

INFLUENCE OF THE SERVICE QUALITY OF A CHRISTIAN-AFFILIATED GUESTHOUSE ON CUSTOMER CHOICE BEHAVIOR IN NAIROBI COUNTY

^{1*}Dorothy K. Nyaga, ²Dr. Peter Muchai, PhD & ³Dr. Susan Laimaru, PhD

^{1,2,3}Department of Hospitality and Tourism, Kenya Methodist University

*Corresponding author email: dknyaga57@gmail.com

Publication Date: August, 2025

ABSTRACT

Purpose: The study sought to examine the influence of service quality on customer choice behavior in Christian-affiliated guesthouses (CAGs) in Nairobi County, Kenya. It aimed to determine how the dimensions of service quality—tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy—shape guests' decisions, with the goal of providing actionable strategies for improving guest attraction and retention in faith-based hospitality settings.

Methodology: The study adopted a descriptive survey research design targeting 13 CAGs registered with the Christian Guest Houses Association of Kenya. The population comprised 723 respondents, including general managers, supervisors, and guests. A census was used for managers and supervisors, while simple random sampling yielded 252 guest respondents. Data were collected using closed and open-ended questionnaires and interview schedules. Reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha (overall $\alpha = 0.779$), and validity was established through piloting. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS to generate means, standard deviations, and regression outputs, while qualitative data were thematically analyzed.

Results: The study found that service quality significantly and positively influences customer choice behavior ($\beta = 5.860$, $p < 0.05$). Responsiveness emerged as the most influential dimension (mean = 4.27), indicating that promptness in attending to guests' needs is a key determinant of choice. Tangibility scored the lowest (mean = 3.17), suggesting that physical aspects were less critical than the staff's ability to deliver timely, reliable, and personalized services. Qualitative responses highlighted that guest valued a combination of bed-and-breakfast offerings, internet availability, modern room amenities, and attentive staff. The results confirmed that as service quality improves, customer attraction and loyalty increase.

Conclusion: The study concludes that service quality is a central determinant of customer choice in Christian-affiliated guesthouses. Promptness, reliability, and attentiveness are more critical to guests than physical infrastructure. High service standards, characterized by empathy and assurance, strengthen customer trust and repeat patronage. Tangible aspects, while important, play a secondary role in influencing choice.

Recommendation: CAG management should implement service protocols emphasizing prompt response, reliability, and personalized attention to guests' needs. Policies should be developed to collect and act upon guest feedback, enabling continuous improvement. Regular staff training should be conducted to enhance interpersonal skills, problem-solving abilities, and attention to detail. Investing in service quality improvement will strengthen competitiveness and customer loyalty in the faith-based hospitality sector.

Keywords: *Service Quality, Christian-Affiliated, Quest house, Customer Choice Behavior, Nairobi County.*

INTRODUCTION

Christian-affiliated guesthouses offer affordable and quality accommodation facilities to meet the ever-increasing demand in the tourism sector. In Christian-affiliated guesthouses, customer choice behavior was affected by a number of traits reliant on the period and purpose of the visit (Gnanapala, 2015). Such attributes included both tangible and intangible service aspects. Tangible services included quality food and beverage services, while intangible services included clean, comfortable, and safe guest rooms, security and safety, accessibility, values that promoted their faith, and, above all, fair rates that favored their budget. The key component for a hotel to retain its customers was to provide better convenience during the service process (Bekele, 2020). Abraham (2015) described service convenience as "being aware of the effort and time spent for customers to purchase or accept service." Al-Rousan, Ramzi, and Badaruddin (2010) used financial effects theory to describe the multidimensional aspects of service convenience, which included temporal convenience, spatial convenience, application convenience, and implementation convenience. Abraham (2015) categorized convenience into five categories: convenience of choice, convenience of access, convenience of transaction, convenience of advantages, and convenience after benefits. He explained that service inconvenience could influence a customer's choice of guesthouse. Therefore, guesthouse service providers had to be aware of the benefits of ease for client value and loyalty.

