
INFLUENCE OF TOUR GUIDE SERVICE QUALITY ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN NAROK COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: The study explored the influence of tour guiding service quality on customer satisfaction in Narok County, Kenya. The study variables were; Tour guiding competencies, core service delivery aspects, tour guide's orientation and status of sightseeing vehicle.

Statement of the problem: The Kenyan government has been developing policies and regulations geared towards improving the service quality of the tour guiding experience. However, these policies are largely based on the views of the policy makers. The views of the tourist, the consumer of the tour guiding services are largely missing. There is limited research on tour guiding service quality and customer satisfaction in Kenya especially from the customer's point of view.

Research methodology: The study used a cross-sectional research design and SERQUAL to evaluate the influence of tour guiding services on customer satisfaction. Primary data was collected from 311 tourists staying in camps and lodges around the Masai Mara National Reserve (MMNR). Descriptive statistics and regression analysis was used to analyse the data.

Results of the study: Results indicate that tour guiding competencies significantly and positively influence customer satisfaction($R=0.805$); punctuality, keen sense of direction and enthusiasm being the most satisfying elements. Core service delivery aspects significantly and positively influence customer satisfaction($R=0.696$); delivery of the promised service and knowledge of the destination being the most satisfying elements. Tour guide's orientation significantly and negatively influence customer satisfaction($R=0.616$); pressure to buy extra excursions and soliciting for tips being the most unsatisfying elements. The status of sightseeing vehicle had a significant moderating influence on the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction ($R=0.644$).

Conclusion: The study concluded that tourists' satisfaction with tour guiding services is enhanced by the ability of the tour guide to; demonstrate relevant competencies, deliver the promised service and have adequate knowledge of the destination. Well maintained sightseeing vehicles also lead to customer satisfaction. Soliciting for tips and pressure to buy extra excursions by the tour guides leads to customer dissatisfaction.

Recommendation: The tour operators should develop a standard operating procedure for the tour guides for uniformity of service quality regardless of the individual. Tour guides should always be issued with a copy of the itinerary sold to the guests so as to deliver the promise in the itinerary. Tour companies need a clear written policy on tipping and the sale of extra excursions to minimize conflict between tour guides and tourists. The employment contracts for tour guides should be addressed by government together with tour operators and tour guide associations. Tourist transport vehicles should also be well maintained

Keywords: *Tour guide, satisfaction, service, quality, tourist.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The satisfaction and subsequent loyalty of customers is very important to a destination (Virvilaite, Pilgrimiene & Kliukaite, 2015). Various studies have established that attracting new customers is much more expensive than keeping existing ones (Chen, Weiler, Young & Lee, 2016 and Khan, Garg & Rahman, 2015). As the number of satisfied customers increase, a destination will spend less on marketing thus increase the net direct tourism earnings (Rena, L. P., Qiu, H. Q., Wang, P. L., & Lin, P. M. C., 2016). In addition, the consumption of related services increases (Sood & Chougale, 2016). The overall effect is an improved economic performance at the destination and improved economic wellbeing of individuals (Choo, Tan & Fernando, 2018), (Hoarau, H., 2014).

Tour guides are an important component of the tourism product. They act as the link between the tourists, host community and the tour companies (Kuo, N. T., Chang, K. C., Cheng, Y. S., & Lin, J. C., 2016). They interact with the guests longer than other tourism service chain players (Su, C. J., Yang, J. H., Badaoui, K., & Cho, N, 2014). A tour company is dependent on the tour guide to deliver the promise made to the tourist. As such, the tour guides are the backbone of the entire tour operation (Guzman-Parra, Vila-Oblitas & Maqueda-Lafuente, 2016). The significance of the tour guides in promoting a country's foreign relations and enhancing the country's positive image is widely acknowledged (Araslı, H., & Baradarani, S., 2014). For this reason, the Kenyan government, through the Ministry of Tourism has given prominence to the critical role the tour guides play in the long term success of Kenya as a destination of choice for many tourists (Kabii, Okello & Kipruto, 2017).

For most tourists visiting Kenya, they will have made prior arrangements of their trips either through travel agencies in their country of origin or with a local tour operator (Suntikul, Tang & Pratt, 2016). On arrival in Kenya, they join up with the tour group at the airport or hotel in Nairobi to begin their tour. Majority of these groups travel by road using Safari Landcruisers or Tour vans to various attraction sites such as Masai Mara National Reserve (MMNR). The vehicles are driven by the tour guide who performs the dual role of guiding as well as driving.

The tour groups stay at lodges and /or tented camps within the protected areas or just outside the reserves. The days are spent out in the parks on game drives in search of wildlife (Kabii, Okello & Kipruto, 2017). Optional and additional excursions such as the hot air balloon ride, Masai village visit and Souvenir shopping are incorporated in the program either within the park and its environs or during the transfer from one park to the other (Togoch & Koki, 2018 and Suntikul, Tang & Pratt, 2016).

