

Hotel Choice Determinants in the North Rift Region of Kenya

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Abstract

Hotels form an important component and are critical to tourists' destination choice and satisfaction. It is therefore imperative to understand the determinants of tourists' choice of hotels especially for relatively 'new' destinations such as the North Rift region in Kenya. Literature suggests that tourists' choices are complex and are driven by needs and judgments on the merits of the options available. This paper aims at establishing determinants considered important by tourists in their choice of hotels. The study was undertaken in six hotels located in three purposively selected counties namely, Uasin Gishu, Elgeyo Marakwet and Baringo in the North Rift region of Kenya. The study adopted descriptive research design wherein the sample comprised 240 tourists both domestic and international. However, only 191 (79.6%) managed to fill the questionnaires. Primary data was collected using structured questionnaires administered to tourists. Cronbachs' Alpha was used to test the reliability of the research instrument. Descriptive statistics specifically mean and standard deviation were used to analyze data. Factor analysis was used to reduce the indicators to measurable variables. Descriptive results reveal that product range, value for money, location and staff related issues were crucial in determining hotel choice by tourists. On the other hand, factor analysis results grouped the 27 indicators into seven components that include facility elements, staff attributes, perceived value, quality aspects, accessibility, services offered and physical features as important indicators of hotel choice determinants. Based on the findings, the study concludes that tourists decisions are driven by attributes that require careful consideration that are crucial in creating visibility of an establishment. Thus the study recommends special attention towards ensuring that these factors are carefully observed in order to strategically place hotels within North Rift Region as a destination of choice for tourists. The findings can be used by the ministry of tourism when marketing North rift as a destination.

Key Words: Choice, Determinants, Hotels

INTRODUCTION

The North Rift region based on the administrative units created by the Constitution of Kenya (2010) comprises of seven counties which include: Turkana, Nandi, West Pokot, Elgeyo Marakwet, Trans Nzoia, Baringo and Uasin Gishu Counties. There are various tourist attractions in the region including the world famous Great Rift Valley and diverse cultural and natural attractions. However, despite the world famous attractions, the area receives a minimal number of visitors compared to other tourist regions in Kenya. According to it is estimated that 66% of tourism expenditure takes place in the Coast region, 14% within Nairobi, and only 8% in

the Rift Valley region. In addition to the low visitor levels compared to the mainstream tourism destinations such as the Kenyan coast, Maasai Mara and Nairobi, there exists limited information on the North Rift region, which can be helpful to the tourism stakeholders for marketing purposes for the region hence the need for this research.

The mainstay of tourist attractions in Kenya have been the sea and the sand (beach) at the coast and the wildlife (safari) in the Maasai Mara amongst other premier protected areas (Akama & Kieti, 2007). Kenya Vision 2030 and the Tourism Policy No. 28 of 2010 emphasize diversification of tourism products from beach and wildlife tourism to ecotourism development for sustainable tourism in Kenya. In particular, the policy identifies Western Kenya Tourism Circuit for tourism activities aimed at opening the region as an alternative tourist destination. The industry, being the second largest contributor of foreign exchange earnings after agriculture, is indispensable to the Kenyan economy. Therefore, initiatives to ensure that the tourism industry remains relevant have been initiated by various stakeholders. Tourism product and destination diversification have been greatly emphasized (Sindiga, 1996). One way of accelerating diversification exercise is to promote aggressively the new tourist destinations such as the Western Kenya tourism circuit and specifically the North Rift region. The North Rift tourism region is home to popular tourist attractions such as the Saiwa Swamp National Park, Lake Bogoria geysers and hot springs, Lake Baringo, Lake Kamnarok and Rimoi National Parks among others. The North Rift region is also the home to world famous athletes making it a high potential sports tourism destination. The newly formed regional economic bloc North Rift Economic Bloc (NOREB) is an additional boost for the prospects of tourism in the region. The region also has great prospects for the development of Agritourism. In addition, the region's hotel sector is rapidly growing with a large number of hotels being constructed in the recent past. This growth has been necessitated by the increased demand for conference facilities and owing to the expansion of towns in the region after devolution of governance from the National Government to regional or County Governments (Awino *et al.*, 2010).

The formation of the above mentioned North Rift Economic Bloc (NOREB) by the region's county governments is geared towards opening up the region for the demand of tourism products. Despite this great potential for tourism in the region, the region records limited number of tourist arrivals. The region also faces among others challenges related to tourism product development, accessibility, marketing, coordination among stakeholders and insecurity (Kiprutto *et al.*, 2012). To date, there exists limited information on the region in literature. More so, there is limited information on the region's tourism products which can form the basis for the promotion or extensive marketing of the region. This study therefore aimed at providing information on hotel choice factors that will be useful to both individual service providers as well as destination's marketers.

