

# **SERVICE QUALITY AND OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF HOTELS IN PORT HARCOURT, NIGERIA**

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## **ABSTRACT:**

**This study investigated the nexus between service quality and operational performance of hotels in Port Harcourt. Service quality was dimensioned by tangibles, assurance, responsiveness, reliability and empathy; while operational performance was measured by customer satisfaction. Cross-sectional survey design was adopted for the study. The target population comprised both the managers and customers of hotels in Port Harcourt with a sample size of 120 respondents drawn for the study. The findings indicated that service quality dimensions correlated strongly with customer satisfaction. Based on this, it was concluded that service quality dimensions are good predictors of the operational performance of Port Harcourt Hotels. The study recommended that operators of hotels in Port Harcourt should be intentional in the quality of service they render since it is capable of affecting the level of satisfaction among their customers, train their service employees on service quality delivery and pay particular attention to the empathy dimension.**

**Keywords: Customer Satisfaction, Tangibles, Assurance, Responsiveness, Reliability and Empathy.**

## **INTRODUCTION:**

Service Quality is a phrase consisting of two words - "Service and Quality". Service refers to an activity or benefit a service provider wishes to offer to a customer, client or recipient that is primarily intangible and does not manifest in the possession of anything. Quality on the other hand is a strategic component for achieving operational efficiency and better performance of any organization. Service quality therefore, is simply the ability of a service provider to meet, exceed and satisfy customers' expectations in an effective manner in which the service provider can better the performance of his organization. In the service sector such as hotels and banks, quality delivery is a significant element for a favorable performance of any organization. Operational performance is enhanced because of their understanding of quality delivery's positive correlation with profits, increase in market share, customer satisfaction, etc. Numerous earlier studies and literature had revealed that the quality delivery concept in service is dissimilar from the idea predominant in the goods sector. The motives for such a treatment are intrinsic features of services delivery like intangibility, inseparability from the provider, heterogeneous, etc. Hence there is a distinct framework for quality explication and measurement. The concept 'Service quality' is even more problematic to define and judge. Several scholars have tried to define service

quality and give groupings from a different point of view. Kotler and Armstrong (2006) defined the term 'service quality as the ability of a service organization to hang on to its customer through delivering services that meet or exceed expectations. This implies that customer retention is the best measure of service quality. Parasuraman, Zeitham<sup>1</sup> and Berryl (1998) defined service quality delivery as "the delivery of excellent or superior service relative to customer expectation."

Consumer satisfaction has been extensively studied in marketing over the last few decades. However, marketing philomaths have not yet concurred on a generally accepted definition of satisfaction. Giese and Cote (2000), after conducting a review of literature and consumer interviews, defined satisfaction as a summary effective replication of varying intensity with a categorical time point of tenacity and circumscribed duration directed toward focal aspects of product acquisition and/or consumption. Consumers' satisfaction has been considered as one of the most paramount constructs (Morgan et al., 1996; McQuitty et al., 2000), and one of the main goals in marketing (Erevelles & Leavitt, 1992). Satisfaction plays a central role in marketing because it is a good presager of purchase comportment (repurchase, purchase intentions, brand choice, and switching behavior) (McQuitty et al., 2000). Customer satisfaction is a quantification of how the products and services provided by a company meet or exceed customer prospects (Fornell, 1992). As such customer satisfaction metrics betoken how prosperous an organization is at providing products and/or services to the emporium (Fornell, 1992). Customer satisfaction is formally quantified by several publicly available customer satisfaction databases including the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) in the USA and the Customer Satisfaction Barometer in Sweden

(Anderson, Fornell and Lehmann, 1994; Fornell, 1992; Fornell et al., 1996). The Data from these sources are frequently employed in empirical research studies (e.g. Anderson and Sullivan, 1993; Fornell et al., 2010). Ameliorating levels of customer satisfaction is consequential for firms due to the influence customer satisfaction has on economic performance (Fornell et al., 2006). At the microeconomic level, customer satisfaction is associated with increases in market share and profitability (Anderson, Fornell, and Lehmann, 1994; Reichheld and Sasser, 1990). Research shows that firms with higher calibers of customer satisfaction engender higher return on investment (Anderson, Fornell and Lehmann, 1994), productivity (Anderson et al., 1997), market value added (Fornell, 2001), shareholder value (Anderson et al., 2004), and stock market performance (Fornell et al., 2006). Furthermore, incrementing and maintaining high calibers of customer satisfaction enhances customer adhesion and accommodates as a safeguard against incrementing price competition (Anderson, Fornell, and Lehmann, 1994; Anderson and Sullivan, 1993). At the macroeconomic level, research indicated that aggregated customer satisfaction indices such as ACSI are vigorous soothsayers of gross domestic product and services magnification and even more vigorous presagers of personal consumption expenditure (Fornell et al., 2010).