To enhance professionalism in tour guiding, efforts by the Kenyan government and other players have been made at regulating the industry. The development of the tour guiding sector regulation can be traced back to the 1990s (Togoch & Koki, 2018). This was when the Kenya Association of Tour Operators (KATO) in conjunction with the Kenya Wildlife Services (KWS) first initiated a regulatory mechanism for tour guides. This culminated in the formation of the Kenya Professional Safari Guides Association (KPSGA). This organisation was an industry initiative that was tasked with evaluation and grading of the practising guides. Later on in 2005, the Ministry of tourism, through the Catering and Tourism Development Levy Trustees (CTDLT) developed the initial regulatory framework for tour guide licensing (Kabii, Okello & Kipruto, 2017). Measures and regulations on tour guide licensing were put in place. CTDLT was later disbanded and its roles taken over by Tourism Fund (TF) and Tourism regulatory Authority (TRA). Currently, the role of tour guide licensing and regulation is a key mandate of the TRA (GOK, 2011).

TRA has developed policies and regulations for the Tour guiding sector in Kenya. These policies are meant to ensure that tour guides deliver better service quality for customer satisfaction among tourist visiting Kenya. However, just like previous efforts, these policy framework is mainly from the perspective of the policymakers (Togoch & Koki, 2018). The input of tourist, the recipient of these guiding services is largely lacking. There are no specific studies relating to the issue of tour guiding service quality and customer satisfaction in Kenya more specifically from the tourists' perspective. This study addressed this gap.

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Existing literature identify the need to satisfy customers (Della-Corte, Sciarelli, Cascella & Del Gaudio, 2015), the need to solve visitor problems (Gnapala, 2015) and the need to improve visitor experience (Choo, Tan & Fernando, Y. 2018; Kabii, Okello, & Kipruto, 2017). In Kenya various policy documents seeking to achieve and maintain competitiveness have been drafted. The National Tourism Strategy (GOK, 2013) identifies the challenges of reinforcing the Kenya tourism industry as a service sector while the National Tourism Blueprint (GOK, 2018) highlights the need to increase and maintain visitor satisfaction levels. TF has for a long time invested in sustained efforts to improve the quality of tour guiding services in Kenya. The continual allocation of financial and human resources to this effort is due in part to the important role played by tour guides in delivering high quality of service to the visitors (Bimonte & Punzo, 2016).

The Tourism Act established TRA in charge of regulating tourism activities and services countrywide (GOK, 2016). TRA has been developing and improving a system of regulating and improving quality in tour guiding since its inception. The policies and regulations on tour

guiding, developed by TRA are geared towards improving the service quality of the guiding experience (GOK, 2016). This in itself is noble and very well intentioned. However, these policies and regulations are largely based on the views of the policy makers. The views of the tourist, the main consumer of the tour guiding services are vital to development of sound policies for the tour guiding sector. There is limited research on tour guiding service quality and customer satisfaction in Kenya. Explicitly, research focussing on tour guiding competencies, core service delivery aspects, customer orientation and the status of sightseeing vehicles is scanty especially on the Kenyan context. Yet this is critical information for policy makers and Tour operators. Therefore, there is need for this timely study on tour guiding and visitor satisfaction in Narok County, the home of MMNR.

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- i. To examine tour guiding competencies and their influence on customer satisfaction in Narok County
- ii. To assess the impact of core service delivery aspects on customer satisfaction in Narok county
- iii. To determine the extent that tour guides' customer orientation has on customer satisfaction in Narok County
- iv. To determine the moderating effect of the status of the sightseeing vehicle on customer satisfaction in Narok county

1.3 RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

- i. H₁: Tour guiding competencies have no significant influence on customer satisfaction in Narok County
- ii. H₂: Core tour guiding service delivery aspects have no significant impact on customer satisfaction in Narok County
- iii. H₃: The tour guide's orientation towards their own economic interest has no significant negative influence on customer satisfaction in Narok County
- iv. H₄: Status of the sightseeing vehicle has no significant moderating effect on the relationship between tour guiding service quality and customer satisfaction in Narok County.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 THEORITICAL REVIEW/ FRAMEWORK

Measuring service quality is generally accepted as a way of assessing customer satisfaction with a service (Sam, Hamidu & Daniels, 2018). As such service quality has been the focus of several studies. The approaches to these studies fall under two main schools of thought by Parasuraman, Zeithml and Berry, 1988) and Gronroos (1988). The SERVQUAL model, a shortened form of "service quality" is a popular model used in the measurement of service

quality. This model was developed by Parasuraman, et al (1988). It uses five instruments to compare the customer's expectations against perceptions along a variety of service elements. The instruments are; reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles. According Dudovsky (2014), SERVQUAL was initially designed to evaluate financial services. Since the of service quality dimensions depend on the service type being studied, the SERVQUAL model has been customised to cater for different services. SEVQUAL has been adapted in many service sectors including the tourism industry (Deb & Ahmed, 2018) and (Rajeswari & Kumari, 2014).

