guests, whether they stay overnight at the hotel or only use the facilities (Oloidi, 2008). The hotel could be defined as a commercially-oriented building that provide accommodation facilities to the public with service facilities for food and beverages, room service, service luggage, washing clothes. Furthermore, the customers can use the facilities or furniture, as well as enjoy the decorations in it. Marketing services of the hotel consist of several activities that aim to attract potential customers by giving motivation so that they are interested in buying the products and services of the hotel (Bachruddin & Grisna, 2015). In classifying hotel as an accommodation component, Nwankwo (2020, p. 85) defined it "as an establishment with paid accommodation unit (among other facilities) that provides care and overnight stay facilities to its numerous guests". This means that every service rendered to the guests in the hotel attracts payment to ensure comfortable stay. The hotel usually offers a full range of accommodations and services, which may include suites, training facilities, banquet/restaurant facilities, catering services, discotheque facilities, lounges, sporting facilities, business facilities, laundry services, car hire service, decoration facilities, hall and entertainment facilities (Bachruddin et al, 2015; Nwankwo, 2020; Oloidi, 2008). These services form various departments in the hotel that offer them (Oloidi, 2008); and with this hotel is seen "as one of the much-celebrated established accommodation units" (Nwankwo, 2017, p. 116). The above explanation shows that hotel is not only selling the room but also a part of hospitality industry that sells other facilities, and could also be seen as an establishment whose primary business is to provide lodging and other supporting physical infrastructural facilities for the guests.

2.2 Measurements of Quality Service Delivery in the Hospitality Industry

According to Hellstand (2010) and Anyanwu (2018), it has concurred that quality service delivery stretches to all phases of hotel operations which included, but not limited to architectural designs and layout, moderate billing, purchasing strength, furnishing and fittings, production and processing, packaging and delivery. These

operational and functional characteristics have therefore made the concept of quality service delivery appeared in all business and educational-oriented sectors to ensure an increase in the production of goods and services. Hellstand (2010) further stated that quality service delivery has become a motivating and distinguishable factor in the hospitality industry where goods and services obtainable to the customers are similar. This indicates that various professional planning, implementation, training and repackaging techniques are the strategies to achieve quality service delivery for better improvement and sustainability of the sector and to meet the demands of the customers (Bello & Majebi, 2018; Zeithaml et al, 2009); because "quality service assessment is dependent on consumer needs and expectations, and it remains indispensable in the marketing of services" (Anyanwu, 2018, p. 2).

According to Berry et al (1988); Umesh (2014) and Anyanwu (2018), in exchange of goods and services, the six key areas to consider in measuring sustainable service delivery in business-oriented sectors like hospitality industry are reliability, tangibles, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and security. The reliability is seen as the principal aspect of quality service delivery. It comprises how dependable the hotels are in providing accurate services according to the demands of the customers but if the services are unreliable to fulfil customers' demands, there will be low-quality services. This also involves accurate records and billing goods and services. The customers' payment needs to be accurate with the services, and the same with what is obtainable on the menu list to avoid unforeseen billing (Saghier & Nathan, 2013). Reliability in quality services is a core and vital aspect that helps in fulfilling the establishment's promise and keeping the records of the activities concerning the staff-customer relationship. The tangible aspect involves different physical activities applied to give positive impressions of the industry. These are the physical appearances like buildings, facilities, staff appearances, recording documents, conducive environment, and other enticing and unique physical materials (Delgado-Ballester, 2004 in Anyanwu, 2018). The way staff are dressed gives impressive or depressive signals to the customer. Good outlook usually attracts customers to the staff and the industry which is another dimension to create sustainable and cordial relationships between them. This virtually appealing equipment and structures are assessed by the customers believing that physical appearances could determine how the entire services would be (Anyanwu, 2018).

