

Eximia journal

www.eximiajournal.ro

Vol. 14/2025

PLUS
COMMUNICATION P



International
Communication & PR

The Influence of Waiting Staff on Customer Retention in Two-Star Hotels in Takoradi Metropolis

Adelaide Spio-Kwofie¹, adelaide.spio-kwofie@ttu.edu.gh
Takoradi Technical University
P. O. Box 256, Takoradi, Ghana.

Janet Deh², janet@gmail.com
Cape Coast Technical University
P.O. Box DI50 Cape Coast Ghana.

Hannah Amoah³, hannahesiamoah@gmail.com
Ghana Secondary Technical School
P.O. Box 252, Takoradi, Ghana.

Abstract

The study's main purpose was to assess the influence of waiting staff on customer retention in two-star hotels in Takoradi Metropolis. The study's objectives were to identify the role of the hotel waiting staff in service delivery, to determine the factors affecting customer retention, and to examine measures employed to promote customer retention in two-star hotels in Takoradi. A survey research design was employed for the study. The study population was five (5) waiting staff from twelve (12) two-star hotels in Takoradi which was made up of sixty (60) respondents. A random sampling technique and questionnaire for data collection was used for the study. The study found that most waiting staff take orders, welcome customers, and lead them to their seats. The findings of the study further revealed that employees are empowered by management to interact with customers to meet their needs. It was evident from the study that when customers are satisfied with the services provided by the waiter, and experience a good atmosphere and waiting time, they return to the hotel. The study concludes that the role of hotel waiting staff in service delivery in two-star hotels significantly affects hotel customer retention. The study recommends that two-star hotels should organise regular training for their waiters to enable them to gain knowledge in providing quality waiting service to customers. This will encourage customers to patronize the hotel, thus leading to customer retention.

Keywords: Waiter, Customer, Retention, Two-star, Hotels

Introduction

The role of waiters in hotels

The provision of food and beverages to guests away from home is a significant part of activities performed in the hotels. The staff involved in the serving of food and beverages in the hotel are part of the front line of customer service in full-service restaurants, casual dining, eateries and other food service establishments. To Pratten (2003), to move food prepared in the kitchen to a customer, some form of food service activities is required to be performed by the waiters. The services vary from silver service style in a luxury hotel restaurant, plates service, and self-service cafeteria to where the customer collects their food from a service counter (Abel & Obeten, 2015; Drummond, Cooley, & Cooley, 2021). A waiter as a salesman of food and beverage personnel plays an important role in the restaurant with friendly courtesy, a welcoming attitude, well-cooked and efficient service. The hotel restaurant with good waiting service is one that guest wants to repeat visit and feel as comfortable as in their home (Pratten, 2003; Sthapit & Jiménez-Barreto, 2018). This comfortable atmosphere is produced by a friendly, courteous, and efficient service waiter. With this service both the customer and the seller are satisfied and the goodwill of the hotel is increased.

The services provided are all the actions and reactions that the customers perceive they have bought. In the hotel restaurants, the serving of food and beverages is performed for the guests by a waiting staff. Unlike physical goods/products, most of the services are consumed in the process of production (Abel & Obeten, 2015). Some authors are of the view that the service process is more important than the service outcome (Luu, Hau, Ngo, Bucic, & Cuong, 2016), and others argue there may be distinct stages in the service delivery process that customers usually use as a basis for evaluation and judgment (Di Mascio, 2007). This then suggests waiting service delivery process has several distinct stages depending on the nature of the service under investigation. No matter how the quality of food, beverage, décor and equipment is, untrained or unhelpful waiting staff can destroy the customer's potential satisfaction. On the other hand, well-trained, smart and helpful waiting staff often make up for the aspects that are lacking elsewhere in the operation.

A customer experiences several chronological stages during the visit to the hotel restaurant. In the case of the hotel restaurant service delivery process, this would begin with checking in at the reception of the restaurant and ending with the presentation of the check to the customer and saying goodbye (Dang, 2021). Besides, customers are happy and feel belonging plus money worth when such services are offered to them as asserted (Heidarzadeh Hanzae & Esmaeilpour, 2017).

The interaction between people in a restaurant is the core business (Abel & Obeten, 2015; Di Mascio, 2007), the satisfaction of social and intellectual needs during a restaurant service delivery process (Kim, Jeon, & Hyun, 2011) and equally important as the satisfaction of physiological needs of the guests. More often than not, the waiter's (or waitress) responsibilities that fall under hotel include welcoming guests, demonstrating menu knowledge, answering questions, up-selling restaurant speciality items, the description of dishes, taking orders (beverage and food), handling complaints, and ensuring the satisfaction of the guests (Abel &

Obeten, 2015; Drummond et al., 2021). Others include the ability of the waiter to operate the point-of-sale register system, process the credit card and cash transactions, communicate in an appropriate professional manner with customers and other colleagues, read and understand menus and instructions, and have knowledge of culinary terminologies (Dang, 2021; Pratten, 2003).

Taking into consideration the activities performed by the waiter, the study sought to assess the influence of waiting staff on customer retention in two-star hotels in the Takoradi metropolis on the premises of the following objectives. Thus, the role of the hotel waiting staff in service delivery determines the factors affecting customer retention in two-star hotels in Takoradi and examines measures employed to promote customer retention in two-star hotels in Takoradi. This study contributes to extant knowledge on waiting staff and customer retention and provides information for the stakeholders in the hotel industry on the impacts of the services rendered to their customers that have been keeping them in or out of business.