Research Question

What are the determinants of hotel choice by tourists in the North Rift region of Kenya?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Lockyer (2002) argues that it is important for managers to understand who their customers are and what they desire when selecting a hotel. Moreover, an understanding of customer preferences and the important service attributes can enable hoteliers to position their products to target customers based on preferences (Verma & Thomson, 1997). Likewise, knowledge of the reasons behind hotel choices will enable hotels to structure their products to meet the desired needs of individual travellers from different markets, predict future travel plans, and plan marketing activities that amplify the potential satisfaction of the tourist's needs.

Although the reasons for tourists' choice of hotels are often complex, involving an interaction of disparate elements, they all appear to involve the key word 'service'. There is a consensus in the literature in which authors (Alpert, 1971; Mowen & Minor, 2003; Engel *et al.*, 2005; Zeithaml, 1988; Taplin, 2012) consider that attributes differ considerably in importance that they have for consumers, i.e., the importance of the attributes of a product can vary considerably from one consumer to another, according to the specific characteristics of each individual (Engel, Blackwell & Miniard, 2005). According to Alpert (1971), the attributes directly influencing choices are termed 'determinant attributes' in that they arouse consumers' purchase intention and differentiate a hotel's services and products from the competitors' offerings. Yavas & Babakus, (2005) posit that there are three attributes for hotel selection: general amenities, core services and convenience dimensions were the salient attributes influencing both business travellers and leisure travellers' hotel choice decisions.

Hotel Choice Determinants

Ferreira and Salazar (2012) argue that one main determinant factor in selecting a hotel evident in literature review was quality of service. According to Parasuraman *et al.* (1985) service quality comprises the tangible aspects as well as the reliability, responsiveness, competence, courtesy, credibility, security, access, communication service and understanding/knowing the consumer. In the hotel set up, tangible aspects related to quality have been highlighted by various scholars as components of service quality (Chu & Choi, 2001; Callan & Bowman, 2000; Yavas & Babakus, 2005; Dolnicar, 2002). Moreover, the aspects related to human resources are included in all the service quality dimensions, and hoteliers should take this into consideration when planning their human resources and when promoting their services (Ferreira & Salazar, 2012; Enz & Siguaw, 2000; Briggs *et al.*, 2008; Cho *et al.*, 2006; Tsaor & Lin, 2004). Customers get influence by some special elements in products and thus end up purchasing in corresponding to their needs and preferences. Hotel attributes comprise of both intangible and tangible aspects (Chang & Wong, 2005) wherein tangible characteristics or physical attributes for a hotel are those elements that can be seen such as price, the form of facilities, the location, the existence of choices, word of mouth communication, and advertising, a familiar name and past experience. Intangible for a hotel can be characteristics such as security, dependability, service quality, reputation and staff behavior. Lockyer (2002) confirmed to this finding that cleanliness has high importance for customers.

Choi & Chu (2001) identified seven hotel factors that are likely to influence consumer choice. These include: 'Staff Service Quality', 'Room Qualities', 'General Amenities', 'Business Services', 'Value', 'Security' and 'International Direct Dialing (IDD) Facilities'. Hotel services can be divided into core and supporting services, and the way these services are managed (Kiprutto *et al.*, 2012). The core services are those that are traditionally associated with hotels, such as, provision of food and beverages, the quality and variety of food, the speed of service by hotel staff, provision of accommodation, and the hygienic conditions of rooms. Other important hotel attributes fronted by Ferreira and Salazar (2012) includes: price, value for money, certification and rating, brand, human resources, communication policy, service quality, satisfaction and word-of-mouth.

Wilkins, Merrilees & Herington, (2007) contend that a variety of attributes are used by customers to evaluate the quality of service they receive in a hotel. Both tangible and intangible aspects of service qualities impact positively on customer satisfaction (Ekinci, Dawes & Massey, 2008) as well as "value for money" are more complex to define (Mohsin & Lockyer, 2010). Intangible components include customer service, caring from management, reassurance, and general convenience while staying in a hotel. Tangible elements which are physical in nature include the availability and quality of facilities in the hotel such as coffee making facilities, sauna, safe keeping facilities. The physical manifestation of hotel staff, general cleanliness of rooms and the entire hotel has a crucial role to play in the overall presentation of the hotel. Customers judge a hotel by the cleanliness and quality of food (Han *et al.*, 2009; Wu & Liang, 2009) which could differentiate hotels by either making it receive more compliments or complaints from customers.

