

Exploring the Relationship Between Service Management and Customer Satisfaction: A Case Study of Western Sun Hotels, Osun State

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Abstract: *The hospitality industry is highly service-driven, with service management playing a crucial role in shaping guest experiences and sustaining hotel competitiveness. In medium-scale hotels, particularly in Nigeria, challenges such as service inconsistencies, limited resources, and rising customer expectations necessitate effective management strategies. This study examined the relationship between service management practices and customer satisfaction at Western Sun Hotels, Osun State. The research problem stemmed from observed operational lapses, including delayed services and inconsistent quality, which could undermine guest satisfaction and loyalty. A descriptive research design was adopted, targeting both guests and hotel staff directly involved in service delivery. Using a multistage sampling technique, a total of 70 respondents (60 guests and 10 staff) participated. Data were collected through structured questionnaires covering demographic profiles, perceptions of service management, and satisfaction levels, with responses rated on a 4-point Likert scale. Descriptive statistics summarized respondent characteristics, while the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation tested the relationship between variables. Findings revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between service management and customer satisfaction ($r = 0.301$, $p = 0.011$), indicating that improvements in service delivery, staff professionalism, and responsiveness lead to higher guest satisfaction. The results align with existing literature on the importance of service quality dimensions in enhancing customer experiences and loyalty. The study concludes that structured and customer-focused service management is essential for sustaining repeat patronage and competitive advantage in the Nigerian hospitality sector. It recommends continuous staff training, periodic service quality assessments, and personalized guest engagement strategies to strengthen satisfaction and loyalty.*

Keywords: hospitality industry, service-driven, service management, hotel competitiveness, customer expectations, effective management strategies

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality and tourism industry is one of the most service-intensive sectors of the global economy, and within this context, service management plays a pivotal role in shaping customer experiences and influencing organizational success. Service management encompasses the strategies, processes, and practices involved in designing, delivering, monitoring, and improving services to meet or exceed customer expectations. In the hotel sector, it integrates operational efficiency with customer-focused strategies, ensuring that every interaction between staff and guests creates value for both the customer and the organization (Issau et al., 2023).

Effective service management goes beyond basic service delivery; it involves the alignment of people, technology, systems, and business processes to achieve seamless and consistent service experiences (Moodley, & Ebrahim, 2025). Key components include service design, staff training, quality control, performance monitoring, and service recovery mechanisms. In the hospitality sector; where services are intangible, perishable, and highly variable, the demand for effective service management is amplified (Kandampully, & Solnet, 2024). Unlike tangible products, services cannot be stored, and their quality depends heavily on human interaction and real-time execution, making consistency a significant challenge.

Customer satisfaction stands at the core of service-oriented industries such as hospitality. It refers to the extent to which the actual experience of a product or service meets or surpasses customer expectations. In the hotel industry, satisfaction is influenced by multiple factors, including room quality, cleanliness, amenities, staff behavior, timeliness of service, and overall ambiance. High levels of customer satisfaction contribute to repeat patronage, positive word-of-mouth referrals, and enhanced brand loyalty, while dissatisfaction can lead to customer attrition and reputational damage (Amerta, & Madhavi, 2023).

To assess customer satisfaction effectively, hotels often rely on tools such as the Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI), Net Promoter Score (NPS), and Customer Effort Score (CES). These tools provide managers with measurable indicators of service quality, enabling data-driven improvements (Baquero, 2022). In today's competitive environment, delivering consistently superior service is no longer optional, it is a necessity for survival and growth. This is particularly true for medium-scale hotels, which often face unique challenges such as limited budgets, smaller workforces, and less advanced technology compared to larger hotel chains (Porter, 2008).

In Nigeria, the hospitality industry has expanded significantly over the last two decades, driven by factors such as urbanization, increased domestic and international tourism, business travel, and educational activities (Adeola, & Ezenwafor, 2016). The South-West geopolitical zone, including Osun State, has become a hub for both leisure and business tourism due to its cultural heritage, academic institutions, and growing commercial activity. Medium-scale hotels play a critical role in this landscape by offering a balance between affordability and comfort, catering

to middle- and upper-middle-class customers who seek quality service without the premium price of luxury hotels (Elisha, 2022).