Parasuraman et al (1988) regards customer satisfaction as the gap between the expectations of the customer with regards to a service and the customer's perception of the service that they receive. It is the perception of the customer viewed against their expectation. The expectation versus perception school of thought makes it possible to interpret customer satisfaction based on expectations. The SERVQUAL model was chosen for this study. This model was deemed suitable for this study because it has a scale constituting several items which makes it ideal for measuring the gap between tourist expectations and perceptions of service quality. SERVQUAL has also been successfully used, previously to evaluate service quality and tourist satisfaction by other researchers including; Choo, Cheng, & Yeo, (2018) and Sam, Hamidu & Daniels, (2018).

2.2 EMPIRICAL REVIEW

The measurement of a quality of a service is very important in determining customer satisfaction (Zhang, Zhao & Lyles, 2018). According to Caro, Berchoux, Marek, and Chen (2015), quality of a service is comparison of expectations with performance, which depends on the customer. The quality of service provided is dependent on customer perceptions and expectations before and after service is consumed (Phiri & Mcwabe, 2013). Quality service that meets or even exceeds customer's expectation is important in meeting satisfaction (Caro, et. al., 2015; Roger et al, 2015; Dabija, Dinu, Tăchiciu & Pop, 2014). The quality of tour guiding has been a subject of feedback by tourists who have visited destinations globally. Several factors may affect tour guide service quality. Tour guiding competencies, delivery of core services, tour guide orientation and quality of sightseeing vehicles have been cited by many researchers as contributing to service quality and customer satisfaction in tour guiding (Dedeoğlu, & Demirer, 2015).

Tour guides' competencies including communication skills, improvisation, enthusiasm, punctuality are critical traits that determine the perception of guests towards the guiding services rendered (Al Jahwari, Sirakaya-Turk & Altintas, 2016). In a study in Istanbul, Turkey by Centikaya and Oter (2016) found out that lack of critical tour guiding competencies like creativity, humour, interpersonal skills among other contributes to ineffective tour guiding leading poor quality of services and unsatisfied client (Pereira, 2016). Cetinkaya and Oter (2016) also found out that there exists a significant relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty, competency of the tour guide and the tour guiding service (Tsegaw and Teressa, 2017).

A tour guide who is not endowed with a wide range of tour guiding competencies has likelihood of providing unprofessional, poor quality guiding services. This is a fact that was noted by Chen, Weiler, Young and Lee (2015) in their study on the quality of tour guiding in China. They noted that lack of key competencies like professionalism ultimately affected service performance by the tour guides. In an attempt to ensure quality service performance by the tour guides they recommended professional training to impact guides with competencies like communication skills, product knowledge among others (Hughes, Wang & Shu, 2015). These recommendations are in line with observation by Min (2016) who argued that tour guide competencies are a prerequisite for professional guiding services.

The critical role of tour guide competencies in ensuring customer satisfaction has been underscored by a study in Egypt (Magdy, 2016). In this study it was established that knowledge of the needs of the tourists and ability to meet their expectations plays a big role in ensuring clients satisfaction. They also posited that quality guiding services is determined by a number of competencies in a guide which helps him/her to execute their duties professionally (Pereira, 2015). Similar findings were recorded in a study conducted in South Africa to assess key tour guide competences, Hurombo (2016) found that personality aspects as well as emotional and cultural knowledge were critical in delivering memorable guided experiences. The same was found in Ethiopia by a study conducted by Tsegaw & Teressa (2017) who established that tour guides plays an important role in tourist satisfaction. He also revealed that for tour guides to offer sufficient quality guiding services they must be able to communicate effectively in a language the tourist can understand to influence their perception (Pauw, Collins & Gouws, 2017). He also argued that knowledge of the destination was so critical in satisfying the clients needs. These revelations by Hurombo (2016) and Magdy (2016) confirms that tour guiding competencies ensure quality guiding a prerequisite for customer satisfaction.

In a study conducted in Tanzania, the tour guiding services were found to be relatively poor (Philemon, 2015). This was attributed to lack of tour guiding competencies like mastery of foreign languages like English, French, Italian, Spanish, and even Chinese. The tour guides were also found to lack competencies of close interactions with the clients which is key in influencing guests' perceptions (Pathirana & Gnapala, 2015). These findings were collaborated further by a research in Malawi (Chilembwe and Mweiwa, 2014).