Review of Related Literature

Hotel restaurant customer retention

The ways through which companies retain their customers depend on the goals, ideas and context of each and once the companies know who their customers are, specific tactics are used in retaining the customers (Andrews & Turner, 2017; Dang, 2021). Customer retention is the loyalty your customers exhibit towards the patronage of your product or service. The relationship between customer loyalty and satisfaction is not a linear one as the behaviour of every guest depends on his attitude towards the service provided. For this reason, managers around the world are always looking for ways to measure customer satisfaction and this is a worthy pursuit from all marketing communities in all hotels.

The hospitality industry is often regarded as one of the most global in the service industry (Abel & Obeten, 2015; Di Mascio, 2007), as more people are travelling around the world. When the travellers are far from their homes, they need a place of abode, sleeping bed, food to eat and often end up choosing hotels for such. In this regard, the hospitality industry comes into play and to (Sthapit & Jiménez-Barreto, 2018), this has caused customer retention in the hospitality industry to become increasingly important.

Oftentimes, long-standing customers purchase more, introduce new customers, take less of the service providers' time, and are sometimes sensitive to price (Ahmed, Naseer, Asadullah, & Khan, 2020). Research shows the cost of soliciting new customers is seven times more than retaining old customers (Kim et al., 2011) and that enhances customer retention which in the end leads to profit increase. To increase the retention of customers, hotel managers ought to recognize the relationship between customer service features and customer retention.

Loyal customers are the principal drivers of profits as they continue to stay at a brand's properties. Hotel restaurant guests who fit into the extremely loyal clusters have a high attachment to the hotel and so are prepared to change their time of visit to ensure they can stay at their preferred hotel (Madhani, 2019). Further, the guests are not as sensitive to pricing issues and are willing to pay extra to stay in their choice property rather than go elsewhere in favour

of moderate room rates. Brand loyalty customers also reduce the marketing costs that are associated with attracting new customers. In addition, these loyal customers say positive things about a company to others (Dang, 2021) and frequently pay premium prices. Report on the luxury hotel segment among leisure travellers, overall satisfaction was significantly higher among repeat guests. It therefore suggests that satisfying leisure travellers often pay higher rates and more repeat guests. Thus, customer loyalty is a key to sustaining long-term business success.

Existing literature on loyalty showed retention as the number of customers who stay with the provider in the course of an established period, and this instance a year (Abel & Obeten, 2015; Andrews & Turner, 2017). Retention and attraction of the company's new customers are used as indicators for growth in market share and revenues (Ahmed et al., 2020). In the retention of customers, a company needs to identify how to serve its customers as well as how to manage post-sales services (Drummond et al., 2021; Madhani, 2019). Product or service providers need to emphasise the quality of products and services. As stated by (Andrews & Turner, 2017) there is a relationship between quality, commitment, trust and satisfaction, customer retention, and future use of the product or services, as retention is influenced by the future use of the product. Previous research findings showed there is a strong relationship between customer retention and quality of service/or products (Andrews & Turner, 2017).

Research showed a loyalty program with monetary compensation is a step toward great customer retention (Ahmed et al., 2020; Heidarzadeh Hanzaee & Esmaeilpour, 2017). Additionally, evidence in previous literature that emotional commitment and loyalty programs that give financial incentives have positive effects on the retention of customers (Madhani, 2019). A customer retention survey that was conducted nationwide showed the majority of the respondents reported that 75% of the sales were from existing customers (Abel & Obeten, 2015; Kim et al., 2011). A higher number of the respondents surveyed agreed with the importance of customer loyalty, nonetheless only half of them could attest to being aware of any customer loyalty program that is implemented at their companies. Revenue from companies' loyal customers continues to grow as long as customers continue to be loyal to them. The companies' time and money spent on attracting new customers are not worthy cause if they cannot keep them. All those companies that practice relationship marketing have customer retention as their primary goal (Di Mascio, 2007; Heidarzadeh Hanzaee & Esmaeilpour, 2017).

While retention of customers might have a different connotation and measurement for different industries and firms (Lahap, Ramli, Said, Radzi, & Zain, 2016; Madhani, 2019), there is an agreement the fact that focusing on the activities that retain customers can generate several economic benefits. Estimation of customer's use of service providers in the future is an indicator of customer retention (Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000; Lahap et al., 2016), and this is usually described in the context of behavioural intention to return to a company and willingness to mention it to others (Giovanni, Thamrin, Ting, Rosman, & Wiyana, 2024). Thus, the customer intentionally stays loyal to that service provider, especially in the context of

switching costs and the inclination of the customers to stay with the service provider in future (Giovanni et al., 2024; Madhani, 2019).

Factors affecting customer retention in hotels

To Hyun and Perdue (2017) and (Giovanni et al., 2024), ***customer defection*** occurs when a customer forsakes one service provider for another and also will not recommend such services to other customers. The bad experiences most customers have with hotels cause customer dissatisfaction and defection (Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000; Lahap et al., 2016). Many hotels tend to ignore customers who defected or forsaken service for another and also influence other customers to join them. Causes of customer defection could be any of the following switch to another competitor offering lower prices, competitor offering a better product, inadequate service, out of business, a product or service from outside the industry and due to internal and external political considerations (Abel & Obeten, 2015; Pratten, 2003). A customer's selection of hotel services is influenced by many factors and these include the variety of services, star rating, location, and prices charged. This notwithstanding, a hotel's higher service alone cannot guarantee sufficiency to satisfy customers as Heidarzadeh Hanzaee and Esmaeilpour (2017) state price is crucial, if not more important than the service and relationship established by the service providers. Businesses, especially service providers should make customer-centred activities that lead to customer retention their priority (Andrews & Turner, 2017; Heidarzadeh Hanzaee & Esmaeilpour, 2017). Satisfaction often influences customer decisions for a re-purchase and new customers to participate in the purchase of the same thing (Kim et al., 2011). Though some service providers value the acquisition of new customers, it behoves on the service provider to maintain the existing customers (Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000). Hotel businesses manage their customer retention process through several processes and these include; the customer satisfaction measurement process, customer retention planning process, quality assurance process, win-back processes and the complaints handling (recovery) process (Hyun & Perdue, 2017).

