

Relationship between Customer Satisfaction and Repeat Patronage in Bida, Niger State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated the correlation between customer satisfaction and repeat patronage of hotels in Bida, Nigeria, using questionnaires and descriptive statistics and regression analysis. The study found that 84.2% of customers at four hotel establishments are satisfied with their stay, with 89.8% recommending the hotel to friends and family, and 84.2% willing to pay a premium. The results indicated that hotel staff was a significant determinant of overall customer satisfaction. Courtesy and responsiveness of the hotel staff had a higher influence (Beta = 0.441, $p < 0.001$) than the knowledge and skills of the staff (Beta = 0.195, $p < 0.05$). It highlights the crucial role of staff performance and service delivery in influencing customer experiences and loyalty, suggesting that hotel management should implement customer satisfaction initiatives.

Keywords: Customer satisfaction; repeat patronage; hotel industry; staff performance and Nigerian hospitality.

1. Introduction

Satisfaction of customers is now a key determinant of business success and longevity in different industries. There is no doubt that satisfied customers are likely to patronize the organization again and this can result in more sales, customer loyalty and growth of the organization [20]. It is therefore important for organizations to have a clear understanding of the link between customer satisfaction and repeat patronage so as to formulate strategies that would suit the market needs and demands. In the current world of business, competition is high and organizations are therefore looking for ways to enhance their relationship with the customers. Loyalty, which can be described as the ability of a customer to continue or repeatedly purchase products from a business or seek its services is an important measure of customer loyalty and a major factor in the sustainability of business success [32].

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Loyal customers are likely to have a favorable attitude towards the organization and its products, endorse the products to others, and enhance the organization's revenues [9]. While customer satisfaction is defined as the level of satisfaction of a customer by the performance of a product or a service [21]. Customers who are satisfied are likely to recommend the organization to others and this will help the organization to attract more clients [13]. On the other hand, dissatisfied customers may decide to patronize the competitors, harm the organization's brand reputation, and decrease its market share. The link between customer satisfaction and repeat patronage has been a well-discussed topic in the marketing and consumer behavior literature. Numerous studies have explored the various factors that influence this relationship, such as product quality, service quality, price, and customer loyalty programs [9,13]. Understanding the nuances of this relationship can provide valuable insights for organizations to develop effective customer-centric strategies and enhance their long-term viability. For hotels in Nigeria to ensure that their customers keep coming back, there is need for the hotels to adopt a customer-oriented approach that will enable them to understand the needs and wants of their customers. This can be done through various measures for instance staff training and development. Qualified and knowledgeable employees are crucial for providing excellent services and ensuring that customers have the right experiences [39]. Hotels should ensure that training programs are all rounded, where technical skills are not the only skills being taught but also communication, problem-solving, and emotional intelligence skills [11]. In addition, the use of technology to personalize the experience can be of great benefit to the guest. In the current world, customers provide their information and preferences to hotels, making it easier for the hotels to provide services and experiences that meet the customers' needs [28]. This can range from personalized room facilities, promotional offers, and the integration of technology in the services offered [8]. Improving the physical space of a hotel is another key area in the management of the guest experience. The physical environment of the hotel includes the design, the lighting, and the cleanliness of the hotel spaces, and these factors are very important in the provision of comfort to the guests [18], hotels should ensure that they develop spaces that are suitable for the guests and are able to provide comfort to the guests [40]. It is crucial to have proper complaint management strategies in place as even the best of hotels is not immune to service failures or complaints. This means that when customers have a complaint, their complaints should be addressed as soon as possible, and they should be listened to with empathy, and their complaints resolved in the shortest time possible, this will help to change their attitude towards the business and make them loyal customers [15]. Another factor that can be used in increasing customer satisfaction is the promotion of customer feedback and participation. Direct interactions with customers and interactions with the guests during their stay can help in identifying their needs and the areas that require change [23]. To illustrate, hotels can use surveys, social media, and face-to-face communication to collect feedback and show that they are working on it [37]. The purpose of this research is to establish the correlation between customer satisfaction and repeat business in the hotels and hospitality business. In light of this, the study was able to offer empirical evidence on the factors that influence customer satisfaction and their influence on repeat patronage to help organizations to strengthen their customer relations and sustain their competitive advantage in the market.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction to Customer Satisfaction in the Hotel Industry

