

Original Paper

Assessing the Effects of Customer Satisfaction and Retention in
the Hospitality Industry: A Study of St. Jacobs and Groovy
Hotels, Akure, Ondo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the effect of customer satisfaction and retention in St. Jacobs and Groovy Hotels, Akure, Ondo State. Satisfying customers' needs allows for keeping them and fostering customer retention, ensuring ongoing patronage. The level of customer satisfaction and retention dictates to some extent the achievement of organizational objectives. Descriptive survey research design was used for this study. This study sample comprised 120 customers and they were selected using convenience sampling technique. The questionnaire was used as an instrument of primary data collection. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Demographic information of the respondents was analyzed using simple percentages and bar charts. Linear Regression Analysis and Pearson Correlation were used to test the three hypotheses that were formulated for this study at 0.05 alpha levels of significance. The results of the findings in hypothesis one concluded that service quality has a positive significant impact on customer satisfaction. Hypothesis two established that customer satisfaction has a positive significant impact on customer retention. In the third hypothesis, it was found that there is a positive significant relationship between customer care, customer satisfaction and customer retention. This study recommended that proper and quick care should be given to customers whenever objections are raised to give them a sense of belonging. Therefore, it would be valuable to investigate other variables, such as food and beverage quality and service, branding, cleanliness and security of hotels about the construct of customer satisfaction.

Keywords

Customer satisfaction, Customer retention, Customer care, Hospitality industry, Hotels

1. Introduction

The hospitality industry encompasses a wide range of sectors within the service industry, such as accommodation, food and beverage services, event management, theme parks, and travel and tourism. It encompasses accommodations, dining establishments, gambling establishments, theme parks, gatherings, sea voyages, recreational activities, and other services associated with tourism. Hospitality, in its broadest sense, refers to the act of warmly welcoming a traveller or providing a comfortable environment that resembles a home away from home. Hospitality refers to the industry that offers lodging, meals, beverages, and entertainment services to tourists and guests (Akpan & Eno, 2021). The aforementioned functions have piqued the interest of researchers in investigating the influence of customer satisfaction and retention in the hospitality industry within two specific hotels in Akure, Ondo State. As stated by Hwang and Seo (2016), the guest experience in the hospitality industry refers to customers' overall evaluation of their interactions and observations of the services received at a hospitality establishment. This is an integral part of the establishment's distinct service offering. Since the services provided by a hospitality firm cannot be owned, stored, or reused, customers can only judge the quality of the hospitality services based on their experience (Line, 2021).

According to Agwa, Aziz and Khalifa (2018), the importance of customer satisfaction in today's dynamic corporate environment is obvious as it greatly influences customers' repurchase intentions whereas dissatisfaction has been seen as a primary factor for customers' intention to switch. It is therefore obvious for business organizations to create and maintain favourable relationships with their customers to not only give room for repeat purchases but also create room for customer retention. When there is a favourable relationship between the organization and the customers, customers tend to repeat purchases and continue patronizing the organization, thereby sharing their favourable experiences with other members of society which can have a positive effect on the organization (Bala, 2016). More so, disgruntled customers are more likely to inform individuals about their terrible experiences which will severely affect the success of the firm. In other to achieve customer satisfaction, the hospitality sector must be able to create and sustain a long-lasting relationship with consumers through satisfying various customers' requirements and desires which resultantly drives them to continue to do business with the organization on an on-going basis. Leninkumar (2017) was of the view that, for a firm to continually maintain its numerous customers in this competitive global village, there is the need to strategically always satisfy the requirements of the customers.

Customer satisfaction in the service industry has been significant for many years. High-quality service and boosting customer satisfaction are widely regarded as essential aspects leading to the success of firms in the hotel, catering and tourism industries (Ludfi, 2017; Akpan & Eno, 2021). It is considered that satisfied customers are more likely to build retention, repeat purchases and pleasant word-of-mouth (Omondi, Lusala & Odondo, 2021). The satisfaction of hotel customers encompasses various factors, including the atmosphere of the hotel and the level of hospitality exhibited by the service staff (Parawansa, 2018). Satisfaction can be described as the comprehensive assessment of performance,

taking into account all previous interactions with a company (Parawansa, 2018). According to Bowen and Shoemaker (2004), a customer is more likely to be satisfied with their hotel stay if they obtain what they were anticipating. Customer satisfaction with hotels encompasses various factors, including the atmosphere of the hotel and the level of hospitality exhibited by the service staff (Shimekit, 2016). Hence, the hotel, catering, and tourism businesses universally acknowledge that providing excellent service and improving customer satisfaction are crucial elements for achieving success (Shimekit, 2016; Nayebedeh & Farmani, 2018).