Another aspect, which is ***service quality*** is how the customer perceives and experiences the service purchased. Extant literature confirms that service quality influences customer satisfaction (Di Mascio, 2007; Luu et al., 2016) and this gained attention in the late 70s regarding indicators of business performance. Quality of service plays a significant factor in a successful business. The service provider affects guest satisfaction and for that reason, the waiter ought to demonstrate all the attributes of a waiter (Abel & Obeten, 2015; Drummond et al., 2021). The labour market has some level of influence on the hospitality industry so if the employees are uneducated, unmotivated, untrained, unskilled and unproductive the hotel industry loses time and money due to loss of customers (Heidarzadeh Hanzaee & Esmaeilpour, 2017; Madhani, 2019).

For guests to appreciate and value the quality of service, personnel should have a passion for the work they do, attend to guests with honesty, be trustworthy, and be able to handle emergencies (Hyun & Perdue, 2017). Hence, the training programmes are organised for all employees to ensure they deliver polite, friendly, and respectful service to the guests (Kim et al., 2011). The relationship between hotel contact staff and guests is very important during

transactions as there ought to be a relationship when service is ongoing (Fu & Parks, 2001; Koc, 2020), and (Hyun & Perdue, 2017), and that is the premises for training the following service personnel in the hotel; front desk, waiters, door and bellmen, room maids, and stewards. Research showed whenever customers experience service failure, they tend to discuss that occurrence with at least ten other persons, whereas positive experiences are discussed with only five persons (Fu & Parks, 2001). This shows that negative experiences spread faster than positive experiences. Nevertheless, effective service recovery is necessary to maintain guest satisfaction as this significantly impacts the growth of the company's revenues, and profitability (Hyun & Perdue, 2017; Madhani, 2019).

Customers interviewed in a research study stated hotel *physical surroundings* influence buying behaviour, as well as emotional and psychological status. The designing of hotels is geared towards influencing the buyer emotionally and increasing buying ability (Ryu & Han, 2011), have a big impact on the guests, build some memories and make them want to come again (Almohaimmeed, 2019; Madhani, 2019). Unique designs of hotels can increase the daily occupancy and rate (Hyun & Perdue, 2017). Hotels with facilities such as swimming pools, restaurants, green areas, and bars among others are found to be more successful than others (Andrews & Turner, 2017), and this confirms the popularity of boutique hotels due to their unique designs. The connection study further showed that the physical surrounding of the business has a significant effect on the fulfilment of the service staff and an increase in performance (Ryu & Han, 2011).

To Kandampully and Suhartanto (2000) *customer satisfaction* results from the experience of the evaluation of the service received in the hotel. Companies that provide services place priority on activities that promote customer satisfaction because it is seen as an indicator of retention. Whereas satisfied customer leads to repeat patronage, stay loyal, and serve as an advert for the business through word-of-mouth to friends, unsatisfied customers complaining behaviours affect the business (Luu et al., 2016). Additionally, the quality of service experienced by the customers is what determines their satisfaction (Di Mascio, 2007), as future patronage depends on the performance the customer anticipated (Andrews & Turner, 2017). Thus, the satisfaction of the customer is achieved when the services provided match the expectations of the service. Failure to meet the expected outcome results in dissatisfaction, or poor perception of the service quality.

Depending on the service quality expectation of the customer, satisfaction can be acknowledged in various senses that range from feelings of fulfilment, contentment, pleasure, delight and relief (Almohaimmeed, 2019; Fu & Parks, 2001). The level of customer satisfaction is the result of the customer's comparison of the service quality expected in a given service encounter, with the perceived service quality (Heidarzadeh Hanzaee & Esmaeilpour, 2017). When hotel customers are satisfied with the quality of services, it leads to loyalty and retention which is positive for the hotel because it results in higher profits, higher market share, as well as an increase in customer base. Loyalty of customers is dependent on the quality of the services received from the hotel, therefore, if a customer is not satisfied with the services received in one hotel, he/she is likely to look for better services somewhere else (Luu et al., 2016). Several studies analyzed the needs and desires of hotel guests and found guest

satisfaction is linked with a variety of attributes such as the cleanliness of the hotel, price of the service being purchased, location of the hotel, security, personnel and physical attractiveness (Fu & Parks, 2001). The hotel business is very competitive so for a hotel to remain in business in terms of customer satisfaction suggest it must track the levels of customer satisfaction to implement a continuous improvement of services and goods based on the needs of the customer (Lahap et al., 2016).

Challenges to the delivery of customer service

Most hotels have come to terms with the need to offer customer service (Almohaimmeed, 2019; Hyun & Perdue, 2017) but customers sometimes have difficulty explaining their issues which often leads to customer dissatisfaction, hence affecting retention. Providing customer service can often be frustrating, especially when client requests appear demanding because barriers in providing such service by the hotel make consumer requests seem excessive (Di Mascio, 2007). Such outcomes cause the service provider or waiter to quickly lose their energy and customers will receive insufficient attention to their issues (Drummond et al., 2021; Heidarzadeh Hanzae & Esmaeilpour, 2017). On the other hand, if the waiter is underworked, they will feel less challenged, unappreciated, and unimportant. Customers get frustrated when turnaround time is longer than expected due to underworked waiters (Lahap et al., 2016). The culture of the business can have an extensive effect on how customer service cases are handled (Almohaimmeed, 2019; Ryu & Han, 2011). Poor accountability is also a challenge to the provision of customer service. Anytime accountability for action is ignored, staff tend to play the blame game and this leaves customers unhappy and likely not to return.