A study of UK hotels undertaken by Ramanathan (2010) classified the value for money as a significant attribute in the selection of guest accommodation. This is a complex attribute that calls for efficient operational practices that minimizes the cost of operations, which will be ultimately passed on to guests who will perceive getting good service for the best possible price. The importance of this attribute has been stressed in several studies on hotel performance (Chen & Schwartz, 2008; Gallarza & Saura, 2006; Mattila & O'Neill, 2003). In another study by Al-Sabbahy *et al.*, (2004) value for money was classified as a determining feature of choice behaviour of customers in the future. Chen & Schwartz (2008) stressed the importance of value when guests book a room on the internet and showed that the patterns of changes in room rates observed by guests while searching for a deal affects their propensity to book.

Most hotels in business today have facilities that are similar which makes their survival dependent on quality delivery of services in order to achieve customer satisfaction and contentment (Mohsin & Lockyer, 2010). According to Wilkins *et al.*, (2007), three major types of service quality are found in hotels – physical aspects, experience of service and food and beverage quality. On the other hand, Kimpakorn & Tocquer (2007) stressed the increasing role of service quality in the light of the employee motivation required to support the brand image/promise of the hotel. Chang (2006) exhibited a significant correlation of personality traits of hotel front office employees to guest perception of quality of service. Ineson *et al.*, (2011) alluded that pointers of service that is exceptional

include service delivered with display of passion for work, honesty, dependability and ability to handle any emergencies. As a result of this, Vijayadurai (2008) concluded the need for hotel managers to train employees to endeavour delivery of friendly, gracious, courteous and cordial service.

According to Al Khattab & Aldehayyat (2011) managers need to pay attention to tangible aspects such as the physical aspects of the service such as the appearance of employees, equipment, arrangement of facilities and materials used for service as well as operating time of the hotel. On the other hand, Ramanathan (2010) suggests that room quality, cleanliness and food are components of product quality. Room quality is consistently recognized as dissatisfiers. Any perception of reduced room quality is likely to be detrimental to guests' intention to stay again in the hotel. Cleanliness and food are generally neutral attributes. Cleanliness is considered as satisfier for chain hotels. This could indicate that cleanliness will add to the perception of the entire group of hotels in the chain and help in facilitating the return of guests. In fact, value for money is not a critical attribute to hotels that are part of a chain. Thus, any perception of low value for money is likely to dissuade guests from staying in the chain again. This finding is consistent with previous observations by Briggs, Sutherland & Drummond, (2007) that Chain hotels take a transformational approach by providing a consistently efficient service.

Cadotte & Turgeon (1988) survey on 26 categories of compliments, established that attitude of employees; cleanliness and neatness, quality of service and employee knowledge of service were important to hotel guests. In addition to understanding hotel choice attributes considered important by guests, measuring their satisfaction with those attributes is critical in an effort to improve the quality of hotel products and services which ultimately results in an establishment's competitive advantage (Cravens *et al.*, 1988; Garvin 1991). Dolnicar & Otter, (2003) found 24 attributes as crucial in determining hotel choice as friendliness of staff, meeting rooms available, room size, non-smoking rooms, bathroom Cleanliness, business centre, food & beverage quality, hotel cleanliness, swimming pool, Parking facilities, health/fitness facilities, quiet / soundproof rooms, bathroom amenities, service speed, restaurant facilities, reputation, comfort of bed, room service (24 hour), convenient location, room cleanliness, service, professionalism /quality, accommodation price and hotel aesthetics. Choi and Chu (2001) established seven attributes necessary in hotel choice that include staff service quality, room quality, general amenities, business services, value, security and IDD facilities.

Various studies have focused on attributes that tourists consider when selecting a hotel to stay in (Ananth *et al.*, 1992; Callan & Bowman, 2000; Clow *et al.*, 1994; Cobanoglu *et al.*, 2003; Dolnicar, 2002; Griffin *et al.*, 1996; Lewis, 1984; Lockyer, 2002; Lockyer, 2005; McCleary *et al.*, 1995). Dube & Renaghan (1999) identified location, brand name and reputation, physical property, value for money, and guest-room design as attributes that most influenced customer's perception of value when deciding which hotel to stay in and while they are staying at the hotel. Findings from the study revealed that guest-room design, physical property, service (interpersonal), service (function), and food and beverage related services were rated highest in influencing customer hotel stays. In a study by Parasuraman *et al.*,

(1988), the quality of personal interactions with employees was found to be a critical component of the service quality evaluation. Service quality by employees has been cited as important to tourists when selecting overnight accommodation (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988). According to Knutson (1988) tourists were mainly concerned with a hotel's safety and security since tourist visits often involve families who have a high sensitivity to what may occur around them when their families are involved.

