SOCIAL SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES RESEARCH

EVALUATE THE ELECTRONIC SERVICE DELIVERY AND PERFORMANCE OF SELECTED THREE-STAR HOTELS USING SERVQUAL

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A B S T R A C T

The purpose of this study is to empirically evaluate the relationship between Electronic Service Delivery and Performance of selected Three-Star Hotels in Port Harcourt using SERQUAL. Electronic Service Delivery is operationalized by Responsiveness, Reliability as against Hotel Performance A cross-sectional survey method was adopted as the research design. The population of the study constituted 10 selected three-star hotels in Port Harcourt using simple random sampling. Judgmental Sampling of Non-probability sampling technique was adopted to determine a sample size of 40 (4 managers of each hotel). Self-administered copies of questionnaire consisting of closed ended questions, structured on five (5) points Likert scale was designed and adopted as a method of data collection. Pearson Product Moment Coefficient was adopted to test if there is a relationship and also to clarify whether the relationship is positive or negative. The initial data was conducted using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 23. The findings of the study indicated that there exists a positive significant relationship between Electronic Service Delivery and Hotel Performance. The researcher recommends Hotels should adopt international hospitality standards of service delivery processes so as to be competitive, furthermore, hotel managers should try to invest more in the use of electronic service delivery and lastly, hotel managers must arm their staff with modern electronic service delivery processes so as to improve hotel performance.

K E Y W O R D S:

Electronic Service Delivery, Hotel Performance, Responsiveness, Reliability

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry is constantly seeking to enhance its services, but doing so requires taking some planned and deliberate actions in order to achieve organizational performance and business growth. These actions entail carrying out market research and surveys in order to properly understand the needs of the market and develop proper strategies that are required to improve overall business performance.Sonnentag and Frese (2015) definedperformance is a multi-faceted concept. But focusing more on its contextual definition, performance are actions which do not add to the practical core, but which supports the structural, social, and mental setting in which administrative goals are pursued. Contextual performance comprises not only actions of employees such as helping each other or being a dependable member of the firm, but also creating ideas about how to advance work place procedures (Sonnentag&Frese, 2015).Performance by Maraka, Kibet and Mike (2015) looks at how well an organization is positioned in achieving its financial and market-oriented goals. Focusing on measuring this outcome of an organization plays a more critical role in comparison to accounting and quantification in any business organization (Maraka, et al, 2015).

The competitive nature of service sector especially in the hospitality and tourismindustry has led managers to seek for best possible means outside the norm to improve their organization's service delivery process and in this regard, electronic service delivery becomes a means to an end. Lukanova (2010) defined electronic service delivery as a mix of technological procedures that help enhance service process to meet guest's needs and at the same time helps create the fundamental conditions necessary for increasing their buying and utilization capacity. Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler (2006) states that fast development of technology and its utilization for better service delivery has become an important business consideration. These scholars further state that one of the basic issues hotels and their managers face becomes the adoption and incorporation of the right kind of electronic services that will enable the business achieve productivity in terms of efficiency and effectiveness.Electronic service delivery is progressively becoming influential in the performance success or failure of businesses particularly in the hospitality and tourism industry and also,it is now becoming an essential necessity for hotels for better execution of reliable services, aids businesses performance and helps in surviving the wave of competition sweeping through the hospitality industry (Borgave & Koranne, 2012).

Statement of the Problem

Even though the Nigerian hospitality industry have an excessive potential for growth, there seem to be several problems related to the industry which have distorted its growth. The cost of these electronic devices for low rated hotels for one, is rather expensive, the level of quality service delivery is poor, improper monitoring and improving of performance, online marketing campaigns & promotions are not carried out to properly attract customers, etc. Additional challenges such as lack of planning and strategic positioning are another factor that characterized the industry and these are not favourable for competitive positioning.