Methodology

Opinions of service staff influence customer retention in hotels so a descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The study targeted the waiting staff of two-star hotels in Takoradi and the sample size was 60. For each hotel five (5) waiting staff were selected from twelve (12) two-star hotels. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2017) asserted that in research it is unlikely to investigate all members of a target population if it is extremely large, hence, there is a need to draw a sample from this population of interest. With simple random sampling, each distinct is chosen randomly by chance, and this was done so that each distinct has the same probability of being chosen during the sampling process. Further, each subset of k individuals has an equal probability of being selected for the sample as any other subset of k individuals (Bhardwaj, 2019). The study adopted these sampling techniques because the respondents (waiters) selected already had a fair knowledge of the study topic and were able to answer the questions appropriately. A structured questionnaire was developed in three sections regarding the role of the hotel waiting staff on service delivery, factors affecting customer retention, and measures employed to promote customer retention. These were assessed on a 5-point Likert scale of 1: strongly disagree, 2: disagree, 3 - neutral, 4: agree and 5: strongly agree. Primary data was obtained from respondents where questionnaires were administered personally and collected a day after distribution. The data was edited, coded, and entered and descriptive statistics was used to analyze, present and interpret data.

Results and Discussions

Demographic characteristics

This section of the study was to describe the participants who completed the survey. The following demographic variables as gender, age, academic qualification, and marital status were used. Table 1 presents the results of the analysis of the respondent's demographic characteristics.

Variables	Frequency	Percent (%)
Sex		
Male	20	33
Female	40	67
Total	60	100
Age		
18-25yrs	34	57
26-33yrs	24	40
34-41yrs	2	3
Total	60	100
Academic Qualification		
SHS/Vocational	35	58
Diploma	8	13
HND	10	17
Bachelor	7	12
Total	60	100
Marital Status		
Single	39	65
Married	20	33
Divorce	1	2
Total	60	100

The analysis in Table 1 depicts the demographic characteristics of respondents. From the analysis, a greater proportion of the respondents (67%) were female while 33% were male. Since most jobs in the hotels were female-related, it rather attracted more females than males as employees. The finding affirmed a study by (Hekman & Lashley, 2017), which stated that, in most countries, women make up 60% to 70% of the workforce in the hospitality industry. There should be a balance concerning gender and that this gender balance brings a healthy work-life among staff. This notwithstanding, Almohaimmeed (2019), stressed that females should dominate in the area of service such as waiting for the marketing of goods and services.

More so, most of the respondents (57%) fell within the age cluster of 18-25 years, 40% within the age

group 26-33 years and a smaller proportion (3%) within the age group of 34-41 years. Hekman and Lashley (2017) in their study stated that most waiters fall within the age cluster of 18-25 years in the hospitality industry because such age groups of the population are smart in waiting services.

Given this, most waiters in the hotels were within their youthful age as only (3%) of the hotel waiting staff falls within the age group 34-41 years.

Again, looking at the academic qualification of respondents, most of the respondents (58%) hold an SHS/Vocational school certificate, 17% of the respondents hold a Higher National Diploma Certificate, 13% of the respondents hold a diploma certificate and 12% of the respondents hold a bachelor's degree certificate. Koc (2020) stated that it is an undisputable fact that, if respondents attain higher educational levels, they are pushed up to take care of higher positions. Since waiting service is a stepping stone most waiters hold a SHS/vocational certificate. Not all waiting staff hold SHS/vocational certificates some waiting staff hold another certificate such as a Diploma or Higher National Certificate and this affirms the research finding. To Koc (2020), even though waiting service is a stepping stone for most waiters due to economic hardship and difficulty in getting a job after university, some degree holders engaged themselves in waiting service.

In addition, most of the respondents 65% were single, 33% married and 2% divorced. Hekman and Lashley (2017), stated that most waiting staff are single when it comes to waiting service in the hospitality industry. This could result from reporting and closing time of restaurant operations.

Role of hotel waiting staff on service delivery

This identifies the role of the hotel waiting staff in service delivery and it is depicted in Figure 1 below.