Customer satisfaction is one of the most important determinants of the success and competitiveness of companies

in the hotel sector [2]. In the context of the highly competitive hospitality industry where hotels provide similar services and facilities, customer satisfaction can be a key factor that sets the hotel apart from its competitors and increases the likelihood of repeat business, positive word of mouth and long-term profitability [36]. Customer satisfaction in the hotel industry is not a simple concept as it depends on several factors that are associated with the physical facilities of the hotel, the quality of services offered and the experience of the customers [1]. In contrast to the manufacturing industry where customer satisfaction is a function of the quality of the product, customer satisfaction in the hotel industry is a function of the perceived satisfaction by the guests which is a function of their expectations which may be influenced by cultural factors, past experiences and personal preferences [3].

Customer satisfaction is a crucial element in the hotel business since it is the customers who determine the success of the business. Customer satisfaction results in repeat patronage, positive word of mouth and higher customer loyalty which are key factors that enhance the profitability and market share of the hotel [22]. On the other hand, dissatisfied customers may decide to patronize a competitor's hotel, spread negative word of mouth and other forms of communication that can negatively affect the hotel's reputation and competitiveness [35]. Since customer satisfaction is an important factor in the hotel industry, it is important for the hotel managers and researchers to identify the factors that influence customer satisfaction and how to improve it [4]. Such factors may include the physical facilities of the hotel, the competence of the staff, the price charged by the hotel, and the general environment of the hotel [34].

Furthermore, the link between customer satisfaction and repeat patronage has been a popular area of study in the hospitality literature [6]. A lot of research has been conducted to identify the antecedents of repeat patronage including reward programs, customized services, and prior experiences [16]. Knowledge of these factors can assist the hotel managers in the formulation of strategies that can be used to attract the repeat business and hence establish a loyal clientele base.

2.2. Importance of Customer Satisfaction in the Hotel Industry

The hotel industry is very competitive, and therefore, the level of customer satisfaction is a key factor in the success of the business as noted by [30]. Since guests have a wide choice when choosing a place to stay, hotels are to focus on creating a pleasant and unique experience to attract and maintain customers. Customer satisfaction has been a subject of interest in the hotel industry in the recent past with literature showing the various facets of the concept and the various ways in which the hotels can improve on it. Customer satisfaction is considered to be of paramount importance in the hotel industry because it is directly related to the financial performance and profitability. [17] noted that customer satisfaction is a good determinant of hotel revenues since satisfied customers are likely to revisit the hotel and recommend it to other people. In the same way, [12] established that customer satisfaction significantly influences the occupancy levels, which are directly related to a hotel's revenue. In addition, [35] noted that satisfied customers are willing to pay a premium price for the products, thus allowing hotels to earn good profit margins. Apart from the financial benefits, customer satisfaction enhances the competitive position and brand image of a hotel. [26] noted that in an environment where the services provided are quite similar across the hotels, customer satisfaction is one of the few means through which the hotels can

distinguish themselves. Happy customers are more likely to recommend the hotel to other people in the social media platforms and in their day-to-day conversations, this brings in more customers and improves the image of the hotel [5]. On the other hand, dissatisfied customers can harm the hotel by posting negative comments about their experience which may discourage other customers from booking the hotel [25].

