Hotel Star Rating Attributes and Customers' Satisfaction: Evidence from Upmarket Hotels in Abuja Territory, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study adopted importance performance analysis to investigate hotel star rating attributes and customers' satisfaction of upmarket hotels in Abuja Territory, Nigeria. The basic hotel star rating attributes of quality of facilities, service quality, ambience and business service mix were involved to determine the perceived importance and performance of where upmarket hotels meet, exceed or under-perform customer satisfaction. A cross sectional descriptive survey design involving all the upmarket hotels in Abuja Territory, Nigeria was conducted with the sampling frame drawn from the hotel customers as respondents using questionnaire as instruments for data collection. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine variable characteristics while factor analysis was used to determine the associating factors of the variables. The result of the factor analysis on hotel star rating attributes was graphically plotted on importance performance analysis grid. The finding revealed that hotel star rating attribute of quality of room facilities were perceived to be very important to customers however the performance level was fairly low. Also, the hotel star rating attribute of service quality was perceived to be important to customers but the performance level needed to be sustained. On the other hand, hotel star rating attributes of ambience and business service mix were regarded by customers as being over performed. The study concluded that the upmarket hotels operators should concentrate more efforts at improving the level of hotel star rating attribute of quality of room facilities as well as sustaining the service quality. The study recommends that upmarket hotel operators should consider as very important the fundamental issue of providing very high quality of room facilities as well as not to relent at the level of service quality delivery in their hotels in Abuja Territory, Nigeria.

Keywords: *Hotel star rating attributes, Importance Performance Analysis, Customers' satisfaction, Upmarket hotels.*

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Background to the Study
Hotel industry and hotels in Nigeria
Globally, there are over 160,000 star rated hotels consisting of more than 14 million rooms with the capacity of employing millions of people worldwide in a wide range of job categories (Smith Travel Research, 2014; Dordevic and Jankovic, 2015; UNWTO, 2015). Star rated hotels in Africa account for almost 99,000 rooms with around 44,000 in North Africa and 54,000 in sub-Saharan Africa. The hotel industry in Africa has been undergoing a major metamorphosis over the past five years (Tourism Business Africa, 2013). Many upmarket hotels are in the development pipelines across Africa with a total of almost 40,000 additional rooms (Africa investor, 2012) The upmarket hotel business will continue to go all the way through exceptional and rapid change and will look very diverse by the year 2020 (Tourism Business Africa, 2013; Grant Thornton, 2015).

Key tourist destinations such as Kenya, South Africa, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia and Tanzania offer a wide variety of quality accommodation across the spectrum, ranging from five to one star accommodation. Furthermore, most of Africa's major cities are served by renowned international hotel groups such as Hyatt, Sheraton, Transcorp, Accor and more recently the Southern African operators like Southern Sun, Protea Hotels and Serena (Tourism Business Africa, 2013). While high-quality business hotels and budget accommodation facilities are in fair supply of two to three stars professionally managed accommodation offering value for money is in many instances although quite limited. Countries like South Africa, Kenya, Tunisia and Morocco have well-functioning and market-based hotel rating systems while many others counties in the continent are new at or not implementing the hotel rating systems (Industrial Development Corporation, 2014).

Nigeria is the biggest economy in Africa (World Bank, 2015) and the economic power house of West Africa which offers the most upmarket hotel rooms operated by international hotel chains within Africa (Industrial Development Corporation, 2014).Between 2010 and 2015 a total number of 2,100 rooms were added, a 30% cumulative increase and during the next five years, more than twice that total or 4 700 rooms will become available, increasing the overall number of available rooms by 51% (PWC, 2016). Nigeria is the market eager with the highest number of planned new international hotel investments in development pipeline (Hospitality Net, 2016). In 2013, the hospitality and travel investment in the country attained N264.2 billion ($1.6 billion) amounting to 4.8% of total investment which is above the 4.4% worldwide average (National Bureau of Statistics, 2015).

