

Insights into Online Reviews of Hotel Service Attributes: A Cross-National Study of Selected Countries in Africa

Dandison Ukpabi¹(✉), Sunday Olaleye², Emmanuel Mogaji³,
and Heikki Karjaluo¹

¹ University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland
{dandison.c.ukpabi, heikki.karjaluo}@jyu.fi

² University of Oulu, Oulu, Finland
sunday.olaleye@oulu.fi

³ University of Greenwich, Greenwich, UK
e.o.mogaji@greenwich.ac.uk

Abstract. Online travel reviews are paramount to trip planning because they help consumers' form images of destinations. Despite ample studies on hotel service attributes, knowledge is scarce regarding culturally nuanced attributes, including security perceptions. This study examines consumers' perceptions of service attributes and security/safety concerns of hotels in Africa. Data were extracted from three hotel categories (3, 4, and 5-stars), which were based on TripAdvisor rankings from Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa. A hybrid analysis revealed that hotel service attributes and security/safety are cardinal evaluation criteria for visitors to Africa. Additionally, our study reveals that most negative reviews were from 5-star hotels and Egypt received more positive reviews in all the service attributes than other countries.

Keywords: Online reviews · TripAdvisor · Service attributes · Security Revisit

1 Introduction

Customers' perceptions of a hotel's service quality are an embodiment of its image and are often used as evaluation criteria for patronage (Kandampully, Juwaheer and Hu, 2011). Interestingly, the diffusion of information and communications technologies (ICT), especially its paradigmatic exordium into the social web, has fundamentally transformed the dynamics of word of mouth (Ukpabi and Karjaluo, 2016). Consequently, with a single click of the mouse, a consumer's positive and/or negative comments about a hotel's service quality are made available on a global scale. Thus, the evaluation of a hotel's service quality, which is a critical element of its image, has gone beyond its immediate geographical space to a global audience. Accordingly, tourism review sites, such as TripAdvisor, Lonely Planet, Oyster.com, etc., which also provide hotel reviews, have experienced exponential growth in recent years. Contemporarily, the tourism industry has been most affected by issues of terrorism and global insecurity (Chan and Lam, 2013). When security breaches occur, tourists either

reduce their travel times or choose destinations that are considered safe. Interestingly, a critical search of peer-reviewed publications on Google Scholar regarding hotel service quality in Africa returned only one exploratory study, which was conducted in a single market and which stated that the results could not be applied outside Mauritius—the country where it was conducted (Ramsaran-Fowdar, 2007). Accordingly, in evaluating how online reviews on TripAdvisor shape a hotel's image, O'Connor (2010) argued that management should consistently monitor online reviews to instigate remedial actions regarding customer complaints. However, O'Connor's (2010) study was drawn from a single London hotel market and therefore calls for a cross-market comparison of online reviews. In appraising the quality of online service reviews, Browning, So, and Sparks (2013) suggested that core services can induce positive service quality attributes; however, they also suggested that future studies should consider how core and staff service impact quality attributions. Finally, in a study of safety and security perceptions of Hong Kong hotels, Chan and Lam (2013) argued that managers' provision of safety and security systems should be in tandem with customers' expectations, and they called for a study that embraces the cross-market evaluation of customers' perceptions of security and safety in hotels.

Consequently, in aggregating the above gaps in the literature, this study addresses the following objectives: to understand customer perceptions of service quality dimensions and their differences across hotels in Africa; to examine the role of perceived security in visitor attraction and to analyze how service quality dimensions influence revisit/recommendation intention. Against this backdrop, our study makes key contributions to the literature as it advances knowledge and understanding of hotel service attributes in Africa and provides a critical analysis of different hotel services and compares them against other countries, which provides hands-on materials to travelers and managers regarding specific destinations that perform exceptionally well in certain hotel services. This study proceeds as follows: Sect. 2 discusses the theoretical background. We outline the methodology in Sect. 3. We proceed to data analysis and results in Sect. 4 and conclude with the discussion in Sect. 5 where we also highlight the theoretical and managerial implications.