Responsiveness is another considerable dimension to assess the quality service delivery of the staff. The way staff are eager to attend to customers' needs and demands at the right time and the method used to address different issues within the industry matter a lot in keeping the customers. This is another way that consumers assess sustainable service delivery. According to Umesh (2014) cited in Anyanwu (2018), responsiveness in service refers to the willingness and readiness of the industry to help its customers by providing them with good, quality and fast service at the appropriate time. Another one is assurance. This is the trust that exists between the industry and the customers. If the customers are not relaxed with the employees and there is no standard assurance of services, there is a large chance that there may not be second patronage (Delgado-Ballester, 2004 in Anyanwu, 2018). It is necessary to develop a high level of confidence between the staff and the customers. Empathy in hospitality industry emphasises on how the industry gives individual attention and care to make the customers feel special without any form of sentiments (Umesh, 2014). According to Delgado- Ballester (2004) cited in Anyanwu (2018), if customers feel they get individualized and quality consideration from a sector, there is a chance for further transactions with the industry and they can equally recommend to other potential customers. Also, security is one of the fundamental and determinant factors to measure service delivery in any sector. According to Odunlami and Wali (2019, p. 222), it was stated that "the issue of safety and security is usually of important priority when chosen a destination by the tourists (guests/customers)". It is very crucial to put security management into proper consideration to ensure the safety of lives, property and the integrity of the hotel. These six criteria are the major measures to assess service delivery at various hotels in Ado-Ekiti, the study area.

2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.3.1 Equity Theory and Services in Hospitality Industry

In addition to the above six dimensions in measuring quality service delivery, application of equity theory is also crucial in the hotel industry to measure and assess the ratio of service delivery, the level of customers' satisfaction and the amount tendered by the customers for services. According to Mulder (2018), equity theory was propounded in 1963 by the American Psychologist John Stacey Adams, this is about balancing the effort the employees put into their works (inputs) and the result they get in return (output). According to Adams (1965) and Mulder (2018), it is believed that the inputs include hard-work, skills, and enthusiasm while the output includes salary/wages, recognition, and responsibility. Equity theory is one of the theories propounded to explicitly measure customers' satisfaction to indicate whether the consumers of goods and services experience high-quality services or not. According to Abdelghafour & Faisal (2012, p. 158), equity theory "is the perception of equitability and inequitability. Equity theory focuses on two sides: the input and the outcome. An employee compares his or her job's inputs with an outcome ratio. If the employee perceives inequality, he or she he will act to correct the inequity". Adams (1965) was cited in Abdelghafour and Faisal (2012, p. 160) proposed that "a state of equity exists only when $Op/Ip = Oa/Ia$. Where O = the sum of all outcomes, I = the sum of all inputs, P = person, A = other. Thus, a state of inequity results if $Op/Ip > Oa/Ia$ or $Op/Ip < Oa/Ia$". In Equity theory, customers' satisfaction is perceived when the output-input ratio is equitably justified according to expectations; and this justification depends on many factors such as the prices, facilities, benefits received in turn, time frame for service delivery and the previous transactions (Abdelghafour & Faisal, 2012).

The service rendered in the hospitality industry is satiable when customers' interests are provided adequately. In another way, there is inequality when the demands of the consumers are not supplied satisfactorily and, in the assessment, it leads to low-quality service which is detrimental to the industry. The Equity theory suggests that customers compare perceived input-output (gains) in social exchange: if the tourist's gain is less than their input (time, money, and other costs), it brings about dissatisfaction results. Also, if the staff are not satisfied accordingly, equity theory predicts that low rewards would equally produce dissatisfaction (Abdelghafour & Faisal, 2012). Any service found below equilibrium is classified as low. Also, satisfaction is seen as a relative judgement that takes into consideration both the qualities and benefits obtained through a purchase as well as the costs and efforts borne by a consumer to obtain that purchase. In other words, their perceptions of equitable treatment by the company translated into satisfaction judgments and even affected their future expectations and purchase intentions. In this case, the equity theory has been proposed as satisfaction determinants to assess the quality service delivery in the hospitality industry in Ado-Ekiti as the physical structures, indoor and outdoor facilities, attributes and appearance of the staff are necessary for assessing quality services delivery in the hotels.

3. Methodology

The survey research design was adopted for this study and the research approaches used were sampling survey, observation, interviews with the staff and the guests; and documentary sources. The instruments for data collection were questionnaire, interview guide, writing material, camera, recording tape, etc. The questionnaire was validated by scholars in the fields of hotel management, marketing and tourism. The instrument utilised Likert scale's five points that included: strongly agree (5), agree (4), undecided (3), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1) with average mean of 3.0. The study area was grouped into three district clusters: Ado North, Ado Central and Ado South, with 10 hotels in each district, and the targeted population of the study were the customers of above average-class hotels in Ado town. To achieve the aims and objectives of the research, cluster and