1.1 Aims and Objectives

This study's broad objective is to investigate the impact of customer satisfaction and retention in the hospitality industry: a study of St. Jacobs and Groovy Hotels, Akure, Ondo State, Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives include to;

- 1) assess the effect of service quality on customer satisfaction at St. Jacobs and Groovy Hotels, Akure, Ondo State.
- 2) examine the effect of customer satisfaction on customer retention in St. Jacobs and Groovy Hotels, Akure, Ondo State.

1.2 Research Hypothesis

Hypothesis One: H_0 : Service quality does not have a significant effect on customer satisfaction at St. Jacobs and Groovy Hotels.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Concept of Customer Satisfaction

Multiple academics have provided different definitions of customer satisfaction. According to Elvira and Shpetim (2016), consumer satisfaction is the reaction of the customer to the perceived service, which is determined by their expectations and the actual performance of the service. According to Farooq and Salam (2018), customer satisfaction is the extent to which a service's perceived performance meets or exceeds customer expectations. Ideally, when the service fails to match customer expectations, it results in discontent. According to Çavusoglu et al. (2021), contentment is the responsive reaction to the fulfilment of expectations about interactions. Satisfaction is widely acknowledged as a crucial concern for both marketers and customers, both in theory and in practice. In Nass's (2021) study, customer satisfaction is described as an assessment made after using a product or service, where satisfaction levels can vary based on whether the customer's needs have been fulfilled or not.

According to Mbah, Ekechukwu, and Ugochukwu (2018), customer satisfaction is the consumer's impression of how well a company's products, services, support, and interaction match their expectations. This encompasses addressing consumer inquiries and resolving any difficulties they may have. Berezan, Millar, and Raab (2014) defined customer satisfaction as a judgement made after using a particular product or service to evaluate its quality. Customer satisfaction is determined by comparing the expectations customers have before purchasing with their judgements of how well the product or service

performs throughout and after the consumption process. Research indicates that customer satisfaction can have both direct and indirect effects on business outcomes (Rita et al., 2019). This topic has garnered significant interest from researchers and practitioners worldwide. Customer satisfaction is considered an essential requirement for every profit-oriented business to accomplish its stated goals. The importance of customer happiness cannot be overstated, as it is a crucial component that must be taken into account to facilitate consumer retention (Alkitbi et al., 2020).

2.2 Concepts of Customer Retention

In his analysis, Hamenda (2018) asserts that it is crucial for hospitality organisations to actively pursue possibilities to achieve a competitive edge by using diverse methods to retain customers. Hospitality organisations must therefore adopt proactive measures to achieve customer retention, rather than relying on pricing strategies to attract new customers (Fida et al., 2020). Customer retention is the strategic effort made by firms and organisations to minimise customer defection (Owusu-Mintah, 2018). The objective of customer retention programmes is to assist organisations in retaining a maximum number of customers, typically by implementing customer loyalty and brand loyalty activities (Rita et al., 2019). Customer retention commences at the initial interaction between a customer and a firm and persists throughout the whole duration of their partnership.

Ehsani and Ehsani (2015) defined customer retention as the strategic methods employed by organisations to retain consumers through the provision of products and services that enhance their quality of life. Based on this concept, the objective of the organisation is to continually provide customers with durable products. Customer retention is often more efficient and, on average, incurs up to seven times lower expenses compared to customer acquisition, despite organisations often allocating more funds towards the latter. The reason for this is that people perceive it as a prompt and effective method to augment their earnings (Mbah, Ekechukwu & Ugochukwu, 2018). As stated by Laut et al. (2018), selling to existing customers is frequently a more efficient method of increasing income, as it eliminates the need to attract, educate, and convert new consumers. The significance of customer retention in the hotel industry has also increased. According to Chetioui et al. (2017), customers who have been with a business for a long time tend to spend more money, recommend more customers, require less time from service providers, and are less sensitive to changes in price. Research has shown that enhancing customer retention leads to increased earnings because the expense of gaining new customers is seven times more than that of retaining current ones.

