

The Influence of Waiting Staff on Customer Retention in Two-Star Hotels in Takoradi Metropolis

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Abstract

The study's primary objective was to examine the impact of waitstaff on customer retention in two-star hotels in Takoradi Metropolis. The study's goals were to identify the role of the hotel waiting staff in service delivery, to determine the factors affecting customer retention, and to examine measures employed to promote customer retention in two-star hotels in Takoradi. A survey research design was used for the study. The study population was five (5) waiting staff from twelve (12) two-star hotels in Takoradi, which made up sixty (60) respondents. A random sampling technique and a questionnaire were used for data collection in the study. The study found that most waiting staff take orders, welcome customers, and lead them to their seats. The study's findings further revealed that employees are empowered by management to interact with customers and meet their needs. The study revealed that when customers are satisfied with the services provided by the waiter and have a positive experience atmosphere and short waiting time, they are more likely to return to the hotel. The study concludes that the role of hotel waiting staff in service delivery at two-star hotels has a significant impact on hotel customer retention. The study recommends that two-star hotels should organise regular training for their servers to enable them to gain knowledge in providing quality waiting service to customers. This will encourage customers to patronise the hotel, thus leading to customer retention.

Keywords

Waiter, Customer, Retention, Two-Star, Hotels

1. Introduction

Providing food and beverages to guests away from home is a crucial part of the services offered in hotels. The staff involved in serving food and beverages in ho-

tels are part of the frontline of customer service in full-service restaurants, casual dining, eateries, and other food service establishments. According to Pratten (2003), to move food prepared in the kitchen to a customer, some form of food service activity must be performed by the servers. The services vary from silver service style in a luxury hotel restaurant to plate service and self-service cafeteria, where customers collect their food from a service counter (Abel & Obeten, 2015; Drummond, Cooley, & Cooley, 2021). A waiter, as a salesperson of food and beverages, plays a vital role in the restaurant, offering friendly courtesy, a welcoming attitude, and well-cooked, efficient service. The hotel restaurant with good waiting service is one that guest wants to repeat visit and feel as comfortable as in their home (Pratten, 2003; Sthapit & Jiménez-Barreto, 2018). A friendly, courteous, and efficient waiter produces this comfortable atmosphere. With this service, both the customer and the seller are satisfied, and the hotel's goodwill is increased.

The services provided encompass all the actions and reactions that customers perceive they have purchased. In hotel restaurants, food and beverages are served to guests by a waitstaff. Unlike physical goods/products, most services are consumed during the process of production (Abel & Obeten, 2015). Some authors believe that the service process is more important than the service outcome. Luu, Hau, Ngo, Bucic, & Cuong (2016) and others argue that there may be distinct stages in the service delivery process that customers usually use as a basis for evaluation and judgment (Di Mascio, 2007). This then suggests that the waiting service delivery process has several distinct stages depending on the nature of the service under investigation. No matter how good the quality of food, beverage, décor and equipment is, untrained or unhelpful waiting staff can destroy the customer's potential satisfaction. On the other hand, well-trained, competent and helpful waiting staff often make up for the aspects that are lacking elsewhere in the operation.

A customer experiences several chronological stages during the visit to the hotel restaurant. In the case of the hotel restaurant service delivery process, it begins with checking in at the restaurant and concludes with presenting the check to the customer and saying goodbye (Dang, 2021). Besides, customers are happy and feel a sense of belonging, plus money is worth it when such services are offered to them, as asserted (Heidarzadeh Hanzaee & Esmailpour, 2017).

The interaction between people in a restaurant is the core business (Abel & Obeten, 2015; Di Mascio, 2007). The satisfaction of social and intellectual needs during the restaurant service delivery process (Kim, Jeon, & Hyun, 2011) and equally important as the satisfaction of the guests' physiological needs. More often than not, the waiter's (or waitress's) responsibilities that fall under the hotel include welcoming guests, demonstrating menu knowledge, answering questions, up-selling restaurant speciality items, describing dishes, taking orders (beverage and food), handling complaints, and ensuring the satisfaction of the guests (Abel & Obeten, 2015; Drummond et al., 2021). Others include the ability of the waiter to operate the point-of-sale register system, process the credit card and cash trans-

actions, communicate in an appropriate professional manner with customers and other colleagues, read and understand menus and instructions, and have knowledge of culinary terminology (Dang, 2021; Pratten, 2003).

Considering the activities performed by the waiter, the study aimed to assess the impact of waitstaff on customer retention in two-star hotels in the Takoradi metropolis, with the following objectives. Thus, the role of hotel waiting staff in service delivery determines the factors affecting customer retention in two-star hotels in Takoradi, and examines the measures employed to promote customer retention in these hotels. This study contributes to the existing knowledge on the role of waiting staff in customer retention and provides insights for stakeholders in the hotel industry on the impact of the services they render to their customers, which can either keep them in business or drive them out.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1. Hotel Restaurant Customer Retention

The ways through which companies retain their customers depend on the goals, ideas and context of each, and once the companies know who their customers are, specific tactics are used in keeping the customers (Andrews & Turner, 2017; Dang, 2021). Customer retention refers to the loyalty your customers exhibit towards your product or service. The relationship between customer loyalty and satisfaction is not a linear one, as the behaviour of every guest depends on their attitude towards the service provided. For this reason, managers worldwide are continually seeking ways to measure customer satisfaction, which is a worthy pursuit for all marketing communities in hotels.