convenience sampling techniques were incorporated with 510 copies of questionnaire distributed as a sampling population size; 170 copies for each district. In each district, 10 hotels were conveniently selected, each with 17 copies of questionnaires targeting only customers who were accessible, disposed for the survey and have stayed for at least three days. This indicates that the total number of the sampled hotels is 30, amounted to 30% of the hotels in Ekiti-State. 450 copies of the questionnaires, which is 88.2%, were appropriately returned. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics and calculated using frequencies, percentages and tables. The expectation of the research is to know the level of service delivery at hotels in Ado-Ekiti in which the result would uncover the strength and weakness of staff towards the guests and the attitude of the management to the staff. With the utilisation of tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and security as measures to improve service delivery in the hotels, the hotel operators would be inculcated on the major criteria to consider while recruiting their staff and the standard of goods and services to render in every department. This would also entrust in the hotel operators the attributes of staff welfarism and motivation to achieve quality service delivery.

4. Results and Discussion

This section of the study is focused on the presentation and discussion of results. It is further sectionalized into three sub-sections: Characteristics of respondents, appraisal of quality service delivery in selected hotels, and measures for sustainable quality of service delivery in selected hotels in Ado-Ekiti and other parts of Nigeria.

4.1 Distributions of Sampled Population

Table 1: Distribution by Age

Age Interval	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
20-40	85	18.9
41-60	242	53.8
60 and above	123	27.3
Total	**450**	**100**

(Source: Field survey, 2019)

Table 2: Distribution by Gender

Sex	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	293	65.1
Female	157	34.9
Total	**450**	**100**

(Source: Field survey, 2019)

Table 3: Distribution by Nationality

	Nigeria	Ghana	Togo	South Africa	USA	Benin	Niger	Cameroun	Total
Respondents	402	8	11	6	3	6	6	8	**450**
%	89.3	1.8	2.4	1.3	0.7	1.3	1.3	1.8	**100**

(Source: Field survey, 2019)

Table 4: Summary of Distribution by Nationality

	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)

Nigerian	402	89.3
Foreigners	48	10.7
Total	**450**	**100**

(Source: Field survey, 2019)

According to the distributions by age presented in Table 1, between 20 and 40 years, there are 85 respondents (18.9%), between 41 and 60 years, there are 242 respondents (53.8%), while from 61 years and above, there are 123 respondents (27.3%). The distribution by gender in Table 2 showed that the males are 293 (65.1%) while the females are 157 (34.9%). According to nationality in Tables 3 and 4, those from Nigeria were numbered 402 (89.3%) and they are mostly politicians, businessmen and women, scholars, honeymoon makers, journalists, crusaders, and athletes; while the foreigners, particularly from Ghana, Togo, South Africa, USA, Benin, Niger and Cameroun, have a total number of 48 (10.7%). These foreigners are mainly contractors, holiday-makers, researchers and religious leaders. These respondents have spent three and more days in the selected hotels.

4.2 Appraisal of Quality Service Delivery in Selected Hotels in Ado-Ekiti

This sub-section is focused on the appraisal of quality service delivery in selected hotels. Six criteria were used in this appraisal. These include tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and security as shown in Table 5. This was done using the five-point Likert Scale of Strongly Agreed (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD). Note that MS = Mean Score. With the Likert Scale, the total score on the five-level agreement to assess the quality service delivery in these hotels is 15 which is the summation of the 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1. The average mean of these agreements is 3.0, meaning that the response values with the mean of 3.0 and above is accepted while those below it is unaccepted. The Grand Mean Score (GMS) was used for assessing quality service delivery in the selected hotels.

Table 5: Responses of Respondents on the Appraisal of Quality Service Delivery in Selected Hotels in Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State.