Samaan (2011) researched the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in the banking sector in Syria. The study revealed that service quality has a direct relationship with customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Mary (2015) did a study on the assessment of service quality and customer satisfaction utilizing the Servqual model: a case study of Tanzania telecommunications company circumscribed. The study withal

showed service quality to be an astronomically immense contributor to assessing the caliber of customer satisfaction and their behavioral intentions. Though there is much literature on service quality and customer satisfaction just a quite few have directed their focus study towards the direction of the hotel industry in Port Harcourt. Ergo, this study purports to examine the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction of hotels in Port Harcourt.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW:**

### **Service Quality:**

The inception of quality is one of keen research curiosity in service and hospitality literature. The concept of service quality in the prosperity of hotel businesses cannot be dealt with without. The hotel managers need to have a good concern on exactly what the consumers want. Spotting the comprehensive expectations of consumers, the understanding of the service quality, and its importance for consumers for each precise section of this industry will certainly help supervisors and managers in the challenge of filtering the service quality (Zeithaml, 1988). Available studies on quality have mainly focused their investigation efforts on vital factors that determine quality in the industrial sector. These efforts can be traced to the manufacturing sector in the 1920s and investigations in service quality started to rise in the late 1970s in many parts of the globe (Gummesson, 1991).

Over the past three decades, especially in the developed nations, the service sector has become part of the leading economy and studies have exposed service quality as a prerequisite for success and survival in any competitive business environment, and this has increased to a great extent interest in service quality (Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman, 1996). Xia, Monroe, & Cox (2004) defined service quality as a growing personalized construct of

values and expectations in opposition to which a person grades a product or service. Gronroos (1984) explained it as the import of an assessment process, where the individual likens his or her expectations with the service he or she expected and received. Zeithaml et al. (1988) elucidated service quality as an attitude, associated but not corresponding to satisfaction and outcomes from a distinct of expectations with perceptions of performance. Johns in 1992 floodlit that quality contains chains of sub-qualities or quality characteristics. Oliva, Oliver, and MacMillan (1992) defined service quality as the customer's observation of what service ought to be may change from what they believe they will likely receive. Ideal expectations drive quality, whereas desired expectations drive satisfaction. Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman (1996) confirmed that service quality is formed by three attributes: interaction quality, physical environment quality, and outcome quality; and nine sub-attributes: attitude, behavior, expertise, ambient conditions, design, social factors, waiting time, tangibles, and valence. Kukar-Kinney, Xia, and Monroe (2007) believed that quality is related to the delivery of service according to customer expectations more than to establishment classification. Kim, Park, and Jeong, (2004) cleared that there is a misunderstanding between customer expectations and the service they receive. Kukar-Kinney, Xia, and Monroe (2007) mentioned that service quality results from associating a consumer's real experience with his or her expectation of service.

## **DIMENSIONS OF SERVICE QUALITY:**

### **Reliability:**

Reliability is regarded as the ability to execute the assured service unfailingly and correctly. In other words, reliability means, service firms' fulfilling their promises about a delivery, service provisions, problem

resolutions, and pricing. Individuals like to do business with organizations, who are trustworthy and dependable. So, it is a vital component in the service quality expectation by the individuals and their loyalty. Hence the service organizations need to be abreast of customer expectations and perception of reliability. In the case of hospitality services, the reliability dimension includes - regularity, attitude towards complaints, keeping customers informed, consistency, procedures, etc.

#### **Responsiveness:**

Responsiveness is defined as the willingness to assist customers and to offer speedy service. This service quality construct focuses on the service provider's attitude and promptness in handling customer requests, inquiries, complaints, and challenges. Responsiveness also focuses on the service provider's timeliness, availability, presence, professional commitment, etc. Responsiveness can be calculated on the extent of time customers are kept on hold for assistance, responses to questions, etc. The settings of responsiveness can be enhanced by continuously viewing the process of service quality delivery and employees' attitude towards requests of customers.

#### **Assurance:**

Assurance can be defined as an employee's acquaintance, competency, courtesy, and the ability of the organization and its workforce to inspire and build trust and confidence in their customers. This construct is important in hospitality services because customers feel undefined about their ability to assess an outcome. In hospitality services "front desk officers" play the role of a key contact person. This dimension focuses on job knowledge and skill, accuracy, courtesy, etc of

employees, and security ensured by the organization.