2.3 Concepts of Hospitality Industry

The hospitality sector encompasses the provision of housing, food and beverages, and other interconnected services aimed at satisfying the demands of visitors. This includes offering lodging facilities and specific products within the industry (Rhou & Singal, 2020). The hospitality business, primarily reliant on the efficient operation of hotels, is tasked with providing impeccable services to ensure customer satisfaction in the field of hospitality (Juhana, 2019). The hospitality business offers work opportunities to individuals in many roles such as cleaners, cooks, receptionists, security guards,

and many others. Therefore, in the context of socio-economic growth, the hospitality industry plays a crucial role and there is an increasing need for high-quality and efficient service (Adedipe & Adeleke, 2016).

Hospitality refers to the act of warmly welcoming guests or providing them with a comfortable environment similar to their own home. The term originates from the Latin word “*hospes*”, which denotes a host, visitor, or unfamiliar person. Rhou and Singal (2020) define the hospitality and tourist business as a broad sector encompassing all economic activities that directly or indirectly support or rely on travel, tourism, and hospitality. This industry sector encompasses various subsectors such as hotels and resorts, restaurants and catering, nightclubs and bars, travel and transportation, tourism, spas and wellness, cruise liners and bus tours, cultural and sports, as well as business administration including events, communication, and customer experience, among others.

Adeola and Ezenwafor (2016) assert that the hospitality industry is a substantial and expansive sector. Encompassing a wide range of economic and business activities, it includes all sectors that depend on or contribute to travel and tourism. Enterprises with an emphasis on hospitality, such as hotels and travel agencies, make a direct contribution by offering vital services that facilitate travel and tourism. Suppliers, transportation services, and catering companies indirectly contribute to the industry by providing the goods and services required for its operation. However, their revenue does not depend only on the hospitality sector (Shi & Xu, 2021). The hospitality industry is extensive and can be categorized into distinct sectors. The four leading sectors comprise the categories of “Food and Beverage”, “Accommodation”, “Travel and Tourism”, and “Entertainment and Recreation”. While the industry is divided into several segments, there is a notable degree of overlap that can be leveraged to enhance the consumer experience (Harun, Prybutok & Prybutok, 2018).

3. Methodology

3.1 Study Areas

Akure is a town located in the southwestern region of Nigeria and serves as the capital of Ondo state. It is situated in the southern region of the forested Yoruba Hills and is located at the point where highways from Ondo, Ilesha, Ado-Ekiti, and Owo intersect. Akure serves as a hub for agricultural trade, particularly in commodities like cassava, corn (maize), bananas, rice, palm oil and kernels, okra, rubber, coffee and pumpkins. Cocoa is the predominant local commercial crop, but cotton, teak, and palm products are also grown for export. The town’s economic sectors encompass electronics manufacture, soft drink bottling, weaving, and pottery making. Akure is the location of the Federal University of Technology, Akure, which was established in 1981, and the Federal College of Agriculture, which was created in 1957 (Britannica.com., 2023).

The study areas (Akure) are shown below in Figure 1.

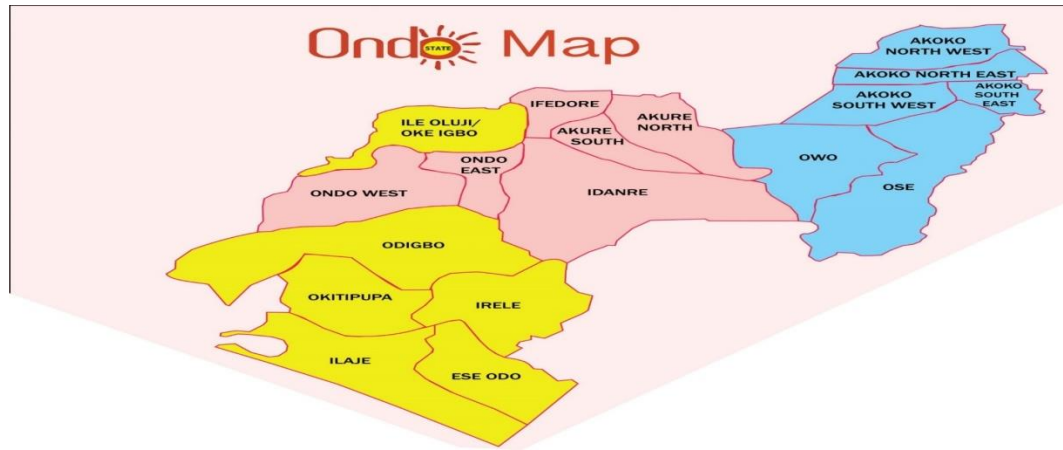


Figure 1. Map Showing the Location of Akure in Ondo State

Source: Premiumtimesng.com. (2024).