The researcher observed that there is a lack of investigations in relation to electronic service delivery of three-star hotels in River State and its influence on the performance of these hotels.The current study intends to solve the stated challenges through evaluating the relationship between electronic service delivery dimensions and performance of selected three-star hotels in Port Harcourt using SERVQUAL.
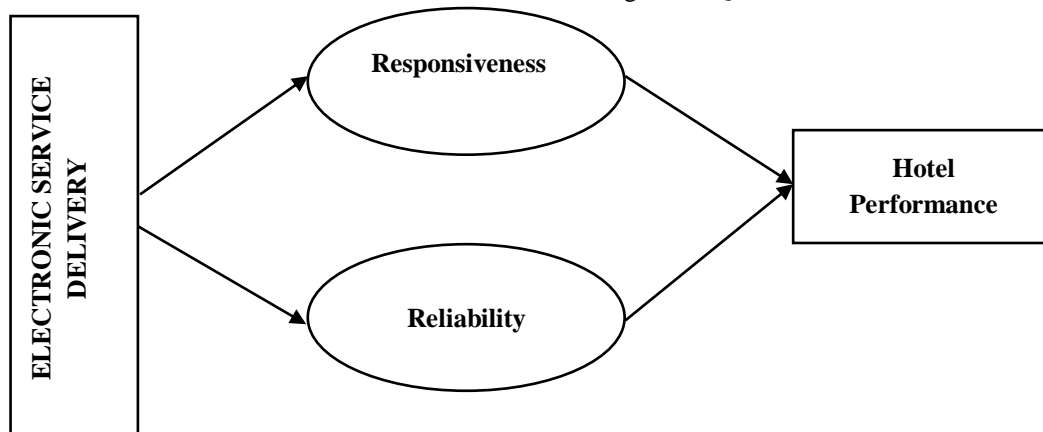
Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework
Source: As adapted from the works of Parasuraman and Zinkhan (2005).

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this research is to empirically evaluate the relationship between Electronic Service Delivery and Performance of selected Three-Star Hotels in Port Harcourt using SERVQUAL. Specific the objectives of the study are to:

i. Examine the relationship between responsiveness and performance of three-star hotels in Port Harcourt
ii. Determine the relationship between reliability and performance of three-star hotels in Port Harcourt

Based on these objectives, the following null hypothesis were stated:

H_0**:1.** There is no significant relationship between responsiveness and performance of three-star hotels in Nigeria
H_0**:2.** There is no significant relationship between reliability and performance of three-star hotels

LITERATUREREVIEW
Theoretical Review
Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The technology acceptance model (TAM) was created precisely to explain computer usage practice behaviour. It is a variation of Fishbein and Azjen's (1975) theory of reasoned action (TRA), which has been effective in forecasting and explaining conduct in general (Malhotra &Galletta, 1999; Yi & Hwang, 2003). There are two central determinants in TAM: *Perceived usefulness*, which refers tothe extent to which anindividual believes that utilizing a specific system would improve his/her job routine; and *perceived ease of use*, which denotes the extent to which anindividual believes that utilizing a specific system would be free of exertion (Davis, 1989). Following the theoretical basis of TRA, these perceived characteristics are expected to influence intensions to use a system, which in turn influence actual system usage (Davis et al., 1989).Furthermore, perceived ease of use is hypothesized to influence perceived usefulness. This hypothesis follows from the logic that improvements in ease of use of a system contribute to increased usefulness due to saved effort (Davis et al., 1989). Since the original TAM was introduced, the model has undergone numerous adjustments. Some versions of TAM simply include perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and actual use of a particular system (Adams, Nelson, & Todd, 1992; Burton-Jones &Hubona, 2006).It has been stated that technology acceptance model explains computer usage behavior, which implies the need for use of technology in everyday business activities for creation of convenient services being offered to guests.