The hospitality industry is often regarded as one of the most global in the service industry (Abel & Obeten, 2015; Di Mascio, 2007), as more people are travelling around the world. When travellers are far from their homes, they need a place to stay, a bed to sleep in, and food to eat, and often end up choosing hotels for these necessities. In this regard, the hospitality industry comes into play, and according to (Sthapit & Jiménez-Barreto, 2018) has made customer retention in the hospitality industry increasingly important.

Oftentimes, long-standing customers purchase more, introduce new customers, take less of the service providers' time, and are sometimes sensitive to price (Ahmed, Naseer, Asadullah, & Khan, 2020). Research shows the cost of soliciting new customers is seven times more than retaining old customers (Kim et al., 2011) and that enhances customer retention, ultimately leading to increased profits. To increase customer retention, hotel managers should recognise the relationship between customer service features and customer retention.

Loyal customers are the principal drivers of profits as they continue to stay at a brand's properties. Hotel restaurant guests who fit into the extremely loyal clusters have a high attachment to the hotel, and so are prepared to change their time of visit to ensure they can stay at their preferred hotel (Madhani, 2019). Further, the guests are not as sensitive to pricing issues and are willing to pay extra to stay in

their choice property rather than go elsewhere in favour of moderate room rates. Brand-loyal customers also reduce the marketing costs associated with attracting new customers. In addition, these loyal customers say positive things about a company to others (Dang, 2021) and frequently pay premium prices. Report on the luxury hotel segment among leisure travellers, overall satisfaction was significantly higher among repeat guests. It therefore suggests that satisfying leisure travellers often pays higher rates and more repeat guests. Thus, customer loyalty is a key to sustaining long-term business success.

Existing literature on loyalty defines retention as the number of customers who stay with the provider over a specified period, typically a year (Abel & Obeten, 2015; Andrews & Turner, 2017). The retention and attraction of the company's new customers serve as indicators of growth in market share and revenue (Ahmed et al., 2020). In retaining customers, a company needs to identify how to serve its customers as well as how to manage post-sales services (Drummond et al., 2021; Madhani, 2019). Product or service providers need to emphasise the quality of products and services. As stated by Andrews & Turner (2017), there is a relationship between quality, commitment, trust, and satisfaction, which in turn influences customer retention and future use of the product or service, as retention is linked to future use. Previous research findings showed there is a strong relationship between customer retention and quality of service or products (Andrews & Turner, 2017).

Research showed that a loyalty program with monetary compensation is a step toward excellent customer retention (Ahmed et al., 2020; Heidarzadeh Hanzaee & Esmaeilpour, 2017). Additionally, evidence in previous literature suggests that emotional commitment and loyalty programs that give financial incentives have a positive effect on customer retention. A nationwide customer retention survey revealed that the majority of respondents reported that 75% of sales came from existing customers. More respondents agreed on the importance of customer loyalty; however, only half of them were aware of any customer loyalty programmes implemented in their companies. Revenue from loyal customers continues to grow as long as they remain loyal. The time and money companies spend on attracting new customers are not worthwhile if they cannot keep them. All companies practising relationship marketing focus primarily on customer retention. Although the meaning and measurement of customer retention may differ across industries and firms, there is consensus that activities aimed at retaining customers are valuable in different industries and firms (Lahap, Ramli, Said, Radzi, & Zain, 2016; Madhani, 2019). There is a consensus that focusing on activities that retain customers can yield several economic benefits. Estimation of customers' use of service providers in the future is an indicator of customer retention (Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000; Lahap et al., 2016), and this is usually described in the context of behavioural intention to return to a company and willingness to mention it to others (Giovanni, Thamrin, Ting, Rosman, & Wiyana, 2024). Thus, the customer intentionally stays loyal to that service provider, especially in the context of switching costs and the inclination of the customers to stay with the service pro-

vider in the future (Giovanni et al., 2024; Madhani, 2019).