In another study, Barsky & Labagh (1992) identified employee attitudes, location and rooms to be the most important attributes in selecting a hotel. Often, customers rely on the attributes or "cues" to help them make a purchase decision (Crane & Clark, 1988; Lee & Lou, 1995). Cues are either intrinsic or extrinsic (Olson, 1977; Olson & Jacoby, 1972). Intrinsic cues, according to Brady *et al.*, (2005) are made up of a product or services attributes that are not easy to change. However, if an intrinsic attribute were to be changed, Szybillo & Jacoby (1974) allude that the product or service would display noticeable change because intrinsic cues are more specific to a product or service (Lee & Lou, 1995) unlike extrinsic cues that are applicable to a wider range of products and are more general. Extrinsic attributes are intangible in nature such as price, brand, or image (Olson & Jacoby, 1973; Veale & Quester, 2009). Studies such as that by Espejel, Fandos & Flavian (2009) have distinguished between intrinsic and extrinsic cues, and how they may influence the decision-making process. The study by Espejel *et al.*, (2009) reveals that quality affect the consumer's perceived trust, satisfaction and loyalty. Other studies indicate that consumers are typically more familiar with extrinsic cues than with intrinsic cues and thus use the extrinsic cues most often to evaluate a service or product (Aqueveque, 2008; Espejel *et al.*, 2009; Veale & Quester, 2009). Therefore, it can be argued that extrinsic cues are the most influential attributes that customers use when evaluating services or products. However, the use of extrinsic cues in the evaluation process not universally applicable and varies depending on the context and individual differences (Lee & Lou, 1995).

Ferreira & Salazar (2012) attempted to identify the attributes most valued by customers when choosing a hotel as well as management implications associated with each attribute, in order to help identify the strategic variables in the process of selecting a hotel. Three kinds of factors were identified: directly controllable (quality of service, human resources performance, quality certifications and ratings, communication policy and price), indirectly controllable (word-of-mouth, value for money, and satisfaction) and uncontrollable (previous experiences, purpose of travel and location). In another study undertaken by Hu & Hiemstra (1996) on meeting planners, cross analysis was used to assess the significance of specific hotel attributes to decisions of hotel selection. Their results indicate that price range is the most important attribute among six attributes tested (price range, functional properties of meeting rooms, hotel conference planning procedure, hotel guest room comfort, food and beverage function, and hotel location), followed by hotel location. Renaghan & Kay (1987) in addition sought to understand the aspects meeting planners wanted to be present in a meeting facility, which of the needed attributes were the most important, and the ones they would give up to get something else. The findings of the study indicated that facilities and arrangements were of great importance to customers. Moreover, Dube *et al.* (1994) analyzed the

specific attributes of customer satisfaction that patrons perceived as most important when visiting a restaurant.

According to River *et al.* (1991) convenience of location and overall service were rated highly. Out of 57 hotel attributes, a survey conducted by Ananth, *et al.*, (1992) revealed that price and quality followed by security and convenience of location were the most important hotel attributes in hotel choice decision. LeBlanc & Nguyen (1996) observed that the image of a hotel in terms of the external and internal environment, business identity, employees, service quality and accessibility are vital in tourists hotel choice. By and large, literature for the hospitality industry imply that attributes such as cleanliness, location, room rate, security, service quality, and the reputation of the hotel have been considered important by most tourists in hotel choice decision (Ananth, *et al.*, 1992; Atkinson, 1988; Barsky & Labagh, 1992; Cadotte & Turgeon 1988; Knutson 1988; LeBlanc & Nguyen 1996; Lewis, 1984; 1985). Other studies have compared business and leisure travellers. Other studies revealed the importance of cleanliness and location as important factors considered by tourists in their choice of hotel (Lewis & Chambers, 1989; McCleary *et al.*, 1993), while security, personal interactions, and room rates are considered as important by leisure travellers (Clow, *et al.*, 1994; Lewis, 1985; Marshall, 1993). Employees' service quality is argued to be an important aspect to leisure travellers when selecting overnight accommodation (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988).