The sector directly contributed N1.56billion ($9.4million) and 1.7 percent to the Gross Domestic Products [GDP] in 2014 (Industrial Development Corporation, 2014; Oxford business group.com, 2015; Euromonitor, 2016, Hospitality Net, 2016). The hotel industry in Nigeria achieved 2.4 percent growth in GDP in 2015 and this expected to rise by 5.8 percent per annum in the next 10 years (National Bureau of Statistics, 2015). The city of Abuja has a number of international standard hotels while others are under construction however, the demand for affordable yet quality upmarket hotel accommodation is still growing rapidly (Industrial Development Corporation, 2014).

Literature Review
Importance Performance Analysis (IPA)

Importance performance analysis (IPA) is the comparison between the importance customers place on an attribute and performance in relation to that attribute. IPA conceptually underlies the multiattribute models that date back to the late 1970s. Martilla and James (1977), Yavas and Babakus (2005), assumed that Importance performance analysis is the comparison between the importance consumers place on an attribute and performance in relation to that attribute. Evans and Chon (1989) used the IPA to formulate and evaluate tourism policy while Keyt, Yavas and Riecken (1994) and Hsu, Byun and Yang (1997) adopted the IPA technique in restaurant positioning. Lewis (1985), used the IPA as a competitive analysis technique to identify tourists' perceptions of the hotel industry while Chu and Choi (2000), used IPA to measure hotel selection factors in the industry.

The underlying assumption of the IPA technique is that customers' level of satisfaction with the attributes is mainly derived from their expectations and judgment of the product or service performance. The interpretation of the importance performance analysis of star rating attributes is graphically presented on a grid divided into four quadrants and the four identifiable quadrants include concentrate here, keep up the good work, low priority and possible overkill.

Quadrant I - Concentrate here quadrant, the star rating attributes are perceived to be very important to respondents but performance levels are fairly low. This sends a direct message that improvement efforts should concentrate here.

Quadrant II - Keep up the good work quadrant, the star rating attributes are perceived to be very important to respondents and at the same time the hotel seems to have high levels of performance on these activities. The message here is to keep up the good work.

Quadrant III - Low Priority quadrant, the star rating attributes are with low importance and low performance. Although performance levels may be low in this cell, managers should not be overly concerned since the attribute in this cell is not perceived to be very important as such limited resources should be expended on this low priority cell.

Quadrant IV - Possible Overkill quadrant contains the star rating attributes of low importance but relatively high performance. Respondents are satisfied with the performance of the organisations but managers should consider present efforts on the attributes of this cell as being over utilised.

The extension of the technique into the hotel industry provides opportunities for individual upmarket hotels to evaluate their performance. The importance performance analysis enables an understanding of the dimensions where hotels meet, exceed or under-perform customer importance. These provide a greater understanding of how customers perceived the performance of upmarket hotels. The analysis offers opportunities for upmarket hotel managers to understand how different consumers see the hotel experience.

Hotel Star Rating and Attributes

Globally, hotels are rated by some kind of local or international standard criteria either by government or private organisation and the rating serves as a general guide to draw attention and inform prospective customers of the facilities, standards and services offered. The rating system which may include symbols such as star, diamond, letter or crown is a guide to choosing accommodation and among all star rating is the most popular of the rating schemes used for the general assessment and rating of hotels in many countries. Generally hotels are star rated based on some specific attributes of quality of facilities, service quality, ambience and business service mix (AA Hotel Services, 2011; Visit England, 2011; Australian Motoring Services, 2014; UNWTO, 2015).

The generic star rating guide indicated one star as a simple comfortable hotel, two stars a well presented run hotel, three stars a good level of quality and comfort, four star excellent standards throughout and five star an exceptional hotel with a degree of luxury. This means that, hotels with more attributes, attracts higher rating and these star rating attributes are more obvious in upmarket hotels which account for the luxury rating status of 4 or 5 stars (AA Hotel Services, 2011; Chikosha and Vutete, 2012; Australian Motoring Services, 2014; UNWTO, 2014; Qviclub, 2015; Hensens, 2015; Hooff, 2015).