In particular, customer satisfaction has been found to have a positive relationship with customer loyalty in the hotel industry. [33] found out that satisfied guests are more likely to return to the same hotel, meaning that customer satisfaction is a long-term investment. In the same way, [24] concluded that customer satisfaction has a positive effect on the guests' willingness to recommend the hotel and this results in repeated patronage and profitability in the long run. This way hotels can save costs of acquiring new customers and can always count on the loyal customers [31]. In a bid to improve customer satisfaction, the following measures have been adopted by the hotels with regard to the guests. A vast amount of literature has been devoted to the analysis of the impact of service quality, and the findings of the research show that guests' expectations of service assurance, timeliness, and tactfulness can enhance satisfaction to a great extent [12]. Further, the physical surrounding of the hotel such as the appearance, tidiness, and usability of the amenities have been found to affect the customer satisfaction [35]. In addition, the use of technology has become a significant determinant of the level of satisfaction of customers in the hotel business. According to [7], the presence of effective and easy to use technology interfaces and customized services can enhance the satisfaction of the guests. In the same vein, [14] also highlighted the need to use data analytics to enhance guests' satisfaction through personalization.

3. Methodology

3.1. Study Area

The study was conducted in Bida, a city located in Niger State, Nigeria (Figure 1). Bida is situated within the geographical coordinates of 9°03'N to 9°07'N latitude and 5°59'E to 6°03'E longitude . The city lies within the Guinea Savannah region of Nigeria, which is characterized by a tropical continental climate [38]. The climate in Bida is typically tropical, with a distinct wet and dry season. The area experiences a rainy season from April to October, with an average annual rainfall of approximately 1,200 mm [38]. The dry season, on the other hand, extends from November to March, with temperatures ranging from 25°C to 35°C. The region is also influenced by the seasonal reversing of the wind patterns, with the dry, dusty harmattan winds blowing from the Sahara Desert during the dry season [38]. The vegetation in Bida and the surrounding region is predominantly characterized by Guinea Savannah, which is a transitional zone between the dense tropical rainforests to the south and the drier Sahel Savannah to the north [2]. Bida experiences two distinct seasons: the rainy season and the dry season. The rainy season, which lasts from April to October, is characterized by high humidity, frequent rainfall, and relatively lower temperatures. The dry season, on the other hand, extends from November to March and is marked by dry, hot, and dusty conditions, with the harmattan winds blowing in from the Sahara Desert [2].

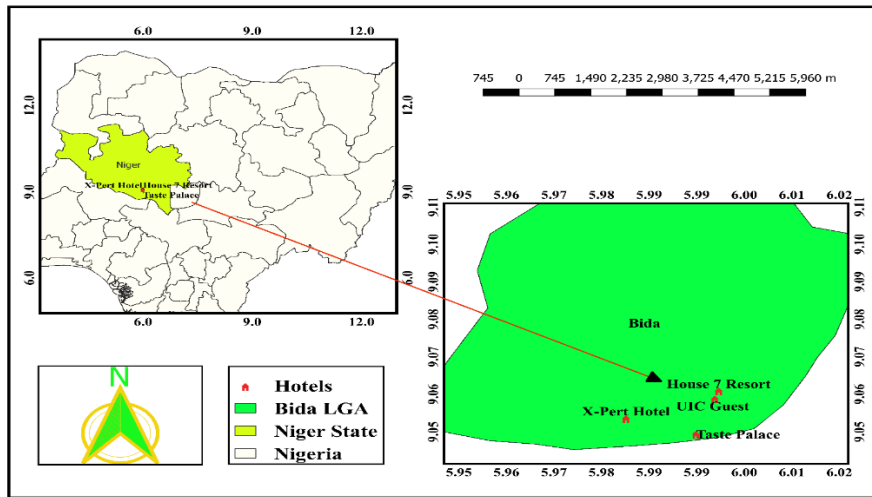


Figure 1: Map of Nigeria showing the Surveyed Hotels in Bida LGA, Niger State

3.2. Population and Sample Size

The sample population for this study consisted of hotel customers, including individuals and groups who had stayed in hotels in Bida within the previous two days. The population included customers from various demographic backgrounds, including age, gender, occupation, and nationality. For the customer survey to develop and measure the customer satisfaction for repeat patronage, a sample size of 200 hotel customers was administered a semi-structured questionnaire. This sample size provided adequate statistical power to detect meaningful relationships and differences, while accounting for potential non-response.