Various studies point out that leisure travellers are more concerned with hotel safety and security (Clow *et al.*, 1994; Knutson, 1988; Marshal, 1993). Tourists convey their feelings about a hotel's reputation and name familiarity (Ananth *et al.*, 1992). Findings by Knutson (1988) provides the aspects considered by travellers when selecting a hotel for the first time or for repeat patronage as clean, comfortable and well-maintained rooms; convenient location; prompt and courteous service; safe and secure environment, and friendly and courteous employees. Barsky & Labagh (1992) considered employee attitude, location, and rooms as vital attributes for tourists in hotel selection. Based on the various hotel choice attributes reviewed from the various studies summarized above and taking into considerations the contextual factors of the study area, twenty seven (27) hotel choice attributes were considered for this study.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in selected hotels in the North Rift region of Kenya. Three counties, that is, Baringo, Elgeyo-Marakwet and Uasin Gishu Counties, were purposively selected because of their diverse tourist attractions, accessibility and facilities in comparison to the other counties. The study adopted descriptive research design. The target population included all international and domestic guests who visited the selected hotels in the North Rift during the study period. The study employed a combination of cluster, purposive and census sampling techniques in selecting the respondents. Purposive sampling was used to select three counties (Baringo, Elgeyo-Marakwet and Uasin Gishu) and also select a total of six hotels that are star-rated (2 from each of the selected counties) all with a total of 240 bed capacity. Consequently a census of 240 tourists from the 6 hotels formed the sample size out of which 191 tourists returned their questionnaires.

Structured questionnaires were used to collect data from the tourists. Content and face validity was used to test validity of data collection instruments. Cronbach's Alpha was used to test reliability at significance level of 0.7. Exploratory factor analysis was used to reduce the indicators to manageable variables. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, specifically mean and standard deviation.

Measurement of Determinants

The items used to measure determinants of hotel choice were adopted and modified from various scholars. Twenty seven determinants for hotel choice were used to collect data in a questionnaire. The attributes were level of security, food, beverage and reliability of service, physical attractiveness, accessibility of the hotel, location and facilities of the hotel, variety of products and services offered, friendly, knowledgeable, skills and professionalism of the staff, hygiene and cleanliness of the hotel, social interaction of staff with guests, perceived value for money, easy travel arrangements, affordable products and services, speed of service, proximity to banking and hospitals, perceived quality of service, variety of food, flexibility of service, perceived political stability and availability of cultural attractions. A five-point likert scale was used to collect data where 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree and 5=Strongly Agree.

RESULTS

A total of 240 questionnaires were distributed but only 191 questionnaires were completely filled in and retrieved back hence the response rate yielded 79.5% which was adequate representation of the target population. Cronbach's alpha was used to test reliability of indicators of hotel choice determinants. The maximum value attained was 0.691 while the lowest value was 0.674 hence the indicators used were reliable in explaining hotel choice determinants because they were all above the 0.7 threshold.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation for all the responses to items contained in the questionnaire. From the table, 'variety of products and services' attained the highest mean followed by 'perceived value for money', 'good location', 'social interaction of staff with guests' and 'cleanliness of hotel' among other indicators. This could imply that physical aspects of a hotel are crucial in determining a destination.

Table 1. Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Level of security at destination	4.3927	.70169	191
Food service	3.7539	.73783	191
Beverage service	3.9319	.67323	191
Reliability of service	4.0576	.60856	191
Physical attractiveness	3.9738	.69913	191
Accessibility of hotel	4.2565	.67446	191
Good location	4.7696	.53244	191
Variety of products and services	4.8377	.36970	191
Good facilities	4.6649	.47326	191
Friendly staff	4.4817	.63943	191
Knowledgeable staff	3.7173	.90825	191
Professionalism of the staff	3.9843	.72892	191
Skills displayed by staff	3.7173	.87278	191
Hygiene	4.3979	.74607	191
Cleanliness of the hotel	4.7016	.45877	191
Social interaction of staff with guests	4.7068	.59640	191
Perceived value for money	4.8220	.38353	191
Easy travel arrangements	4.4188	.63450	191
Affordable products and services	4.2304	.64016	191
Speed of service	4.3037	.67429	191
Proximity to banking	4.5236	.67138	191
Proximity to hospitals	3.4346	.97044	191
Perceived quality of service	3.9319	.76817	191
Variety of food	4.2565	.63424	191
Flexibility of service	3.8796	.78884	191
Perceived political stability	3.8796	.62505	191
Availability of cultural attractions	3.6963	.61724	191

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Exploratory factor analysis was done to reduce hotel choice determinants to measurable variables. As shown on table 2, KMO measure of sampling accuracy of 0.546 was found, which is within the acceptable minimum 0.5 measure of sampling accuracy. Kaiser (1974) recommends values greater than 0.5 as acceptable. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yielded a value of 1035.508 at a significance level of 0.000 which implied that the adequacy test of correlation matrix and the findings were satisfactory for the study.