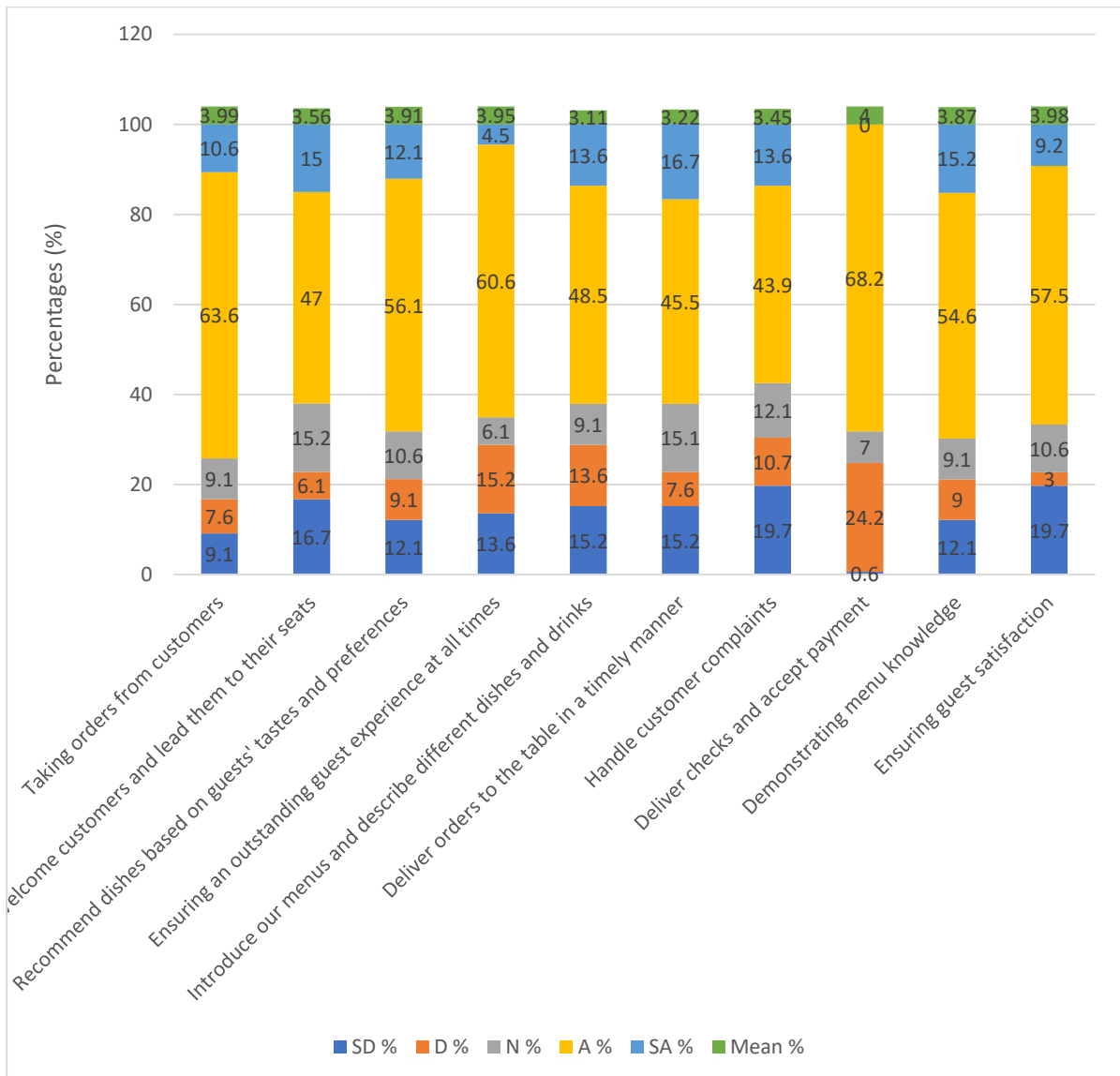


Figure 1: The Role of Hotel Waiting Staff on Service Delivery

Note: SD means Strongly Disagree, D means Disagree, N means Neutral, A means Agree and SA means Strongly Agree. A mean of: 0.1-1.0 indicates Strongly Disagree (SD), 1.1-2.0 indicates Disagree (D) 2.1-3.0 indicates Neutral (N), 3.1-4.0 indicates Agree (A) and 4.1-5.0 indicates Strongly Agree (SA).

The analysis in Figure 1 depicts the role of hotel waiting staff in service delivery. From the analysis in Figure 1, a greater proportion of the respondents (63.6%) agreed that taking orders from customers was one of the roles of hotel waiting staff with a corresponding mean response of 3.99. Nevertheless, 9.1% of the study’s respondents strongly disagreed that the role of a hotel waiter was to take orders and also be responsible for the food service process. Taking into consideration the assertion by (Di Mascio, 2007), moving food prepared in the kitchen to a customer involves food service activities required by the waiter, hence the 9.1%.

In addition, 47% and 15% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that the hotel waiters welcomed customers and led them to their seats with a mean response of 3.56. The study findings buttress the work of (Ryu & Han, 2011), that waiters and waitresses occasionally perform the duties of other food and beverage service workers, thus, escorting the customers to their tables, serving customers seated at tables, serving customers seated at the counter. This shows that customers are happy and feel belonging plus money worth when such services are offered to them.

The majority of the respondents (56.1%) indicated that hotel staff recommends dishes based on guests' tastes and preferences with a mean response of 3.91. Moreover, 60.6% of the respondents agreed that ensuring an outstanding guest experience at all times was one of the roles of hotel waiting staff with a mean score of 3.95. More so, 48.5% and 13.6% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that hotel waiting staff introduced menus and described different dishes and drinks with a mean score of 3.11. This is in line with Koc (2020) and (Hyun & Perdue, 2017), that waiters set tables before customers sit down (e.g., changing the tablecloth, putting out new plates, cleaning chairs, etc.); offer drinks such as cocktails, wine, beer, or other beverages; recommend food options; serve foods and beverages and clear tables used by customers were all roles of waiters to customers. When customers experience these services, they are likely to come back for more and possibly recommend them to others.

In addition, 45.5% and 16.7% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that the role of hotel waiting staff was to deliver orders to the table on time. This is in line with (Almohaimmeed, 2019), that service is part of a waiter's work, but that is only one part of what brings a guest to a hotel. Other duties include welcoming guests with menu information, responding to guest questions, up-selling speciality items, taking beverage and food orders, handling complaints and ensuring the guest is satisfied before leaving the hotel. Waiters follow specific rules and service guidelines when performing their duties and this makes it a skilled job.