2.2. Factors Affecting Customer Retention in Hotels

According to Hyun and Perdue (2017), customer defection occurs when a customer switches from one service provider to another and also refuses to recommend such services to others. The negative experiences most customers have with hotels lead to customer dissatisfaction and defection (Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000; Lahap et al., 2016). Many hotels tend to ignore customers who have defected or migrated to another service and also influence other customers to follow suit. Causes of customer defection could include switching to a competitor offering lower prices, a competitor providing a better product, inadequate service, going out of business, acquiring a product or service from outside the industry, or due to internal and external political considerations (Abel & Obeten, 2015; Pratten, 2003). A customer's choice of hotel services is influenced by many factors, including the variety of services, star rating, location, and prices charged. However, higher service quality alone cannot guarantee customer satisfaction, as Heidarzadeh Hanzaee and Esmailpour (2017) state that price is crucial, if not more important than the service and relationship established by the providers. Businesses, especially service providers, should prioritise customer-centred activities that promote customer retention (Andrews & Turner, 2017; Heidarzadeh Hanzaee & Esmailpour, 2017). Customer satisfaction often influences decisions to repurchase and encourages new customers to engage in the same purchasing behaviour (Kim et al., 2011). Although some service providers focus on acquiring new customers, it is equally important for them to retain existing ones (Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000). Hotel businesses manage customer retention through several processes, including measuring customer satisfaction, implementing a customer retention planning process, quality assurance processes, win-back processes, and complaint handling (recovery) processes (Hyun & Perdue, 2017).

Another aspect, which is *service quality*, refers to how the customer perceives and experiences the service they have purchased. Extant literature confirms that service quality influences customer satisfaction (Di Mascio, 2007; Luu et al., 2016), and this gained attention in the late 1970s regarding indicators of business performance. Quality of service plays a significant factor in a successful business. The service provider affects guest satisfaction, and for that reason, the waiter ought to demonstrate all the attributes of a waiter (Abel & Obeten, 2015; Drummond et al., 2021). The labour market has some level of influence on the hospitality industry, so if the employees are uneducated, unmotivated, untrained, unskilled and unproductive, the hotel industry loses time and money due to loss of customers (Heidarzadeh Hanzaee & Esmailpour, 2017; Madhani, 2019).

For guests to appreciate and value the quality of service, personnel should have a passion for the work they do, attend to guests with honesty, be trustworthy, and be able to handle emergencies (Hyun & Perdue, 2017). Hence, the training programmes are organised for all employees to ensure they deliver polite, friendly,

and respectful service to the guests (Kim et al., 2011). The relationship between hotel contact staff and guests is very important during transactions as there ought to be a relationship when service is ongoing (Fu & Parks, 2001; Koc, 2020), and (Hyun & Perdue, 2017), and that is the premise for training the following service personnel in the hotel: front desk, waiters, door and bellmen, room maids, and stewards. Research showed that whenever customers experience service failure, they tend to discuss that occurrence with at least ten other persons, whereas positive experiences are discussed with only five persons (Fu & Parks, 2001). This shows that negative experiences spread faster than positive experiences. Nevertheless, effective service recovery is necessary to maintain guest satisfaction as this significantly impacts the growth of the company's revenues, and profitability (Hyun & Perdue, 2017; Madhani, 2019).

Customers interviewed in a research study stated that the physical surroundings of a hotel influence buying behaviour, as well as their emotional and psychological status. The design of hotels is geared towards influencing the buyer emotionally and increasing buying ability (Ryu & Han, 2011). It has a significant impact on the guests, builds some memories and makes them want to come again (Almohaimmeed, 2019; Madhani, 2019). Unique designs of hotels can increase the daily occupancy and rate (Hyun & Perdue, 2017). Hotels with facilities such as swimming pools, restaurants, green areas, and bars, among others, are found to be more successful than others (Andrews & Turner, 2017). This confirms the popularity of boutique hotels due to their unique designs. The connection study further showed that the physical surrounding of the business has a significant effect on the fulfilment of the service staff and an increase in performance (Ryu & Han, 2011).

According to Kandampully and Suhartanto (2000), *customer satisfaction* results from the evaluation of the service received at the hotel. Companies that provide services prioritise activities that promote customer satisfaction, as it is seen as an indicator of customer retention. Whereas satisfied customers lead to repeat patronage, loyalty, and serve as an advertisement for the business through word-of-mouth to friends, unsatisfied customers' complaining behaviours affect the business (Luu et al., 2016). Additionally, the quality of service experienced by customers determines their satisfaction (Di Mascio, 2007), as future patronage depends on the performance the customer anticipated (Andrews & Turner, 2017). Thus, customer satisfaction is achieved when the services provided meet the customer's expectations. Failure to meet the expected outcome results in dissatisfaction or a poor perception of the service quality.

Depending on the service quality expectation of the customer, satisfaction can be acknowledged in various senses that range from feelings of fulfilment, contentment, pleasure, delight and relief (Almohaimmeed, 2019; Fu & Parks, 2001). The level of customer satisfaction is the result of the customer's comparison of the service quality expected in a given service encounter with the perceived service quality (Heidarzadeh Hanzaee & Esmaeilpour, 2017). When hotel customers are satisfied with the quality of services, it leads to loyalty and retention, which is beneficial for the hotel

because it results in higher profits, a larger market share, and an increase in the customer base. Loyalty of customers is dependent on the quality of the services received from the hotel; therefore, if a customer is not satisfied with the services received in one hotel, he/she is likely to look for better services somewhere else (Luu et al., 2016). Several studies analysed the needs and desires of hotel guests and found that guest satisfaction is linked with a variety of attributes such as the cleanliness of the hotel, price of the service being purchased, location of the hotel, security, personnel and physical attractiveness (Fu & Parks, 2001). The hotel business is very competitive, so for a hotel to remain in business in terms of customer satisfaction, it must track the levels of customer satisfaction to implement a continuous improvement of services and goods based on the needs of the customer (Lahap et al., 2016).