S/N	ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES	SA	A	U	D	S D	MS	REMARKS
	TANGIBILITY							
1	Hotels have modern structures, furniture and fittings	336	114				4.8	Accepted
2	The facilities are updated with current standard	256	194				4.6	Accepted
3	The staff appearances are attractive	301	149				4.7	Accepted
4	The environment is neat and spacious	205	235	10			4.4	Accepted
5	Facilities and services are always available for customers	257	152	5	36		4.4	Accepted
6	The hotels are in good and accessible location	198	227	23	2		4.4	Accepted
	GROUND MEAN SCORE						**4.6**	**Accepted**

	RELIABILITY	SA	A	U	D	S D	MS	REMARKS
7	Staff offer prompt and accurate service	58	94	25	130	143	2.5	Unaccepted
8	The documentation of hotels' activities is certain	142	252	45	11		4.2	Accepted
9	The hotel staff are reliable	98	200	47	71	34	3.6	Accepted
10	The staff are concerned withproblem-solving	65	176	34	83	92	3.1	Accepted

11	The staff have good communication skills	195	201	11	20	23	4.2	Accepted
	GROUND MEAN SCORE						**3.5**	**Accepted**

	RESPONSIVENESS	SA	A	U	D	S D	MS	REMARKS
12	The staff are well-mannered on duty	178	227	12	21	12	4.2	Accepted
13	The staff give extra welcoming attention to the customers	83	108	5	122	132	2.8	Unaccepted
14	The staff are experts to meet customers' demands	86	75	10	176	103	2.7	Unaccepted
15	The staff take their responsibilities seriously	92	98	5	122	133	2.8	Unaccepted
	GROUND MEAN SCORE						**3.1**	**Accepted**

	ASSURANCE	SA	A	U	D	SD	MS	REMARKS
16	The staff are trustworthy	206	236	5	3		4.4	Accepted
17	The staff are polite	216	229	5			4.5	Accepted
18	The staff impact confidence on the guests	174	201	12	54	9	4.1	Accepted
19	The staff are accommodating and cheerful	236	214				4.5	Accepted
	GROUND MEAN SCORE						**4.4**	**Accepted**

	EMPATHY	SA	A	U	D	SD	MS	REMARKS
20	The staff render special attentions to the customers	176	183	17	63	11	4.0	Accepted
21	The staff understand the demands of the customers	186	193	7	48	16	4.1	Accepted
22	The staff choose customers as their priority	143	199	6	43	59	3.7	Accepted
23	The staff work towards the interest of the customers	137	187	13	49	64	3.6	Accepted
24	The staff attend to customers indiscriminately	88	125	34	105	98	3.0	Accepted
	GROUND MEAN SCORE						**3.7**	**Accepted**

	SECURITY	SA	A	U	D	S D	MS	REMARKS
25	The hotels have good security personnel	98	173	4	145	30	3.4	Accepted
26	The customers' lives and property are not at risk	58	155	43	153	81	3.2	Accepted
27	The customers' details are totally secured	217	233				4.5	Accepted
28	The food and drinks items are hygienic	205	241	4			4.5	Accepted
29	Environmental pollutions are controlled	238	212				4.5	Accepted
30	People are thoroughly scrutinised	102	184	6	101	147	3.6	Accepted
	GROUND MEAN SCORE						**4.0**	**Accepted**

(Source: Field survey, 2019)

The responses from 450 respondents in selected hotels in Ado-Ekiti as comprehensively shown in Table 5 revealed that the Tangibility aspect of the hotels which comprised of the physical resources are well-facilitated and attractive with updated modern equipment and structures. All the activities and services are highly accepted with Ground Mean Score (GMS) of 4.6 to indicate that the structures, facilities and other physical appearances exhibited by the staff are attractive to the customers. Belic et al. (2011) in Anyanwu (2018) revealed that

inadequate interior and exterior design, equipment of premises and lack of additional programme constituted the key challenge in some spa hotels. They concluded that building and structuring of objects by modern guest requirements would lead to the long tourist season and better positioning of spa hotels in the market. Generally, in Ado-Ekiti, the hotel buildings are in strategic, spacious and accessible locations where customers can easily find them. These are the foremost welcoming attractions that have been put in place to divert the attention of the customers in all the selected hotels. Physical appearances are highly welcoming and the staff of these hotels are well-mannered, attractively dressed, accommodating, polite, trustworthy and reliable to some extents with good communication skills. This was also confirmed through interviews and direct observations.