According to Ananth *et al.* (2011), service quality consisted of five components: tangible things, dependability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Most hospitality visitors considered reliability to be the most important aspect of service excellence. Customers who experienced a high level of service convenience were more likely to be satisfied with the service provider and to want to return. Arghutashvili and Gogochuri (2019) asserted that accommodation facilities designed to be handled as guest homes had to include common areas and an openly accessible phone or cell phone accessible to visitors in every building. In guest residences, a single bedroom's minimum floor area had to be eight square meters and be equipped with a bathtub. Rooms with two or three beds had to have twelve square meters of floor area at a minimum (plus four-square meters for each additional bed) and a shower. It also encompassed various forms of tourist activities with comparable features to the food and beverage served in small hotels (Weng & Wang, 2019). Churches in Nairobi, in particular, responded by providing quality, comfortable, and reasonably priced accommodation facilities

to both local and international religious tourists, who could not afford accommodation in star-rated tourist hotels.

Problem Statement

Despite a reasonable determination through several religious organizations in Nairobi County to invest in the guesthouse business, the average occupancy percentage in these guesthouses over the last three years was not encouraging (Mutinda, 2020). This resulted in a detrimental tendency and a dramatic drop in guesthouse space occupancy, leading to the underutilization of accommodation facilities. Additionally, this resulted in revenue loss and low organizational productivity. Existing studies on guesthouses in Kenya, and specifically in Christian-affiliated guesthouses, mainly focused on general marketing issues such as business promotion strategies, business challenges, and solutions during and after COVID-19, and their contribution to the overall hospitality and tourism industry without considering the specific attributes that led to customer attraction and retention. This implied that no research had assessed the attributes and customer choice behavior in these guesthouses. This study, therefore, aimed to assess the relationship between the price tariffs of a Christian-affiliated guesthouse and customer choice behavior in Nairobi County. The study aimed to assess the relationship between the price tariffs of a Christian-affiliated guesthouse and customer choice behavior in Nairobi County.

Research Hypothesis

H₀1: The service quality of a CAG did not significantly affect customer choice behavior in Nairobi County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Consumer Behavior Theory in the Hotel Industry. According to this concept, a consumer's desire, influence, and interest were the main triggers for the creation of stimuli (Cantalops & Salvi, 2014). These triggers compelled the customer to begin gathering data on the goods and/or services offered and matching them to their needs. This was because customer preferences for various goods and services were impacted by a number of variables considered in purchasing decision procedures. The service quality was the phenomena of a product or service after it had been purchased. This theory allowed for the following modeling of customer choice decision-making in hotels.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey research design was used on a target population of the study comprising 13 Christian Affiliated Guest houses registered with the Christian Guest Houses Association of Kenya (CGHAK) in Nairobi County. The total number of respondents was 723, including all guesthouse general managers (13), two supervisors (Front Office and Food and Beverage Supervisors) from each guesthouse (26), and all customers based on the average occupancy (684). A census sampling method was used to select guesthouse managers (13) and supervisors (26). Further, the random sampling method was used to obtain the 252 customer respondents. Closed and open-ended questionnaires were used to obtain data from 252 CAG guests while an interview schedule was used to obtain data from 26 CAG supervisors and 13 CAG general managers. For piloting, this study used one randomly selected CAG (10%) in Kiambu and obtained 1 manager, 2 supervisors, and 25 guests (10%) as respondents. Cronbach alpha was used to measure reliability. For validity, the instrument was piloted before the actual data collection process. Quantitative data such as mean and standard deviation was analyzed using SPSS whereas thematic method was used to analyze qualitative data. Data was presented using tables and figures.

FINDINGS

Response Rate

The study had sampled 13 guesthouse managers, 26 supervisors, and 252 guests making a total sample size of 285. Table 1 provides their response rate.

Table 1: Response Rate

Sample Category	Expected Response	Actual Response	Percentage
Managers	13	13	100.0%
Supervisors	26	26	100.0%
Guests	252	207	82.1%
Total	285	246	86.3%

Source: Survey Data (2024)

Table 1 shows that in all categories of respondents, the response rate was above 70%. Cumulatively, the response rate was 86.3% (252 of 285). This response rate, according to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), surpassed the suggested minimum sample size, which is 70%. Creswell and Port (2017) also admitted that a response rate of at least 70% is a good

representation of a targeted population. Since the sample was sufficient, it implied that inferences about population characteristics can be made based on this data.

Reliability Results

For piloting, this study used one randomly selected CAG (10%) and obtained 1 manager, 2 supervisors, and 25 guests (10%) as respondents. The results are in Table 2.

Table 2: Reliability Results

Study Variable	No. of Items	Alpha Score (α)
Service Quality	5	0.735
Customer Choice Behavior	11	0.824
Average Instrument Reliability		0.779

Table 2 shows that all indicators in each study variable were reliable since all the alpha values were greater than 0.7. Further, it can be seen that even in the overall instrument reliability, the alpha value is 0.779, an indication that the overall instrument was reliable.