2.3. Challenges to the Delivery of Customer Service

Most hotels have come to terms with the need to offer customer service (Almohaimmeed, 2019; Hyun & Perdue, 2017), however, customers sometimes have difficulty explaining their issues, which often leads to customer dissatisfaction and, consequently, affects retention. Providing customer service can often be frustrating, especially when client requests appear demanding because barriers in providing such service by the hotel make consumer requests seem excessive (Di Mascio, 2007). Such outcomes cause the service provider or waiter to lose their energy quickly, and customers will receive insufficient attention to their issues (Drummond et al., 2021; Heidarzadeh Hanzaee & Esmailpour, 2017). On the other hand, if the waiter is underworked, they will feel less challenged, unappreciated, and unimportant. Customers get frustrated when turnaround time is longer than expected due to underworked waiters (Lahap et al., 2016). The culture of the business can have an extensive effect on how customer service cases are handled (Almohaimmeed, 2019; Ryu & Han, 2011). Poor accountability is also a challenge to delivering effective customer service. When accountability for action is ignored, staff tend to play the blame game, leaving customers unhappy and less likely to return.

3. Methodology

Opinions of service staff influence customer retention in hotels, so a descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The study targeted the waitstaff of two-star hotels in Takoradi, and the sample size consisted of 60 participants. For each hotel, five (5) waiting staff were selected from twelve (12) two-star hotels. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2017) asserted that in research, it is unlikely to investigate all members of a target population if it is huge; hence, there is a need to draw a sample from this population of interest. With simple random sampling, each distinct subject is chosen randomly by chance, ensuring that each subject value has an equal probability of being selected during the sampling process. Further, each subset of k individuals has an equal probability of being selected for the

sample as any other subset of k individuals (Bhardwaj, 2019). The study adopted these sampling techniques because the respondents (servers) selected already had a fair knowledge of the study topic and were able to answer the questions appropriately. A structured questionnaire was developed into three sections, covering the role of the hotel's waiting staff in service delivery, factors affecting customer retention, and measures employed to promote customer retention. These were assessed on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 2 (disagree), 3 (neutral), 4 (agree), and 5 (strongly agree). Primary data was obtained from respondents where questionnaires were administered personally and collected a day after distribution. The data was edited, coded, and entered, and descriptive statistics were used to analyse, present, and interpret data.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1. Demographic Characteristics

This section of the study was to describe the participants who completed the survey. The following demographic variables, such as gender, age, academic qualification, and marital status, were used.

Table 1. The results of the analysis of the respondents' demographic characteristics.

Variables	Frequency	Per cent (%)
Sex		
Male	20	33
Female	40	67
Total	60	100
Age		
18 – 25 yrs	34	57
26 – 33 yrs	24	40
34 – 41 yrs	2	3
Total	60	100
Academic Qualification		
SHS/Vocational	35	58
Diploma	8	13
HND	10	17
Bachelor	7	12
Total	60	100
Marital Status		
Single	39	65
Married	20	33
Divorce	1	2
Total	60	100

The analysis in **Table 1** depicts the demographic characteristics of respondents. According to the analysis, a greater proportion of respondents (67%) were female, while 33% were male. Since most jobs in hotels were female-related, they attracted more females than males as employees. The finding affirmed a study by (Hekman & Lashley, 2017), which stated that, in most countries, women make up 60% to 70% of the workforce in the hospitality industry. There should be a balance concerning gender, and this gender balance brings a healthy work-life among staff. This notwithstanding, Almohaimmeed (2019) stressed that females should dominate in the area of service, such as waiting for the marketing of goods and services.

More so, most of the respondents (57%) fell within the age cluster of 18 - 25 years, 40% within the age group of 26 - 33 years, and a smaller proportion (3%) within the age group of 34 - 41 years. Hekman and Lashley (2017) in their study stated that most waiters fall within the age cluster of 18 - 25 years in the hospitality industry because such age groups of the population are smart in waiting services.

Given this, most waiters in the hotels were within their youthful age as only 3% of the hotel waiting staff fall within the age group 34 - 41 years.