ConceptualReview
Hotel Performance

As earlier stated in the introduction, performance is a multi-faceted concept, because it focuses on individual employees and the organization as a whole. Notwithstanding, the relevance of individual performance and the common use of job performance as an outcome measure in empirical researches, quite little effort has been spent on clarifying the performance concept (Sonnentag&Frese, 2015). Sonnentag and Frese (2015) refers to performance as an individual employee's ability with which he/she accomplishes given activities which contribute to the organization's vision and goal. Furthermore, these scholars state that organizations need highly qualified and performing employees in order to meet their target, to distribute what they sell, and finally to attain competitive lead. Performance is also significant for individual employees, as it helps in accomplishing tasks and performing at a high level and can be a source of satisfaction, with feelings of mastery and pride. Low performance and not attaining goals might be experienced as disappointing or even as a personal failure (Sonnentag&Frese, 2015).

Lebans and Euske in (2006) also defined performance as comprising of monetary and non- monetary pointers which offer evidence on the degree of attainment of the organization's objective. The scholars further explained

that performance should be supported by philosophies of performance management which include the validity of cause-effect relationship among variables. Performance measurement has been limited to a financial perspective, ensuing to various restrictions like emphasis on the internal factors of the company and delayed accessibility of performance-related information (Lebans&Euske 2006). According to these scholars, to overcome these restrictions, performance has to be measured as a multi-faceted subject. They went further to state that good organizational performance can be attained by improving product quality, improving production efficiency, effectiveness and better responsiveness to clients' needs.Scholarly contributions to performance studies have focused mainly on solving the problems in the industrial sector, and sparingly on certain segments in the service sector e.g., banking sector, retail, insurance and little or no reference to the hospitality and tourism sector (Osarenkhoe; Byarugaba; Birungi; Okoye & Bennani, 2014). Okumus (2002) in his study, stated that relatively little performance study attention has been directed to the domain of hospitality industry and this gap has greatly affected performance measurement in the sector. It is in pursuit of thisthose literatures recently have applied the performance factors to the hotel sector (Osarenkhae et al, 2014). For example, Kansakar et al, (2018); Osarenkhoe et al, (2014); Rao and Sahu, (2013), etc.

Electronic Service Delivery

The concept of electronic services delivery (ESD) refers to the provision of services by both private and public (individual and government owned establishments) service providers through the internet or other electronic means (Wikipedia, 2018). Syeda and Arsalan (2017) states that electronic service delivery provides convenience and ease of use to its users. Both scholars went further to state that time management and service convenience is of paramount importance to users, hence, the adoption of means by business managers and owners to achieve this business proficiency which is a major driver for customer/client satisfaction. This implies ESD helps in boosting the responsiveness and reliability potency of service providers which is core or bedrock in meeting and exceeding the perceived expectation of customers which breeds satisfaction.Muhammad and Nazariah, (2003) states that electronic service is a highly universal term, usually referring to the delivery of services via the internet, e-mail, social media, and other electronic means like e-cards, point of sales services (POS), or other ICT applications. These scholars went further to postulate that thus, e-service includes e-Commerce, while also applicable to non-commercial services (online), which is usually provided by the government and businesses.

Studies have recognized the critical importance of technology in the delivering of services (Parasuraman. Zeithaml & Malhotra (2005); Sahadev& Islam (2005). In these settings, the hospitality industry might as well increase the chances of success by exploiting the potentialities of these electronic means along with new business practices and strategies (Osarenkhoe et al, 2014).Lu (2001) postulated that there are various benefits of electronic service and these benefits are endless. The scholar identified a number of benefits for electronic services, of which includes: accessing a greater customer base, broadening market reach, lowering of entry barrier to new markets, lowering cost of acquiring new customers, alternative communication channel to customers, increasing services to customers, enhancing perceived company image, gaining competitive advantages, enhancing transparency, potential for increasing customer knowledge, improved organizational performance and much more.