#### **Empathy:**

Empathy is defined as the helpful, adapted attention provided to the customers by their organization or service firms. This variable tries to send the meaning through modified or individualized services that customers are unique and special to the organization. The main focus of this service quality construct is on the variability of services that satisfies different needs of customers, individualized or personalized services, etc. In this case, the service providers need to know customers' personal needs or wants, and preferences.

#### **Tangibility:**

Tangibility is defined as the physical appearance of facilities, equipment, communication materials, and technology. All these give enough clues to customers about the quality of service of the organization. Also, this service quality construct improves the organizational image. Hence tangibility dimension is very important to business organizations and hence need to invest heavily in arranging physical facilities to appeal to their customers

#### **Operational Performance:**

Operational performance in accordance to Cho and Dansereau (2010), refers to the overall performance of an organization in contrast to its desires and objectives. In addition, Tomal and Jones (2015) define operational performance as the authentic consequences or output of a business enterprise as measured against that organization's meant outputs.

The achievable prosperity of a commercial enterprise depends on its operational performance, which betokens its capacity to efficaciously implement techniques

to obtain institutional objectives (Randeree and Al Youha, 2009). The overall performance of any organization relies upon in sizably voluminous section on the calibers of facility its bellwethers possess when it comes to enforcing strategies. Silva (2014) described the essence of management as a conditional relationship that subsists between a manager and his or her adherents. Given that there are always hurdles to attaining organizational goals, it is vital that the techniques that leaders use be bendy adequate to accommodate change. The overall performance of a business enterprise additionally depends on its employees, who are a key phase of the corporation and structure the team that works toward achieving the organization's goals

#### **Customer Satisfaction:**

The literature on consumer satisfaction has so much expanded and has attracted much scholarly consideration. Customer satisfaction has received a wealth of attention in the literature due to its possible influence on customer purchase intentions and behavior (Anderson, et al, 1993). Empirically, the approbation of customer satisfaction is connected to consumer expectations, and expectation is defined as an overall feeling or emotion subsequent from the consumer's disconfirmed expectations (Fornell, 2010). This means that satisfaction influences an individual sense which is whether the product or service offered provided positive value (Johns,1999). In this scenario, satisfaction is perceived as a subjective feeling, which means the degree to which the consumer's expectations regarding a particular purchase encounter are perceived. Customer satisfaction may be appraised according to whether it meets a determined level of expectation. Such estimates can influence repurchase intentions (Tepeci, 999), tendency to provide recommendations (Cronin & Taylor, 1994), positive word of mouth (Lin,

2010), and repurchase intentions (Johns, 1999). Anderson et al (2004) identified customer satisfaction as an individual's awareness of the performance of a product or service in cognation to his or her prospects. In today's world of puissant competition, the key to sustainable competitive advantage is in distributing high-quality services that will in turn consequence in satisfied customers. Therefore, there is not even a bit of doubt about the importance of customer satisfaction as the final goal of service providers throughout the world.

#### **EMPIRICAL LITERATURE:**

##### **Reliability and Customer Satisfaction:**

Joy (2019) did a thesis on The Effect of service quality on customer satisfaction among hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya. The general objective of the study was to establish the influence of service quality on customer satisfaction among four-star and five-star hotels in Nairobi County. The anchoring theory of this study is the Expectation Disconfirmation Theory (EDP). This study used a descriptive research design specifically a cross-sectional survey with a sample size of 385 customers of the four-star and five-star hotels in Nairobi County. The non-probability sampling technique specifically convenience sampling was adopted in the selection of the study sample. The study collected primary data using semi-structured questionnaires. Quantitative data collected was analyzed by use of descriptive statistics, Pearson R correlation was used to measure the strength and the direction of the linear relationships between variables. Multiple regression models at a 5% level of significance were used to establish the relationship between service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction. The study found that reliability has a positive significant influence on customer satisfaction.

Michael and Khaled (2006) conducted a

study on consumer satisfaction with online health information retrieval: a model and an empirical study This research examine the area of online consumer health information retrieval as a field of study that pertains to consumers' use of the Internet to locate and evaluate health-related information for self-education and collection of facts to enable informed decision making. A study model exploring the antecedents of consumer satisfaction with online health information retrieval is developed using constructs from the Information Systems and Human-Computer Interaction bodies of literature. This model is quantitatively validated utilizing structural equation modeling techniques. The findings of this research provide evidence that content quality, technical adequacy, and trust explicate an astronomically immense proportion of the variance in consumer satisfaction with online health information retrieval for consumers. Appearance and concrete content on Web sites played a much more diminutive role in soothsaying consumer satisfaction with online health information retrieval.