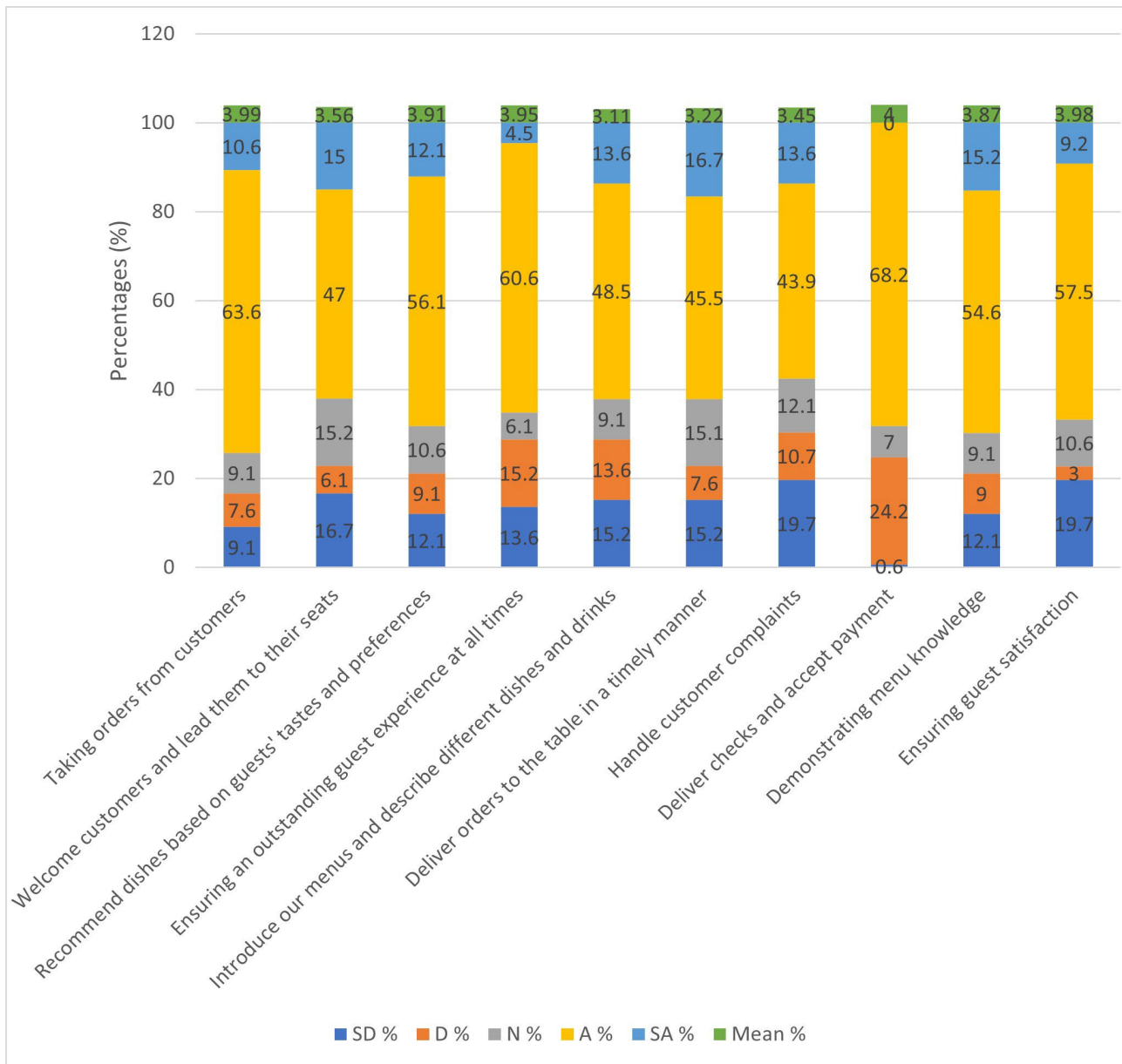
Again, looking at the academic qualification of respondents, most of the respondents (58%) hold an SHS/Vocational school certificate, 17% of the respondents hold a Higher National Diploma Certificate, 13% of the respondents hold a diploma certificate and 12% of the respondents hold a bachelor's degree certificate. Koc (2020) stated that it is an indisputable fact that, if respondents attain higher educational levels, they are pushed to take care of higher positions. Since waiting service is a stepping stone, most waiters hold a SHS/vocational certificate. Not all waiting staff hold SHS/vocational certificates; some waiting staff hold another certificate, such as a Diploma or Higher National Certificate, and this affirms the research finding. According to Koc (2020), even though waiting service is a stepping stone for most waiters due to economic hardship and difficulty in finding a job after university, some degree holders have engaged in waiting service.

In addition, most of the respondents 65% were single, 33% married, and 2% divorced. Hekman and Lashley (2017) stated that most waiting staff are single when it comes to waiting service in the hospitality industry. This could result from the reporting and closing times of restaurant operations.

4.2. Role of Hotel Waiting Staff in Service Delivery

This identifies the role of the hotel waiting staff in service delivery, and it is depicted in **Figure 1**.

The analysis in **Figure 1** depicts the role of hotel waiting staff in service delivery. From the analysis in **Figure 1**, a greater proportion of the respondents (63.6%) agreed that taking orders from customers was one of the roles of hotel waiting staff, with a corresponding mean response of 3.99. Nevertheless, 9.1% of the study's respondents strongly disagreed that the role of a hotel waiter was to take



Note: SD means Strongly Disagree, D means Disagree, N means Neutral, A means Agree, and SA means Strongly Agree. A mean of 0.1 - 1.0 indicates Strongly Disagree (SD), 1.1 - 2.0 indicates Disagree (D), 2.1 - 3.0 indicates Neutral (N), 3.1 - 4.0 indicates Agree (A), and 4.1 - 5.0 indicates Strongly Agree (SA).