In Kenya a study by Akama and Kieti (2003) on satisfaction with guided tours in Tsavo West National Park showed that over 70% of the guests had satisfactory experience. In another study on the challenges that hinders growth indigenous entrepreneurs in the tourism industry by Ragui (2013) it was revealed that most of the tour guides lacked requisite guiding competencies to satisfy the tourists (Togoch & Koki, 2018). This was attributed to lack of formal training in tour guiding.

Customer orientation reflects on how the tour guide prioritises the needs and interests of tourists above his or her own while providing guided services (Cetin & Yarkan, 2017). In the tour guiding context, several factors affect customer orientation. Low levels of income, human resource issues such as employment contract conditions and lack of recognition

contribute to tour guides being motivated by selfish economic interests (Weiler, Young & Lee, 2016). In some cases, low remuneration has turned tour guides from their main roles of interpretation and information givers to salesmen. Zero commission and low prices (Hughes, Wang & Shu, 2015) are some of the most prevalent unhealthy business practises. This occurs when competition among tour operators is very intense and based on price. In such cases, some operators sell the tours at prices less than the actual cost (Weiler and Walker, 2014). To recover the loss, the tour operators do not pay the tour guide. Instead, a financial burden is placed on the guide in encouraging tourist shopping and the promotion of optional tours (Cetin & Yarcan, 2017).

In other cases, tour guides are often paid less than the recommended minimum guide fees and are heavily reliant on tips from the guests (Centikaya & Oter, 2016). In addition, the income is seasonal with the tour guides being out of work for between four and eight months in a year. This period can extend even further whenever there is travel advisories and/or cancellations occasioned by global issues such as pandemics, terrorism and economic upheavals in source countries. Tour guides have to figure out how to bridge the remuneration gap through commissions and tips. This ends up distracting them from their core duties to salesmen pushing the guests to shopping and buying of extra excursions (Magdy, 2016 and Pathirana & Gnapala, 2015).

Transport is a vital service in the tourism industry. This is because tourism and the leisure experience involve travelling (Mahmoud & Hine, 2016). Tourists depend on the destination's transport system for mobility in order to access the attraction sites (Georgescu, C. 2015). The importance of the transport system for tourism at the destination has been acknowledged in tourism literature (Haron, Nasir & Mohammad, 2016, Deb & Ahmed, 2018 and Guner, 2018). For a tourist destination, the ability to travel within the destination with ease to preferred attraction sites enhances the marketability of the destination. This in turn enhances the attractiveness of the destination (Suman, Bolia & Tiwari, 2018).

Service quality measurement has been extensively studied in relation to public passenger transport. Several factors such as the condition of the vehicle, punctuality, reliability, safety and infrastructure have been studied (Joewono, Tarigan & Susilo, 2016). Other studies have focused on key elements including; vehicle, the driver and the management (Jomnonkwao & Ratanavaraha, 2016). The vehicle exterior and interior are what the tourists come into direct contact with (Ratanavaraha, 2016). There is the general tendency of the users to judge the safety of the vehicle based on physical condition and appearance (Currie, C., & Falconer, P. 2014). As a general rule, the newer it appears, the safer it is considered (Deb & Ahmed, 2018). Interior characteristics including seating comfort and a nice clean appearance (Guner, 2018) are key to customer satisfaction.

According to Morton, Caulfield & Anable (2016), Body condition, cleanliness and safety as well as the driver are the three main factors. Body condition constitutes several sub factors such as the age of the vehicle, condition of the wheels, seat comfort, air conditioning and security accessories (Jomnonkwao, Siridhara, Ratanavaraha, 2015). Previous studies in Thailand have shown that tourists are concerned with the condition of sightseeing vehicles

especially when travelling over long distances. The study found out that with good safety features such as seat belts, fire extinguishers, emergency exits and anti-roll bars, the risk of accidents or accident-related injuries decrease (Jomnonkwao & Ratanavaraha, 2016).

Overall, the literature reviewed found that majority of research on the effect of tour guiding on tourist satisfaction have been conducted in developed countries and other countries of Asia. Pereira, 2016 in Portugal, Min, 2016 in China, Kuo, Chang, Cheng & Lin (2015) in Taiwan and Cetinkaya and Oter (2016) are some of the studies that specifically investigated tour guiding service quality in Europe and Asia. Chan, Hsu and Baum (2015) also conducted a study on the impacts of service performance on tourist satisfaction in Hong Kong.

In Africa, there has been similar studies in Tanzania (Philemon, 2015) and in Malawi (Chilembwe & Mweiwa, 2014) investigated tour guide roles. Phiri & Mcwabe (2013) investigated customer expectations while Dzikit & Leonard (2016) focussed on barriers affecting service quality. Although the tour guiding context in Kenya is similar to these countries, the focus of the studies was quite different to the focus of the present study. However, similar studies have also been conducted in other African countries. Tsegaw & Teresa (2017) and Magdy (2016) specifically investigated tour guiding service quality in Ethiopia and Egypt respectively. However, the tour guides in those countries work mainly in historical sites which differs in many ways from the Kenyan big game safari context.