3.2 Research Design

The selection of a research design is essential for effectively conducting studies and generating accurate results that align with the study's aims and research questions (Creswell, 2018). This study utilized a descriptive research design. The researcher considers the descriptive survey design to be the most suitable and beneficial for assessing the perception of respondents on customer satisfaction and retention in the hospitality business.

3.3 Population of the Study

Akure, a city in Ondo State, is home to 109 hotels according to Hotels. ng (2024). However, this study focuses primarily on two hotels in Akure that are considered to be among the top 20 hotels in the city (Hotels.ng, 2024). The two chosen hotels in Akure, Ondo State are St. Jacobs and Groovy Hotels.

St Jacobs Hotel is situated at Block 1, Plot 7A and B, near Leaconac Junction, Alagbaka GRA, Akure, Ondo State. The total number of rooms is 44. The package includes a complimentary breakfast for guests staying in 25 Executive Deluxe rooms, 4 Royal Deluxe rooms, 10 Royal Superior rooms, 4 Diplomatic Suites, and 1 Presidential Suite. The establishment features both a swimming pool and a fully equipped gymnasium for physical exercise activities. Electricity is generated by three robust power plants. Laundry services are provided for both resident and non-resident guests. A highly skilled team of workers ensures 24-hour security. The hotel features a small conference room with a seating capacity of 50 people in a classroom-style arrangement. The St Jacobs Hotel is a luxurious hotel located in Akure, Ondo according to Hotels.ng in 2024.

Groovy Hotel is a cost-effective hotel with a rating of 3 stars. It is located in Block 556, Opposite Plaza Junction, Ijapo, Akure, Ondo, Nigeria. It is highly popular among travellers and tourists. It provides a warm reception to both business professionals and leisure enthusiasts, whether they are on official visits or personal trips. It is also located near the Airport. The Groovy Hotel has rooms that exude elegance and are adorned with contemporary furnishings. The available room categories consist of the Deluxe Room,

Super Deluxe Room, Executive Room, and Super Executive Room. Certain rooms offer a scenic vista. Every room is equipped with a generous bathroom, king-sized beds, cable-connected LCD TV sets, refrigerators and air conditioning. Several amenities are provided at the Groovy Hotel. The amenities provided are complimentary Wi-Fi, an aquatic facility, a dining establishment, and a lounge area. Patrons of this establishment will have additional leisure time to fully savour their sojourn and are cordially invited to indulge in rejuvenating immersions at the swimming pool.

3.4 Sample and Sampling Technique

Having identified the hotels to be used for this study (St. Jacobs and Groovy Hotels), the respondents were selected using convenience sampling technique as a type of non-probability sampling based on the availability and willingness of respondents to participate in the study. The study sampled 60 customers from each of the two hotels, making a total of 120 respondents that will be used for this study.

Table 1 shows the details of how the respondents will be selected from the two (2) hotels.

Table 1. Showing the Study Areas Profile and Number of Respondents for the Study

S/N	Name of Hotel	Local Government Area	Number of Participants	Address	Customer Patronage
1	St. Jacobs Hotels	Akure South	60	Block 1, Plot 7A and B, off Leanonac Junction, Alagbaka GRA	Very High
2	Groovy Hotels	Akure South	60	Block 556, Opposite Plaza Junction, Ijapo, Akure	Very High

3.5 Research Instrument

The data collection instrument consists of a self-designed questionnaire with closed-ended questions. The questionnaire was utilised to extract information from patrons of two chosen hotels. The instrument was partitioned into two sections, A and B. Section A was designed to seek background information about the respondents while Section B contained questions designed to answer the research objectives. Questions in section B were designed and guided using a 5-point Likert scale of Strongly Agreed, Agreed, Neutral, Disagreed and Strongly Disagreed.