3.3. Sampling Techniques

The sampling approach for this study employed a combination of purposive sampling and random sampling techniques. The first level of purposive sampling involved the selection of the study area, Bida Local Government Area in Niger State, Nigeria. Bida was selected as the study area due to its significance as a prominent urban center in the region, hosting a number of hotels that cater to both local and visiting clientele. Targeting this specific location allowed the researchers to delve into the dynamics of customer experiences and loyalty within the Bida hotel industry. Additionally, the researchers purposively selected four hotels within Bida to be included in the study. These hotels were: Taste Palace, House 7 Luxury, UIC Guest Inn, and X-pert Hotel. The selection of these specific hotels ensured that the research captured a representative cross-section of the hospitality offerings in Bida. The second component of the sampling approach involved random sampling for the selection of hotel customers and staff. From the population of hotel customers and employees in Bida, 200 individuals were randomly selected to participate in the qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys. Only 127 copies of the questionnaires were retrieved back from the respondents.

3.4. Data Analysis

The survey data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, such as regression analysis, to examine

the relationships between hotel staff performance and customer satisfaction. The coding process involved systematically assigning segments of the interview text to relevant codes or categories using SPSS software version 26.0. The results were presented in tables and figure.

4. Results

4.1. Hotels Overall Customer Satisfaction

Majority of customers across the four hotel establishments (84.2%) are either satisfied or very satisfied with their overall hotel experience (Figure 2), while those who are either very dissatisfied or dissatisfied) across the four hotels is 15.8%. Taste Palace hotel had the highest percentage of Very satisfied customers at 43.6%, followed by House 7 Luxury at 34.6%, X-pert Hotel at 27.6%, and UIC Guest Inn at 24.2%. Taste Palace had the highest percentage of Neutral customers at 20.5%, followed by UIC Guest Inn at 18.2% and X-pert Hotel at 10.3%. House 7 Luxury had no Neutral customers.