Even though the GMS for reliability is acceptable with 3.5, yet, under reliable and accurate services, the MS is 2.5 which is unacceptable because it is below the average mean score of 3.0. Despite the conduciveness of the environment and good outlook of the staff, it is recorded that the staff are performing below expectation in terms of rendering prompt and accurate services to the customers. The interviews with customers revealed that some staff are partial or selective in rendering appropriate services to the customers and some are not satisfied with the quality of services rendered in some departments in the hotels. Another issue is the poor punctuality on the part of staff to services which also cause delays in attending customer demands. On this case, one of the Administrative Officers responded through the interviews that when unexpected demands of the customers are not available, especially at the catering department, it is the duty of the management to make extra efforts to satisfy guests and this may bring about the delays. According to Saghier and Nathan (2013), reliability should involve accurate fulfilment of goods and services according to the demands of the consumers; proper and understandable documentation; accurate billing of goods and services; accurate calculation of commissions; and keeping services promise without discrimination. Data gotten from interview sections were in tandem with that from questionnaires.

Moreover, for Responsiveness, although the staff are well-mannered on duty, they have issue with rendering additional welcoming services to the customers. They feel reluctant in most cases in meeting customers' demands. Also, some of the staff are not experts in their respective departments. This criterion to assess quality service delivery in these hotels is low even with acceptable GMS of 3.1. The findings revealed that the demands of the customers are reluctantly addressed or merely attended to. Also, this issue of underperformance from staff could be because of poor staff welfare package, lack of relevant in-service training, irregular or underpayment or remunerations, and inadequate number of staff. According to Wang and Wang (2009), Kashyap (2014) and Odunlami and Wali (2019), it was also believed that the major reasons for low-quality services in the hospitality industry across the globe are lack of well-qualified and trained staff and low motivation. If the staff are not fully trained and appreciated in the various hotels, no matter how attractive the structures and facilities are, they would not perform according to the demands of the customers as in the case of the selected hotels in Ado-Ekiti.

More so, for Assurance, the activities and services are highly impressive like that of tangibility with GMS of 4.4. The result revealed that the staff are trustworthy and polite in their duty with MS of 4.4 and 4.5 respectively. The MS of 4.1 showed that there is high level of trust and maximum confidence on the guests without any suspicion. While the MS of 4.5 showed that the staff of the selected hotels are very accommodating and cheerful. According to the observation and interviews with the staff and customers, it was revealed that to accommodate customers without minding their attitude is one of the principal attributes of staff to keep achieving the aims and objectives of the hotels. It was also pointed out that cheerfulness is another strategy for keeping customers. Delgado-Ballester (2004) asserts that show of courtesy on guests, couple with the conviction on the quality service delivery by staff, inspires trust and confidence from these guests. Hence, if there is conviction on quality of service in the hotel after the first patronage, there may not be second patronage. This shows that high quality service delivery could win trust and confidence for the hotel.

Just like the assurance, the Empathy of staff towards the customers is of good standard with GMS of 3.7 and all activities and services under this are acceptable. The result revealed that special attentions are rendered to the customers with MS of 4.0. The highest MS under this measure is 4.1, indicating that the staff understand the demands of the customers. The staff of the selected hotels treated customers as their priority with MS of 3.7. They work based on the interest of the customers with MS of 3.6. Also, the result on discrimination in any form or shape in attending to the customers showed that there is average MS which is 3.0. This figure shows that the staff are showing some elements of prejudice in services which according to Delgado-Ballester (2004) could result to losing of guests.

Furthermore, the findings showed that the GMS for Security service in these hotels is 4.0. This shows that the managements maintain peaceful and marketable atmosphere for both the staff and the customers. Security management is one of the major factors that determine the conduciveness of any hotel. In these selected hotels, few security agents are safeguarding the activities of the industry on rotational schedules. They ensure that the incoming and outgoing movements of the people both staff and customers are scrupulously monitored and scrutinized for effective security and safety of all resources within the industry. The observation and the interviews with few security guards revealed that the lives and properties within the hotels are still at risk because most of the hotels' security agents are not well-equipped with sophisticated security details to tackle safety and security issues in the hotels. It is only few of these hotels have functional secret cameras to monitor activities in the rooms, premises and other departments. Kashyap (2014), Kostin (2018), Odunlami and Wali (2019), Oloidi (2019) and Nwankwo (2020) noted in their respective studies on the relevance of adequate security detail that is commensurate with the size and nature of a particular hotel. Hence insufficient security details have the tendency of crashing statistics of patronage in a particular hotel. For instance, Odunlami and Wali (2019) inform that the hotels at Okom National Park and Obudu Mountain Resort (both in Cross River State, Nigeria) are facing a lot of security issues ranging from the tangible facilities to intangible services.