Customers' Satisfaction

Customers' satisfaction is considered to be one of the most important outcomes of all activities in a service industry and it is the measure of how customers' perception on the products and services provided exceed customer expectations (Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Barsky, 1992; Gerson, 1993; Carev, 2008). It is a post-purchase evaluative judgment concerning a specific buying decision (Chu and Choi, 2000; Yuksel and Yuksel, 2002). Consumer satisfaction is key to success for hotel industry as consumers are now more than ever before well informed and their expectations go on changing very frequently. Therefore, satisfying a consumer in the upmarket hotel is a most challenging task as it depends not only on tangible but on intangible factors as well. Chu *et al.,* (2000) revealed that service attitude and performance of a service encounter has a prominent effect on the levels of customer satisfaction.

The study by Jiang and Zhao (2010), found out that five star hotels were rated the highest on all the attributes including the customer satisfaction. Five star hotels customers do not concern much about price rather they prefer the high quality of facilities and service and the convenience to reach the hotels. Jiang and Zhao (2010), stated that customer satisfaction with services was also higher for five star hotels. Chu*et al.,* (2000) identified that staff quality, room qualities and value are the top three hotel factors that determine customer satisfaction. The study revealed that providing services that customers prefer is the starting point for providing customer satisfaction in the hotel. Chikosha *et al.,* (2012), study indicated a positive relationship between hotel rating and perceived service quality and customer satisfaction. Chikosha *et al.,* (2012) further submitted that perceived service quality and customer satisfaction are positively correlated with hotel rating. In view of the above, this study consequently assumed that the strength of the upmarket hotel in terms of customer satisfaction depends on a combination of all the hotel star rating attributes.

Conceptual Framework

The Conceptual framework was based on the importance performance analysis theoretical framework to indicate the variables that were related to hotel star rating attributes influence on customer satisfaction. The independent variables captured the star rating attributes comprising of the quality of room facilities, service quality, hotel ambience and business service mix while customer satisfaction served as the dependent variable. The starrating attributes of quality of room facilities include comfort of the bedroom, bathroom, furniture/fittings and furnishings, bed and beddings, flooring, lightings and heating, decorations, towers, toiletries and amenities, space, ventilation and general cleanliness of the room facilities.

The starrating attributes of service quality include service professionalism and skills, service behaviour and attitude, service accessibility and flexibility, service reliability and trust worthiness, service recovery when thing goes wrong, service reputation and credibility. Starrating attributes of hotel ambience include hotel location, hotel accessibility, interior decoration, warmness of reception area, brightness of public areas, spotless of public washroom and attractiveness of hotel external environment. Starrating attributes of business service mix include booking services, arrival services, lounge services, room services, departure services, food and beverage services, meeting and conference services, other leisure services.

The study area

The study was conducted at the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja which is the capital city of Nigeria created in 1976 and has an estimated population of about 5 Million people as reported in 2007 national census. Abuja officially became Nigeria's capital on 12th December, 1991 (NTDC, 2006). The Federal Capital Territory (FCT) is located in the North Central Zone of Nigeria the geographical centre of Nigeria and has a land area of 8,000 square kilometres. It is bounded on the north by Kaduna State, the west by Niger State, the east and southeast by Nassarawa State and the southwest by Kogi State. The reason for the choice of the study area is that, Abuja is the capital city and administrative centre of Nigeria with high concentration of the upmarket hotels (Jovago, 2015) and is the base for the hospitality apex regulatory agency in Nigeria.

Objective of Study

The objective of this study is to investigate importance performance analysis of star rating attributes influence on customer satisfaction of upmarket hotels in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria.

Methodology

For the purpose of this study, quantitative research method was employed which involved the use of structured close ended questionnaire and a total number of 333 respondents were sampled using a purposive and stratified random sampling methods. However, only 331 respondents properly completed and returned the questionnaire. The respondents were provided with the questionnaire to fill in the upmarket hotels. The research questions were

projected toward asking about the influence of star rating attributes on customer satisfaction of upmarket hotels in Abuja. The research instrument employed for the study was structured questionnaire and the data collected was analyzed by determining the mean, standard deviation, correlation and factor analysis. The importance performance analysis was carried out using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20.0.