#### **Responsiveness and Customer Satisfaction:**

Miklós, Hossam, János, József, and Judit (2019) did a study on the service quality dimensions that affect customer satisfaction in the Jordanian banking sector. This paper aims to examine service quality dimensions, by using the modified SERVQUAL model, which can be used to measure customer satisfaction, and the effect of these dimensions (tangibles, responsiveness, empathy, assurance, reliability, access, financial aspect, and employee competencies) on customer satisfaction in Jordanian banks. Data were also gathered from 825 customers in the Jordanian banking sector. The sample data were statistically analyzed through exploratory factor analysis by the SPSS program to determine service quality perception and

customer satisfaction.

Wael, (2015) conducted a study on the effects of service quality dimensions on customer satisfaction: an empirical investigation in Syrian mobile telecommunication services. The primary goal of this article is to analyze the effects of service quality dimensions on Customer Satisfaction in Syrian mobile phones companies, the present study strives to develop a valid and reliable instrument to measure customer perceived service quality incorporating both service delivery as well as technical quality aspects. This study was acclimated to amass data germane to the proposed hypothesis from a convenience sample of 600 mobile phone service users and was distributed among Damascus and Aleppo, a total of 460 (76.6%) valid questionnaires were amassed and utilized for analysis. Through a survey of 460 regular users of mobile services, a seven-dimensional service quality instrument is revealed, which is empirically tested for unidimensional, reliability, and construct validity utilizing confirmatory factor analysis. The findings of this study show the direct significant impact of service quality on customer satisfaction, and this effect had appeared through three dimensions (network quality, responsiveness, reliability) and there is no direct effect of other dimensions on customer satisfaction.

#### **Assurance and Customer Satisfaction:**

Khan, Mubbsher Munawar; Fasih, and Mariam (2014) did a study on. Impact of service quality on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty: Evidence from the banking sector. This research study aims to determine the satisfaction level of banking customers regarding the quality of different services provided by their bank and their adherence with the respective bank. Service quality is studied within a spectrum of different dimensions. An effort is withal made to ascertain which service

quality dimensions may enhance customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in a better way. Respondents are culled from a range of varying demographic features using stratified random sampling. Banks from both public and private sectors are selected for sampling. Survey questionnaires were distributed among 270 customers of different banks. An 83% (225 respondents) valid response rate is yielded. Descriptive statistics, one-sample t-test, correlation, and regression are used to analyze the data. Findings designate that service quality and all its dimensions have a significant and positive association with customer satisfaction and customer loyalty

#### **Empathy and Customer Satisfaction:**

Ehigie's (2018) thesis on the impact of service quality on customer satisfaction. This study aims to analyze how service quality affects customer satisfaction. To fulfill the aim of this study, an inductive qualitative research method was employed. Responsiveness, empathy, and assurance are influential to customer satisfaction. Price of service is the most influential variable on customer satisfaction. . The digitalization of taxation services fosters the likelihood of taxpayers paying their taxes on time and consistently.

Vencataya, Pudaruth, Juwaheer, and Dirpal (2019) did a Study on assessing the impact of service quality dimensions on customer satisfaction in commercial banks of Mauritius. the paper explores the impact of Service Quality (SQ) Dimensions on customer satisfaction. Using the SERVQUAL model, the paper seeks to examine the impacts of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangible aspects on customer satisfaction in banks of Mauritius. A sample of 200 banking customers was randomly selected and data were analyzed through SPSS version 22. The SERVQUAL model has been found as a reliable factor and appropriate tool to measure,

evaluate, support, and improve the quality of services in the banking industry. Results indicated that all five service quality factors have significantly positively influenced customer satisfaction in banks. Regression analysis was also conducted and depicted that empathy is a significant predictor of customer satisfaction among the five SQ dimensions. Ehigie's (2018) thesis on the impact of service quality on customer satisfaction. This study aims to analyze how service quality affects customer satisfaction. To fulfill the aim of this study, an inductive qualitative research method was employed. Responsiveness, empathy, and assurance are influential to customer satisfaction. Price of service is the most influential variable on customer satisfaction. . The digitalization of taxation services fosters the likelihood of taxpayers paying their taxes on time and consistently. Vencataya, Pudaruth, Juwaheer and Dirpal (2019) Did a Study on assessing the impact of service quality dimensions on customer satisfaction in commercial banks of Mauritius. the paper explores the impact of Service Quality (SQ) Dimensions on customer satisfaction. Utilizing the SERVQUAL model, the paper seeks to examine the impacts of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangible aspects on customer satisfaction in banks of Mauritius. A sample of 200 banking customers was desultorily culled and data were analyzed through SPSS version 22. The SERVQUAL model has been found as a reliable factor and appropriate tool to measure, evaluate, support, and improve the quality of services in the banking industry. Results indicated that all five service quality factors have significantly positively influenced customer satisfaction in banks. Regression analysis was also conducted and depicted that empathy is a significant predictor of customer satisfaction among the five SQ dimensions

