

**AN ANALYSIS OF HOTEL RATING AND ITS IMPLICATION ON FINANCIAL
TURNOVER OF RATED HOTELS IN KENYA**

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**A Thesis submitted to the Graduate School in partial fulfillment for the requirements of
the Master of Science Degree in Natural Resources Management of Egerton University**

EGERTON UNIVERSITY

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DECLARATION AND APPROVAL

Declaration by candidate

I declare that this thesis is my original work and has not, wholly or in part, been presented in any other institution of higher learning for the award of an academic certificate.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my family in particular my wife Stella Kibet and children; Yvonne, Jean, Billy and Ashley Kibet for their full support during my M.Sc. study.

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ABSTRACT

Hotel service quality has long been a concern for scholars and practitioners. Previous researches indicate that the service quality of hotels in Kenya is yet to match international standards. It has been argued that one reason why hotels do not deliver quality service is due to the substantial gap of the living standards of Kenyans and international tourists and the lack of proper investment in the sector due to fluctuations in growth in the past. With the recent growth in the economy, specifically the tourism sector, there has been renewed urgency by stakeholders to put local hospitality industry at par with other major tourism circuits or countries in the world. This may be attributed to the fact that tourism is identified as one of the key pillars for achieving Vision 2030. The main objective of this study was to examine the financial implications of rating of hotels. The study was conducted in tourism establishments in Nairobi and parts of Rift valley. The scope of the study focused on rated hotels in Kenya. The research design used a sociological survey targeting 50 hotel establishments. The researcher relied on primary and secondary data for information from which an analysis was conducted and conclusions generated. The primary data was collected through face-to-face interviews among tourists and hotel managers using a structured questionnaire. The quantitative data from the questionnaires was analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and Ms Excel, after which it was presented using graphs and pie charts to illustrate the findings for better understanding. The next step was interpretation which entailed generating recommendations and conclusions based on the results or findings on how the hotel rating impacted performance of hotel establishments. Findings from the study pointed out a strong relationship between hotel rating and hotel revenues. This was evidence that for hotels to increase earnings they also needed to improve their ratings. Further to this, rating of establishments eased the decision making of tourists since they would easily differentiate service level of hotels. Overall, it was evident that hotel rating was vital in the hotel business as it aided establishments effectively compete in the market place. Findings from the study will therefore offer an unobtrusive and economic way of examining hotel service quality. In addition, it will also help in understanding the quality service of the star rated hotels perceived by the domestic tourists and financial implication to hotel establishments.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Automobile Association
AAA	American Automobile Association
ATTA	Association of Thai Travel Agents
ETB	English Tourist Board
EAC	East African Community
DEHOGA	German hotel & Restaurant Association
HRA	Hotels and Restaurants Authority
IH&RA	International Hotel and Restaurant Association
LODGSERV	Lodge service
LQI	Lodging Quality Index
MEACT	Ministry of East African Affairs, Commerce and Tourism
NHEC	National Hotel Evaluation Committee
NTO	National Tourism Organization
OHRG	Official Hotel and Resort Guide
RAC	Royal Automobile Club
SERVEQUAL	Service quality
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
THA	Thai Hotel Association
TAT	Tourism Authority of Thailand
WTO	World Tourism Organization

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research background

Kenya's biological resources are diverse, with an estimated 35,000 known species of animals, plants and micro-organisms. As the country gears itself towards industrial development, the importance of its biological resources cannot be overemphasized. Whether in the provision of food, industrial inputs, wood, construction materials, medicines, ecosystem functions, or aesthetics, the conservation and sustainable utilization of biodiversity is a key factor in the country's stated goal of industrializing early in this century. These resources form the basic source of livelihood for the country's population especially in view of the fact that about 80% of the country's population directly or indirectly relies on biodiversity for survival. Further, in developing industrial sectors in the country, ranging from agro-based industries to service industries such as tourism, relies on the same resources (Akama, 2002).

The management of Kenya's biodiversity resources is characterized by some weaknesses. More often than not, people are unable to make informed decisions regarding biodiversity management as they lack adequate information on the non-consumptive values of the resources. While direct use values are well understood, the same may not apply for indirect use values (ecosystem functions, maintaining water cycles, production and protection of soil, storage and cycling of essential nutrients, absorption and breakdown of pollutants). Infrastructure is inadequate to enhance better utilization and management of biodiversity. As a result, the tourism sector has declined marginally over the last ten years, although it still remains a key foreign exchange earner. The overall development of local and international markets for biodiversity products has also not been satisfactory. The opportunity the country has for improving the people's living conditions using biodiversity resources are many and includes: tourism, promotion and use of high nutrition indigenous foods, application of biotechnology, and the development of medicinal products for health and commercial purposes.

According to Valle and Yobesia (2009), tourism is one of the key drivers of Kenya's socioeconomic development. At independence in 1963, Kenya depended mainly on its exports of agricultural products such as coffee and tea for foreign exchange. However, with the decline in world market prices of these primary products, the country has turned to

tourism as an alternative. In spite of the growing importance of tourism as a key industry, little information is available on the holistic economic impacts and the pathways through which these impacts are affected in the Kenyan economy.

The Ministry of East African Affairs, Commerce and Tourism (MEACT) through the Department of Tourism is charged with making Kenya a destination of choice and to facilitate sustainable tourism development as part of our national heritage and for posterity. The core functions of the Department of Tourism include: planning and policy-making, overall coordination, resource mobilization and facilitation, tourism promotion and marketing, product development and diversification, capacity development, research and development and tourism relations (GoK, 2005). In addition, the ministry regulates hotels and restaurants, maintains standards in all tourist facilities and also does classification of hotels and restaurants. Classification is done by Hotels and Restaurants Authority (HRA) which is a semi-autonomous body under the department of tourism.