In Kenya, several studies on tour guiding have been conducted. Most of the studies have focused on levels of training (Sindiga,1994) as well as training needs. (Kabii, Makonjio, & Kipruto, 2017). Akama & Kieti (2003) investigated Tourist Satisfaction in a safari tour but they did not relate that to Tour guiding aspects. Kangogo, Musiega, & Manyasi, (2013) investigated customer satisfaction effect on performance in the hotel industry. Recently Togoch & Koki (2018) investigated tour guiding performance attributes in the North rift region. This implied scanty information that needed further empirical investigation, thus forming the study's justification.

2.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

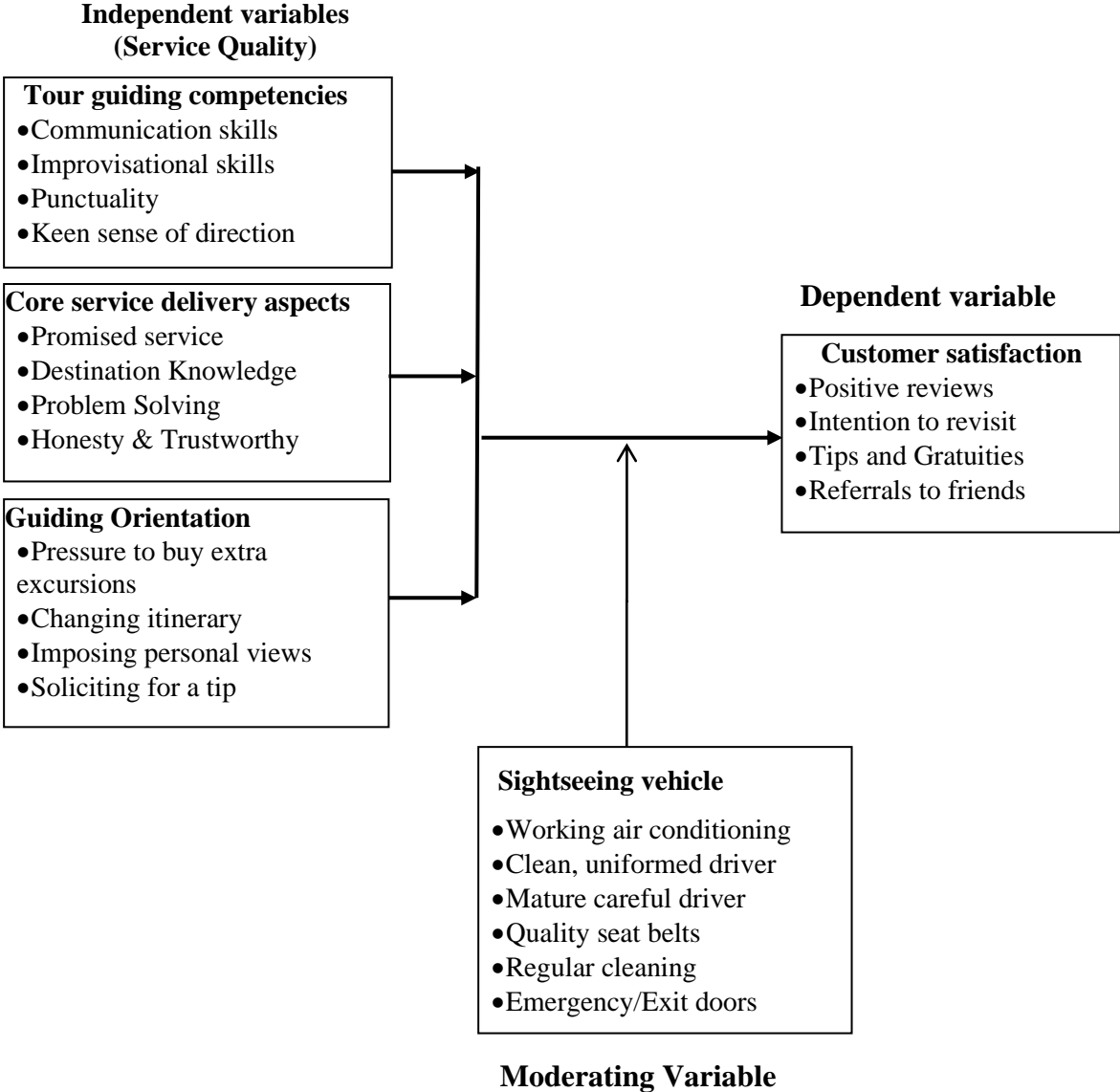


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
 Source: Adapted from Kangogo, Musiega & Manyasi (2013)