Results on Guesthouse Choice Behavior

Behavior of customers in choosing a Christian-affiliated guesthouse was measured using some key attributes of Christian-affiliated guesthouses and how vital they are in attracting guests. The extent of influence was measured on a continuous scale of “1 = 0-5%”, “2 = 5%-10%”, “3 = 10%-15%”, “4 = 15%-20% and “5 = Above 20%” was used. The scale showed the extent to which the specified sub-indicators have influenced the decision of guests to choose that particular guesthouse. Mean ratings and the corresponding standard deviations were also obtained and a summary of the responses was shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Responses on Guesthouse Choice Behavior

Indicators	Min	Max	Mean	SD	CSD
Cost and Price Dimension					
Accommodation costs	1	4	1.62	.766	0.473
Value for money	1	5	2.19	.622	0.284
Mode of payment	1	4	2.40	.681	0.284

Indicators	Min	Max	Mean	SD	CSD
Availability of various accommodation packages	1	4	2.23	.587	0.263
Universality of currency used	1	4	2.32	.868	0.374
Average			2.15	0.705	0.328
Attributes Satisfaction					
General guesthouse ambience	1	4	2.32	.868	0.374
Variety of adjacent attractions	1	5	2.19	.622	0.284
Personal safety and security	1	4	1.78	.643	0.361
General cleanliness and hygiene	1	4	2.23	.587	0.263
Accessibility	1	4	1.62	.766	0.473
General service quality	1	4	2.40	.681	0.284
Average			2.09	0.695	0.332
Overall Average			2.12	.700	.330

Table 3 indicates coefficient of standard deviation, it can be observed that value for money, mode of payment, and availability of various accommodation packages had almost similar levels of uniformity in responses. Coincidentally, even the mean ratings are not wide apart from one another. This means that in terms of the weights of the influences, respondents felt that the three sub-indicators have the same weights in influencing customer's guesthouse choice behavior. Nevertheless, high variation in the responses was noted in accommodation cost as a sub-indicator (CSD = 1.473) and universality of currency used (CSD = 0.374).

Generally, it can also be seen in attribute satisfaction that general service quality, general guesthouse ambience, and general cleanliness and hygiene are very key in influencing customer's guesthouse choice behavior. This is due to the generally high mean scores that these variables exhibit. A measure of uniformity of the responses, however, reveals that high uniformity was noted in general cleanliness and hygiene (CSD = 0.263), general service quality (CSD = 0.284), and variety of adjacent attractions (CSD = 0.284). Nevertheless, from the average ratings for the two dimensions, a similar trend can be observed. In sum, using the overall average, it can be observed that all the indicators influenced customer's guesthouse choice behavior by at least 10% as shown by mean rating of 2.12.

Responses to Service Quality

Service quality was measured using five indicators, which were Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy. Tangibility focused on physical facilities, personnel, equipment and appearance of communication materials. Reliability measured the ability to perform the promised service accurately and dependably. Responsiveness focused on the promptness of service provision and willingness to assist guests. Assurance, on the other hand, measured the ability of employees in conveying trust and confidence and the general knowledge and courtesy. Empathy, as the last dimension in this variable, focused on the overall caring and individualized attention customers receive from the guesthouse. Table 4 provides the results.

Table 4: Responses on Service Quality

Indicators	Min	Max	Mean	SD	CSD
Tangibility	2	5	3.17	.481	0.152
Reliability	2	5	3.77	.647	0.172
Responsiveness	3	5	4.27	.791	0.185
Assurance	2	5	3.73	.764	0.205
Empathy	2	5	4.02	.812	0.202
Average			3.79	0.699	0.184

Results in Table 4 reveals that the mean scores on the statements ranged in value from 3.17 to 4.27. The small range shows that the five indicators are almost equivalent in terms of the weights. Nonetheless, Tangibility had the least mean score (= 3.17) while Responsiveness had the highest mean score (4.27).

This could be evidence that the most important thing that guests are always after is the readiness and/or promptness of their needs being tended to. This is still a confirmation that apart from the actual rates being charged, there are more important factors that the guesthouses should focus on. The overall mean rating (= 3.79) is still implying that service quality, as a whole, is key in influencing behavior of a customer to choose a particular Christian affiliated guesthouse. The highest homogeneity of responses was observed in Tangibility (CSD = .152 or equivalently 15.2%), while the least homogeneity was observed in Assurance (CSD = .205 or equivalently 20.5%).