**Tangibles and Customer Satisfaction:**

Abdel (2018) did a study on the impact of service quality dimensions on customer satisfaction: a field study of Arab bank in Irbid city, Jordan. This study has utilized the model of service quality (Parasuraman et al., 1988) with five dimensions to evaluate its effect on customer satisfaction among Arab bank customers in the city of Irbid. The results donate that the higher the service quality, the more the customer’s satisfaction. The Dimensions of service quality play an important role in this equation. These dimensions are tangibility, responsiveness reliability, empathy, and security. Finally, the findings indicate that these five factors have positively affected customer satisfaction. Joy (2019) did a thesis on The Effect of service quality on customer satisfaction among hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya.

The general objective of the study was to establish the influence of service quality on customer satisfaction among four-star and five-star hotels in Nairobi County. The anchoring theory of this study is the Expectation Disconfirmation Theory (EDP). This study used a descriptive research design specifically a cross-sectional survey with a sample size of 385 customers of the four-star and five-star hotels in Nairobi County. The non-probability sampling technique specifically convenience sampling was adopted in the selection of the study sample. The study collected primary data using semi-structured questionnaires. Quantitative data collected was analyzed by use of descriptive statistics, Pearson R correlation was used to measure the strength and the direction of the linear relationships between variables. Multiple regression models at a 5% level of significance were used to establish the relationship between service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction. The study found that reliability has a positive significant influence on customer satisfaction.

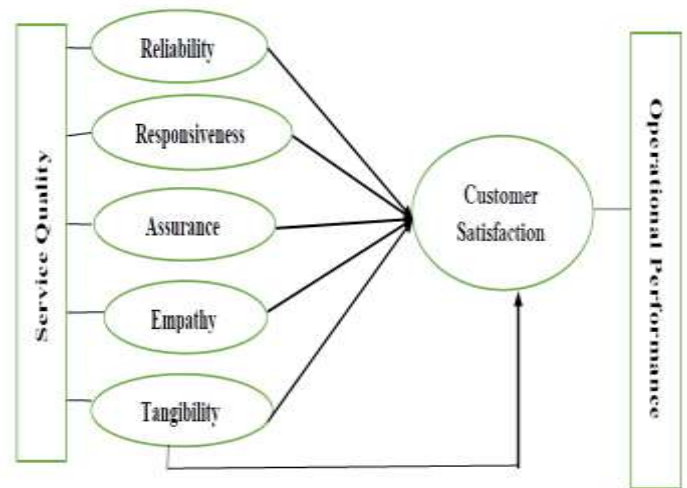


Figure 1: Operational Framework of the Study Variables

**Source:** Dimensions adopted from Parasuraman et al (2002) and Zeithaml et al., (1990) while measure was adapted from Black and Porter (1996).

**Correlation between Service quality and operational performance:**

Parasuraman et al. (1985) pointed out the similarity between provider fine (service quality) and mindset as a customer's assessment of an event. In this case, methods printed products and rate opposition we're no longer the future trend, while service quality referring to the interplay with clients to decorate the delight may want to promote operational performance. Hung (2001) considers service quality as a subjective and summary notion closely related to purchaser perception; besides service quality printed strategic earnings on each market share and return on investment and should decrease the production value and efficiently beautify organizational overall performance of the business. Rust & Oliver (2000) noted that the first-rate provider was the key thing in an enterprise, enhancing organizational overall performance in the globalized market. In different phrases, the competitive gain of an organization lied in the provision of high



service pleasant that outstanding provider best not only should beautify the Organizational profitability but ought to create a brilliant organizational overall performance for the business enterprise (Lin & Lee, 2005). Accordingly, service quality was a key success factor in operational performance (Sheng & Chen, 2010).

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**

This study adopted the cross-sectional survey research design. The target population comprised both the managers and customers of 40 hotels in Port Harcourt (hotels. ng, 2019). Simple random sampling was adopted to come about the 40 hotels which stand as the reachable respondents of the study. For inclusiveness, the sample size encompassed both managers and customers of the 40 selected hotels. Consequently, a sample size of 120 respondents was derived for the study. The Cochran’s formula for sample size determination in an unknown population was used to determine the number of customers to be sampled.