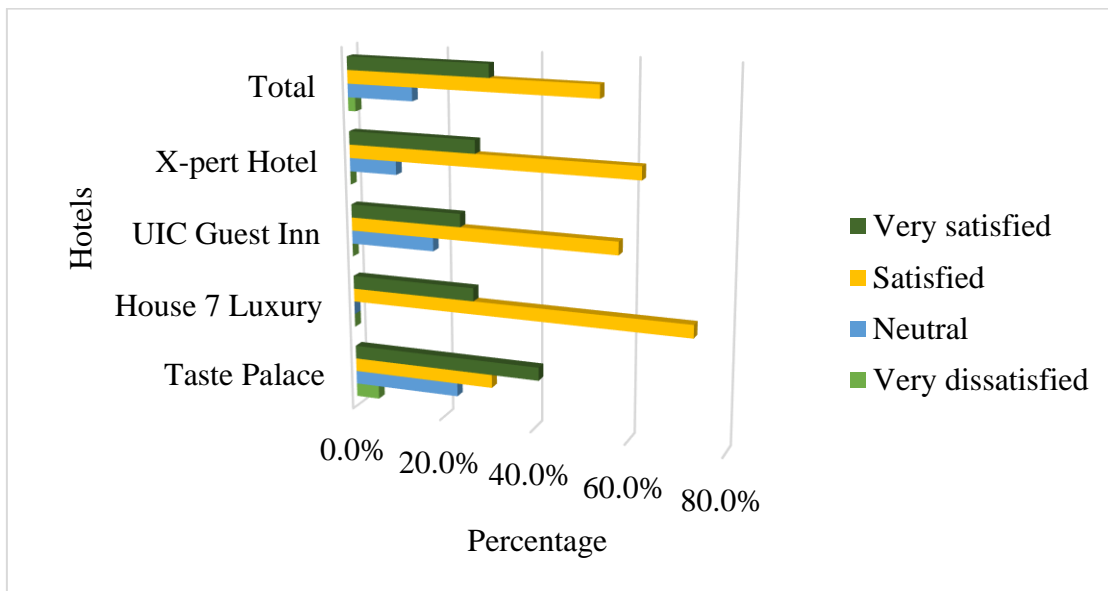


Figure 2: Hotels Overall Customer Satisfaction

4.2. Rating of Courtesy and Responsiveness of the Hotel Staff

The ratings of the courtesy and responsiveness of the hotel staff for the four hotels were presented in Table 1. The table indicated that 26.8% of the respondents rated the hotel staff's courtesy and responsiveness as Excellent, 60.6% rated it as Good, 7.9% rated it as Average, and 4.7% rated it as Poor. House 7 Luxury had the highest percentage of Excellent ratings at 46.2%, followed by Taste Palace at 33.3%, X-pert Hotel at 20.7%, and UIC Guest Inn at 9.1%. Taste Palace was the only hotel that had Poor ratings, with 15.4% of the respondents falling into this category. The other three hotels had no Poor ratings.

Table 1: Rating of courtesy and responsiveness of the hotel staff

			Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Total
Hotels	Taste Palace	Freq	13	16	4	6	39
		%	33.3%	41.0%	10.3%	15.4%	100.0%
	House 7 Luxury	Freq	12	14	0	0	26
		%	46.2%	53.8%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	UIC Guest Inn	Freq	3	27	3	0	33
		%	9.1%	81.8%	9.1%	0.0%	100.0%
	X-pert Hotel	Freq	6	20	3	0	29
		%	20.7%	69.0%	10.3%	0.0%	100.0%
Total		Freq	34	77	10	6	127
		%	26.8%	60.6%	7.9%	4.7%	100.0%

4.4. Rating the Hotel Staff's Knowledge and Skills in Providing Quality Service

The results in Table 2 shows the ratings of the hotel staff's knowledge and skills in providing quality service for the four hotels. Largely, 30.7% of the respondents rated the hotel staff's knowledge and skills as Excellent, 57.5% rated it as Good, and 11.8% rated it as Average. There were no Poor ratings. House 7 Luxury had the highest percentage of Excellent ratings at 69.2%, followed by Taste Palace at 33.3%, X-pert Hotel at 17.2%, and UIC Guest Inn at 9.1%. UIC Guest Inn and X-pert Hotel had the highest percentage of "Good" ratings at 72.7% and 72.4%, respectively, followed by Taste Palace at 51.3% and House 7 Luxury at 30.8%.

Table 2: Rating the hotel staff's knowledge and skills in providing quality service

			Excellent	Good	Average	Total
Hotels	Taste Palace	Freq	13	20	6	39
		%	33.3%	51.3%	15.4%	100.0%
	House 7 Luxury	Freq	18	8	0	26
		%	69.2%	30.8%	0.0%	100.0%
	UIC Guest Inn	Freq	3	24	6	33
		%	9.1%	72.7%	18.2%	100.0%
	X-pert Hotel	Freq	5	21	3	29
		%	17.2%	72.4%	10.3%	100.0%
Total		Freq	39	73	15	127
		%	30.7%	57.5%	11.8%	100.0%

4.5. Relationship between Customer Satisfaction and Repeat Patronage

Table 3 presents the results of a survey on the relationship between customer satisfaction and repeat patronage for

the hotels. 89.8% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend the hotel to their friends and family with mean score of 4.26. 84.2% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were willing to pay a premium price to stay at the hotel with mean value of 4.03. 78.0% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were likely to stay at the hotel again even if the price increased slightly with mean score of 3.80. 91.4% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had a positive experience at the hotel in the past with mean value of 4.10. 91.3% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were willing to provide positive feedback about the hotel on social media with mean of 4.25 out of 5.