Qualitative Analysis

The first question required them to list the attributes in Christian-affiliated guesthouses that influenced customers' choice behavior. The respondents named the services offered, an attitude of workers, prices of rooms, serenity of the environment, and referral rates of the guest houses. Comparatively, Bekele (2020) noted that quality of services was a major factor to be considered by clients. Additionally, Baruca and Civer (2012) noted that aspects such as room prices, referrals, and attitude of staff enabled clients to decide on whether they would utilize the guest house services. Further, Cantallops and Salvi (2014) linked room-seeking behaviors to be closely associated with how modern the rooms were.

The second question required them state on the services offered, the respondents indicated that they preferred guest houses which offered a combination of bed and breakfast, while others preferred the ones that had internet, hot water and modernity of the rooms. A respondent revealed that,

“On thing that guests check is whether the rooms have modern facilities such as state-of-the-art beds and interior deco”

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis about significance of the influence of Service Quality was stated as follows:

H₀₁: Service quality of a CAG does not significantly affect customer's choice behavior in Nairobi County

Table 5: Regression Coefficients

Regression Coefficients				
	Beta	Std. Error	t-statistics	Sig.
(Constant)	0.051	0.057	0.895	.992
Service Quality (X2)	5.860	1.003	5.842	.000

The regression coefficients section shows that service quality was significant since the ($\beta = 5.860$) and p-values were less than 0.05. It implied that the model correctly fitted the data collected and described how service quality influenced customers' guesthouse choice behavior.

In testing H₀₁, the p – value for Service Quality in Table 5 was used, which was 0.000 with a corresponding standard error of 1.003 and t-statistics of 5.842. The positive regression coefficient value 5.86 implies that Service Quality, as a predictor variable, positively influences

customer's guesthouse choice behavior. That is, improvement in Service Quality by one unit in a guesthouse enhances or attracts a customer towards that specific guesthouse by 5.86 units.

Now, using the corresponding p-value for Service Quality, the observed p-value is less than 0.05 ($0.000 < 0.05$). Consequently, the null hypothesis H_{02} was rejected. This decision implied that Service Quality has significant positive influence on the behavior of a customer in choosing a Christian affiliated guesthouse. That is, as service quality in these guesthouses are improved, customers are more likely to get attracted and remain loyal. A similar inference can be made by comparing the t-statistics (5.842) and the tabulated t-score (1.968). Using t-test, the decision rule is to reject the null hypothesis of no significant influence if absolute value of the observed t-statistics is greater than the tabulated t-value. Since 5.86 is greater than 1.968, the null hypothesis H_{02} was rejected. This implied that there is a significant relationship between Service Quality and Customer's Choice Behavior. Thus, based on the inferences on the two tests, there is strong evidence that Service Quality is very key in influencing behavior of customers in choosing a Christian affiliated guesthouse.

Therefore, the quality of service offered at CGAs enabled the guests gauge on critical factors such as reliability, responsiveness, accuracy and empathy. This is because, a guest can only be sure to get the sought after satisfaction, if the services provided are as promised or expected. Comparatively, Cohen *et al.*, (2014) also found a positive influence of service quality with consumer behaviour and noted that local and international tourists were able to plan for various tourism activities, if they were sure of what to expect on quality of services and how much they would spend in key aspects such as accommodation. Therefore, the availability of quality assurance enabled them make decisions on whether they were willing to spend as much on a specific guest house during their visit to various tourism sites.

SUMMARY

The findings indicated that the guests are always after is the readiness and/or promptness of their needs being tended to. This was still a confirmation that apart from the actual rates being charged, there were more important factors that the guesthouses focused on. The overall mean rating (= 3.79) implied that service quality, as a whole, was key in influencing behavior of a customer to choose a particular Christian affiliated guesthouse. This could be evidence that the most important thing that guests are always after is the readiness and/or promptness of their needs being tended to. This is still a confirmation that apart from the actual rates being charged, there are more important factors that the guesthouses should focus on. The overall mean rating