Table 2: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	Approx. Chi-Square	.546
		1035.508
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Df	351
	Sig.	.000

Eigenvalues were obtained after the indicators for hotel choice determinants were analyzed. Using the criteria of picking those indicators whose eigenvalues are greater than one, only seven components were obtained. Facility was 11.25%, Staff was 8.6%, Value 6.68%, Quality 6.30%, Accessibility 5.59%, Service 5.49% and Physical aspects 5.03%. The seven components cumulatively had a variance of 48.92% hence those excluded accounted for 51.08%. This means that the indicators measuring hotel choice determinants could be adequately represented by seven variables as shown on table 3.

Table 3: Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1. Facility elements	3.717	13.765	13.765	3.037	11.247	11.247
2. Staff attributes	1.998	7.400	21.165	2.311	8.560	19.808
3. Perceived Value	1.747	6.469	27.634	1.805	6.684	26.491
4. Quality aspects	1.624	6.014	33.648	1.702	6.303	32.794
5. Accessibility	1.512	5.600	39.248	1.511	5.595	38.390
6. Services offered	1.338	4.955	44.203	1.483	5.493	43.883
7. Physical features	1.272	4.712	48.915	1.359	5.032	48.915

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

As shown on table 4, a rotated component matrix has seven factors after Varimax rotation method with Kaiser Normalization was carried out. The seven components explain the variables on hotel choice determinants after the principal component analysis was done. The rotation converged in seven iterations.

Table 4: Rotated Component Matrix^a

	Component						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Facility	Staff	Value	Quality	Accessibility	Service	Physical
Cleanliness of the hotel	.722						
Good facilities	.658						
Hygiene	.647						
Social interaction of staff with guests	.642						
Easy travel arrangements	.632						
Affordable products and services							
Skills displayed by staff		.764					
Professionalism of the staff		.757					
Knowledgeable staff		.510					
Speed of service							
Proximity to hospitals							
Perceived value for money			.714				
Friendly staff			.650				
Good location							
Perceived quality of service				-.668			
Variety of food				.646			
Perceived political stability				.555			
Level of security at destination							
Accessibility of hotel					.598		
Reliability of service					-.573		
Proximity to banking							
Food service						.716	
Flexibility of service						.559	
Variety of products and services						-.555	
Physical attractiveness							.643
Availability of cultural attractions							.506
Beverage service							

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 9 iterations.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has established the determinants that customers in the North Rift Region, Kenya use to make hotel choice. From the findings, seven determinants can be used to explain factors that influence tourists to choose hotels in North Rift region of Kenya. Out of 27 hotel choice determinants studied, seven were extracted. The seven include facility, staff, perceived value, quality, accessibility, service and physical aspects of the hotel. Facility comprises of cleanliness of the hotel, hygiene status, the state of the facility, the interactions in the facility and ease of travel to the facility. Staff component includes the skills, knowledge and professionalism of employees. Value component includes the perceived value for money and the value derived from interacting with friendly employees. Quality component comprises of perceived quality of service, food, atmosphere in terms of political stability. Accessibility component comprised of the ease at which tourists accessed the hotel and reliable services. Service component includes the flexibility of service, the type and way food is served and the range of products and services. Finally physical component comprised of the attractiveness of the hotel and other physical aspects and the availability of attractions such cultural and natural attractions.

The study recommends that hotel managers in North Rift region should endeavor to make their facilities attractive ensure staff attitude and motivations are geared towards building customer confidence and that value should be received in whatever products and services are offered. In addition aspects of quality are crucial such as speed of service, accuracy in service and promptness. Accessibility of service providers, services demanded and facilities required by customers should be readily available. Services offered should be flexible and different customer needs should be considered when developing hotel products so that customers have a range of services to choose from. Finally, the internal and external physical attributes of the hotel play a crucial role in customer choice decisions. Hence aspects such as hotel premises, grounds, parking, furniture, equipment, staff uniforms and all other features of physical evidence should be carefully designed and selected with customer needs in mind.

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