Responsiveness

Iberahim, Taufik, Adzmir and Saharuddin (2015) defined responsiveness as the ability of an organization to respond to customer requirements timely and flexibly. Responsiveness of e-service as regards hospitality operation focuses on timeliness and technology and that is why these scholars also postulates that timeliness is about handling customer complaints of services within a swift timeframe.According to Ankur (2018) service excellence in the hospitality and tourism sector becomes one of the most important aspects for gaining a workable competitive benefit and customers' confidence in the highly competitive marketplace, and therefore service quality can give the hospitality industry a great chance to create competitive differentiation for organizations. That is why Pakurár, Haddad, Nagy, Popp and Oláh, (2019) postulates that when it comes to service quality and customer satisfaction, responsiveness from employees is paramount and the use of electronic services assists employees to attend to the needs of guest promptly sometimes without a hitch. In order to

achieve service quality, responsiveness is a criterion as it measures the ability of a hotel to solve the problems of guest's fast, deal with customers complaint effectively and the willingness to help customers as well as meet the customers' requirements (Parasuman et al, 2005). In order words, responsiveness is seen as the feedback from hotels to what customers want and need (Essay, UK, 2018).

Reliability

Reliability is seen as the ability of a hotel to perform the promised service dependably and accurately, this means that the hotel delivers on its promises about delivery, service provision, problem resolutions and pricing (Essay, UK, 2018). Customers want to do business with hotels that keep their promises, particularly their promises about the service outcomes and core service attributes (Essay, UK, 2018). All hospitality businesses need to be aware of customer expectation of reliability because businesses that do not provide the core service that customers think they are buying, fails their customers in the most direct way (Essay, UK, 2018).According to Adiele and Anyahie (2018) hotel service reliability refers to how well the hotel is in performing and completing their promised service with accuracy within the given set requirements between the hotel and the customer. Reliability is said to be just as important as a good first impression, because every customer want to know if their service supplier is reliable in fulfilling the set requirements with satisfaction (Ballester, as sited in Adiele&Anyahie, 2018).

Management of all hospitality institutions are to be tasked in the provision of convenient services through electronic service for easy channelling and navigation of customers to full portfolio of all necessary and essentially correct information which the hotel has to offer (Essay, UK, 2018). And also, websites should be easily searchable, price should be competitive and e-shop information should be easily available (Essay, UK, 2018).Reliability of e-services when it comes to hospitality services, focuses on consistency and dependability, whereby consistency is focusing on how much services is being offered and the provision of the same high level of services each and every time, while dependability focuses on coordination and delivering the right type of service on time (Iberahim et al, 2015). Doing the above mentioned often and always leads to a more effective hotel operation.

Empirical Review

A study by Ezeh, Okeke and Nkamnebe (2021) on moderating the role of religion in the relationship between SERVQUAL dimensions and hotel guest satisfaction. The study consists of examining religion (Christianity and Islam) as variables taken into account in the development of the marketing strategy. The data was gathered from 400 hotel guests in Nigeria (Zamfara and Anambra) who made up the study population and were analysed utilizing the structural equation modelling technique (Amos). In addition, composite reliability and extracted mean variance were used to test the dependability and legitimacy of the instrument. The results of the study demonstrated that religion has a significant moderating effect on the dimensions of service quality and hotel guest satisfaction. In other words, there is a significant distinction on how Christian and Muslim hotel guests rate the dimensions of service quality and satisfaction. In addition, the outcome shows that the dimensions of empathy and assurance are the main indicators of customer satisfaction. In addition, religion has a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction. The study also shows that religion significantly moderates the dimensions of service quality. Therefore, hotel management should zero in on giving training programs that will empower employees to offer better customized services than reinforce and support long haul relationships with guests.