Table 3: Relationship between Customer Satisfaction and Repeat Patronage

	SD	D	U	A	SA	Mean + S.D	Decision
I would recommend this hotel to my friends and family	Freq 2 % 1.6%	4 3.1%	7 5.5%	59 46.5%	55 43.3%	4.26±0.83	SA
Willingness to pay a premium price to stay at this hotel	Freq 0 % 0.0%	6 4.7%	14 11.0%	77 60.6%	30 23.6%	4.03±0.73	A
Am likely to stay at this hotel again even if the price increases slightly.	Freq 6 % 4.7%	11 8.7%	11 8.7%	67 52.8%	32 25.2%	3.80±1.04	A
Have had a positive experience at this hotel in the past	Freq 3 % 2.4%	5 3.9%	3 2.4%	81 63.8%	35 27.6%	4.10±0.81	A
I am willing to provide positive feedback about this hotel on social media	Freq 4 % 3.1%	3 2.4%	4 3.1%	62 48.8%	54 42.5%	4.25±0.88	SA

Note: SD=Strongly Agree, D=Disagree, U= Undecided, A=Agree, SA=Strongly Agree, Mean + S.D= Overall mean and Standard deviation

4.6. Relationship between Hotel Staff Performance and Customer Satisfaction

Results in Table 4 shows a multiple regression analysis examining the relationship between hotel staff performance and customer satisfaction. Both independent variables (courtesy/responsiveness and knowledge/skills) are statistically significant predictors of overall customer satisfaction. Courtesy and responsiveness of the hotel staff has a stronger impact on customer satisfaction (Beta = 0.441) compared to staff's knowledge and skills (Beta = 0.195). Therefore, rejecting the null hypothesis (H₀) which says there is no significant relationship between hotel staff performance and customer satisfaction.

Table 4: Relationship between hotel staff performance and customer satisfaction

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.614	.171		3.592	.000
	Courtesy and responsiveness of the hotel staff	.430	.087	.441	4.942	.000
	Staff's knowledge and skills in providing quality service	.221	.101	.195	2.186	.031

a. Dependent Variable: Overall customer satisfaction

5. Discussion

From the survey, 87.4% of the respondents rated the courtesy and responsiveness of the hotel staff as either excellent or good as shown in table 1. This shows that the perception of the staff's interpersonal skills and service quality is generally positive, this is further supported by 84.2% respondents satisfied or very satisfied with their overall hotel experience (Figure 2). This may be due to the fact that the hotel management pays a lot of attention to customer care and training of employees. Recruitment, training and management of staff in the hotel can go a long way in determining the level of courtesy and responsiveness of the staff (Susskind and his colleagues, 2007). The hotels that focus on enhancing the human capital soft skills including communication, empathy, and problem-solving skills are likely to provide the best customer experience [19,27]. Also, the adoption of service culture and policies that enhance staff commitment and engagement can help frontline staff to be willing and capable of delivering services that meet or even surpass the customers' expectations [14]. The positive ratings may also be attributed to the customers' experience and expectations towards the products. Those customers who have had previous positive encounters with the hotel staff or who have high standards of what they expect from the staff are likely to rate the service as Excellent or Good [10]. On the other hand, the respondents who have had bad experience or have low expectations are likely to rate the service as average or poor. The customers' cultural and demographic characteristics can also affect their perception and appraisal of service quality [43].