Regarding complaints, 43.9% and 13.6% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that handling customer complaints was one of the roles of hotel waiting staff. Again, 68.2%, 54.6% and 57.5% of the respondents indicated that delivering checks, accepting payment, demonstrating menu knowledge and ensuring guest satisfaction were roles of the hotel waiting for staff in service delivery with a mean response of 4.0, 3.87 and 3.98 respectively. Thus, waiting service goes beyond bringing food from the kitchen to the customer. Anticipating the guest's needs, making him/her feel welcome, being friendly, and attention to detail, among others as if they were in your own home are all activities performed by the waiter to enable the customer to come back for more. As long as the customer is retained and patronizes the services of the hotel, business is sustained and profit growth is achieved.

Factors Affecting Customer Retention in Two-Star Hotels

Figure 2 determined the factors affecting customer retention in two-star hotels in Takoradi. The findings are explained below in the figure.

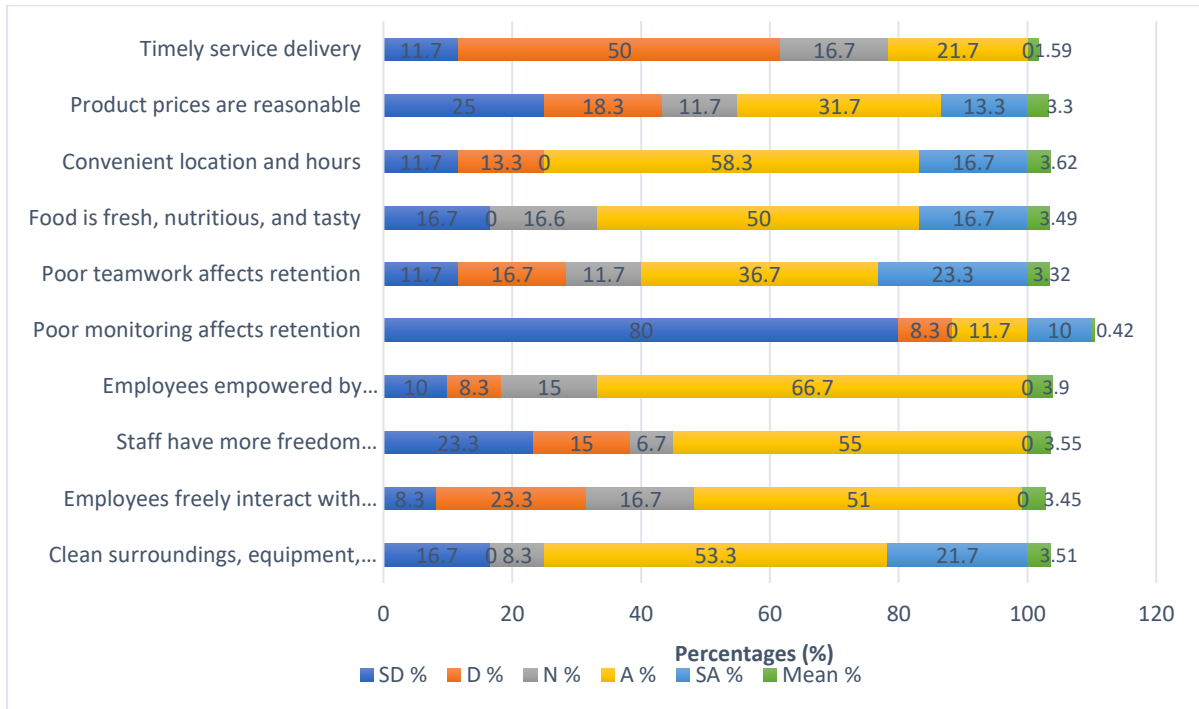


Figure 2: Factors affecting customer retention

Note: SD means Strongly Disagree, D means Disagree, N means Neutral, A means Agree, SA means Strongly Agree
 A mean of; 0.1-1.0 indicates Strongly Disagree (SD), 1.1-2.0 indicates Disagree (D), 2.1-3.0 indicates Neutral (N), 3.1-4.0 indicates Agree (A), and 4.1-5.0 indicates Strongly Agree (SA).

Taking into cognizance of (Ryu & Han, 2011) and (Almohaimmed, 2019) their assertion confirms the study findings displayed in Figure 2, that 53.3% agreed to the surroundings with a clean environment having a mean response of 3.51. Moreover, most of the respondents (51.0%) employees were free to interact with customers to meet their needs with a mean response of 3.45 while 8.3% of the respondents disagreed with that. However, these findings attest to Luu et al. (2016), that the contact between employees and guests is very important during the service transaction in the hotel industry. Unlike physical products, where a customer can even purchase without seeing the seller or experiencing the establishment, waiters cannot provide services without interacting. Customers experience the service instantly provided by the waiter in the restaurant or hospitality setup. The outcome of customer satisfaction stems from the customer's comparison of the service quality expected in a given service encounter, with the moment of truth service quality experienced.

On the responses regarding freedom to handle customer complaints, the study found 55% with a mean response of 3.55 whereas 23.3% of the respondents strongly disagreed with that and this depicted how firms sometimes handle customer complaints while ignoring other alternative opportunities that help recover relationships with the customer, which in turn affects satisfaction and loyalty. Again, 66.7% of service delivery failure of the respondents indicated that employees are being empowered by managers to meet customer needs with a mean score

of 3.90. A greater proportion of the respondents (80.0%) strongly disagreed that poor performance monitoring can lead to customer retention with a mean score of 0.42. More so, 36.7% and 23.3% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that poor coordination and teamwork can affect customer retention with a mean score of 3.32. Furthermore, most of the respondents (50.0%) of the respondents agreed that the food served in this hotel is always fresh. Besides 58.3% of the respondents agreed that food served in hotels looked nutritious, tasty and the location and operating hours are convenient.