2 Theoretical Background

Consumers' assessments of service quality are a determinant of the consumption context. Thus, for products, which mainly comprise tangible goods, easily discernable attributes, such as taste, price, and smell, constitute consumers' evaluation of overall service quality (Browning, So, and Sparks, 2013). However, service quality evaluations of intangible goods have constituted major academic debate in the last decade. This debate is understandable, considering the difficulty with which consumers judge both good and bad service due to their abstract and elusive nature. Accordingly, SERVQUAL typologies (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, 1985, 1988) have been subject to both theoretical and operational criticisms (Buttle, 1996).

Due to the unique nature of the tourism and hospitality sector, scholars have broadened service quality dimensions to fit the tourism research stream such as Getty and Thompson's (1994) LODGQUAL and Salazar, Costa, and Rita's (2010)

HOLSERV. Browning, So, and Sparks (2013) argued that consumers' online reviews of hotel services often fall into core and relational services. Core services embrace a firm's critical value delivery mechanisms, which mainly comprise the "hard" components of their services. Relational services that are embedded in their "soft" components include skills that are often espoused through customer-employee interactions. Empirically, Salazar, Costa, and Rita (2010) found that in selecting hotels, feelings, staff, facilities and room were rated as critical hotel service attributes while location was not considered very important. This is however contrary to O'Connor (2010), who found that location was the most important consideration. Similarly, Ladhari (2009) found that guests satisfaction with a hotel was fundamentally linked to their emotion. Using a data mining approach, Guo, Barnes and Jia (2017), found that ease of checking in and out, resort facilities and communication were top on customers satisfaction. Finally, in examining cultural factors, Viglia and Abrate (2017) found that European visitors ranked TV availability, parking and wi-fi more important than other factors.

Destination safety and security significantly influence guests' hotel selection (Chan & Lam, 2013). As a result, destinations that have suffered security breaches, such as terrorist attacks, kidnappings, and violence, are often avoided. To provide information about safe destinations for its members, TripAdvisor often displays a "Security Alert" for countries that it considers to have security risks. This information is provided to help members take additional security precautions when visiting such destinations (TripAdvisor.com, 2017). Among the various places perceived as targets by terrorists, hotels have often witnessed the most violent attacks, with outbreaks cutting across countries. For instance, Africa suffered attacks at the Corinthia Hotel in Libya (2015), the Soviva and Imperial Marhaba Hotels in Tunisia (2015), the Radisson Blu Hotel in Mali (2015), and the Splendid Hotel in Burkina Faso (2016) (Aljazeera.com, 2017). The Brussels and Paris attacks in 2015 and 2016, respectively, led to a sharp decline in hotel occupancy rates across Europe (RT.com, 2016). Notably, Asia and America have also suffered attacks, such as the Jakarta (2016) and San Bernardino, California (2015) attacks, which adversely affected tourism at those destinations. While there are many travel review sites, TripAdvisor has witnessed phenomenal growth in recent years. TripAdvisor currently has approximately 435 million reviews that cover 6.8 million tourism destinations, which expanded from 51.4 million unique users in 2011 to 390 million unique users in 2017 (TripAdvisor.com, 2017). Notably, issues of content credibility have challenged the *modus operandi* of TripAdvisor as they have faced sanctions in some countries for defamatory content (Ayeh, Au and Law, 2013).

3 Methodology

Three hotel categories (3, 4, and 5-stars) were selected based on TripAdvisor rankings from five African countries: Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa. Egypt was chosen because—as an ancient civilization—it has remained a global attraction, with tourism contributing significantly to its gross domestic product (GDP) (El-Gohary, 2012). In Ghana, the recent discovery of oil and its exploration in commercial quantities have provided the Ghanaian economy with a steady influx of foreigners, which has significantly increased its tourism earnings (Bybee and Johannes, 2014). Nigeria's

undisputed reputation as the most populated country in Africa, in addition to the ubiquity of multinational oil companies, has positioned the country as a strategic tourism hub in Africa. The Eastern African block is highly reputed for wildlife tourism, and Kenya reportedly dominates in terms of visitor attractions (Homewood, Trench, & Brockington, 2012). Finally, we chose South Africa because of its efficient infrastructure.