The Cochran’s formula is given as  $n = (z^2pq)/e^2$   
 Where n = sample size sought  
 Z = standard deviation for the desired confidence value  
 p = probability of percentage of negative responses  
 e = level of significance  
 When p = 0.965  
 q = 0.035  
 Z = 1.96  
 e = 0.05

The computations indicated 90.8 and rounding up to the nearest figure gives 91 as the number of customers; which when added to the 40 managers made it up to 131. Hence, 131 copies of the instrument were administered to the respondents of the selected tourism

organizations using the convenience sampling technique and sampling at least 3 respondents from each of the hotels (inclusive of the manager). Thereafter, 130 copies of the questionnaire were collected and 120 (91.6 percentage return) were found useful for data analysis. The variables were measured with 3-items each on a 5-point Likert-like scale ranging from 5 to 1 measured as follows: 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = disagree, 2 = strongly disagree and 1 = undecided. Validity of the instrument was ascertained using face and construct validity; while the reliability of the instrument was determined via the Cronbach Alpha test which reported acceptable reliability values of 0.767 responsiveness, .754 for assurance, .768 for empathy, and .776 for tangibility. The Pearson’s Product moment correlation (PPMC) was used to test the null hypothesis with the aid of SPSS version 20.0.

**RESULTS:**

This section deals with descriptive analysis. Specifically, descriptive statistical tools used are tables, frequencies, and simple percentages which are adopted for the analysis of personal data of the respondents.

Table 1: Age of the Respondents

RESPONDENTS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
20- 29 years	30	24.4 %
30-39 years	59	48.8%
40-49 years	22	18.8%
Above 50 years	9	8.1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2019.

The distribution of the respondents by age in table 1 shows that 30 respondents representing 24.4% of the total respondents were within the age of 20-29 years, 59 respondents representing 48.8% were within the age of 30-39 years, 22 respondents representing 18.8% were within the age of 40-49 years, while 9 respondents representing

8.1% of the total respondents were aged 50 years and above. This age distribution shows that majority of the respondents were within the age bracket of 30-39 years.

Table 2: Gender of the Respondents

RESPONDENTS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Male	49	40.7%
Female	71	59.3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** Field Survey 2019.

Concerning the gender of the respondents, table 2 shows that 49 respondents representing 40.7% of the total respondents were male respondents while 71 respondents representing 59.3% were female respondents. This gender distribution shows that majority of the respondents were female respondents as compared to the male respondents.

Table 3: Marital Status of the Respondents

RESPONDENTS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Single	70	56.9 %
Married	48	40.7%
divorced	2	2.4%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** Field Survey 2019.

The distribution of the respondents by marital status in table 3 shows that 70 respondents representing 56.9% of the total respondents were single, 48 respondents representing 40.7% were married, while 2 respondents representing 2.4% were divorced. This marital status distribution shows that majority of the respondents were single as compared to the married, and divorced respondents put together.

Table 4: Educational Level of the Respondents

RESPONDENTS	FREQUENC Y	PERCENTAG E (%)
O' level	7	8.1 %
NCE/OND	20	16.2%
HND/BSC	80	65.0%
MSC/MBA/MPH/LL M	13	10.6%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** Field Survey 2019.

As regards the educational level of the respondents, table 4 reveals that 7 respondents representing 8.1% of the total respondents were O' level holders, 20 respondents representing 16.2% were NCE/OND holders, 80 respondents representing 65.0% were HND/BSC holders, while 13 respondents representing 10.6% were MSC/MBA/MPH/LLM holders. This educational level distribution shows that majority of the respondents were HND/BSC holders.

### Univariate Analysis:

In this section, the analysis of the data will involve the dimensions of service quality as well as measures of operational performance

Table 5: Frequency Distribution of the Research Questions on Reliability

	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	Employees provide accurate services to customers	3.81	1.38	Accepted
2.	Employees are dependable in handling customers complaints	3.82	1.35	Accepted
3.	Employees take their time to explain issues to the customer	3.73	1.42	Accepted
4.	Record are kept confidentially	3.75	1.41	Accepted

**Source:** Field Survey, 2019.

Data in table 5 indicated that respondents subscribed to items 1 -4. The items in these areas were accepted since their mean values were above the criterion mean of 3.0. In summary, the respondents agreed that the hotels are reliable enough to meet their service demand and expectations.

**Table 6: Frequency Distribution of the Research Questions on Responsiveness**

	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
5.	Employees are ready to receive customers	3.71	1.42	Accepted
6.	The hotels keep to the time schedule given to customers	3.92	1.25	Accepted
7.	Employees pay less time to a given customer	3.63	1.46	Accepted
8.	The customers assist at odd hours in case of emergency	3.75	1.41	Accepted

**Source:** Field Survey, 2019.

Data in table 6 indicated that respondents subscribed to items 5 -8. The items in these areas were accepted since their mean values were above the criterion mean of 3.0. In summary, the respondents agreed that the hotels are responsive enough to meet their service demand and expectations.