According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO) and the International Hotel and Restaurant Association (IH&RA), hotel rating is the classification of accommodation establishments denoting a system, duly published, in which accommodation establishments of the same type (such as hotels, motels, and inns) have been conventionally broken down into classes, categories, or grades according to their common physical and service characteristics and established at government, industry or other private levels (WTO & IH&RA, 2004). The European Standardization Committee (CEN, the Comité Européen de Normalisation) clarifies the term “accommodation rating or classification scheme” as “a system providing an assessment of the quality standards and provision of facility and/or service of tourist accommodation, typically within five categories, often indicated by one to five symbols” (WTO & IH&RA, 2004).

Initially, the distinction between hotel availability and quality is often blurred (Callan, 1989). Early hotels and inns were little more than an available bed and something barely palatable to eat. The emergence of tourism in the latter half of the 19th century brought with it an improvement of the standards of the early inns (Callan, 1989). Some pressure was placed on these facilities to offer some minimum standards where the consumer was able to identify a property with specific amenities. The rating system emerged out of efforts by the Automobile

and cycling clubs in Europe, who in their tour books displayed hotels, which they recommended to their membership, based on the guaranteed facilities which these hotels/inns offered. This led to the establishment of rating systems such as the Automobile Association (AA) and its American counterpart the (American Automobile Association – AAA) and the Michellin tyre company's – Michellin Red Guide and other mobile guides (Vines, 1981).

After World War II, National Tourist Boards began to consider some form of hotel classification system. By 1970 only five European countries had national classification systems, by 1980 this number increased to 22 European countries and 60 countries worldwide. The criteria applied by the classification systems were, and still are not uniform. There were various meanings attached to registration, classification and grading. While it's seen as a norm in other countries, most African countries, Kenya included, do not have a methodical classification system. Furthermore, there is little or no evidence from literature in Kenya on the link between hotel rating and financial turnover.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Scholars and business writers have for long recognized the need of the importance of hotel rating in influencing performance and earnings of hotels. All over the world hotel rating is used for maintaining standards in the hospitality industry. Kenya has over 3000 registered hotels but very few have been classified. There has been slow implementation by HRA and the last classification was done in 2009. There is little or no empirical evidence showing the link between hotel rating and financial turnover in Kenya. This study therefore seeks to show how with rating, hotels have the potential to earn more revenue and attract more tourists.

1.3 Study Objectives

1.3.1 Broad Objective

The broad objective of this study was to examine the financial implications of rating of hotels in Kenya.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this study were:-

1. To examine the relationship between hotel revenue and hotel rating.

2. To examine the relationship between hotel service quality and hotel rating status
3. To compare hotel charges and different hotel rating status.

1.4 Hypotheses of the Study

1. There is significant increase in the hotel revenues with higher hotel rating.
2. There is significant increase in the levels of quality of service with higher hotel rating.
3. There is significant increase in the amount of hotel charges with higher level of hotel ratings.

1.5 Justification of the Study

The study is important and valuable to the following persons and institutions. Persons in academia such as college students and lecturers will find the results of this study useful as learning materials and for research reference. Entrepreneurs or the investors in the hotel industry will find the results of this study useful, as it will highlight financial implication of rating hotels. The government as the central governing body in the country will use the results of this study to develop policies, programs and legal framework that aid investors in the hotel sector. These include enterprises or ventures interested in having a stake in the tourism industry. They will use results of this study to make informed decisions when in preparation for hotel rating. Marketing intermediaries such as advertising and research agencies will find the results of this study useful as they carry out their activities based on a wider knowledge platform.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study was carried out in Nairobi and South Rift tourism circuit specifically targeting the rated hotels in this region. In Nairobi, the study targeted rated hotels within the central business district and its outskirts and in the South Rift tourism circuit the study targeted rated hotels in Nakuru, Naivasha and Masai Mara. These hotels mainly target local and foreign tourists and have a variety of amenities and facilities targeting different clientele.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

The study was limited by a number of factors which included skewed distribution of rated hotels in specific tourism circuits, lack of manpower and resources need to undertake the study, unwillingness by managers to provide all their financial data and the limited time

available. The researcher attempted to address these issues through use of hotel charges to approximate revenue, through research assistants in data collection who helped address the problem of skewed distribution of rated hotels and through mobilizing of other resources to enhance data collection and also through minimizing of operational costs.

1.8 Definition of Terms

Classification: Refers to separation of different types and ranges of accommodation into several categories based on a range of criteria. Hotel accommodations can allow for five to seven categories to be applied. Other forms of accommodation such as motels, guest-houses and self catering apartments seldom justify more than two or three classes.

Hotel: Refers to an establishment that provides paid lodging on a short-term basis. This consists of rooms with modern facilities, including en-suite bathrooms and air conditioning or climate control, telephone, an alarm clock, television, and Internet connectivity; snack foods and drinks are also supplied in a mini-bar. They also have additional guest facilities such as a restaurant, a swimming pool or childcare, and have conference and social function services.

Marketing: Refers to the process by which companies determine what products or services may be of interest to customers, and the strategy to use in sales, communications and business development. It is an integrated process through which companies create value for customers and build strong customer relationships in order to capture value from customers in return.