Nevertheless, 31.7% and 13.3% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that the prices of products in two-star hotels were reasonable with a mean response of 3.30 and this confirms the key factors influencing customers' selection of a hotel to include the range of services, rates, fees and prices charged and that superior service alone is not sufficient to satisfy customers. Prices are essential, if not more important than service and relationship quality. Also, half (50%) of the respondents indicated that employees in two-star hotels deliver service on time with a mean response of 1.59.

Measures Employed to Promote Customer Retention in Two-Star Hotels

Figure 3 examines measures employed by waiting staff in two-star hotels to promote customer retention.

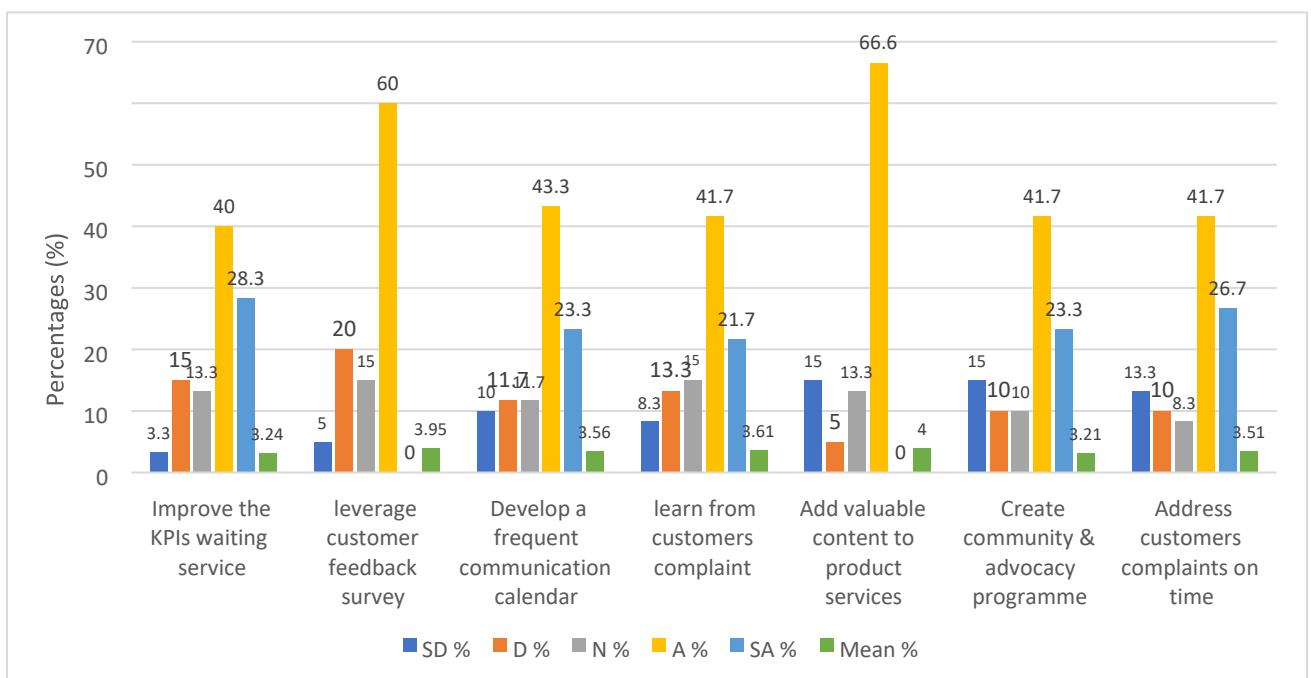


Figure 3: Measures to promote customer retention in Two-Star Hotels
 Note: SD means Strongly Disagree, D means Disagree, N means Neutral, A means Agree, SA means Strongly Agree
 A mean of; 0.1-1.0 indicates Strongly Disagree (SD), 1.1-2.0 indicates Disagree (D), 2.1-3.0 indicates Neutral (N), 3.1-4.0 indicates Agree (A), and 4.1-5.0 indicates Strongly Agree (SA).

The analysis in Figure 3 depicts the measures employed to promote customer retention in two-star hotels. From the analysis, 40% and 28.3% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that management should improve the key performance indicators around waiting service in two-star hotels with a mean response of 3.24. Most establishments including hotels have realized the need to offer customer service and this positively reflects on the amount customers spend as well as gives a boost to the word-of-mouth strategy, which eventually makes them loyal.

A greater proportion (60%) of the respondents indicated that management should leverage customer feedback survey with a mean response of 3.95 while 20% of the respondents disagreed with that. Moreover, 43.3% and 23.3% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that management should develop a frequent communication calendar with their customers with a mean response of 3.56. In addition, 41.7% and 21.7% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that management should learn from customers' complaints. Furthermore, the majority of the respondents (66.6%) indicated that management should consistently add valuable content to their products and services with a mean response of 4.0. Service transactions may sometimes be frustrating, and customer requests can frequently appear demanding, especially when there are barriers that might make rational consumer requests seem excessive. Thus, hotels ought to develop excellent means of frequent communication with their customers to obtain needed information. Given this, 41.7% and 23.3% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that the management of two-star hotels should create a community and customer advocacy programme. Notwithstanding, 41.7% of the respondents agreed that management should address customer complaints on time with a mean response of 3.51. To bridge this gap, the management of hotels should pay much attention to customers' complaints. Hotels need to create customer advocacy programmes for their guests in a way that promotes customer retention.