Figure 1. The role of hotel waiting staff on service delivery.

orders and also be responsible for the food service process. Taking into consideration the extant literature, moving food prepared in the kitchen to a customer involves food service activities required by the waiter, hence the 9.1%.

In addition, 47% and 15% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that the hotel waiters welcomed customers and led them to their seats, with a mean response of 3.56. The study findings buttress the work of (Ryu & Han, 2011), that waiters and waitresses occasionally perform the duties of other food and beverage service workers, thus, escorting the customers to their tables, serving customers

seated at tables, and serving customers seated at the counter. This shows that customers are happy and feel a sense of belonging, and the money is worth it when such services are offered to them.

The majority of the respondents (56.1%) indicated that hotel staff recommend dishes based on guests' tastes and preferences, with a mean response of 3.91. Moreover, 60.6% of the respondents agreed that ensuring an outstanding guest experience at all times was one of the roles of hotel waiting staff, with a mean score of 3.95. Moreover, 48.5% and 13.6% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that hotel waiting staff introduced menus and described different dishes and drinks, with a mean score of 3.11. This is in line with Koc (2020) and Hyun & Perdue (2017), that waiters set tables before customers sit down (e.g., changing the tablecloth, putting out new plates, cleaning chairs, etc.); offer drinks such as cocktails, wine, beer, or other beverages; recommend food options; serve foods and beverages and clear tables used by customers were all roles of waiters to customers. When customers experience these services, they are likely to come back for more and possibly recommend them to others.

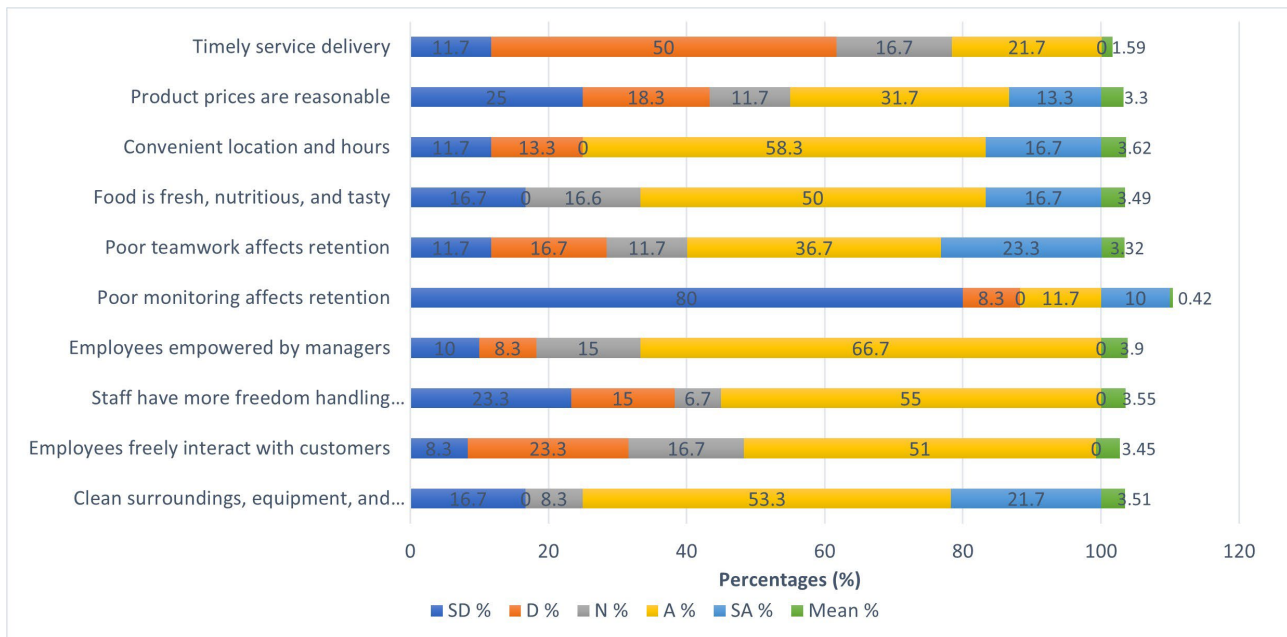
In addition, 45.5% and 16.7% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that the role of hotel waiting staff was to deliver orders to the table on time. This is in line with (Almohaimmeed, 2019), that service is part of a waiter's work, but that is only one part of what brings a guest to a hotel. Other duties include welcoming guests with menu information, responding to guest questions, up-selling specialty items, taking beverage and food orders, handling complaints, and ensuring the guest is satisfied before leaving the hotel. Waiters follow specific rules and service guidelines when performing their duties, and this makes it a skilled job.