Tourism: Refers to travel for recreational, leisure or business purposes

Tourists: Refer to people who travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for more than twenty-four (24) hours and not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited.

Tour Operators: Mean a business entity that combines tour and travel components to create a holiday experience for customers (tourists).

Travel Agencies: Refer to retail business, that sells travel related products and customers

(tourists), on behalf of suppliers, such as airlines, car rentals, cruise lines, hotels, railways, sightseeing tours and package holidays that combine several products.

Registration: Refers to a form of licensing which may or may not demand a minimum standard. This signifies some conformation with health fire safety legislation and it also implied a minimum criteria.

Rating/Grading: This is combined with classification, and is seen as quality assessment awarding a symbol to denote an above average service to an accommodation facility.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Hotel Rating Systems

Hotel rating systems offer benefits to various sectors such as travel agencies, tour operators, hotels, governments, and consumers (WTO & IH&RA, 2004). The systems facilitate travel agents' selection of hotels for their customers. Major tour operators based in Britain and the United States of America, such as First Choice, Thomson Holidays, Air Tours and Thomas Cook, have their own hotel classification systems to assist product packaging and marketing. Hotel companies use classification schemes as "branding" (WTO & IH&RA, 2004), which conveys both qualitative and quantitative grading of properties to their customers. The rating system provides consumers with an easy way to compare hotels. Governments use hotel ratings or classification systems to regulate the hotel industry with tariffs and taxes, and to meet basic requirements of safety and hygiene. Callan (1995) found out that, when choosing hotels, customers staying at three to five star (or other equivalent symbols) hotels use rating systems more often than do those staying at one and two star hotels.

A hotel rating system embraces two parts: A basic registration standard and a grading standard (Callan, 1993). The basic registration standard is the physical requirement (amenities and facilities) that a hotel property must meet; it is the minimum quality requirement. The grading standard is an extension of basic requirements of qualitative and intangible services (room service, concierge, security, among others), allowing a hotel to be compared with other properties. To communicate the quality level a hotel achieves, a variety of grading symbols is used, such as stars, crowns, diamonds, suns, or letters. The symbol most universally recognized is stars, as most countries have at least one rating system using stars to represent quality grades (Callan, 1993; WTO & IH&RA, 2004).

The 100-plus hotel rating systems worldwide can be categorized into two groups: official and non-official (Qing & Liu, 1993). Official hotel rating systems are established and conducted by government agencies and followed on a compulsory and regulatory basis. Official systems apply to all hotels, while non-official hotel rating systems are developed and implemented by private organizations, such as hotel or tourism associations and national or regional automobile association's on a voluntary participation basis by hotels. The purpose of official

systems is mainly to control lodging tariff and taxes, whereas non-official systems impose no social obligations (WTO & IH&RA, 2004).

Callan (1994) specified that some hotels tend to oppose the compulsory grading scheme due to concerns over bureaucratic interference, with customers expecting guaranteed service quality out of these official systems. China is one of the countries with an official hotel rating system, while some countries like the U.S. and Britain have only non-official rating systems. In the United States of America, for example the three most popular hotel rating systems are AAA (diamond rating), Mobil (star rating), and Utell's (Official Hotel Guide-OHG). On the other hand, in Britain there are a number of hotel classification schemes offered by private organizations and regional tourist boards. For example, the English Tourist Board (ETB) awards crowns to hotels in England, whereas the AA and the Royal Automobile Club (RAC) rate tourist accommodations by star systems with different criteria and judgments (Conway, 2004).

In 2004, the WTO and the IH&RA carried out an international study to survey hotel classification schemes in both public sectors, such as the National Tourism Organizations (NTOs), and private sectors, such as the National Hotel Association. The study revealed the complexity of hotel rating systems by reviewing their evaluation criteria and administration in different countries. To reduce the complexity of numerous hotel rating systems in existence, the WTO and the IH&RA have been developing a universal hotel grading scheme that can be used in countries throughout the world to benefit both customers and tourism service providers. A joint promotional campaign among AA, RAC, and ETB was also undertaken to develop a harmonized hotel classification scheme (Conway, 2004).

2.2 Service Quality

Although technology makes products similar, it is service quality that differentiates them in a very competitive market place (Denburg & Kleiner, 1993). The importance of service quality is well recognized in the hospitality industry, since hotels cannot survive intense competition without satisfying their customers with quality service. Garvin (1988) defined perceived quality as the subjective perception of quality through indirect measures of quality comparison. Gronroos (1993) stated that service quality was developed based on the confirmation/disconfirmation concept in the perceived service quality model introduced in

1982. The notion of the model explains that perceived service quality is the result of comparing a consumer's real experience with his/her expectation of the service.

To achieve high service quality, an establishment needs to understand its customers' expectations. Service improvement programs can be developed, which include issues of customer segmentation, service culture, communication to customers, recruitment and training of service personnel, empowerment of employees, and appraisal systems. The essentials of service quality are rationalized as enhancement in customer loyalty, increase in market share, higher returns to investors, reduction in costs, lowering vulnerability to price competition, and establishment of a competitive edge (Haksever *et al.*, 2000; Knutson, 1988 and Wuest, 2001).