**Table 7: Frequency Distribution of the Research Questions on Assurance**

	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
9.	Employees are courteous and friendly	3.52	1.35	Accepted
10.	Employees inspire trust and confidence in customers	3.75	1.29	Accepted
11.	Customers are willing to continue business with the hotel because of the hotel's assurance	3.77	1.12	Accepted
12.	Employees create atmosphere for customers to feel safe and relaxed	3.68	1.23	Accepted

**Source:** Field Survey, 2019

Data in table 7 indicated that respondents subscribed to items 9-12. The items in these areas were accepted since their mean values were above the criterion mean of 3.0. From this, it is evident that the respondents agreed that they are satisfied with the level of assurance of the hotels.

**Table 8: Frequency Distribution of the Research Questions on Empathy**

	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
13.	Staff ought not to be anticipated to give separate and modified attention to customers	3.88	1.38	Accepted
14.	it is impractical to anticipate workers to completely comprehend the desires of the customers	3.63	1.29	Accepted
15.	companies ought to not unavoidably have to function at hours suitable to the customers	3.72	1.39	Accepted
16.	it is irrational to anticipate workers to have the finest interests of the customers at heart	3.71	1.38	Accepted

**Source:** Field Survey, 2019.

Data in table 8 indicated that respondents subscribed to items 13-16. The items in these areas were accepted since their mean values were above the criterion mean of 3.0. Hence, it is evident that the respondents

agreed that the hotels display acceptable level of empathy.

**Table 9: Frequency Distribution of the Research Questions on Tangibility**

	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
17.	I like the service cape of this hotel	3.72	1.34	Accepted
18.	This hotel is very clean and well-arranged	3.67	1.33	Accepted
19.	The rooms in this hotel are spacious and well furnished	3.79	1.28	Accepted
20.	This hotel has up to-date equipment available for the customers use	3.77	1.30	Accepted

**Source:** Field Survey, 2019.

Data in table 9 indicated that respondents subscribed to items 17-20 as applicable. The items in these areas were accepted since their mean values were above the criterion mean of 3.0. Thus, the respondents agreed that tangibility is an important factor in their choice of a hotel.

**Table 10: Frequency Distribution of the Research Questions on Customer Satisfaction**

	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
21.	Provision of affordable pricing for goods and services always make customers come back to this hotel.	3.52	1.35	Accepted
22.	This exceeds customer expectation	3.75	1.29	Accepted
23.	Customers get value for the money they spend in this hotel	3.77	1.12	Accepted
24.	This hotel records low level of customer complaints	3.71	1.25	Accepted

**Source:** Field Survey, 2019

Table 10 indicated that respondents subscribed to items 21-24. The items in these areas were accepted since their mean values were above the criterion mean of 3.0. Therefore, the respondents agreed that they are satisfied with the services of the hotels.

## Test of Hypotheses and Discussion of Findings:

### Hypothesis 1:

H<sub>0</sub>:1 There is no significant correlation between Reliability and Customer Satisfaction

H<sub>A</sub>:1 There is a significant correlation between Reliability and Customer Satisfaction

**Correlations**

		Reliability	Customer Satisfaction
Reliability	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.883**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.001
	N	120	120
Customer Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.883**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.
	N	120	120

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From the result above, Pearson Correlation Co-efficient is 0.883 while the P. value (2-tailed) is 0.000. Since the P-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05, we, therefore, reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis. This implies that there is a significant correlation between Reliability and Customer Satisfaction. From the result above, the correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.883$ ) between Reliability and Customer Satisfaction share has a strong positive linear affiliation. The coefficient of determination ( $r^2 = 0.8$ ) indicates that 80% of customer satisfaction can be determined by the reliability of the service rendered.

The findings of hypothesis two revealed that reliability is a service quality variable that can influence customer satisfaction. This finding agrees with the findings of Wael (2015) whose study showed a direct significant impact of reliability on customer satisfaction. The study also is in line with that of Joy (2019) whose study found that reliability has a positive significant influence on customer satisfaction.