3.6 Method for Data Analysis

Once the filled questionnaire was collected, the data were compiled and evaluated accordingly. The researcher employs the IBM SPSS quantitative analysis software, namely version 26 of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, to analyze the data obtained from the primary data collecting source. Descriptive statistics was employed to evaluate and interpret the data obtained for this investigation.

The demographic data of the respondents were analyzed using frequency distribution, which was shown using percentages and bar charts. While Linear regression analysis and Pearson Product Movement Correlation (PPMC) were used for the hypotheses. All study hypotheses were evaluated at a significance level of 0.05.

4. Analyses of Demographic Information of Respondents

Total number of respondents: 120

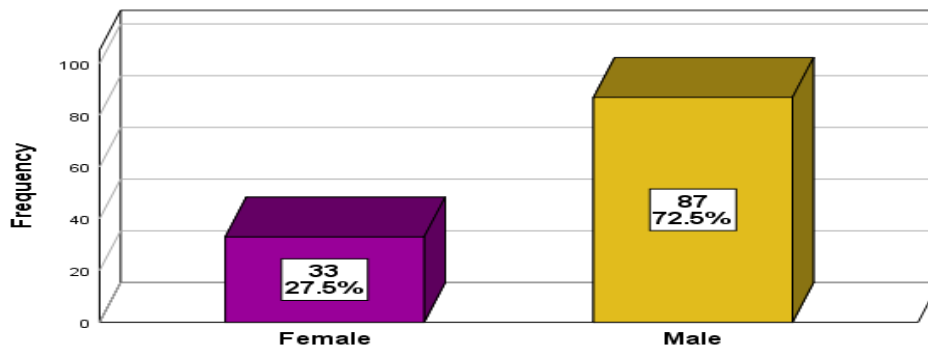


Figure 2. Demographic Distribution of Respondents according to Gender

Source: Fieldwork, 2024.

Data shown in Figure 2 showed the distribution of respondents according to their gender. Female respondents account for 27.5% and male respondents account for 72.5%. The finding showed that male customers patronized the hotels more compared to female customers.

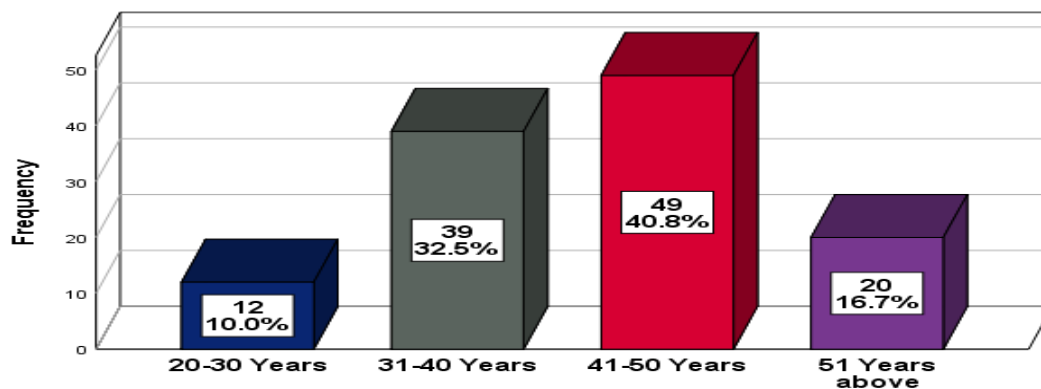


Figure 3. Demographic Distribution of Respondents according to Their Age Range

Source: Fieldwork, 2024.

Data shown in Figure 3 showed the distribution of respondents according to their age range. Respondents within the age range of 41-50 years participated more in this study with 40.8%, followed by respondents within the age range of 31-40 years with 32.5%. Also, respondents who are 51 years and above are 16.7% while the least participants in this study are respondents within the age range of 20-30 years which are 10.0%. The finding indicated that respondents within the age ranges of 31-40 and 41-50 years are the majority who patronize the hotels.