Based on the theory of perceived service quality, Parasuraman *et al.* (1985) proposed their "conceptual gap" model of service quality and explained that perception of service quality is a comparison of consumers' expectations with actual service performance and quality evaluation involves evaluation of both process and outcome of service delivery. In their succeeding studies, SERVQUAL, a scale for measuring consumer perceptions of service quality, was proposed. The 7-point Likert scale, which is regarded as a generic service quality measurement tool for service industries (Lovelock, 2001), measures customer expectations and perceptions with 22 items in five dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988). Reliability is defined as the ability to provide the promised service dependably and accurately. Responsiveness is defined as willingness to help customers and provision of prompt service. Assurance is seen as the knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence. Empathy is defined as caring and individualized attention to customers. Tangibles are physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of personnel. In the context of hospitality management, the measurement of service quality was derived from the concept and studies of service quality in general business.

A number of studies applied or modified the SERVQUAL instrument to measure service quality in the hospitality industry. LODGSERV (Lodge Service), a modified instrument of SERVQUAL, was developed to measure hotel guests' expectations and experience of service quality (Knutson *et al.*, 1991). HOLSERV - a grading scale created for measurement and

assessment of the hotels service an extension of the SERVQUAL scale, was introduced to the hospitality industry in 1999 (Mei *et al.*, 1999). Ekinçi and Riley (1999) proposed the application of the Q-sort technique in the context of hotel service quality evaluation to validate the dimensions of the established models of service quality. Using the same approach of SERVQUAL, the Lodging Quality Index (LQI) was developed to measure customers' perception of service performance (Getty & Getty, 2003).

2.3 Hotel Rating System and Hotel Performance

Competitive marketing demands local and international hotels to seek standards and tools to reflect their service quality. One of the answers to this need is a reliable hotel rating system, which ranks, certifies, and reflects the quality of hotels' facilities and service. Hotel rating systems are vital to hotel marketing. A survey conducted by Callan (1989) found out that hotel operators valued the classification awards and grading as promotional assets, and that the classification schemes provided significant amount of business to the hotels.

2.4 Types of Hotel Rating Systems

According to Collins Concise Dictionary (1998, 1109), rating is defined as "a classification according to order or grade and as ranking". Consequently, hotel rating can be described as a classification of hotels according to grade and rank. Often, there is confusion regarding the terminology used in hotel rating. Callan (1989) attempted to identify the differences between classification and grading. Classification involved assessing the tangible elements of the service mix and qualitative grading was concerned with the intangible elements.

Globally there are many diverse hotel ratings systems as are the regional tourism blocks in existence (Moyer, 1989). The more common classification systems include 'star' rating, letter grading, from 'A' to 'F', diamond or simply a 'satisfactory' or 'unsatisfactory' footnote to accommodation such as hostels and motels. Systems using terms such as Deluxe/ Luxury, First Class/ Superior, Tourist Class/ Standard, and Budget Class/ Economy are more widely accepted as hotel types, rather than hotel standards. The star classification system is a common one for rating hotels. Higher star ratings indicate more luxury. Food services, entertainment, view, room variations such as size and additional amenities, spas and fitness centers, ease of access and location may be considered in establishing a standard.

2.4.1 North America; AAA Rating System

The AAA Diamond Rating Process is North America's premier hotel rating program. Whether you seek simple roadside accommodations or a destination resort experience, trust AAA's reliable Diamond ratings to guide your decisions. Approximately 32,000 hotels throughout the United States, Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean are AAA approved and Diamond rated. Several factors make the AAA's two-part rating system so reliable. These include full-time, professional evaluator, member feedback, clear quality standard, and thousands of up-to-date choices. And, unlike systems that rate properties from poor to excellent, AAA rates only those properties approved for quality.

2.4.2 Britain; AA Rating system

One of the globally acclaimed rating systems, the AA rating system which is a British System focuses on a consumer's perspective on accommodation properties. The objective was to introduce a classification system easily understood by the consumer. This system is part of the description of properties seen in travel books and reviews; the American version is the AAA system, (Caribbean Tourism Organization, 2002). The minimum requirements for these ratings are as indicated below:

(i) AA Star Rating

One Star Hotels

Hotels in this classification are likely to be small and independently owned, with a family atmosphere. Services may be provided by the owner and family on an informal basis. There may be a limited range of facilities and meals may be fairly simple. Lunch, for example, may not be served. Some bedrooms may not have en suite bath/shower rooms. Maintenance, cleanliness and comfort should, however, always be of an acceptable standard.

Two Star Hotels

In this classification hotels will typically be small to medium sized and offer more extensive facilities than at the one star level. Some business hotels come into the two star classification and guests can expect comfortable, well equipped, overnight accommodation, usually with an en-suite bath/shower room. Reception and other staff will aim for a more professional presentation than at the one star level, and offer a wider range of straightforward services,

including food and drink.

Three Star Hotels

At this level, hotels are usually of a size to support higher staffing levels, and a significantly greater quality and range of facilities than at the lower star classifications. Reception and the other public rooms will be more spacious and the restaurant will normally also cater for non-residents. All bedrooms will have fully en suite bath and shower rooms and offer a good standard of comfort and equipment, such as a hair dryer, direct dial telephone, toiletries in the bathroom. Some room service can be expected, and some provision for business travelers.

Four Star Hotels

Expectations at this level include a degree of luxury as well as quality in the furnishings, decor and equipment, in every area of the hotel. Bedrooms will also usually offer more space than at the lower star levels, and well designed, coordinated furnishings and decor. The en-suite bathrooms will have both bath and fixed shower. There will be a high enough ratio of staff to guests to provide services like portage, 24-hour room service, laundry and dry-cleaning. The restaurant will demonstrate a serious approach to its cuisine.