Generally, the issue of insecurity needs to be addressed in Nigeria to boost the nation's hospitality industry. An encouraging aspect of the security in selected Hotels in Ado-Ekiti is the hygienic nature of the foods and drinks being served in a clean environment. According to the findings, the local and international foods and drinks are very neat with high standard. The environment is visitor-friendly with insignificant level of pollution that can disrupt the comfort or endanger the health of guests throughout their stay. Also, the confidentiality of customer information is guaranteed.

4.3 Measures for Sustainable Quality Service Delivery in Selected Hotels in Ado-Ekiti

Despite the attractive structures and advanced publicity details of these hotels, there are some other responsible measures that can improve the quality service delivery in selected hotels in Ado-Ekiti as gathered during the study. These included Quality staffing and in-service training, rebranding and repackaging of goods and services, staff remunerations, facilities and maintenance culture, market survey, evaluation and feedback, and security details. The summary of data on these is summarized in the tables below

Table 6: Responses to the Measures for Sustainable Quality Service Delivery in Selected Hotels in Ado-Ekiti.

S/N	MEASURES	AGREED	DISAGREED
1	Quality staffing and in-service training	✓	*
2	Rebranding and repackaging of services	✓	*
3	Staff remunerations	✓	*
4	Putting customers' demands as the priority	✓	*

5	Handling customers complains and suggestions quickly	✓	*
6	Provision of modern facilities and regular maintenance	✓	*
7	Frequent market survey	✓	*
8	Security management	✓	*
9	Frequent evaluation and feedback	✓	*
10	Provision of souvenirs	✓	*

(Source: Field survey, 2019)

Table 6 shows that the customers agreed on the measures for sustainable quality service delivery in selected hotels in Ado-Ekiti. The findings revealed that lack of in-service training limited the output of the staff and it is one of the issues that affected other departments in these hotels. According to Wang and Wang (2009), it was discovered that after studying the challenges of hospitality industries in China, the shortage of well-trained personnel is a global challenge facing the hospitality industry. For the industry to survive in the face of incessant economic dynamisms (inflations and deflations) because of recession, quality recruitment strategies should be used to engage employees based on competence, experience and requisite qualification. Emphasis should be on attributes like self-discipline, good communication skills, fast-thinking, respectful, team spirit, computer literacy, smartness and neatness. More so, the employees need to periodically update their skills and flexibility in the industrial trends through in-service professional trainings, seminars, workshops, and conferences in their respective specialties. Cairncross et al. (2008), in their work on training and service quality in regional Australian restaurant; revealed that the respondents acknowledged periodic staff training as one of the measures to achieve professionalism in a hospitality establishment. It maintains standard through improvement on the quality of service and consistency. These trainings would improve employees' attitudes to their jobs and inputs to business growth. Hence, they are expected to learn different marketing strategies on how to welcome and attend to customers, the composures to have a cordial relationship with the customers and other staff, acquire good communication skills, upgrade food menu, face-lift for the environment, new security measures, etc.

In addition, the respondents and informants recommended rebranding and repackaging of goods and services as a fundamental measure to boost customers' interests and showcase high quality of service delivery. This is to have a new and fashionable method of presenting their products to the customers. There should be: dynamic and encouraging dimensions in the patterns of attending to customers. Environment with aesthetic features, and additional attractions such as swimming pools, discotheques, playground, indoor games, etc, should be put in place. According to the respondents, to rebrand and repackage hotel products and services indicate that the old and common ways of rendering services are to be revisited and adjusted with a focus to meeting international best practices. Even with the availability of some modern facilities, there is need for facility-facelift. The respondents agreed that new generation hotels usually incorporate modern facilities and structures which are tangible resources to entice the customers, and these facilities should always be available to the customers to boost quality of service delivery. Online booking mechanisms can also be explored to improve size of public visibility and visit of the studied hotels in Ado-Ekiti (Oka, 2019; Nwankwo, 2020). This is imperative since 'integration of communication channels whether online or offline can present the customer experience in obtaining the information or products/services desired' (Bachruddin & Grisna, 2015, p. 3)

In Table 5, it was discovered that even when there are quality facilities and staff attitude to work, the level of quality of services delivery is below average. Job motivation for employees through remuneration is recommended to ensure employees' greater contribution to delivering quality services (Odunlami and Wali, 2019). According to Mulder (2018), one the core of the Adams Equity Theory is to balance the input and output of the staff to avoid poor employee's input to quality service delivery because of lack of motivation. The staff

should be appreciated in cash and kind to avoid unnecessary transfer of aggressions towards customers and other fellow staff. Surprise packages should be arranged for them especially during festive periods as a form of appreciation. Furthermore, guests' patronage can also be sustained through specially customized gift items as souvenirs and occasional rebates to leave them with the memory of their stay in the hotel. This marketing strategy can only be possible when the internal marketing strategy is very much effective. The internal marketing mix has to do with staff attitude and quality of service delivery. This is what motivates second patronage; which is much significant in the hospitality industry than the first patronage (Nwankwo, 2020).