Conclusions of the Study

Findings from the data collected revealed some facts which served as basic conclusions. It can be concluded that the role of hotel waiting staff in service delivery in two-star hotels has a significant impact on customer retention. Some of these major roles include taking orders from customers, welcoming customers and leading them to their seats, recommending dishes based on guests' tastes and preferences, introducing menus and describing different dishes and drinks to customers as well as demonstrating menu knowledge and ensuring guest satisfaction. It was evident from the study that customers were always satisfied with the good atmosphere and waiting time and this influence their coming back. Additionally, the taste, nutritious and freshness of food served in the hotel influence customer loyalty. The surroundings, equipment, and prompt handling of customer complaints had a role as well. Besides, these factors (physical surroundings, free communication, and handling of customer complaints) influence customer retention. The study further revealed management should leverage customer feedback surveys. The study recommends management of hotels should provide waiting staff with service tools and equipment that are needed to meet the satisfaction of customers. The waiters' trendy service

tools and equipment also contribute to the experience and moment of truth for most customers. This will help the waiting staff to deliver customers' orders on time and also help the waiting staff to work smart.

The management of the hotels has to introduce reward schemes to loyal customers as well as performing staff. When this is done, it brings healthy competition among staff as each wants to be rewarded. Again, the customers in turn serve as an advert for the hotel through word of mouth. Training and development of waiters is dynamic, and so employees should regularly be trained on how to deliver quality service to customers. This will prevent service failures and enable customers to patronize the hotel, thus leading to customer retention.

Reference

- [1] Abel, E. E., & Obeten, E. (2015). Restaurant customer self-ordering system: A solution to reduce customer/guest waiting time at the point of sale. *International Journal of Computer Applications*, 111(11).
- [2] Ahmed, A., Naseer, R., Asadullah, M., & Khan, H. (2020). Managing Service Quality, Food Quality, Price Fairness and Customer Retention: A Holistic Perspective. *Annals of Contemporary Developments in Management & HR (ACDMHR)*, 2(1), 1-5.
- [3] Almohaimmeed, B. (2019). Pillars of customer retention: An empirical study on the influence of customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, customer profitability on customer retention. *Serbian Journal of Management*, 14(2), 421-435.
- [4] Andrews, D., & Turner, S. (2017). Improving the customer experience through consistency and effective service delivery in the United Kingdom public house sector. *British Food Journal*, 119(3), 587-599.
- [5] Bhardwaj, P. (2019). Types of sampling in research. *Journal of the Practice of Cardiovascular Sciences*, 5(3), 157-163.
- [6] Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2017). Theory in educational research. In *Research Methods in Education* (pp. 68-78): Routledge.
- [7] Dang, K. (2021). The important role of physical environment to customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in Finland's fine dining restaurants.
- [8] Di Mascio, R. (2007). A method to evaluate service delivery process quality. *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 18(4), 418-442.
- [9] Drummond, K. E., Cooley, M., & Cooley, T. J. (2021). *Foodservice Operations and Management: Concepts and Applications*.
- [10] Fu, Y.-Y., & Parks, S. C. (2001). The relationship between restaurant service quality and consumer loyalty among the elderly. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 25(3), 320-326.
- [11] Giovanni, G., Thamrin, N. B., Ting, T., Rosman, D., & Wiyana, T. (2024). The Impact of Employee Satisfaction on Loyalty, Employee Retention, and Customer Satisfaction in Restaurant Industry. In *Opportunities and Risks in AI for Business Development: Volume 1* (pp. 833-842): Springer.
- [12] Heidarzadeh Hanzae, K., & Esmailpour, F. (2017). Effect of restaurant reward programs on customers' loyalty: evidence from Iran. *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 8(1), 140-155.

- [13] Hekman, A., & Lashley, C. (2017). Workers in the luxury hospitality industry and motivation—the influence of gender, age and departments. *Research in Hospitality Management*, 7(2), 115-120.
- [14] Hyun, S. S., & Perdue, R. R. (2017). Understanding the dimensions of customer relationships in the hotel and restaurant industries. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 64, 73-84.
- [15] Kandampully, J., & Suhartanto, D. (2000). Customer loyalty in the hotel industry: the role of customer satisfaction and image. *International journal of contemporary hospitality management*, 12(6), 346-351.
- [16] Kim, I., Jeon, S. M., & Hyun, S. S. (2011). The role of effective service provider communication style in the formation of restaurant patrons' perceived relational benefits and loyalty. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 28(7), 765-786.
- [17] Koc, E. (2020). Do women make better in tourism and hospitality? A conceptual review from a customer satisfaction and service quality perspective. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism*, 21(4), 402-429.
- [18] Lahap, J., Ramli, N. S., Said, N. M., Radzi, S. M., & Zain, R. A. (2016). A study of brand image towards customer's satisfaction in the Malaysian hotel industry. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 224, 149-157.
- [19] Luu, N., Hau, L. N., Ngo, L. V., Bucic, T., & Cuong, P. H. (2016). Outcome versus process value in service delivery. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 30(6), 630-642.
- [20] Madhani, P. M. (2019). Rewards strategy: A key driver of service–profit chain. *Compensation & Benefits Review*, 51(4), 162-172.
- [21] Pratten, J. D. (2003). The importance of waiting staff in restaurant service. *British Food Journal*, 105(11), 826-834.
- [22] Ryu, K., & Han, H. (2011). New or repeat customers: How does physical environment influence their restaurant experience? *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 30(3), 599-611.
- [23] Sthapit, E., & Jiménez-Barreto, J. (2018). Sharing in the host–guest relationship: perspectives on the Airbnb hospitality experience. *Anatolia*, 29(2), 282-284.