Five Star Hotels

In this classification, one finds spacious and luxurious accommodation throughout the hotel, matching the best international standards. Interior design should impress with its quality and attention to detail, comfort and elegance. Furnishings should be immaculate. Services should be formal, well supervised and flawless in attention to guests' needs, without being intrusive. The restaurant will demonstrate a high level of technical skill, producing dishes to the highest international standards. Staff will be knowledgeable, helpful, well versed in all aspects of customer care, combining efficiency with courtesy.

Red Star Awards

AA star classifications are usually depicted in black on signs and in the AA's guides and electronic products. However, at each of the five classification levels, the AA recognizes exceptional quality of accommodation and hospitality by awarding Red Stars for excellence. A hotel with Red Stars, therefore, has been judged to be the best in its star classification and recognizes that the hotel offers outstanding levels of comfort, hospitality and customer care

and rated as: country house hotels, town house accommodation, travel accommodation (lodges) guesthouse/private hotels or farmhouse.

(ii) AA Rosette Awards

The AA makes annual rosette awards on a rising scale of one to five for the quality of food served in restaurants and hotel restaurants. Only those offering the highest international standards of cuisine and service will merit the AA's top awards of four or five rosettes.

Outstanding Quality (5 and 4 Rosettes)

Five rosettes is the supreme accolade, made to chefs at the very top of their profession. This award recognizes superlative standards of cuisine at an international level, evident at every visit in every element of the meal. Creativity, skill and attention to detail will produce dishes cooked to perfection, with intense, exciting flavours in harmonious combinations and faultless presentation. Menus may be innovative or classical, and may use luxury ingredients like lobster, truffles, foie gras, and others. Often in unexpected combinations and with secret ingredients that add an extra dimension of taste and interest. At this level, cuisine should be innovative, daring, highly accomplished and achieve a noteworthy standard of consistency, accuracy and flair throughout all the elements of the meal. Excitement, vibrancy and superb technical skill will be the keynotes.

High Quality (3 Rosettes)

Only cooking of the highest national standard receives three or more rosettes. Menus will be imaginative; dishes should be accurately cooked, demonstrate well developed technical skills and a high degree of flair in their composition. Ingredients will be first-class, usually from a range of specialist suppliers, including local produce only if its quality is excellent. Most items - breads, pastries, pasta, petits fours - will be made in the kitchens, but if any are bought in, for example, breads, the quality will be excellent (Callan, 1989).

Good Quality (2 and 1 Rosettes)

Two rosettes denote cooking that displays a high degree of competence on the part of the chef. The menus should include some imaginative dishes, making use of very good raw ingredients, as well as some tried and tested favourites. Flavours should be well balanced and complement or contrast with one another, not over-dominate. One rosette denotes simple,

carefully prepared food, based on good quality, fresh ingredients, cooked in such a way as to emphasize honest flavours. Sauces and desserts will be home-made and the cooking will equate to first-class home cooking (Callan, 1989).

2.4.3 Official Hotel and Resort Guide (OHRG)

This rating combines two elements: Quality of guest accommodations- room size, quality of furnishings; and the extent of hotel facilities- Number and size of public rooms and meeting facilities. This methodology has established ten quality levels which can be divided as follows; superior deluxe, deluxe, moderate deluxe, superior first class, first class, limited-service first class, moderate first class, superior tourist class: tourist class, moderate tourist class.

2.4.4 National/Regional Rating Systems

The advantage of adopting international classifications system is that the travel trade and international consumers can easily recognize the codes and or ranking systems developed. Consumers expect certain accommodation standards regardless of the locations of the property. National Systems are designed to be simple, assist government planning by supplying statistics on occupancy of varying classes of accommodation and identifies the need to develop more of a particular category of establishment and aid in the marketing strategy as it provides a profile of the tourist targeted by a particular establishment (small hotels versus resorts) by assisting hotels to target their promotions to selected groups, encouraging hoteliers to improve standards and range of facilities by pinpointing weaknesses in their operating systems and services and eliminating bad properties which impacts negatively on the reputation of the destination and of the better hotels.

The tool has set standardization guidelines for town hotels, vacation hotels, lodges and tented camps, motels, restaurants, villas, cottages, serviced apartments. Some of the guidelines on the checklist:- Occupational permit, valid operating license, drainage, room designation, safe deposit, hand wash basin, wash rooms, waste/refusal disposal, sewage disposal and treatment, vermin proofing, water supply, communication systems, security systems, fire security, electrical safety, first aid, qualification/ experience of management staff, qualification/ experience of departmental heads, health/medical examination and establishment insurance.

2.4.5 European Ratings Standards

Some countries have rating by a single public standard - Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Italy, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Hungary have laws defining the hotel rating (O'Neill, 2001). In Germany, Austria and Switzerland the rating is defined by the respective hotel industry association using a five-star system - the German classifications are Tourist (*), Standard (**), Comfort (***), First Class (****) and Luxury (*****) with the mark Superior to flag extras beyond the minimum defined in the standard. The Swiss hotel rating was the first non-government formal hotel classification beginning in 1997 (Olorunniwo, 2003). It did influence the hotel classification in Austria and Germany. The formal hotel classification of the DEHOGA (German Hotel and Restaurant Association) started on 1st August 1996 and proved very successful (with 80% of guests citing the hotel stars as the main criteria in hotel selection) which led to the creation of a common European Hotel stars rating system that started in 2010 (Medlik, 2000). Vallen and Vallen(2005) noted an approximately 20% increase in sales among top-rated hotels in the Mobile Guide and a 40% increase in business among small hotels rated in AAA. Therefore, hotel ratings functioning as a promotional tool might be associated with growth in hotel business measured by volume of sales and occupancy rate.