Data extractions were based on reviews from 1st January to 31st December, 2016. Two coders were involved with an arbitrator, and the coding procedure involved manual and NVivo 11, a computer-assisted coding program, which was used to prevent inconsistencies between human coders. To ensure intercoder reliability, the coders agreed on the coding scheme, exchanged text for comparison, and sent it to a neutral member of the research team for necessary text reconciliation. The study used content analysis due to its flexibility and a procedure of inquiry that fits qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Mogaji, Farinloye and Aririguzoh 2016; White and Marsh, 2006). Additionally, we used Ncaputre, a freeware browser extension to import the extracted data from TripAdvisor website into NVivo to glean insights from the qualitative data. We explored the themes that necessitate hotel revisit. Furthermore, we employed regression analysis to understand the in-depth relationship of variables that related with hotel revisit. Multiple regression is the appropriate quantitative analysis for this study because the independent variables (predictors) were 11 to predict the dependent variable (hotel revisit intention).

Although this hybrid method has been used widely across different research streams, it was necessary to interpret the coding of textual material from the TripAdvisor reviews and make replicable and valid inferences. Thus, the coding comprised the content of the hotels' reviews regarding the general quality of their experience. Of the 59,805 reviews available, 1021 were found useful based on strict selection criteria, which comprised basic demographic details, such as age, gender, and location. In line with the same approach adopted by Lee, Law and Murphy (2011), it was considered that those who had provided their demographic details to TripAdvisor could be taken as real and genuine, and the reviews about their hotel experiences could be considered authentic. The Excel 2016 Analysis Toolpak and NVivo 11 (Ruggiero and Green 2017) were used to analyze the obtained data, with NVivo specifically used for review coding, generate themes and generate demographic data.

4 Data Analysis and Results

Per our objectives, we developed a coding scheme of hotel services based on extant studies (Browning, So and Sparks, 2013; O'Connor, 2010; Salazar, Costa and Rita, 2010). Accordingly, for each of the five countries, we identified and coded the following themes: security/safety, location, room service, toilet/toiletries, price, breakfast/food, drinks/beverages, staff, Internet/Wifi, swimming pool, and gym. Specifically, security/safety was coded based on reviews such as 'the hotel had armed guards', 'there were thorough security checks at the airport and entrance to the hotel', 'CCTV camera were available'. Importantly, each service was identified based on whether it was used either positively or negatively. Additionally, reviews that indicated intention to either revisit or recommend were identified and coded as either positive or the negative.

Table 1. Demographic distribution of the reviews

Country	Gender		Age					Grand total
	Male	Female	18–24	25–34	35–49	50–64	65+	
Egypt	218	116	13	116	125	70	10	334
Ghana	79	22	1	30	41	24	5	101
Kenya	120	83	8	57	77	57	4	203
Nigeria	166	49	2	42	119	50	2	215
South Africa	95	64	1	23	52	64	19	159
Sub-Total	678	334	331	203	159	216	101	1012

Table 1 shows the gender and age brackets of hotel visitors to Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa. The male visitors (678: 67%) to hotels in Africa outnumbered the female visitors (334: 33%), with those between the ages of 35–49 being the highest number of visits to the countries examined, except for South Africa, which had the most visits from those within the age bracket of 50–64. Egypt had the highest visits from those within the age bracket of 35–49, with 125 (38%) visitors, and Nigeria followed with 119 (55%) visitors. Egypt also had the highest number of young adult visitors (18–24 age bracket) with 13 (4%). In all, Ghana had the lowest number of hotel visitors of the countries reviewed, with 101 (10%).