One notable example is Western Sun Hotels, located in Ede, Osun State. Strategically situated near the Federal Polytechnic, Ede, and within proximity to heritage sites such as the Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove (a UNESCO World Heritage Site), the hotel serves a diverse clientele, including business travelers, tourists, government officials, and event organizers. With over 60 well-furnished rooms, modern conference facilities, a restaurant and bar, a swimming pool, and a fitness center, Western Sun Hotels positions itself as a reputable medium-scale hotel blending modern amenities with personalized service (Wahab, & Karounwi, 2014).

Despite these strengths, the hotel operates in an increasingly competitive environment where customer expectations are rising, and online reviews can significantly influence booking decisions. Like many medium-scale hotels, Western Sun faces operational challenges, including occasional service inconsistencies, insufficient staff training, outdated facilities in certain areas, and difficulties in maintaining service quality during peak demand periods. Customer feedback has highlighted issues such as delayed room service, lapses in housekeeping, and inconsistencies in restaurant service, which underscore the importance of strengthening service management practices.

In the hospitality industry, the relationship between service management and customer satisfaction is both direct and complex. Well-managed service processes lead to more efficient operations, motivated staff, and ultimately, happier customers. Conversely, poor service management; whether due to inadequate training, insufficient resources, or lack of standard operating procedures, can quickly erode customer trust and loyalty (Oh, & Parks, 1996). For a hotel like Western Sun, where a significant portion of clientele are repeat guests or referrals, maintaining high satisfaction levels is crucial for long-term competitiveness.

This study focuses on exploring how service management practices at Western Sun Hotels influence customer satisfaction. While the specific objective is to

- i. investigate the relationship between service management and customer satisfaction in Western Sun Hotels, Osun State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Underpinning

This study is underpinned by the SERVQUAL Model developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988), which provides a systematic approach for measuring service quality by identifying and evaluating gaps between customer expectations and perceptions. SERVQUAL identifies five core dimensions of service quality: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. In the hospitality industry, tangibles refer to the physical facilities, décor, cleanliness, and appearance of staff; reliability denotes the ability to perform promised services dependably and accurately; responsiveness captures the willingness to help customers promptly; assurance relates to employees' competence, courtesy, and ability to inspire trust; and empathy reflects personalized attention and care given to customers (Shahin et al., 2014).

For a medium-scale hotel such as Western Sun Hotels, these dimensions directly align with the operational components of service management, such as housekeeping, reception, and restaurant operations. The SERVQUAL model is particularly suitable for this study because it bridges the operational aspects of service management with the perceptual experiences of guests (Forde, 2014). By evaluating gaps between what guests expect and what they perceive, the model allows the researcher to identify specific areas of service delivery that influence customer satisfaction positively or negatively. For instance, a guest who perceives housekeeping to be prompt and thorough may rate responsiveness and reliability highly, whereas delays in food service might indicate a gap in reliability or responsiveness.

While SERVQUAL offers a measurement framework, the Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory (EDT) proposed by Oliver (1980) provides the explanatory foundation for understanding how customer satisfaction is formed in this context. EDT posits that customer satisfaction results from a cognitive comparison between pre-service expectations and actual service performance. When the perceived performance of a service exceeds prior expectations, positive disconfirmation occurs, leading to high satisfaction. Conversely, if performance falls short of expectations, negative disconfirmation occurs, resulting in dissatisfaction. If performance matches expectations, confirmation takes place, generally leading to neutral or moderate satisfaction (Jia et al., 2024).

In the case of Western Sun Hotels, guests may arrive with specific expectations shaped by advertisements, online reviews, personal recommendations, or prior visits. Their post-stay evaluations are then influenced by how well the hotel's service management practices align with or deviate from these expectations. For example, if guests expect clean, well-maintained rooms and courteous reception staff, and these are delivered consistently; confirmation or positive disconfirmation will occur, fostering satisfaction and potentially encouraging repeat patronage. However, if promised amenities are unavailable or service delivery is inconsistent, negative disconfirmation is likely, diminishing satisfaction and potentially harming the hotel's reputation.

Integrating SERVQUAL and EDT offers a robust theoretical framework for this study. SERVQUAL provides the operational lens, enabling the measurement of service quality dimensions as part of service management practices, while EDT offers the psychological explanation of how these measured service quality outcomes translate into customer satisfaction levels. Together, these theories support a comprehensive investigation into the relationship between service management and customer satisfaction at Western Sun Hotels, ensuring that the study captures both the tangible operational factors and the cognitive-emotional processes influencing guest perceptions. This dual-theory approach not only enriches the analysis but also enhances the practical implications for hotel managers seeking to improve service delivery and strengthen customer loyalty in a competitive hospitality market.