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a cross-sectional research design to the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data at a single point in time (Mugenda, O., & Mugenda, A., 2012). The quantitative data was collected from tourists visiting MMNR from the month of November 2019. Qualitative data was also collected from Nairobi based Tour Operators, whose tour guides took their customers (tourists) to MMNR during this period. The design was useful to demonstrate the relationship between Service Quality determinants and customer satisfaction. The study was carried out in the Narok County in Kenya. The county is home to the world famous MMNR. The reserve covers some 1,510 km². The target population comprised of guided tourists visiting Masai Mara National Reserve. According to the Narok County visitor data, Masai Mara received 291,164 tourists in 2018. In November 2018, 9,031 tourists visited the reserve. Using visitor data from a similar month (November) in the previous year, the Slovin's formula was used to work out the sample size. The sample size was 384. With the sample of 384 tourists and since there were 32 facilities to sample from, the sample of 384 was divided between the 32 facilities for 12 respondents per facility.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 General Information

The general information included the gender, region of origin and purpose of the visit of the respondents. The findings are presented in Table 1

Table 1: Demographic Information of Respondents.

| Gender | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Male | 169 | 54.3 |
| Female | 142 | 45.7 |
| Total | 311 | 100.0 |
| Region of Origin | | |
| Europe | 94 | 30.2 |
| America | 30 | 9.6 |
| Asia | 15 | 4.8 |
| Africa | 172 | 55.3 |
| Total | 311 | 100.0 |
| Purpose of Visit | | |
| Wildlife Viewing | 187 | 60.1 |
| Photography | 15 | 4.8 |
| Bird Watching | 47 | 15.1 |
| Any other (Relaxation and Leisure) | 62 | 20.0 |
| Total | 311 | 100.0 |

Based on the findings presented in Table 1, 54.0% of the respondents were male while 46.0% were female. The possible explanation is that men are more adventurers than females. The results indicate that of the tourists visiting the MMNR, 55.3% were European, 30.2% Americans and 9.6% Africans. Asians recorded 4.8% of the respondents. These findings are consistent with previous visitor data for MMNR that indicates that Non-Residents constitute

the highest number of visitors to Masai Mara throughout the year (Suntikul, et al, 2016). The findings further indicate that the majority of the respondents (60.1%) were visiting MMNR for wildlife viewing opportunities. Relaxation and leisure accounted for 20.0% while a significant 15.1% came for bird watching. The possible explanation for this result is that Kenya’s tourism is mainly wildlife based (Suntikul, *et al*, 2016) and MMNR offers the best viewing opportunities (Bandari, 2018).

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

4.2.1 Descriptive statistics for tour guiding competencies

The descriptive statistics for tour guiding competencies is depicted in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Tour Guiding Competencies

| | Count | Mean | Std. Deviation | |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------------|-----------|
| | Statistic | Statistic | Std. Error | Statistic |
| Strong communication skills | 311 | 3.43 | .060 | 1.050 |
| Improvisational skills | 311 | 4.20 | .055 | .974 |
| Enthusiasm | 311 | 4.16 | .054 | .959 |
| Punctuality | 311 | 4.51 | .052 | .912 |
| Keen sense of direction | 311 | 4.40 | .041 | .729 |

The findings of the tour guiding competencies and their influence on customer satisfaction revealed that punctuality and a keen sense of direction were the most important factors influencing customer satisfaction. Descriptive analysis revealed in Table 2 that the mean scores of all the variables ranged between moderate and high. Punctuality (M=4.51) ranked highest followed by Keen sense of direction (M=4.40), Improvisational skills (M=4.20), Enthusiasm (M=4.16) and Strong Communication skills (M=3.43) In addition, all the variables had a low standard deviation ranging between 0.729 (Keen sense of direction) and 1.050 (Strong Communication skills)

4.2.2 Descriptive statistics for core service delivery aspects

The descriptive statistics for Core service delivery aspects is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Core Service Delivery Aspects

| | Count | Mean | | Std. Deviation |
|------------------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|----------------|
| | Statistic | Statistic | Std. Error | Statistic |
| Delivery of promised service | 311 | 4.65 | .027 | .477 |
| Knowledge of the destination | 311 | 4.50 | .028 | .501 |
| Ability to solve problems | 311 | 4.55 | .028 | .498 |
| Honesty and trustworthiness | 311 | 4.60 | .028 | .491 |

The findings of core service delivery aspects' influence on customer satisfaction revealed that all the factors were important for customer satisfaction. Descriptive analysis revealed in Table 3 that the mean scores of all the variables were high. Delivery of the promised service ranked highest (M=4.65) followed by Honesty and trustworthiness (M=4.60), ability to solve problems (M=4.55) and knowledge of the destination (M=4.50). All the variables produced low standard deviations with the highest being 0.501

4.2.3 Descriptive statistics for tour guide's customer orientation

The descriptive statistics for tour guide's customer orientation is presented in Table 4