Table 2. Perception of hotel services in five African countries

Themes	Egypt		Ghana		Kenya		Nigeria		South Africa	
	+	–	+	–	+	–	+	–	+	–
Security/safety	140	10	25	7	27	2	43	1	37	–
location	160	11	83	–	23	3	62	13	117	4
Room service	165	36	50	42	129	22	104	19	121	19
Toilet/toiletries	32	18	16	16	2	6	18	6	47	–
Price	42	47	13	14	14	4	33	8	32	19
Breakfast/food	301	6	145	46	119	6	182	14	109	20
Drinks/beverages	50	–	12	12	20	–	5	2	71	–
Staff	116	5	39	12	103	10	5	3	45	22
Internet/Wifi	35	16	14	18	12	13	28	10	16	13
Swimming pool	38	2	17	7	19	2	62	2	14	7
Gym	24	3	18	2	4	4	28	4	14	–
Revisit Intention/recommend	75	2	14	17	66	3	55	2	38	2

Notes + Positive; – Negative

Consumer experiences with hotel services, as revealed by their positive and negative reviews in Table 2, showed more positive reviews than negative. Across the five countries studied, security, location, breakfast/food, and staff received the most positive reviews. In Egypt, while the reviews were all positive concerning drinks/beverages, those dissatisfied with the price was higher than the positive reviews. In Ghana, the reviews were all positive regarding hotel locations. Furthermore, visitors to Egypt, Kenya, and South Africa expressed maximum satisfaction with drinks and beverages. However, for visitors to Ghana and Egypt, price was reviewed as negative. Interestingly, the views expressed by some scholars regarding the slow adoption of information and communications technology in Africa (Ukpabi & Karjaluoto, 2017) appeared in our analysis. Accordingly, visitors to Ghana and Kenya expressed dissatisfaction with the Internet/Wifi. Furthermore, to meet one of our objectives regarding revisit and recommendation intention, we identified and coded all reviews that contained comments such as the following: “I will visit again,” “I will recommend this hotel,” “I will tell my friends about this hotel when they visit,” etc. Thus, regression and ANOVA tests were conducted to obtain the statistical significance of service dimensions in predicting revisit and recommendation intention (see Tables 3 and 4). Table 3 shows that the overall model of hotel services in Africa was statistically significant. Egypt was statistically significant, $F(11, 3612) = 164.6, p < 0.01$, and the other countries were as follows: Ghana $F(11, 840) = 39.8, p < 0.01$, Kenya, $F(11, 2688) = 141.7, p < 0.01$, Nigeria $F(11, 3492) = 144.2, p < 0.01$ and South Africa $F(11, 1212) = 78.9, p < 0.01$.

Table 3. ANOVA of scale and hotel services in Africa

	Egypt		Ghana		Kenya		Nigeria		South Africa	
	df	F	df	F	df	F	df	F	df	F
Between groups	11	164.6	11	39.8	11	141.7	11	144.2	11	78.9
	3612		840		2688		3492		1212	

The results indicated that the independent variables of security, location, room service, toilet, price, food, drinks, staff, Internet, swimming pool, and gym (see Fig. 1) explained the variation in the dependent variable of hotel revisit. Based on the above results, the study model is fair to middling for further hypotheses testing. Additionally, we rejected our null hypothesis that hotel services are not statistically different in Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa and accepted the alternative hypothesis: Hotel services are different. To determine the difference, we examined the *t* statistics and the *p*-values of the services separately.

Table 4. Regression for hotel services in Africa

Items	Egypt	Ghana	Kenya	Nigeria	South Africa
	<i>p</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value
Security/safety	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.05	ns
Location	<0.01	<0.01	ns	ns	<0.01
Room service	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Toilet/toiletries	ns	<0.01	ns	<0.01	ns
Price	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Breakfast/food	ns	ns	ns	ns	<0.05
Drinks/beverages	ns	<0.01	ns	ns	ns
Staff	<0.01	ns	<0.01	ns	ns
Internet/Wifi	ns	ns	ns	<0.05	ns
Swimming pool	ns	<0.01	ns	ns	ns
Gym	ns	ns	ns	<0.01	ns
Observations	302	71	225	292	102
Revisit intention/recommend (variance) (%)	79	95	46	82	52

Notes Dependent variable: revisit intention; Predicators: security, location, room service, toilet, price, food, drinks, staff, Internet, swimming pool, gym; Two-tailed test; *ns* Not significant