Findings and Discussion
Data analysis was conducted between the independent variables (quality of room facilities, service quality, hotel ambience and business service mix) and dependent variable (customer satisfaction). The following analyses were conducted, descriptive statistics, correlation, factor analysis and Importance Performance Analysis.

Descriptive Statistics
The descriptive statistics was based on the levels of agreement of respondents on importance and performance of star rating attributes of upmarket hotels in Abuja and the results is shown in table 2.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Star Rating Attributes (N=331)

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Quality of Room Facilities	55.4109	1.80749
Service Quality	27.2568	1.07474
Ambience	32.0060	1.36846
Business Service Mix	36.1390	1.54096
Average	**37.7032**	**1.10580**

Source: Researcher (2017)

The results in table 1 on star rating attributes indicated an average mean score of 37.7032 with quality of room facilities scoring the highest mean of 55.4109 followed by business service mix mean score of 36.1390, ambience mean score of 32.0060 and service quality mean score of 27.2568.

Correlation Matrix Analysis
Table 2 shows the result of the correlation matrix indicating the association of all the independent and dependent variables.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix Between the Variables (N=331)2

		Quality of Room Facilities	Service Quality	Hotel Ambience	Business Service Mix	Customer Satisfaction
Quality of Room Facilities	Pearson Correlation	1	.008	-.122*	-.072	-.069
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.886	.026	.193	.212
Service Quality	Pearson Correlation	.008	1	.341**	.337**	.146**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.886		.000	.000	.008
Hotel Ambience	Pearson Correlation	-.122*	.341**	1	.418**	-.034
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.026	.000		.000	.534
Business Service Mix	Pearson Correlation	-.072	.337**	.418**	1	.189**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.193	.000	.000		.001
Customer Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	-.069	.146**	-.034	.189**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.212	.008	.534	.001	
	N	331	331	331	331	331

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Researcher (2017)

The correlation matrix results in table 2 cover star rating attributes of quality of room facilities, service quality, hotel ambience and business service mix and customer satisfaction. The first correlation analysis indicated a weak and negative significant correlation (r=-0.069, p=0.212) between star rating attributes of quality of room facilities and customer satisfaction of upmarket hotels in Abuja. The second indicated a weak and positive significant correlation (r=0.146, p=0.008) between star rating attributes of service quality and customer satisfaction of upmarket hotels in Abuja. Furthermore, the third revealed a strong and negative significant correlation (r=-0.034, p=0.534) between star rating attributes of hotel ambience and customer satisfaction of upmarket hotels in Abuja. Also, the fourth indicated a weak and positive significant correlation (r=0.189, p=0.001) between star rating attributes of business service mix and customer satisfaction of upmarket hotels in Abuja.

Factor Analysis
Factor Analysis was conducted on the star rating attributes collectively which include quality of room facilities, service quality, ambience and business service mix. In order to identify the variables impact and ascertain the appropriateness of the main component, factor analysis was carried out. Both Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity were conducted on the star rating attributes. The Kaiser Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy examined if the strength of the relationship between variables is large enough to proceed to factor analysis. The sample adequacy was tested and the level of significance of KMO measure of sample adequacy = 0.639 and Bartlett's Test: χ^2 =127.160, P <0.000. Based on these results, the reduction by principal components was

suitable. Therefore, factor analysis was considered appropriate and as such, a factor analysis total variance and varimax rotation were carried out as shown in tables 4 and 5 respectively.

Table 3: Factor Analysis – Total Variance Explained (N=331)

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	1.748	43.707	43.707	1.729	43.231	43.231
2	1.007	25.173	68.880	1.026	25.649	68.880
3	.667	16.666	85.546			
4	.578	14.454	100.000			
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.						