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Tour Guides' Customer Orientation

| | Count | Mean | | Std. Deviation |
|--|-----------|-----------|------------|----------------|
| | Statistic | Statistic | Std. Error | Statistic |
| Pressure to buy extra excursions e.g. Masai village | 311 | 4.50 | .069 | .710 |
| changing itinerary without consulting the guests | 311 | 3.94 | .058 | 1.017 |
| Imposing personal views | 311 | 1.88 | .056 | .989 |
| Soliciting for a tip | 311 | 4.73 | .068 | .950 |

The findings of tour guide's customer orientations influence on customer satisfaction revealed that soliciting for a tip and pressure to buy extra excursions were the most dissatisfying factors. Descriptive analysis of the variables indicated in Table 4 revealed that soliciting for a tip (M=4.73) and pressure to buy extra excursions (4.50) were the variables that produced high mean scores and low standard deviations. Changing the itinerary without consulting the guests produced moderate mean scores (M=3.94) and a higher standard deviation of 1.017. Imposing personal views produced a low mean (M=1.88)

4.2.4 Descriptive statistics for the moderating effect of the status of the sightseeing vehicle.

The study presented the descriptive statistics for the moderating effect of status of sightseeing vehicle in Table 5

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for Moderating Effect of Status of Sightseeing Vehicle

| | Count | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------------|
| | Statistic | Statistic | Std. Error |
| Working air conditioning | 311 | 3.38 | .089 |
| Driver uniformed and clean | 311 | 4.04 | .067 |
| Mature careful driver | 311 | 4.56 | .028 |
| Quality seat belts | 311 | 3.94 | .066 |
| Regular cleaning | 311 | 3.94 | .049 |
| Emergency/exit doors | 311 | 4.13 | .055 |

The findings of the moderating effect of the status of the sightseeing vehicle on customer satisfaction revealed moderate to high moderating effect by all the variables. Descriptive analysis of the variables as shown in Table 5 revealed that; Mature, careful driver (M=4.56), Emergency exits (M=4.13) and Uniformed and clean driver (M=4.04) had a high moderating effect while Quality seat belts (M=3.94), Regular cleaning (M= 3.94) and Working air conditioning (M=3.38) had a moderate effect. The standard deviation for working air conditioning was high (1.575) revealing inconclusive findings.

4.3 HYPOTHESES TESTING

Based on the objectives of the study, four hypotheses were formulated and analysed. linear regression analysis was used to determine the simple correlation (R value) and how much the total variation the dependent variable (customer satisfaction) can be explained by the independent variables (R^2 value). Regression analysis revealed a moderate to high degree of correlation between the all the independent variables and customer satisfaction. Tour guiding Competencies (R, =0.805 R^2 =76.4%) revealed the highest degree of correlation followed by Core service delivery (R, =0.696 R^2 =48.4%), Moderating effect of the status of the sightseeing vehicle (R, =0.644 R^2 =41.4%) and Tour guide's orientation (R, =0.616 R^2 =38.0%)

The ANOVA analysis was used to report how well the regression equation fits the data (i.e. predicts the dependent variable). This is determined by looking at the "regression" row, "sig" column. The analysis indicated that all the independent variables produced "sig" =0.001 which is less than 0.05. This implies that the regression model statistically significantly predicts the outcome variable (i.e.it is a good fit for the data).

To test the hypotheses, the coefficients tables were generated to provide necessary information to predict whether the independent variables statistically contribute to the model. The regression equations for each of the four independent variables were generated. The regression equations showed that the four independent variables had a statistically significant influence on customer satisfaction. Further, the variables having produced low P value

($0.003=P=0.000$) implies that these findings can be generalized to the population from which the sample was drawn. Therefore, all the null hypothesis were rejected and the alternative accepted.

4.4 SERVQUAL Gap Analysis

The SERVQUAL model was used to measure the difference between customer expectation and their perception of the tour guiding services received. The respondents were given 17 service quality statements under SERVQUAL variables of tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. They were asked to rate their expectations and perception of the quality of tour guiding services received based on a 7-point Likert scale. Gap analysis for each SERVQUAL variable was analysed by first computing the gap score for each statement and then computing a mean gap score for all the statements relating to the specific variable. This composite score under SERVQUAL was used to denote customer satisfaction.