The above Table 4 reveals three factors that predicted revisit to Egypt. Out of the eleven criteria used to predict hotel revisit, hotel location was the highest predictor of hotel revisit intention, followed by security assurance and staff. Location positively predicted hotel revisit in Egypt $t = 9.34$ ($p < 0.01$). The security perception was significant $t = 5.38$ ($p < 0.01$) and staff $t = 2.97$ ($p < 0.01$). Overall, the predictors explained 79% of the variance of hotel re-patronage. However, the variables were perceived differently in Ghana, which had negative significant results. The safety confidence in Ghana was $t = -7.64$ ($p < 0.01$). As with Egypt and South Africa, location was the highest predictor of hotel revisit $t = 7.78$ ($p < 0.01$). Toilet, drinks and swimming pool were significant $t = -5.20$, ($p < 0.01$), $t = -6.98$, ($p < 0.01$), $t = 2.80$, ($p < 0.01$). This negative result may correlate to hotel visitors' discomfoting experiences in Ghana regarding security, toilet, and drinks, which likely cause them to not revisit. These visitors have lost any hope of seeing improvements upon future visits. The model predicted 95% of the variance of the dependent variable. Kenya and Egypt outpaced the other countries that were examined in this study regarding excellent staff reviews $t = 9.34$ ($p < 0.01$).

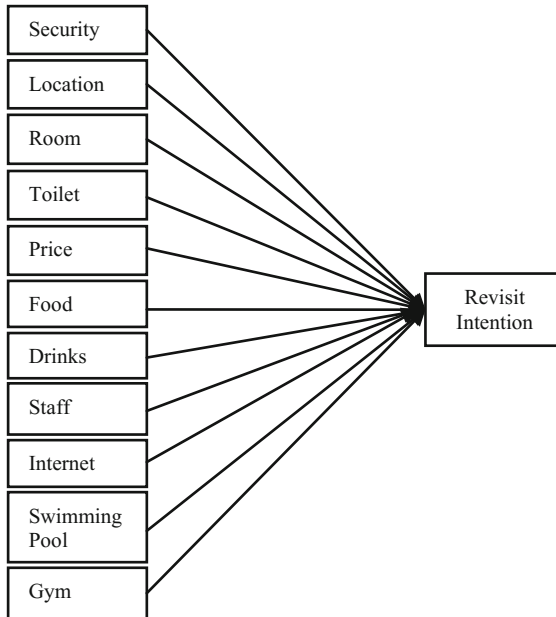


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework

Safety perception was also significant ($t = 4.08, p < 0.01$). Egypt’s hotels and visitor’s security personnel make pleasing visitors a priority. Excellent staff and positive security perceptions encourage travelers to visit Kenya, and 46% of the variance could be explained with revisit intention. Interestingly, gym was the highest predictor of revisit intention in Nigeria ($t = 10.22, p < 0.01$); toilet ($t = 10.02, p < 0.01$), security ($t = 2.06, p < 0.05$), and Internet access ($t = -2.55, p < 0.05$) were negatively associated with revisiting and recommending. A total of 82% of the variance of revisit intention was explained. Factors that encouraged tourists to revisit hotels in South Africa included the strategic location and delicious meals from a standard restaurant. Location ($t = 6.88, p < 0.01$) and food ($t = 2.63, p < 0.05$) positively predicted hotel revisit in South Africa. Strategic hotel location in South Africa was the highest predictor of hotel revisit, and the 52% variance of hotel re-patronage could be explained by the predictors.

Table 5. Path coefficients of the variables for the five countries

BETA					
	Egypt	Ghana	Kenya	Nigeria	South Africa
Security	0.30	-1.7	0.45	0.12	n.s.
Location	0.51	3.2	n.s.	n.s.	0.66
Room	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Toilet	n.s.	-0.34	n.s.	0.32	1.09
Price	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Food	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	0.18
Drinks	n.s.	-0.41	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Staff	0.10	n.s.	0.17	n.s.	n.s.
Internet	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Swimming pool	n.s.	0.20	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Gym	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	0.45	n.s.
Adjusted R ²	0.79	0.95	0.46	0.82	0.53

Table 5 is the path coefficient of the tested variables for the five countries. The adjusted R² would have been an effective criterion for comparing the models but due to a difference in the sample size, there is a tendency of model estimation and this may create an assessment bias. For example, Egypt, Ghana, and Nigeria recorded high adjusted R² while Kenya and South Africa are moderate. The study based the model comparison on three criteria of intuitive moderateness, simplicity and relevance and usefulness of the model for decision makers. Based on these 3 criteria, Ghana and Nigeria had more significant variables than the other three countries.