Also, a study by Meesalaa and Paul (2016) on quality of service, consumer satisfaction and loyalty in hospitals: thinking for the future. The study attempted to identify the most critical factors in hospitals associated with quality of service that will guarantee the survival and success of future services. This study was conducted using data obtained from clients who received services from 40 different private hospitals in Hyderabad, India. Tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy (dimensions of quality of service), patient satisfaction and loyalty to the hospital were variables considered for the study.An analysis was performed on AMOS V20 to calculate the path coefficients, the direct and indirect effects of the variables on patient satisfaction and also hospital fidelity. The result indicates that reliability and responsiveness (not empathy,

tangibility and assurance) affect patient satisfaction. Patient satisfaction is directly related to patient loyalty to the hospital. Marital status and age do not affect the regression weights of the variables analyzed; however, it has been found that, to some extent, gender does.

Reliability is the measure of service quality for certain customers because it entails the attributes relating to performing services on time and accurately, solving problem sincerely, and keeping records confidentially, ability to sell products or provide services in a discreet and reliable manner (Minh, Ha, Anh, & Matsui, 2015). These scholars did a study on Service quality and customer satisfaction with a case study on hotel industry in Vietnam. The reason for this study was to empirically examine the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. Data was collected from 447 guests of 33 three-star hotels. One of the main discoveries of the study indicated that service quality plays an important role as a driver for higher customer satisfaction in hotel service.

Another study by Osarenkhoe et al (2014) on technology-based service encounter with a focus on the use of email as a booking tool in hotels in France. A total of 240 hotels located across 120 cities constituted the empirical setting. A one-way ANOVA that tested differences between means was used to assess the impact of hotel category on response time. The finding of the study indicated that there is significantly dissimilarity in responsiveness across the hotel categories. Also, a major implication of these findings is that the speed with which enquiries from current and potential customers are met is most likely a preamble to providing good quality technology-based buyer seller interactions to create positive service outcomes using the Internet. That is to say, for service firms to be considered effective, customer relationship management should be focused on because it includes ways through which organizations improves their response speed in order to answer to guests needs and complains swiftly.

Lastly, a study by Ng'ang'a (2013) on the influence of an operation manager on performance in the hotel industry in Nairobi, Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive research design by employing face to face interviews and semi structured interviews as tools to collect data and the population of the study comprised of 59 hotels. The study adopted stratified sampling technique to arrive at 31 hotels which made up 53% of the study population participated in the study. The findings revealed that hotels who provide easy and quick service are abound to have repeat visits. This conclusion came about after the scholar tested study variables using Pearson's Correlation ranking order to test the relationship between operation strategy dimensions on hotel performance measures.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the cross-sectional survey research design. Target population are managers of 10 selected three-star hotels operating in Port Harcourt. Simple random sampling is accepted to come about 10 hospitality organizations which stands as the population size of the study. For inclusiveness, the sample size encompassed both managers and supervisors to represent if managers are absent of the 10 selected hotels. Consequently, judgmental sampling technique was used to determine a sample size of 40 (4 managers from each of the 10 selected hotels) for the study. The study also adopted census study due to the nature of the sample size. A census study according to Gall and Bob (2010) is used if a given population of study is below 100, which implies that all subjects that constitute the population should be censored.

The variables were measured with 5-items each on a 5-point Likert-like scale ranging from 5 to 1 measured as follows: 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = undecided, 2 = strongly disagree and 1 = disagree. Validity of the instrument was ascertained using face and construct validity; while reliability of instrument was determined via the Cronbach Alpha test which reported acceptable reliability values of 0.775 for responsiveness, .747 for reliability, and .776 for performance. The Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the null hypothesis with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha value

Variable Measured	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Responsiveness	4	.754
Reliability	4	.768
Hotel Performance	4	.775

Source, SPSS Result of Field Survey, 2021

The instrument was subjected to face validity where it was given to experts in the field of Hospitality Management for validation.

Data Analysis

H_0:1. There is no significant relationship between responsiveness and performance of hotel

Table 2: Test of relationship between responsiveness and hotel performance
Correlations

		Responsiveness	Hotel Performance
Responsiveness	Pearson Correlation	1	. 763**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	40	40
Hotel Performance	Pearson Correlation	.763**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	40	40

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: *SPSS Output, version 23*

Decision rule: reject the null hypothesis if the p-value or "r" calculated is less than the level of significance or "r" tabulated.