**Hypothesis 2:**

H<sub>0</sub>:2 There is no significant correlation between responsiveness and Customer Satisfaction

H<sub>A</sub>:2 There is a significant correlation between responsiveness and Customer Satisfaction

**Correlations:**

		Responsiveness	Customer Satisfaction
Responsiveness	Pearson Correlation	1	.807**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	120	120
Customer Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.807**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	120	120

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From the result above, Pearson Correlation Co-efficient is 0.807 while the P. value (2-tailed) is 0.000. Since the P-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05, we, therefore, reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis. This implies that there is a significant correlation between Responsiveness and Customer Satisfaction. From the result above, the correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.807$ ) between Responsiveness and Customer Satisfaction has a strong positive relationship. The coefficient of determination ( $r^2 = 0.65$ ) indicates that 65% of guest satisfaction can be explained by the responsiveness of the service providers. The findings of hypothesis two revealed that responsiveness as a service quality dimension has a positive effect on guest satisfaction. This finding agrees with the findings of Wael (2015) whose study showed a direct significant impact of responsiveness on customer satisfaction. The study also is in line with that of Miklós, Hossam, János, József, and Judit (2019) that found in their study that reliability is a good pointer to customer satisfaction.

H<sub>0</sub>:3 There is no significant correlation between Assurance and Customer Satisfaction

H<sub>A</sub>:3 There is a significant correlation between Assurance and Customer Satisfaction

**Correlations**

		Assurance	Customer Satisfaction
Assurance	Pearson Correlation	1	.789**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	120	120
Customer Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.789**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	120	120

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From the result above, Pearson Correlation Co-efficient is 0.789 while the P. value (2-tailed) is 0.000. Since the P-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05, we, therefore, reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis. This implies that Assurance relates significantly with Customer Satisfaction. The coefficient of determination ( $r^2 = 0.65$ ) indicates that 62% of guest satisfaction can be traced to service assurance. This finding agrees with that of Khan, Mubbsher Munawar; Fasih, Mariam (2014) whose study showed assurance and other service quality dimensions have a direct significant impact on customer satisfaction.

H<sub>0</sub>:4 There is no significant correlation between Empathy and Customer Satisfaction

H<sub>A</sub>:4 There is a significant correlation between Empathy and Customer Satisfaction

**Correlations**

		Empathy	Customer Satisfaction.
Empathy	Pearson Correlation	1	.540**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	120	120
Customer Satisfaction.	Pearson Correlation	.540**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	120	120

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From the result above, Pearson Correlation Co-efficient is 0.540 while the P.

value (2-tailed) is 0.000. Since the P-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05, we, therefore, reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis. This implies that there is a moderate affiliation between Empathy and Customer Satisfaction. From the result above, the correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.540$ ) between Empathy and Customer Satisfaction share has a strong linear affiliation. The coefficient of determination ( $r^2 = 0.2916$ ) indicates that about 30% of guest satisfaction can be explained by empathy from service providers. This finding agreed with that of Ehigie (2018) who posited in his thesis that there exists a significant correlation between empathy and customer satisfaction. Likewise, it agreed with the findings of Vencataya, Pudaruth, Juwaheer and Dirpal (2019) whose work depicted that empathy is a significant predictor of customer satisfaction.

H<sub>0</sub>:5 There is no substantial affiliation between Tangibility and Customer Satisfaction

H<sub>A</sub>:5 There is a substantial affiliation between Empathy and Customer Satisfaction.

**Correlations**

		Tangibility	Customer Satisfaction.
Tangibility	Pearson Correlation	1	.820**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	120	120
Customer Satisfaction.	Pearson Correlation	.820**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	120	120

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From the result above, Pearson Correlation Co-efficient is 0.291 while the P. value (2-tailed) is 0.000. Since the P-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05, we, therefore, reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis., the correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.820$ ) between Tangibility and Customer Satisfaction indicate a strong positive correlation. The coefficient of determination ( $r^2 = 0.67$ ) indicates that 67% of guest satisfaction

can be explained by Tangibility (service environment and staff appearance). This finding agrees with that of Wael (2015) whose study showed a direct significant impact of responsiveness on customer satisfaction. The study also agreed with Abdel (2018), who found that tangibility has a positive relationship with customer satisfaction.

#### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION:

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that the dimensions of service quality are good predictors of customer satisfaction. This implies that service quality can help hotels to satisfy their guests and thereby improve on their operational performance. Furthermore, hotel operators should be mindful of the service quality dimension they invest their resources on as the strength of relationship differs significantly. Based on these, the study recommends that:

1. Operations managers of Port Harcourt hotels should be intentional with the quality of service they render and at no point should quality be compromised.
2. They should train and retrain staff on the tenets of quality service delivery to enable them deliver top notch service to their customers at all times.
3. They should beware of those factors not captured in the model; but are capable of affecting the predictive power of the service quality dimensions on customer satisfaction.
4. Particular attention should be paid to the empathy dimension since it showed a moderate relationship, hence they should improve on their empathy variable to enhance the chances of having improved predictive power.

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