5 Discussion

This study examined reviews on Trip Advisor for 100 hotels across 5 African countries to provide empirical evidence of service quality issues that are pertinent to Africa. Across the different levels of hotels in each of the countries studied, breakfast/food, staff, and room service dominated in the 5-star hotel categories. In Egypt, 3-star hotels performed better than 4-star hotels in the same service attributes. Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa saw similar performances among 5-star hotels. However, Nigeria was quite different, with the 4-star hotel categories outperforming both the 5-star and 3-star hotels. Finally, location, consistent with O'Connor (2010) and security significantly predicated revisit intention to Egypt. Moreover, for Nigeria and Kenya, the regression test indicated that security was negatively significant. This implied that increased security issues, such as terror attacks, can scare potential visitors and increasingly prevent them from traveling to these countries. Again, staff significantly predicted revisit to Egypt and Kenya as well as positively predicted revisit to the other countries studied. Importantly, these findings are crucial considering the lack of studies on hotel service quality in the investigated regions, especially on a cross-country comparative basis which implied that visitors and managers do not have the requisite information

regarding critical service quality attributes that underpin attractiveness to the region. We believe our study has filled this gap and added to the emerging research stream, which is exploring user-generated content on social media platforms (Tham, Croy and Mair, 2013).

5.1 Theoretical Implications

The physical appearance of the hotels was determined to be a primary measure of hotel quality in Africa; responsiveness, assurance, and empathy were not particularly evident in tourism reviews, while reliability was neither well presented by the hotels nor acknowledged by the visitors. This provided some theoretical implications regarding using SERVQUAL as a model in exploring hotel services; Wu and Ko's (2013) three major dimensions of hotel service quality could be specifically suitable. Alternatively, Salazar, Costa, and Rita's (2010) HOLSERV items could offer more interesting insights, considering that the most prominent themes in our study, such as location, breakfast/food, and staff, relate more specifically to the HOLSERV dimensions. Our study found that consumers' perceptions of these service attributes were mostly positive with most of the variables positively predicted intention to revisit for most of the countries. Thus this finding is consistent with prior studies that providing value-creating and excellent hotel services will positively influence revisit intention (Amin et al. 2013). As anticipated, hotel star rating was a critical determinant of satisfaction. In Ghana for instance, where majority of the reviews were from 5-star hotels, reviews on price were mostly negative in addition to most of the variables indicating consumers' unwillingness to revisit. Consumers who patronize 5-star hotels pay more, have higher expectations and are more likely to express dissatisfaction and cognitive dissonance when the price paid does not match the service. Interestingly also, our regression results of these service attributes varied across the studied countries. For instance, while location, security assurance, and staff were critical factors for revisiting both Egypt and South Africa, visitors to Ghana and Nigeria were unsatisfied with the security systems in those countries' hotels. Consistent with extant studies, security has unarguably become a prominent theme, implying that increasing waves of terrorism have made safety and security concerns an integral part of evaluating hotel services, which has advanced our understanding of one of the main challenges of the industry in recent years (Guillet et al., 2011). Security issues are still a primary concern for visitors, and this creates challenges for managers and governments regarding how best to protect tourists and offer reassurances that efforts are being made to ensure their safety. This could include references to security processes in marketing communication campaigns, either through images or text that describes the hotels and/or the country. Notably, there were more negative perceptions of price and Internet/Wifi than in other sectors. The availability of Internet/Wifi is considered paramount in hotels and event centers (Lee & Lee, 2017). In line with extant studies, slow adoption of ICT by businesses in Africa negatively affects their productivity and revenue (Ukpabi & Karjaluoto, 2017). The challenges that most businesses in Africa are facing include the absence of a policy framework on the development of the ICT sector, especially in ensuring a robust national broadband policy. Consequently, businesses, at great cost, struggle to ensure that Internet is available for their operations. Additionally, in line