(= 3.79) is still implying that service quality, as a whole, is key in influencing behavior of a customer to choose a particular Christian affiliated guesthouse. The highest homogeneity of responses was observed in Tangibility (CSD = .152 or equivalently 15.2%), while the least homogeneity was observed in Assurance (CSD = .205 or equivalently 20.5%). In testing H_{01} , the p – value for Service Quality in Table 5 was used, which was 0.000 with a corresponding standard error of 1.003 and t-statistics of 5.842. The positive regression coefficient value 5.86 implies that Service Quality, as a predictor variable, positively influences customer's guesthouse choice behavior.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings/ the study concludes that service quality had a positive influence on customer choice behavior. This was noted through key aspects like how quick the staff were to offer services at the request of the guests mattered a lot. Additionally, the willingness to listen attentively to guests wishes and offer reliable solutions, assured the guests that they were indeed in the right place. However, the quality of services was not much affected by the tangibility of services since what mattered most to the clients is the ability of the guest houses to offer quick solutions to their needs as at the time they are hosted by the guest houses.

RECOMMENDATION

The recommendations made on service quality are that the service providers should ensure that they have a working conduct that promotes reliability, attention to detail and promptness towards the wishes of the guests. This would enhance quality of the services they provide to the guests. Additionally, the management should develop policy structure that enables the guests to provide their comments on the quality of the services offered. This would enable the management get feedback on the quality of services offered by its staff to prompt actions such as training on areas of weakness.

References

Abraham, G. (2015). *Service quality and customer satisfaction in hotel industry: The case of three-star hotels in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia* [Master's Thesis, Addis Ababa University]. Ethiopia.<https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Service-Quality-and-Customer-Satisfaction-in-Hotel-Egziabher/690e38761c321e21081b3b788fe83d7073b1f1f2>

- Al-Rousan, M. R., & Mohammed, B. (2010). Customer loyalty and the influences on service quality: The case study of five-star hotels in Jordan. *International Journal of Human and Social Sciences*, 5(13), 886-892.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/284261536_Customer_loyalty_and_the_impacts_of_service_quality_The_case_of_five_star_hotels_in_Jordan
- Ananth, A., Ramesh, R., & Prabakaran, B. (2011). Service quality gap analysis in private sector banks a customer perspective. *Internationally Indexed Journal*, 2(1), 245-252.
<https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Aanant-Anthonisamy/publication/50380283>
- Arghutashvili, V., & Gogochuri, M. (2019). Characteristics of the long-term regional tourism development in Georgia. *International Journal of Economics and Management Engineering*, 13(5), 646-650.
<https://www.researchgate.net/profile>
- Baruca, P., Z., & Civer, Z., (2012). How do guests choose a hotel. *Academic touristic*, 5(1), 75-84.
https://econpapers.repec.org/scripts/redir.pf?u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.hippocampus.si%2FISSN%2F2335-4194%2F5_1_75-84.pdf;h=repec:prp:jattij:v:5:y:2012:i:1:p:75-84
- Bekele, F. (2020). *The influence of service quality on customer satisfaction: In the case of Hyatt Regency Hotel* [Doctoral Dissertation, St. Mary's University]. Ethiopia.
<http://repository.smuc.edu.et/bitstream/123456789/5723/1>
- Cantalops, A. S., & Salvi, F. (2014). New consumer behaviour: A review of research on WOM and hotels. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 36(1), 41-51.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2013.08.007>
- Cohen, S. A., Prayag, G., & Moital, M. (2014). Consumer behaviour in tourism: Concepts, influences and opportunities. *Current issues in Tourism*, 17(10), 872-909.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2013.850064>
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approach* (2nd Ed.). Sage Publications Ltd.

- Gnanapala, W. A. (2015). Tourists' perception and satisfaction: Implications for destination management. *American Journal of Marketing Research*, 1(1), 7-19.
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311706092>
- Mugenda, O.M., & Mugenda, A.G. (2008). *Research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approach*. Act Press.
- Mutinda, J. M. (2020). *The Influence of service quality on customer satisfaction among hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya* [Doctoral dissertation, Strathmore University]. Kenya.
<https://su-plus.strathmore.edu/bitstreams/99dade9c-9d08-41a8-b967-a67193374b5d/download>
- Ramkissoon, H. (2017). Hospitality consumers' decision-making. In *The Routledge handbook of hospitality marketing* (pp. 271-283). Routledge.
- Weng, M., & Wang, X. (2019, October). Application and Research of Enterprise Reservation System in Hotels and Guesthouses in China. In *2019 3rd International Conference on Economic Development and Education Management (ICEDEM 2019)* (pp. 197-200). Atlantis Press.