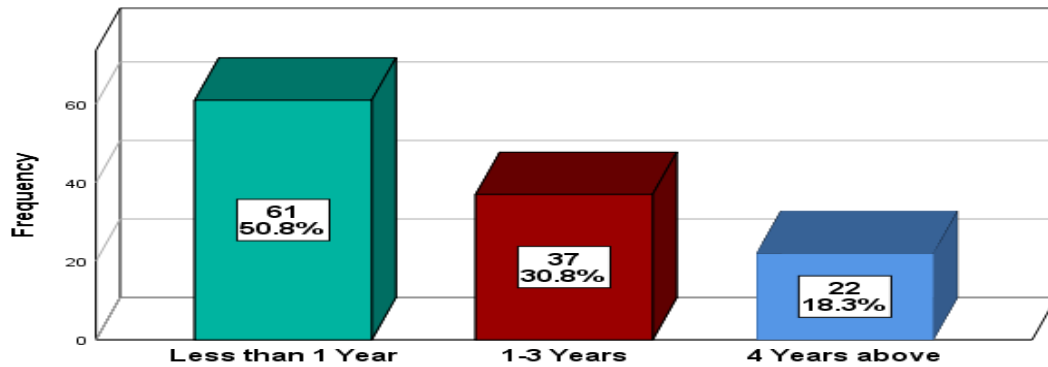


Figure 4. The Demographic Distribution of Respondents Is based on How Long They Have Been Visiting the Hotels

Source: Fieldwork, 2024.

Data shown in Figure 4 showed the distribution of respondents according to how long they have been visiting the hotels. The majority of the respondents have been visiting the selected hotel for less than 1 year (50.8%). This is followed by respondents that have been visiting the hotels between 1-3 years ago with 30.8%. The least respondents in this study are those that have been visiting the hotel for more than for years with 18.3%. The finding indicated that the majority of the customers of the selected hotels are satisfied and patronize the hotels regularly.

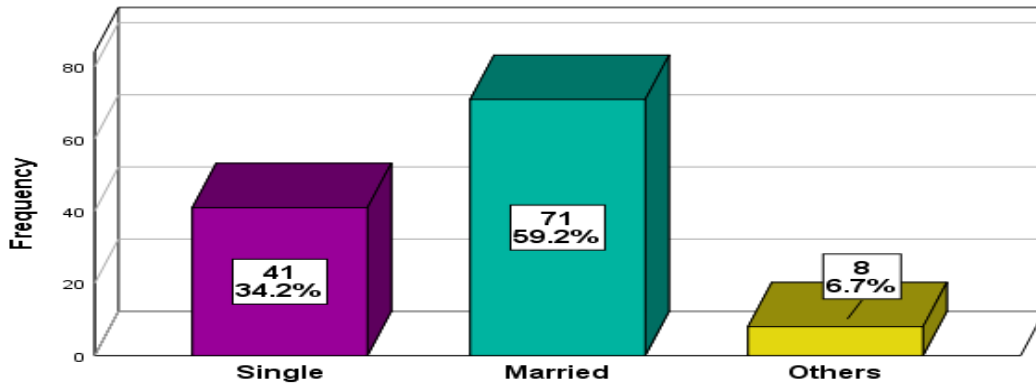


Figure 5. Demographic Distribution of Respondents according to Their Marital Status

Source: Fieldwork, 2024.

Data shown in Figure 5 showed the distribution of respondents according to marital status. The majority of the customers of the hotels are married with 59.2%, this is followed by respondents that are single with 34.2%. The least participants are those who responded with others with 6.7%. The finding showed that customers who are married are the once that mostly patronize the hotels.

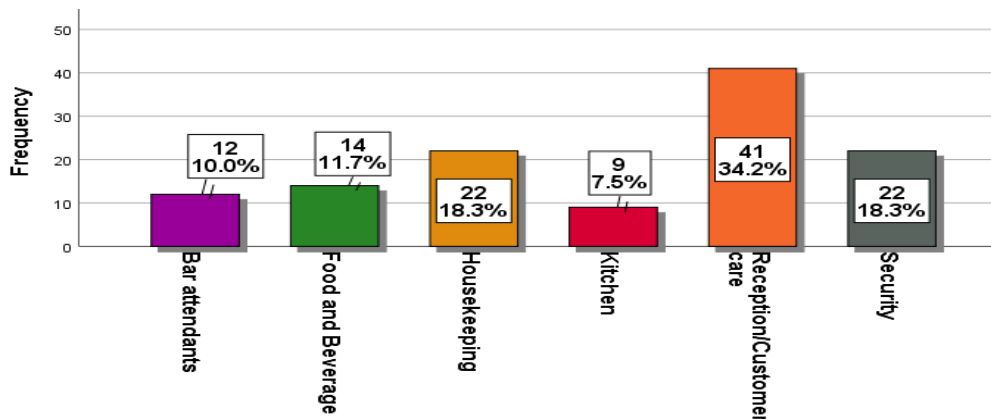


Figure 6. Demographic Distribution of Respondents according to Best Department based on the Customers' Opinions

Source: Fieldwork, 2024.