Regarding complaints, 43.9% and 13.6% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that handling customer complaints was one of the roles of hotel waiting staff. Again, 68.2%, 54.6% and 57.5% of the respondents indicated that delivering checks, accepting payment, demonstrating menu knowledge, and ensuring guest satisfaction were roles of the hotel waiting staff in service delivery, with a mean response of 4.0, 3.87, and 3.98, respectively. Thus, waiting service goes beyond bringing food from the kitchen to the customer. Anticipating the guest's needs, making them feel welcome, being friendly, and paying attention to detail, among other things, are all activities performed by the waiter to enable the customer to return. As long as the customer is retained and patronises the hotel's services, business is sustained, and profit growth is achieved.

4.3. Factors Affecting Customer Retention in Two-Star Hotels

Figure 2 determined the factors affecting customer retention in two-star hotels in Takoradi.

Taking into cognizance of Ryu & Han (2011) and Almohaimmeed (2019), their assertion confirms the study findings displayed in Figure 2, which show that 53.3% agreed with the surroundings having a clean environment, with a mean



Note: SD means Strongly Disagree, D means Disagree, N means Neutral, A means Agree, SA means Strongly Agree. A mean of 0.1 - 1.0 indicates Strongly Disagree (SD), 1.1 - 2.0 indicates Disagree (D), 2.1 - 3.0 indicates Neutral (N), 3.1 - 4.0 indicates Agree (A), and 4.1 - 5.0 indicates Strongly Agree (SA).

Figure 2. Factors affecting customer retention.

response of 3.51. Moreover, most of the respondents (51.0%) employees were free to interact with customers to meet their needs, with a mean response of 3.45, while 8.3% of the respondents disagreed with that. However, these findings attest to [Luu et al. \(2016\)](#) that the contact between employees and guests is very important during the service transaction in the hotel industry, unlike physical products, where a customer can even purchase without seeing the seller or experiencing the establishment, waiters cannot provide services without interacting. Customers experience the service instantly provided by the waiter in the restaurant or hospitality setup. The outcome of customer satisfaction stems from the customer's comparison of the service quality expected in a given service encounter, with the moment of truth service quality experienced.

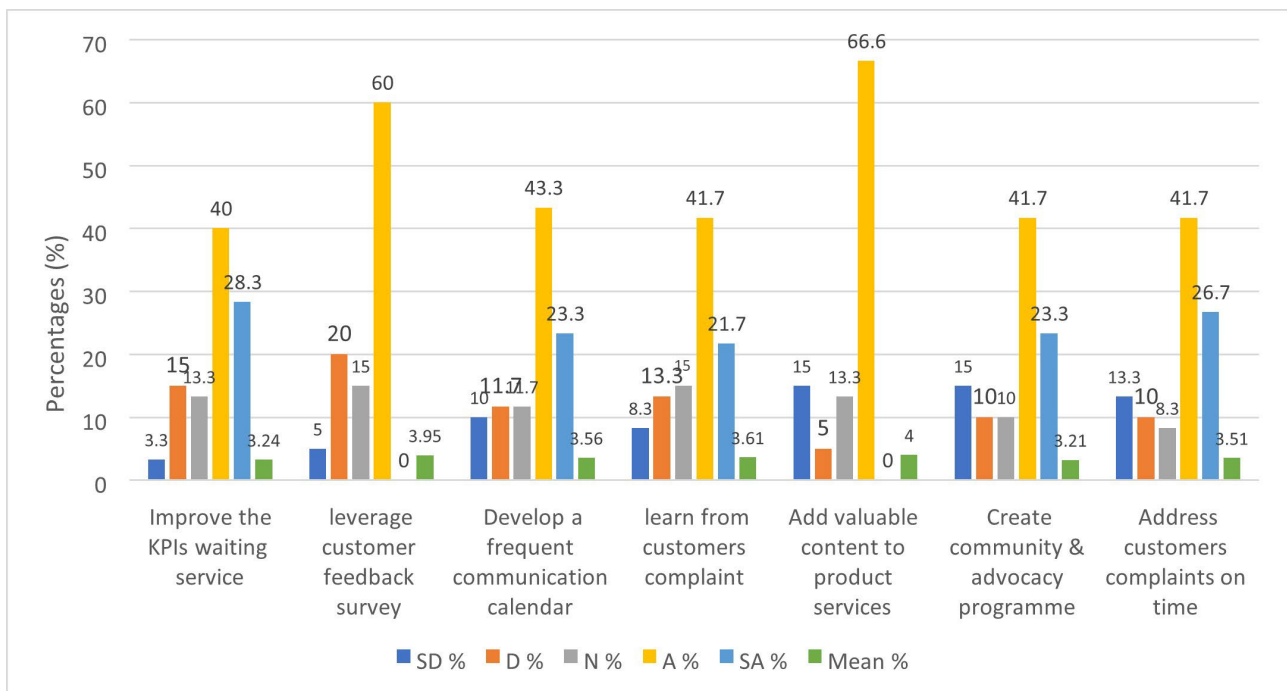
On the responses regarding freedom to handle customer complaints, the study found 55% with a mean response of 3.55 whereas 23.3% of the respondents strongly disagreed with that and this depicted how firms sometimes handle customer complaints while ignoring other alternative opportunities that help recover relationships with the customer, which in turn affects satisfaction and loyalty. Again, 66.7% of service delivery failures of the respondents indicated that employees are being empowered by managers to meet customer needs, with a mean score of 3.90. A greater proportion of the respondents (80.0%) strongly disagreed that poor performance monitoring can lead to customer retention, with a mean score of 0.42. More so, 36.7% and 23.3% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that poor coordination and teamwork can affect customer retention, with a mean score of 3.32. Furthermore, most of the respondents (50.0%) of the respondents