2.4.6 System of Hotel Ratings in Asia

According to Yu's study (1992), China's rating criteria included six categories: 1) architecture and level of service, 2) facilities, 3) maintenance, 4) sanitation and hygiene, 5) service quality, and 6) guest satisfaction. The first five criteria were evaluated by the inspectors of the National Hotel Evaluation Committee (NHEC), whereas the guest satisfaction scores were obtained from conducting a guest survey by NHEC at all participating hotels. There were three stages in China's star rating procedure. First, as an entry requirement, the managers or owners of hotels had to evaluate and decide the category of their hotels. Next, the NHEC evaluated each hotel for the entry requirements. If the minimum requirements were met, then hotels could apply for that star rating. In the subsequent process, the NHEC inspected and evaluated the hotels in line with the six criteria mentioned previously. Finally, when the scores derived from these six criteria were summed up, the NHEC awarded the qualifying hotels one of the five star categories. Additionally, Yu pointed out the criteria for rating guest satisfaction was unclear as the NHEC did not provide a specific scoring system required for each star-rating category. Quin and Liu (1993)

indicated other limitations that China's hotel rating system had inconsistent scoring requirements, unspecified service requirements, and a lack of incentives to maintain continuous standards.

Prior to the development of a national hotel quality rating program, Thailand was one of a few major travel destination countries without a standard hotel rating system (Intarakomalyasut, 2001). The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), the Thai Hotel Association (THA), and the Association of Thai Travel Agents (ATTA) collaborated under the project of "World Class Standard" to establish a quality standard for the hotel industry, which served as a pilot project to standardize the Thai tourism industry (THA, TAT & ATTA.) in 2003. The program, which was entitled "Thailand Hotels Standard", uses stars as symbols to certify the quality of hotel properties.

The development of a reliable hotel standard was expected to improve both the efficiency and the effectiveness of hotel operation and management and to grant equal recognition to both Thai-owned and managed hotels as well as international chain hotels. The TAT stated the Thailand Hotels Standard allowed tour operators and customers to recognize hotels with non-renown brand names and trust the ratings, which assisted them in identifying what levels of standard they should expect from the hotel (TAT).

2.4.7 Classification Systems in Africa

The rise in hotel classification systems in Africa aims to bring some order, consistency and, perhaps most importantly, transparency to the marketplace. While some countries such as South Africa are busy tightening star rating criteria, others such as Zimbabwe and Ethiopia are beginning to consider introducing schemes. And others still, such as Nigeria, are still a long way off. Government and tourism players in these countries generally believe a rating system provides a vital industry framework and yardstick for consumers. As global hotel chains rush in to tap sub-Saharan Africa's unprecedented economic growth, harmonized national ratings are sorely absent. Most African countries do not have a methodical classification system(Akama, 2000).

2.4.8 East Africa Classification System

In 2000 the Committee on the development of Tourism and Wildlife within East African Community constituted the East African Panel of Experts which would help the sectoral committee in the establishment of a common code of conduct for private tour and travel operators, standardize hotel classification and harmonize the professional standards of agents in the tourism and travel industry within the community (EAC, 2009). The EAC Standards criteria would act as a tool that would facilitate the offering of products and services that would consistently meet the expectations of tourists patronizing the region (EAC, 2009).

Hotels around the world are classified based on different system of classifications. The star classifications system of hotels is common in many countries. The higher the star rating of the hotel indicates the higher luxury. Hotels in Kenya are classified in star-rating system that includes 5-star the higher luxury, 4-star hotels, 3-star hotels, 2-star hotels and 1-star hotels (Johanna, 2010). The Kenyan classification criteria consider the following essential items before classifying tourist facilities: occupational permit, valid operating license, drainage systems, room designations, fire safety, water supply, parking space, communication systems, electrical safety, first Aid.

2.4.9 Impact of Rating on Establishment Performance

Vallen and Vallen (2005) noted an approximately 20% increase in sales among top-rated hotels in the Mobile Guide and a 40% increase in business among small hotels rated in AAA after hotels were awarded with classifications. Therefore, hotel ratings functioning as a promotional tool might be associated with growth in hotel business measured by volume of sales and occupancy rate. Hotels also perceive ratings as a pricing tool. Israeli and Uriely (2000) examined the impact of star ratings and corporate affiliations on hotel room prices in Israel. It was found that price variations could be partially explained by star ratings and the star rating system was a significant predictor of hotels' decision in setting prices.

Lollar's (1990) exploratory study further supported this conclusion. It was found that a hotel charged more once a higher level of classification was awarded and in some countries four or five star hotels could charge any price at their will. This research proposes that changes in hotel performance are associated with service quality improvement as a result of participating in the hotel rating system. Fernandez and Bedia (2004) examined whether a hotel rating

system was a good indicator of its service quality and found that, based on values of expectations and perceptions and their differences, the ranking of the hotel groups did not correspond exactly to the ranking of stars. They also found that customers from highly rated hotels had negative differences between perceptions and expectations indicating a demanding clientele.

An exploration by Narangajavana *et al.* (2008) concluded that the underlying constructs of hotel service quality improvement had four dimensions: service delivery, hotel employees, facilities and surroundings, and prestige. A study on hotel industry survey in Thailand revealed that there was a significant relationship between improvement in service quality and changes in hotel performance. In the first relationship, hotels' performance change in sales corresponded with improvement in service delivery, facility and surroundings, and prestige. Average daily rate and occupancies, the two parameters in room revenue measurements, were not significant. This relationship examined the association between changes in non-room revenue and service quality improvement. They study concluded from the study that hoteliers could increase non-room related revenue through improving service delivery with better service production and error-free delivery, upgrading guest facilities and surroundings, and enhancing hotels' prestige.