Data shown in Figure 6 showed the distribution of respondents according to the views of the respondents based on their opinions on the best departments in the hotels. The majority of the customers 34.2% responded that the reception/customer care department is the best. This is followed by housekeeping and security departments with 18.3% respectively. Food and beverage departments are 11.7%, followed by bar attendants' departments which are 10.0%. The last department is the kitchen department which is rated 7.5%. The finding indicated that all the selected departments render good services to the customers of the selected hotels.

4.1 Analyses of Research Hypotheses

Three hypotheses were postulated for this study and they are:

4.1.1 Hypothesis One

H₀: Service quality does not have a significant effect on customer satisfaction at St. Jacobs and Groovy Hotels.

Table 2. Summary of the Regression Analysis Model on Effects of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				Durbin-Watson	
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2		Sig. F Change
1	.760 ^a	.577	.574	.667	.577	161.198	1	118	.000	1.468

a. Predictors: (Constant), Service Quality
b. Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction

Source: Fieldwork, 2024.

Decision rule: From the regression analysis result presented in Table 2, the result reveals the coefficient of R-square (R^2) of .577 which indicates that customer satisfaction is being predicted by the service quality in the hotels. This shows 57.7% of the total variance which is a very high coefficient in the determination of customer satisfaction. The finding indicated that service quality has a positive significant effect on customer satisfaction. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted, hence, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected.

Table 3. Coefficients of the Effect of Effects of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	.846	.272		3.106	.002
	Service Quality	.839	.066	.760	12.696	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction

Source: Fieldwork, 2024.

Decision rule: The coefficient summary Table 3 revealed the degree of effect of service quality on customer satisfaction. The statistical result is as follows; service quality: $\beta=0.760$, $t=12.696$; $p=0.000<0.05$. The statistical result implies that service quality has a positive significant effect on customer satisfaction.

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this research, the study concluded that the service quality of the selected hotels has a positive significant effect on customer satisfaction. The findings indicated that R-square (R^2) of .577 indicated that customer satisfaction is being predicted by the service quality in the hotels. This shows 57.7% of the total variance which is a very high coefficient in the determination of customer satisfaction. This implies that when hotel businesses provide quality services, their customers will be more satisfied.

The findings of this study concluded in hypothesis two that customer satisfaction has a positive significant effect on customer retention. The findings of the R-square (R^2) of .637 indicated that customer retention is predicted by customer satisfaction. This shows 63.7% of the total variance which is a very high coefficient in the determination of customer retention. This means that when customers are satisfied with their interactions with hotel services, they will be willing to always patronize the hotel.

Finally, this study concluded in hypothesis three that there is a positive significant relationship between customer care, customer satisfaction and customer retention. Based on the findings of this study, customer care and customer satisfaction are [$r=0.197^*$, $p=0.031<0.05$] while customer care and customer retention shows [$r=0.199^*$, $p=0.030<0.05$]. This implies that effective customer care will always lead to customer satisfaction and retention.

6. Recommendations

The following recommendations are made to the management of St. Jacobs and Groovy Hotels, Akure, Ondo State to improve their customer rate and profitability level.

- i. Proper and quick care should be given to customers whenever objections are raised to give them a sense of belonging.
- ii. There should be affordable services to all segments of the hotel services to avoid creating a gap for other competing hotels.
- iii. Quality services that will add value to their customers' needs should be provided to avoid switching from one hotel to the other and to keep customers retained instead of looking for new customers.
- iv. Ensuring total and complete satisfaction to customers by ensuring that the 4ps (product, price, place and promotion) are integrated into the products and services offered to gain competitive advantage as well as boosting the morale of the customers in having the hotels and its services in mind.
- v. Hotels should constantly research to understand the needs of their target market and how to effectively satisfy the needs of their customers to effectively retain them.

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