Source: Field Survey (2017)

The factor analysis results in table 3 show that out of the variables of four components only two factors accounted for 68.880% of the total variance on the star rating attributes at an eigenvalue equal to or greater than 1. The factors in first component accounted for 43.231 per cent of the total variance of the star rating attributes. Also, the factors in second component accounted for 25.649 per cent of the total variance of the star rating attributes.

Table 4: Factor analysis – Rotated component matrix of star rating attributes

| Rotated Component Matrix[a]		
	Component	
	1	2
Quality of Room Facilities	-.039	.978
Service Quality	.740	.168
Hotel Ambience	.764	-.189
Business Service Mix	.772	-.077
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.		
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.		
a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.		

Source: Field Survey (2017)

The results in table 5 show the factor analysis - rotated component matrix on the star rating attributes indicated three strong variables in component 1 and one strong variable in component 2. The strong variables in component 1 include business service mix 0.772, hotel ambience 0.764 and service quality 0.740. Also, the quality of room facilities 0.978 was the only strong variable in component 2.

The factor analysis revealed that there is a pattern of association in the rating of factors of hotel star rating attributes. The factor analysis scree plot in figure 2 indicating the variables of two components curved at factor number two and thus confirmed that the two components were appropriate for hotel star rating attributes.

Figure 1: Factor analysis scree plot
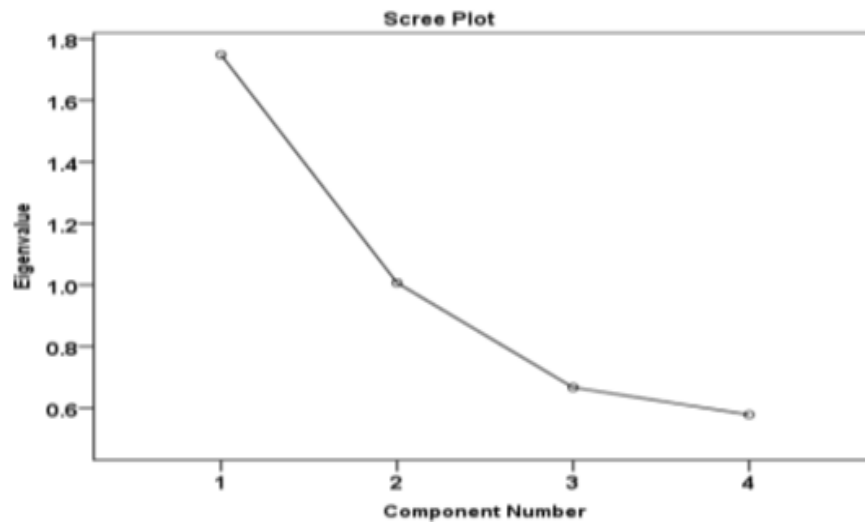
Star Rating Attributes in Importance Performance Analysis Grid
The result of the factor analysis on star rating attributes is graphically presented on Importance Performance Analysis grid. The grid is divided into four quadrants as illustrated in Fig. 3 and the four identifiable quadrants include, concentrate here, and keep up the good work, low priority and possible overkill.

Quadrant I - Concentrate here quadrant, the star rating attributes are perceived to be very important to respondents but performance levels are fairly low. The finding revealed that the star rating attribute of quality of room facilities fall within the quadrant. This shows that more attention should be place on star rating attribute of quality of room facilities. The implication is that upmarket hotel managers in Abuja should concentrate more efforts at improving the level of star rating attribute of quality of room facilities. The upmarket hotel managers in Abuja should consider as very important the fundamental issue of providing very high quality of room facilities in their hotels in Abuja.

Quadrant II - Keep up the good work quadrant, the star rating attributes are perceived to be very important to respondents and at the same time the hotel seems to have high levels of performance on these activities. The finding revealed that the star rating attribute of service quality fall within the quadrant. This shows that the star rating attribute of service quality is perceived to be very important. The implication is that upmarket hotel manager in Abuja should not relent at sustaining the star rating attribute of service quality.