Empirical Review

Several empirical studies have explored the relationship between service management and customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry, with findings consistently showing that

effective service management significantly enhances guest experiences. For instance, Akude (2022) examined the effect of service quality dimensions on customer satisfaction in selected three-star hotels in Ghana using the SERVQUAL model. Their results revealed that tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy were all positively correlated with guest satisfaction, with responsiveness and assurance emerging as the most influential predictors. Similarly, Tijani et al. (2012) investigated service delivery practices in Nigerian hotels and found that well-coordinated housekeeping, front-desk efficiency, and restaurant services had a direct and measurable impact on customer loyalty.

In another study, Ochoche (2025) analyzed service management in Lagos hotels using a quantitative survey of 210 guests. The findings showed that consistency in service delivery and staff professionalism contributed to higher repeat patronage, while poor service recovery mechanisms often led to negative reviews. This aligns with Flores et al. (2025), who found in an Egyptian hotel context that employee attitude and promptness in addressing guest complaints strongly influenced satisfaction scores. Moreover, Sigauke (2023), in a Zimbabwean study, reported that training hotel employees on customer engagement techniques significantly improved customer satisfaction ratings over a six-month evaluation period.

Research has also emphasized the contribution of specific hotel departments to overall customer satisfaction. For example, Baloroo (2015) assessed the role of housekeeping, reception, and food and beverage services in guest satisfaction within medium-scale hotels in Accra. Their study revealed that cleanliness and comfort from housekeeping ranked highest in importance to guests, followed by courteous and efficient reception services, while food quality from restaurants acted as a key driver for repeat visits. Likewise, Adebayo (2023) in Nigeria discovered that the reception desk serves as the primary determinant of first impressions, while restaurant service quality has a lasting influence on guests' likelihood to recommend a hotel. Furthermore, studies have shown that service management impacts not only satisfaction but also overall hotel performance. Mahjub (2024) examined Bangladeshi hotels and found that effective service management practices reduced customer complaints by 28% and increased booking rates by 15% over one year. These findings are in line with recent evidence from Ajiboye et al. (2023), who noted that hotels in Southwest Nigeria that implemented structured service quality monitoring systems achieved higher customer satisfaction scores compared to those with unstructured systems (Akintade et al. 2025).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a descriptive research design, which is considered the most appropriate for systematically collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data regarding existing conditions and the relationship between service management practices and customer satisfaction in a real-life setting (Gliner et al., 2011). The design is particularly suitable because it allows for the detailed exploration of both hotel staff and guest perspectives on the nature, quality, and effectiveness of service management, as well as how these services influence customer satisfaction at Western Sun Hotel, Ede, Osun State.

The population of the study comprises of two main groups: male and female guests who have recently stayed at the hotel and are in a position to evaluate the quality of services received, and male and female hotel staff directly involved in service delivery. The staff category includes personnel from housekeeping, reception, and restaurant departments; departments that represent the operational backbone of the hotel's service management. Guests serve as the recipients of these services, while the staff are the providers; thus, their experiences and perceptions are central to assessing both the quality-of-service management and the resulting satisfaction levels.

A sample size of seventy (70) respondents was drawn from the population, consisting of both guests and staff. A multistage sampling technique was employed. In the first stage, purposive sampling was used to select ten (10) staff members from key service departments, ensuring that those most directly engaged in service delivery were included. In the second stage, convenience sampling was applied to select sixty (60) guests who are available and willing to participate during the data collection period. This approach is common in hospitality research, as guest turnover is frequent, and convenience sampling provides a practical means of engaging willing respondents. The accessible population was thus limited to guests present at the hotel and staff on duty during the study period, making the process realistic while ensuring relevant data is obtained.

The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed to generate quantitative data from both guests and staff. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. Section A captured demographic information such as age, gender, type of guest (e.g., business or leisure), and length of stay. Section B, targeted at staff, assessed service management practices by evaluating factors such as the efficiency of housekeeping, professionalism at the reception, quality and timeliness of restaurant services, staff responsiveness, communication skills, availability of resources, and adequacy of staff training. Section C, aimed at guests, measured customer satisfaction in terms of cleanliness, check-in experience, food quality, whether services met or exceeded expectations, willingness to return, and overall impressions of service quality. Responses in Sections B and C was measured using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from "Very Dissatisfied" (1) to "Very Satisfied" (4).