agreed that the food served in this hotel is always fresh. Besides, 58.3% of the respondents agreed that food served in hotels looked nutritious, tasty, and the location and operating hours are convenient.

Nevertheless, 31.7% and 13.3% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that the prices of products in two-star hotels were reasonable with a mean response of 3.30 and this confirms the key factors influencing customers’ selection of a hotel to include the range of services, rates, fees and prices charged and that superior service alone is not sufficient to satisfy customers. Prices are essential, if not more important than service and relationship quality. Also, half (50%) of the respondents indicated that employees in two-star hotels deliver service on time with a mean response of 1.59.

4.4. Measures Employed to Promote Customer Retention in Two-Star Hotels

Figure 3 examines measures employed by waiting staff in two-star hotels to promote customer retention.



Note: SD means Strongly Disagree, D means Disagree, N means Neutral, A means Agree, SA means Strongly Agree. A mean of 0.1 - 1.0 indicates Strongly Disagree (SD), 1.1 - 2.0 indicates Disagree (D), 2.1 - 3.0 indicates Neutral (N), 3.1 - 4.0 indicates Agree (A), and 4.1 - 5.0 indicates Strongly Agree (SA).

Figure 3. Measures to promote customer retention in Two-Star Hotels.

The analysis in **Figure 3** depicts the measures employed to promote customer retention in two-star hotels. From the analysis, 40% and 28.3% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that management should improve the key performance indicators around waiting service in two-star hotels, with a mean response of 3.24. Most establishments, including hotels, have realised the need to offer cus-

tomers service, and this positively reflects on the amount customers spend as well as gives a boost to the word-of-mouth strategy, which eventually makes them loyal.

A greater proportion (60%) of the respondents indicated that management should leverage customer feedback surveys with a mean response of 3.95, while 20% of the respondents disagreed with that. Moreover, 43.3% and 23.3% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that management should develop a frequent communication calendar with their customers, with a mean response of 3.56. In addition, 41.7% and 21.7% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that management should learn from customers' complaints. Furthermore, the majority of the respondents (66.6%) indicated that management should consistently add valuable content to their products and services, with a mean response of 4.0. Service transactions may sometimes be frustrating, and customer requests can frequently appear demanding, especially when there are barriers that might make rational consumer requests seem excessive. Thus, hotels ought to develop excellent means of frequent communication with their customers to obtain needed information. Given this, 41.7% and 23.3% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that the management of two-star hotels should create a community and customer advocacy programme. Notwithstanding, 41.7% of the respondents agreed that management should address customer complaints on time, with a mean response of 3.51. To bridge this gap, the management of hotels should pay much attention to customers' complaints. Hotels need to create customer advocacy programmes for their guests in a way that promotes customer retention.

4.5. Conclusion of the Study

Findings from the data collected revealed some facts that served as basic conclusions. It can be concluded that the role of hotel waiting staff in service delivery in two-star hotels has a significant impact on customer retention. Some of these major roles include taking orders from customers, welcoming customers and leading them to their seats, recommending dishes based on guests' tastes and preferences, introducing menus and describing different dishes and drinks to customers, as well as demonstrating menu knowledge and ensuring guest satisfaction. It was evident from the study that customers were always satisfied with the good atmosphere and waiting time, and this influenced their coming back. Additionally, the taste, nutrition and freshness of food served in the hotel influence customer loyalty. The surroundings, equipment, and prompt handling of customer complaints had a role as well. Besides, these factors (physical surroundings, free communication, and handling of customer complaints) influence customer retention. The study further revealed that management should leverage customer feedback surveys.

The study recommends that management of hotels should provide waiting staff with the service tools and equipment that are needed to meet the satisfaction of customers. The waiters' trendy service tools and equipment also contribute to the experience and moment of truth for most customers. This will help the waiting

staff to deliver customers' orders on time and also help the waiting staff to work smart.

The management of the hotels has to introduce reward schemes to loyal customers as well as to performing staff. When this is done, it brings healthy competition among staff as each wants to be rewarded. Again, the customers in turn serve as an advert for the hotel through word of mouth. Training and development of waiters is dynamic, and so employees should regularly be trained on how to deliver quality service to customers. This will prevent service failures and enable customers to patronise the hotel, thus leading to customer retention.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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