The findings as presented in Table 3 on the link between customer satisfaction and repeat patronage of the hotels in Bida, Niger State, Nigeria offer a useful connection between these two important factors in the hotel business. The survey reveals that 89.8% of the respondents were either agree or strongly agree with the statement that they would recommend the hotel to their friends and family with the mean score of 4.26 on a 5-point scale. This finding connotes that the hotel guests had a positive experience and are likely to recommend the hotels to others in their social network. Word of mouth and referrals are important in the hotel industry since they can play an important role in changing the perception of the potential customers and in the process of brand building. This supported the conclusion made by [14] on the role of customer satisfaction on word-of-mouth and customer loyalty in the hospitality industry in Kwara State. The study also found out that majority of the respondents (84.2%) had a agree or strongly agree that they were willing to pay a premium price for the hotel with a mean value of 4.03. This suggests that the guests considered the offerings of the hotel to be very valuable and were willing to pay a premium

price to get the hotel of their choice. The ability of consumers to pay a higher price for a product is an excellent sign that the customers are satisfied and loyal. Happy customers are more likely to be willing to pay a higher price for the hotel services because they understand the value they are receiving from the hotel. This finding means that the hotels in Bida have been successful in delivering a level of service and quality that exceeds customer expectations, leading to a high level of satisfaction and a willingness to pay a premium. The findings table 3 indicates that a significant majority of the respondents (78.0%) agreed or strongly agreed that they were likely to stay at the hotel again even if the price increased slightly, with a mean score of 3.80. This suggests that the customers have a strong sense of loyalty and are willing to pay a higher price to maintain their relationship with the hotel, reflecting a high level of customer satisfaction. These results agree with the assertion made by [24] in their study on the impact of service quality and customer satisfaction on customer loyalty in the Malaysian hotel industry. The authors discovered that satisfied customers were willing to patronize the hotel again and were willing to pay a higher price since they understood the value that the hotel was offering. Likewise, [19] noted that perceived value for money is a critical determinant of customer satisfaction and loyalty in the hotel sector. The authors pointed out that the customers who perceive that they are getting value for their money in terms of services and facilities are likely to revisit the hotel. This high level of customer satisfaction is a strong indicator of loyalty and this is in support of the findings by [5] that established that service quality in the hotel industry is a key driver of customer loyalty. The reasons that can explain the high percentage of positive experiences and the customers' readiness to pay more for the hotel services are the following. Firstly, the hotels' compliance to the quality services delivery as highlighted by the ratings of the physical facilities, staff courtesy and food and beverages may have enhanced the customers' satisfaction and loyalty. Also, the hotels' ability to understand and cater to the diverse needs and expectations of their customers, as reflected in the demographic profile, may have played a significant role in creating a positive and memorable experience for the guests. The findings of the multiple regression analysis presented in table 4 are clear indication of the relationship between hotel staff performance and customer satisfaction. The study indicates that the two factors of staff performance; courtesy/responsiveness and knowledge/skills are significant determinants of customer satisfaction, with the former being more influential. The positive correlation between the courtesy and responsiveness of the hotel employees and the customers' satisfaction can be explained by the fact that interpersonal communication is a central component of the hotel service delivery. A number of previous works have pointed out that frontline employee behavior influences the customers' perceptions and their level of satisfaction [38]. Polite, receptive, and quick to attend to the needs of the guests will enhance the experiences of the guests thus improving the level of satisfaction and loyalty among the customers [42]. The study also reveals that the knowledge and skills of the hotel staff, though significant, have a less influence on the customer satisfaction than the interpersonal skills. This could be due to the fact that in the hotel industry where provision of service is personalized, customers may be more concerned with the interpersonal skills of the personnel, that is, their ability to understand the customer and meet his/her needs than the technical competence of the personnel [38][42]. Additionally, the findings support the concept that customer satisfaction is not only a function of the quality of the actual product or service being offered but also the total service encounter which is a function of the performance of frontline employees [44]. By ensuring that hotel staff are courteous, responsive, and possess the necessary knowledge and skills to address customer needs, organizations can create a positive and memorable experience that can lead to increased customer satisfaction and loyalty [38,42].

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Therefore, this research confirms that customer satisfaction is not only an end product but a success and survival imperative for hotels in Bida. It affects customer loyalty, customers' willingness to pay a premium price and recommendations to other customers. The results of the study therefore call for attention to staff training, customer relations, and the use of technology in the hotel industry to meet the needs of the customers and sustain market competitiveness.

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