Data collection was carried out using both physical and online methods. Hard copies of the questionnaire were distributed in person to guests currently staying at the hotel and to staff members on duty in the key service departments. For respondents unavailable for face-to-face contact, an online version was administered via email, WhatsApp, or Google Forms. All participants were assured of confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation, and informed consent was obtained in line with ethical research protocols.

For data analysis, descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages was used to summarize demographic characteristics, while means and standard deviations was used to described perceptions of service management and satisfaction levels. Inferential statistics, specifically the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, was applied to test the relationship between service management and customer satisfaction.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristic of Respondents**

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	50	71.4%
	Female	20	28.6%
Age	Under 20 years	2	2.9%
	21-30 years	2	2.9%
	31-40 years	11	15.7%
	41-50 years	25	35.7%
	51 years and above	30	42.9%
Educational Qualification	Primary	3	4.3%
	SSCE	8	11.4%
	OND/NCE	33	47.1%
	HND/BSc	25	35.7%
	MSc/PhD	1	1.4%
Status	Guest	60	85.7%
	Hotel Staff	10	14.3%
How often they use the Hotel	First Time	19	27.1%
	Occasionally	17	24.3%
	Frequently	34	48.6%

Source: Field Survey Result, 2025

The demographic characteristics of respondents, as presented in Table 4.1, provide a comprehensive overview of the profile of participants in the study. In terms of gender distribution, the majority of respondents were male, accounting for 71.4% (50 respondents), while females made up 28.6% (20 respondents). This suggests a significant male dominance in the sample, which may indicate either a higher proportion of male guests and staff in the hotel or a greater willingness among men to participate in the survey.

The age distribution reveals that the largest group of respondents fell within the category of 51 years and above, representing 42.9% (30 respondents). This was followed by those aged 41–50 years at 35.7% (25 respondents), while respondents aged 31–40 years constituted 15.7% (11 respondents). Younger age groups were sparsely represented, with only 2.9% (2 respondents each) for both the under-20 and 21–30-year categories. The dominance of older respondents suggests that the hotel attracts a more mature clientele, possibly due to its service offerings, pricing, or location.

Regarding educational qualifications, a substantial portion of the respondents held OND/NCE qualifications, representing 47.1% (33 respondents). This was followed by those with HND/BSc degrees at 35.7% (25 respondents). Respondents with only SSCE made up 11.4% (8 respondents), while a small fraction had primary education (4.3%, or 3 respondents). Only 1.4% (1 respondent) possessed an MSc or PhD. This distribution suggests that the majority of the respondents are moderately educated, which could influence their expectations and perceptions of service quality.

The status of respondents shows that the majority were guests, making up 85.7% (60 respondents), while hotel staff accounted for 14.3% (10 respondents). This distribution indicates that the study's findings are largely reflective of customer perspectives, though some insights from staff were also incorporated. When asked how often they use the hotel, the largest proportion (48.6%, or 34 respondents) reported using the hotel frequently. Occasional users accounted for 24.3% (17 respondents), while 27.1% (19 respondents) were first-time users. The high proportion of frequent users suggests a strong base of repeat customers, which could indicate a level of satisfaction with the services offered.

Table 4.2: Summary of Correlation Result on the Relationship between Service Management and Customer Satisfaction

	SM_Avg	CS_Avg
SM_Avg	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	N	70
CS_Avg	Pearson Correlation	0.301*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.011
	N	70

Source: Field Survey Result, 2025

The results in Table 4.2 reveal that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between service management practices (SM_Avg) and customer satisfaction (CS_Avg), with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.301 and a p-value of 0.011 ($p < 0.05$). This indicates that improvements in service management practices are associated with corresponding increases in customer satisfaction levels. The strength of the relationship, while moderate, suggests that effective implementation of service management practices such as prompt service delivery, employee professionalism, and responsiveness to customer needs plays a meaningful role in shaping guests' satisfaction. The positive coefficient further supports the notion that as hotels enhance their service management quality, guests are more likely to report higher satisfaction with their overall experience.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The demographic profile of respondents, as revealed in this study, provides insight into the composition of individuals whose perceptions shaped the findings. The predominance of male respondents (71.4%) aligns with the observations of Otado (2022), who found that male guests often dominate hotel patronage in certain Nigerian cities, possibly due to work-related travel patterns. This male dominance in participation could also reflect a cultural tendency for men to engage more in survey-based research. In contrast, the underrepresentation of female respondents may point to differences in visitation frequency or willingness to participate in hospitality research, a trend also reported by Pinar et al. (2011) in their study of hotel service quality in the Southwest.