In addition Narangajavana *et al.* (2008) noted that changes in sales, average daily rates, and occupancy were strongly related to improvement in employees' service competencies and hotels' facilities and their surroundings. This relationship examined changes in hotel performance with an emphasis on room revenue. It was concluded that hotel managers who intend to achieve higher room revenue needed to focus on improvement in their properties' tangible assets (facilities) and surroundings and intangible assets (employees' service competencies). Maintaining and upgrading guest facilities and surroundings was also important for generating both room and non-room related revenue. As employees were found strongly associated with room sales, hotel managers should recognize the importance of recruiting and retaining qualified employees and offering competency and skill training programs. Overall the hotel rating system is one of many instruments that the hotel industry use as a guideline to reach an expected level of service quality and to convey this message to the public.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework to examine the relationship among hotel rating systems, service quality, and hotel performance is shown in figure 2.1 below.

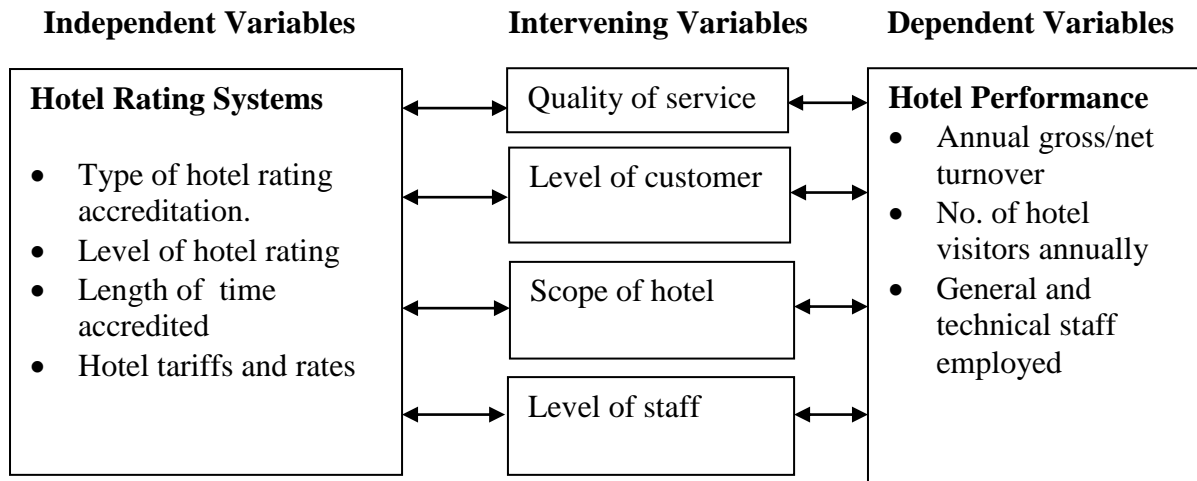


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework

Hotel rating systems are related to service quality improvement, while service quality improvement is associated with changes in hotel performance. It is suggested that hotel rating systems encourage hotel operators to improve their service quality, which in essence may lead to changes in hotel performance and overall financial turnover. The quality of service in the hotel industry is an important factor of successful hospitality business. The existing trend of complete quality management in hotel industry ensures the hotel is given a certain rating which provides competitive advantage to hotel companies. Improvement of service quality leads to improvement in ratings and performance of hotels. This in essence implies that hotel performance and rating are dependent on service quality.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Area

This study was carried out in Nairobi and South Rift Valley tourism circuits specifically targeting the rated hotels. These hotels mainly target local and foreign tourists and have a variety of amenities and facilities targeting different clientele. The two areas were chosen because of high concentration of rated hotels which in essence meant the cost of data collection was significantly reduced. Further, the regions were chosen due to the dynamic nature of the tourism industry which has changed from the traditional approach to a more diverse nature which includes ecotourism and conference tourism. (See appendix III for map of study Area)

3.2 Research Design

The study design was that of a social survey design with a structured questionnaire as the main tool of data collection. The study's sampling frame was of rated hotels in the Nairobi Circuit and the Southern Rift Valley Tourism Circuit of Kenya. This was premised on the fact that they had high concentration of rated hotels across the different classification categories

3.3 Sampling Procedure

The study's sampling was focused on the two major tourism circuits in Kenya namely the Nairobi Tourism Circuit and the Southern Rift Valley Tourism Circuit. This was premised on the fact that they had high concentration of rated or classified hotels across the different categories. For each circuit sub-sampling approaches were employed so as to spread out the questionnaire tool equitably across the rated hotel establishments from the lowest to the highest classification levels. This entailed the use of purposive random sampling in defining the sampling frame. The selection of sampling units in the different categories of hotel ratings was by application of stratified sampling procedures.

3.4 Sample Size

A total of 50 hotels were sampled for each of the 2 respective tour circuits under consideration in this study. A total of 100 structured questionnaires were issued proportionally across the different hotel classes. Two sets of respondents were issued with the

questionnaires namely the hotel tourists or visitors and the hotel management staff.