Table 6: SERVQUAL Gap analysis

| Variable | Expectations (E) | Perceptions (P) | Gap Score (P-E) |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Average gap score for tangibility | 6.41 | 5.54 | -0.87 |
| Average gap score for reliability | 6.24 | 5.04 | -1.20 |
| Average gap score for responsiveness | 6.30 | 4.99 | -1.31 |
| Average gap score for assurance | 5.94 | 5.24 | -0.66 |

The results of the gap analysis in the table indicate that the tourists were not satisfied with the tour guiding services provided. Responsiveness accounted for the highest dissatisfaction with a gap score of -1.31 while assurance was the least dissatisfying variable at -0.66

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of this study and the testing of the four-research hypothesis that formed the framework of this study, four major conclusions can be made. First, the study set out to examine tour guiding competencies and their influence on customer satisfaction in Narok County. Although all variables were found to positively and significantly influence customer satisfaction, the results of this study further highlight the importance of punctuality, keen sense of direction and enthusiasm in enhancing the service quality of tour guiding and tourist satisfaction. This implies that tour guides in MMNR who are serving a predominantly Western clientele need to take punctuality seriously as it greatly affects the tourists' perception of the entire tour guiding experience and thus customer satisfaction.

Second was to assess the impact of core service delivery aspects on customer satisfaction in Narok county. Core service delivery aspects were found to have a significant influence on customer satisfaction. In addition, delivery of the service promised in the itinerary and Knowledge of the destination were the most important variables of core delivery aspects of tour guiding influencing customer satisfaction at MMNR. This enhances the position that the perceived quality of a guided tour depends largely on the tour guide's ability to deliver the service promised in the itinerary.

Third objective was to determine the extent that tour guides' customer orientation has on customer satisfaction in Narok County. The tour guide's orientation was found to significantly influence tourist satisfaction. Of the variables examined, results indicate that soliciting for tips by the tour guides has the most negative influence on customer satisfaction followed by pressure to buy extra excursions and changing the itinerary without consulting the guests which had only a mild significant influence while imposing of personal views on the guests had no significant influence.

As long as the tour guides are mostly motivated by self-economic interest and not genuine desire to provide high-quality customer service to tourists, the tourists will perceive the guiding service as of low quality therefore negatively affecting customer satisfaction. To give quality services, then the tour guides' issues around their remuneration, job satisfaction and employment conditions need to be addressed by the relevant authorities. That way, the tour guides can revert to their main roles of interpretation and information givers and not salesmen seeking to make the most economic benefit from their interactions with tourists.

Forth was to determine the moderating effect of the status of the sightseeing vehicle on customer satisfaction Reserve in Narok county. The moderating variable (status of sightseeing vehicle) was found to have statistically significantly accounted for a high proportion of the relationship between tour guiding service quality and customer satisfaction. The tour guides are commonly referred to as driver guides because of their dual roles as drivers of the tourist vehicles as well as information givers. The tourists therefore perceive the tour guiding service experience through the guide's ability as a driver, ability as a guide and also the condition of the vehicle they are using. If any of the elements is perceived as being of low quality, then the entire experience will lead to customer dissatisfaction.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations are made;

- i. TRA has done a lot in ensuring that tour guides have relevant training before licensing. However, some of the critical tour guiding competencies such as punctuality, keen sense of direction and enthusiasm has a lot to do with the organisational culture of the tour operator. As such, tour operators should think more about their culture, vision and mission as well as objectives and standard operating procedures. The tour operators should develop a standard operating procedure based on these relevant competencies. This will then be inculcated in their tour guides and ensure similar levels of service regardless of the tour guide.

- ii. Tour operators must ensure that their tour guides are issued with a copy of the itinerary sold to the guests in order to implement it as agreed between the tour company and the tourist. For newly employed tour guides, the tour operators have a responsibility of ensuring that before sending them out with tourists, the tour guides are familiar with the destination. Familiarization trips during the low tourism season should be a regular. For an industry where many of the tour operators use freelance tour guides whom they hire for short term during the high season, the responsibility is on Tour guide association to ensure that their members are up to date and ready to go out into the field.
- iii. It is important that tour companies develop a clear policy on tipping and the sale of extra excursions. Since tips, though not mandatory form a significant proportion of the income of tour guides globally, tour companies should develop a tipping guideline that is given to the tourists. This guideline will put the guide at ease knowing that if the service they render is good, then they will get their tip. Tour companies should also, inform the tourists beforehand of any extra excursions or activities such as Masai Village visit together with prices. This will not only help the tourists with planning but also protect them from financial exploitation by tour guides.
- iv. The employment contracts for tour guides should be addressed by government together with tour operators and tour guide associations. In order for the tour guide to be fully focussed on delivering quality services to the tourists, their economic wellbeing must be looked into. Daily guiding fees, salaries and the nature of contracts should be looked into to ensure remuneration that matches the responsibility given to them. If the terms are better, more professionals will be attracted to the field
- v. Tour operators should ensure that they have well maintained tourist vehicles. Having a checklist of items to use when assessing the quality of their or hired vehicles is important. A policy of selling off older vehicles and renewing their fleets every five or so years can help in this. Besides, tour companies should, possibly through their associations arrange for specialist training of tour guides in skills such as off-road driving, defensive driving and safe tourist transportation. Tourists will perceive such skills from the onset helping them to relax and settle down to enjoy their tour.

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