with the arguments of previous studies on the role of food quality in influencing revisit and recommendation intention (Rand, Heath, and Alberts, 2003), our study found that breakfast/food attracted the most positive comments, with some reviewers predicating their revisit to the quality of food served. Finally, our study extends the debate on the reliability of TripAdvisor as an e-WOM platform for travellers. TripAdvisor has come under severe criticisms for absence of customer review validation procedure and has attracted mixed feelings from scholars and the industry (Ayeh, Au and Law, 2013). This finding corroborates Agusaj, Bazdan and Lujak (2017) who quantitatively analysed the reviews on TripAdvisor and Booking.com and found that TripAdvisor is still as reliable as Booking.com.

5.2 Managerial Implications

This study offered several managerial implications, especially from the perspective of policy makers and practitioners. In Egypt, the performance of the different classes of hotels was even, with no sharp differences in their service quality evaluation, when compared to the other countries studied. This implies that the Egyptian economy is supported by tourism, and there is strategic attention paid to both the development and improvement of hotel services, irrespective of the category, to meet the needs of different classes of visitors. Thus, visitors can patronize Egyptian hotels, according to affordability, without compromising quality. However, for countries like Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa, the lack of a strategic framework in the industry precipitated the development of high-class hotels that only cater to the needs of elites and disregard lower-class hotels. Therefore, the development of hotels is more of an individual effort, and it lacks regulatory oversight, which would ensure compliance with specifications. It is therefore important for the governments of these countries to strategically develop the tourism industry with the basic understanding that having high-quality hotel services that cut across the different classes of hotels will significantly affect the image of the country as a destination (Tsai, Song, & Wong, 2009). Regarding staff relational services, interpersonal relationships are essential to social cohesion in a high-context culture like Africa. Thus, friendliness, politeness, and courtesy are not only synonymous with the African social system but are also embedded in the corporate culture. In addition to promptness to customers' requests, staff can equally initiate discussions that promote interpersonal relationships and intimacy by asking polite questions, such as "How was your night?" and "Did you enjoy your breakfast?" Additionally, management should sponsor staff attendance at seminars that promote their interpersonal relationship skills. To further add to the quality of customers' experiences, hotels should be sited on ambient locations. Locating hotels close to historical and heritage sites could tie visitors' entire trip experiences to such locations. For instance, most of the positive reviews about the location of hotels in Egypt centered on the pleasurable feelings of having rooms overlooking the River Nile and the spa area. Understandably, price is an important criterion in evaluating a hotel service; high-quality hotel services positively correlate with high prices, and consumers usually express dissatisfaction when the price paid does not match the level of service. Consequently, managers, especially those in lower-class hotels, should continuously improve services to match the prices that customers pay. It is further recommended

that, while managers should continue to improve the quality of the Internet/Wifi in their hotels, African governments should create policies that will liberalize Internet availability if they hope to catch up with modern business practices. Finally, managers should continuously ensure that adequate security systems are in place. Even though hotels cannot control the national security system, guests will feel reassured if they know that there are adequate security systems in hotels. However, managers must carefully implement the appropriate security measures because, as Chan and Lam (2013) argued, some overt security measures can frighten guests instead of reassuring them.

5.3 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Our selection of service quality attributes was based on the frequency of occurrence of those attributes, which was based on the content analysis. Although we painstakingly ensured that our inclusion was standardized, there may have been some culturally nuanced attributes that might have been excluded due to their infrequent occurrence. We therefore recommend a qualitative study with guests in selected hotels in Africa to gain a deeper understanding of those culturally nuanced attributes. Additionally, the African market is quite large, and the selection of five countries and only twenty hotels in each of those countries may have grossly affected the results of our study. Consequently, a study that embraces countries in other regions, such either as Europe, America, or Asia, and compares their service attributes to those in Africa is recommended. Finally, our inclusion criteria were limited to reviews with complete demographic profiles because reviews with no demographic profiles could have altered the results of our study.

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