The age distribution results, with a significant proportion (78.6%) of respondents aged 41 years and above, suggest that the hotel attracts an older and possibly more financially stable clientele. This finding mirrors the work of Molla (2015), who noted that mature customers are often drawn to medium- and high-scale hotels because of their preferences for comfort, security, and premium services. The minimal representation of younger customers may also imply that the hotel's pricing, ambience, or service mix is less targeted at youth markets.

In terms of educational qualifications, the fact that nearly half of respondents (47.1%) held OND/NCE and over a third (35.7%) held HND/BSc degrees suggests that most patrons and staff have moderate to high education levels. This resonates with the study by Anyim et al. (2020), which observed that educated guests tend to have higher expectations of service quality and are more articulate in evaluating their hotel experiences (Tafera & Migiro, 2017). This demographic profile also implies that respondents are likely to be discerning and capable of critically assessing service management practices.

The finding that most respondents (85.7%) were guests, with only 14.3% being hotel staff, means the study predominantly reflects the consumer perspective. This aligns with the approach of Plakoyiannaki et al. (2008), who argued that customer-oriented data are critical for accurately gauging satisfaction levels, although staff perspectives provide valuable operational insights. Furthermore, the high proportion of frequent users (48.6%) is consistent with the loyalty patterns discussed by Hu et al. (2019), who emphasized that repeat patronage in the hospitality industry often stems from satisfactory prior experiences.

Regarding the relationship between service management practices and customer satisfaction, the study found a positive and statistically significant correlation ($r = 0.301$, $p = 0.011$). Although moderate in strength, this relationship indicates that improvements in service delivery, staff professionalism, and responsiveness have a meaningful effect on guest satisfaction. This finding supports the SERVQUAL model's assertion (Zeithaml et al., 1996) that service quality dimensions directly influence satisfaction outcomes. It also aligns with the Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory (Oliver et al., 1994), which posits that satisfaction results when actual service performance meets or exceeds customer expectations.

The results are in line with previous empirical studies. For example, Kleynhans, & Zhou (2012) found a significant positive relationship between service quality management and customer satisfaction in South African hotels, while Tefera, & Govender (2016) reported similar outcomes in the Nigerian hospitality sector. Both studies emphasized that customer satisfaction is not merely a byproduct of basic service provision but is significantly shaped by how services are managed, from front-desk efficiency to housekeeping quality.

However, the moderate correlation value in the present study suggests that while service management practices are important, other factors, such as hotel facilities, location, pricing, or brand reputation, may also play substantial roles in influencing satisfaction. This observation mirrors the conclusions of Tamwatin et al. (2015), who noted that customer satisfaction in hotels is a multi-dimensional construct influenced by a blend of tangible and intangible service elements.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

This study examined the relationship between service management practices and customer satisfaction in Western Sun Hotels, Osun State. Findings revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between the two variables, indicating that effective service management practices; such as efficient operational processes, well-trained staff, timely service delivery, and a focus on customer needs, play a crucial role in enhancing the satisfaction of hotel guests. The results align with the SERVQUAL and Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory, reinforcing the notion that service quality dimensions and the ability of a service to meet or exceed expectations are critical drivers of guest satisfaction. In the competitive hospitality industry, particularly within the Nigerian context, prioritizing structured and customer-centric service management can lead to increased customer loyalty, repeat patronage, and improved hotel reputation.

Recommendations

Firstly, hotel management should invest in continuous training and capacity building for staff to improve their competence, communication skills, and service delivery efficiency, as well-trained employees are essential to meeting and exceeding guest expectations. Secondly, management should adopt structured service quality monitoring tools, such as SERVQUAL-based periodic assessments, to identify service gaps and implement timely improvements, ensuring consistency in guest experience. Lastly, the hotel should implement personalized service strategies, leveraging guest feedback and preference data to tailor offerings, thereby creating memorable experiences that foster stronger customer loyalty and long-term competitive advantage.

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