Interpretation Based on Decision Rule

From the result above, Pearson Correlation Co-efficient is 0.763 while P. value (2-tailed) is 0.000. Since 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 significant relationship between responsiveness and the hotel performance.

The result indicated the correlation coefficient (r = 0.763) between responsiveness and hotel performance, therefore showing that there exists a relationship. The coefficient of determination (r^2 = 0.58) indicates that 58% of hotel performance can be explained by responsiveness. The significant value of 0.000 (p< 0.05) reveals a significant relationship. Based on that, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that, there is a significant relationship between responsiveness and hotel performance.That is to say that the value of time in service delivery should be given serious attention as customers are very impatient and this is in line with Osarenkhoe et al (2014) who also stated that for hotels to be considered as performing optimally, guest relationship management should be focused on since it embraces ways through which hotels improves their response speed in order to answer to guests needs and complains quickly and adequately.

$H_0$2: There is no significant relationship between responsiveness and performance of hotels

Table 3: Test of relationship between reliability and hotel performance
Correlations

		Reliability	Hotel Performance
Responsiveness	Pearson Correlation	1	. 569**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	40	40
Hotel Performance	Pearson Correlation	.569**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	40	40

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: *SPSS Output, version 23*

Decision rule: reject the null hypothesis if the p-value or "r" calculated is less than the level of significance or "r" tabulated.

Interpretation Based on Decision Rule

From the result above, Pearson Correlation Co-efficient is 0.569 while P. value (2-tailed) is 0.000. Since P-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05, we therefore reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. This implies that there is significant relationship between responsiveness and hotel performance.

The result indicated the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.569$) between reliability and hotel performance, therefore showing that there exists a relationship. The coefficient of determination ($r^2 = 0.32$) indicates that 32% of hotel performance can be explained by reliability. The significant value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) reveals a significant relationship. Based on that, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that, there is a significant relationship between reliability and hotel performance. This is line with Minh, et al, (2015) who emphasised that reliability necessitates the traits relating to performing services on time and accurately, solving problem sincerely, and keeping records confidentially, ability to sell products or provide services in a discreet and reliable manner. Also, Minh, et al, (2015) indicated that service quality plays an important role as a driver for higher customer satisfaction in hotel service performances.

RESEARCH IMPLICATION AND CONCLUSION

The finding of the study discovered that electronic service delivery has a profound correlation and significant relationship with hotel performance. The implication is both on theory and practice. Theoretically, hotel performance is linked to the skillset of employees a hotel. Also, Technology Acceptance Model is a function of how individuals employees feel that the use of technology would enhance their skills, which in turn reflects on services they provide and how these services can impact negatively or positively on the hotel's performance in terms of gaining repeat patronage, loyalty, profitability, productivity, satisfaction, from guests.In terms of practice, the study emphasizes the need for hotels to improve their service delivery. The study further indicated that electronic service delivery is a good driver which helps to boost hotel performance.

Based on the study implications, the study determined that investing in electronic services can greatly improve the performance of hotels in Port Harcourt, Rivers State; and responsive & reliability of service delivery and other influences can prompt an increase in performance of hospitality firms. The study therefore recommended that:

1. Hotels should adopt international hospitality standards of service delivery processes so as to be competitive
2. That hotel managers should try to invest more in the use of electronic service delivery
3. Hotel managers must arm their staff with modern electronic service delivery processes so as to improve hotel performance.

CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

i. The findings of this research study may greatly be added to the stock of knowledge in hospitality management discipline as it filled the gap of scanty empirical studies on electronic service delivery and performance of three-star hotels in Port Harcourt.

ii. Owing to the empirical statistical results obtained, this study seems to critically evaluateelectronic service delivery of three-star hotels using SERVQUAL.

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