Quadrant III - Low Priority quadrant, the star rating attributes are with low importance and low performance. Although performance levels may be low in this cell, managers should not be overly concerned since the attribute in this cell is not perceived to be very important as such limited resources should be expended on this low priority cell. The finding did not identify any

star rating attributes as being low importance and low performance. One possible explanation is that most respondents simply perceived that all attributes presented to them were important and that they would not resolve for less as far as upmarket hotel performance was concerned. The implication is that upmarket hotel manager in Abuja should remain focused and remain resourceful in managing resources of their hotels.

Quadrant IV - Possible Overkill quadrant contains the star rating attributes of low importance but relatively high performance. The finding revealed that respondents are satisfied with the performance of the upmarket hotel in the area of hotel star rating attributes of ambience and business service mix. The implication is that upmarket hotel managers should consider their present efforts on the hotel star rating attributes of ambience and business service mix as being over utilized.

Figure 2: Star Rating Attributes in Importance Performance Analysis Grid
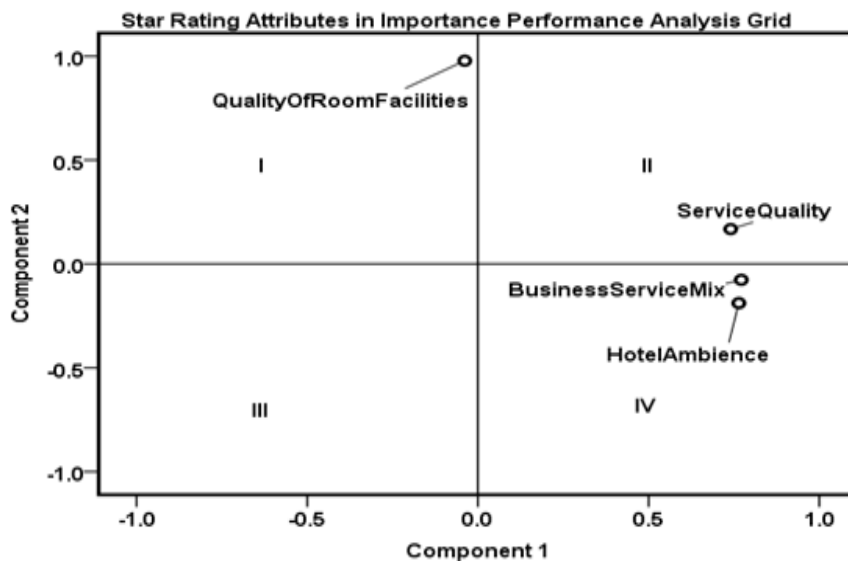
Source: Field Survey (2017)

Conclusion
Importance performance analysis as a technique assumed that customer level of satisfaction with the attributes is mainly derived from their expectations and judgment of the product or service performance. In hotel industry, the level of customer satisfaction is considered to be one of the most important outcomes of star rating activities. The perceived importance and performance of the star rating attributes revealed that quality of facilities fall within the first quadrant. This shows that star rating attribute of quality of room facilities under-perform customer satisfaction, therefore more attention should be place on star rating attribute of quality of room facilities. Also, the star rating attribute of service quality fall within the second quadrant which implies that service quality is perceived to be very important and meet customer expectations therefore upmarket hotel manager in Abuja should not relent at sustaining the star rating attribute of service quality. Furthermore, the star rating attribute of

hotel ambience and business service mix fall within quadrant four. This implies that upmarket hotels have over utilized and exceeded customer expectation therefore upmarket hotel managers in Abuja should consider their present efforts on the star rating attributes of hotel ambience and business service mix as adequate.

Recommendations
The evaluation of star rating attributes importance and performance from the customer point of view would further improve upmarket hotel managers' understanding of customer satisfaction which ultimately leads to repeat patronage. A customer who is satisfied with the products and services will likely become a regular customer of the hotel. Therefore, upmarket hotel managers should constantly review, evaluate and analysis the hotel star rating attributes importance and performance on customer satisfaction in other to gain competitive advantage, repeat patronage, attract new customers and increase the hotel performance.

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