Moreover, there is need for the management to prioritize customers' interests as can be seen in some other international hotels. For instance, goods and services should be delivered to consumers accordingly without sentiments; complains or suggestions from customers should be considered and addressed quickly to retain their loyalty and patronage, etc. In this case, frequent evaluation and feedback should be facilitated to periodically evaluate the market value of the hotel from guests' perspective (Kostin, 2018). This can also be done through distribution of hotel evaluation forms to lodging and lodged guests. This concept is supported by Anyanwu (2018: 10), when he asserted that; "hotel operations are encouraged to carry out periodic service quality assessment to determine customer service quality perceptions this will help the hotel management to tackle all issues affecting the quality of services in the industry... and develop a sustainable feedback mechanism that can facilitate constant updates on customer needs and wants such as comment cards and other online interactive platforms". In such case where this feedback mechanism is in use, suggestion boxes are placed at strategic locations for customers to anonymously drop completed evaluation forms where their independent views on staff attitudes, service delivery, facility functionality, security issues, environmental hygiene, food and drink safety, among others, are clearly stated, with possible suggestions on the way forward

Periodic market information helps in the sustenance of business growth and productivity in the hospitality industry. The competitive and ever-changing trends in the industry in this 21st Century, has called for periodic market surveillance to obtain necessary market information that would aid in maintaining touch with international best practices in the hospitality industry around the globe at any point in time. Through this, the management can be in touched with the trending marketing strategies and initiatives in the industry. This is equally applicable to the security aspect of these selected hotels in Ado-Ekiti. During the interview sessions, it was gathered that most of the hotels in Ado-Ekiti, have serious threats to lives and properties of both the staff and their numerous guests. Most of these hotels lack the usual security cameras that pick majority of criminal activities within the vicinity of these hotels. Odunlami and Wali (2019) and Kostin (2018), assert that the major concern of business establishments is to ensure that the business environment is conducive enough to attract the much needed second patronage from their numerous guests, in the hospitality industry.

5. Conclusion

Quality of service delivery is paramount in the hospitality industry; hence, if the services are unequalled to the expectations of customers, there would be dissatisfaction. Also, low job motivation for hotel employees could contribute to poor service quality in the hotel. Equity Theory has been found vital in measuring quality of service delivery as it entails customers' satisfaction in exchange for payments and employees' performance in exchange of job motivation. This study gave a critical assessment of some selected hotels in Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria with a view to understand the quality service delivery in those hotels. The summary of findings revealed that there is low-quality of service delivery in those hotels selected for the study due to some factors like inadequate in-service training for staff, unprofessional attitudes of staff, poor staff/guest relationship among others. However, there is need to improve quality of service delivery in average hotels in Ado-Ekiti to gain reasonable market share in the competitive hospitality industry. To this end, employment should be based on

qualifications, and requisite knowledge on service delivery in the hospitality industry. There is also need for the employees to be engaged in periodic in-service training by attending professional seminars, workshops, conferences, and other educational programmes that are organized by hospitality management experts and other professionals in the fields of tourism, management and accounting.

Hotel managements are encouraged to organize periodic in-service trainings to maintain international best practices in staff attitudes, service delivery, information technology, facility facelift and general hygiene. In addition, poor motivation is another factor that contributes to poor service delivery in hotels. Employees need to be motivated through remunerations, promotions, awards, and other necessary incentives. More so, the use of guests' evaluation forms and feedbacks will straighten the competitive position of these hotels in the industry. In conclusion, this study has implications for improving quality of service delivery in hotels in newly developing cities like Ado-Ekiti towards a sustainable business in the competitive hospitality industry. This will not only enhance the hotel business, but equally support the sustainable growth of such small cities through efficient hospitality industry.

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