3.5 Data Collection

Pretesting during data collection was done in selected hotels. Pretesting ensured that questions which were vague were revealed, comments and suggestions made by respondents were considered and incorporated in the questionnaires and deficiencies were revealed. Pretesting also helped the researcher to estimate the time needed to complete the questionnaires. The method by which data was collected was by administering questionnaires and oral interviews to customers of tourist hotels, enabling the study to gather exact information needed from them in order to meet the specific objectives of study. Questionnaires were administered to managers of rated establishments. The questionnaires were structured and unstructured. Secondary data was also collected to act as an auxiliary source of information for reinforcing the findings of this study. This was based on a review of related works that proved invaluable in influencing the direction of this proposed study.

3.6 Data Collection Instruments

The method by which data was collected was by administering questionnaires and oral interviews to customers of tourist hotels, enabling the study to gather exact information needed from them in order to meet the specific objectives of study. Questionnaires were administered to managers of rated establishments. The questionnaires were structured and unstructured. Secondary data was also collected to act as an auxiliary source of information for reinforcing the findings of this study. This was based on a review of related works that proved invaluable in influencing the direction of the study.

3.7 Data Analysis

Pretesting during data collection was done in selected hotels which were not included in the final data collection. Pretesting ensured that questions which were vague were revealed, comments and suggestions made by respondents were considered and incorporated in the questionnaires and deficiencies were revealed. The main objective of pretesting was to ensure validity and reliability of the instruments used. Pretesting also helped the researcher to estimate the time needed to complete the questionnaires. The responses were drawn from the questionnaires targeting tourist hotels clients, collated, analyzed and interpreted. Data collected was analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. Qualitative data was analyzed by

inferring deductions from respondent's statements. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and the data output presented in the form of pie charts, frequency and bar graphs. Specific analysis procedure entailed using MS Excel and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Central tendency (Mean, standard deviation), cross tabulation and correlation analysis were applied. This was aimed at testing the relationship between revenues and hotel rating status. These analysis techniques identified the significance of the relations, associations, and interactions with regard to the impact of hotel ratings on quality service delivery and the amount of revenues and profit generated thereof. Thereafter, data was presented using varied techniques such as charts, frequency tables, graphs, ratios, ranges, fractions, percentages, averages and textual form for clarity.

Table 3.1: Summary of the Data Analysis

Specific Objective	Statistical Methods	Output
1. To examine the relationship between revenue(gross/net) and hotel rating.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descriptive statistics: percent distribution of revenue turnover with time and level of hotel rating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bar graphs, pie charts • Measures of central tendency
2. To examine the relationship between service quality and hotel rating levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descriptive statistics: percent distribution indicative of service delivery and customer and staff satisfaction levels between the different level of hotel ratings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequency distribution tables • Graphs
3. To compare hotel charges and different hotel rating.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descriptive statistics: percent distribution net turnover across the different ratings of hotel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequency distribution tables • Graphs

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter attempts to present findings obtained from the research. It starts with the presentation of the results obtained from the questionnaires, and continues with the interpretation of findings identifying links with the theories exposed in the preceding chapters. The study finally reports on the findings based on the objectives and gives deductions on these objectives.

4.1 Demographic Information

The section gives demographic background of the respondents including the number of years in which the hotels have been operational. This study targeted both foreign and domestic tourists.

Table 4.1: Number of years in operation

Number of years in operation	Percentage
< 5	18
5 – 10	22
10 – 15	4
15 – 20	12
> 20	44
Total	100

The study ensured establishments that were selected in the study were adequately distributed in terms on number of years they have been operation. This was to provide response from a cross-section of players within the hotel industry. From the findings, most of the rated hotels have been in operation for over 15 years.

The demographics on the ages of the respondents are presented in Table 4.2. As indicated in Table 4.2, majority of the tourists interviewed were above 45 years, evidence that most tourists are in older age bracket.

Table 4.2: Age of the respondents

Age Bracket	Frequency	Percentage
19 – 24 years	2	4
25 – 30 years	9	18
31-34 years	8	16
35- 40 years	8	16
41- 45 years	2	4
Above 45 years	21	42
Total	50	100

This is mainly attributed to the fact that most tourists have higher disposable incomes which has a positive correlation with older age bracket. This further supported by a United Kingdom department of statistics which clearly indicates increased income in the population of United Kingdom among citizens aged above 40 years (United Kingdom, Department for Social Development, 2004)

Table 4.3: Gender of the respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	26	52
Female	24	48
Total	50	100

According Ministry of Tourism Inbound Tourism Study (2010) the gender split among tourists who arrived in Kenya during the same period was 50% male and 50% female. This acted as a guide in our study and therefore had to split the gender equally in order to have a true representation of the tourism population.

Table 4.4: Marital status of the respondents

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	18	36
Married	32	64
Total	50	100

As indicated in Table 4.4, 64% of the tourists were married an indication that majority of the tourists have settled down. This is a result of them being in the older age bracket (above 45 years). The end result of this is that establishments should ensure their offerings match the needs of tourists who are mostly older and married.

On further analysis (Table 4.5) it was evident that married tourists spend more than their unmarried counterparts. This pointed to the fact that married tourists were more inclined towards spending more (booking hotels with higher ratings) than single counterparts. Establishments with higher ratings are therefore more likely to benefit from this phenomenon than lowly rated hotels.

Table 4.5: Average amount paid per night for single room

Marital status	Average amount spent per night for single room in Kshs
Single	3,576
Married	8,634
Total	12,210

According to Table 4.6, there was a sizeable number (24%) of Kenyan tourists, a shift from the past when tourists were mainly foreigners. A majority of them however are still from western countries with Britain (22%) and America (14%) leading the pack. There were also tourists from African countries such as Nigeria (2%), Ghana (2%), Uganda (4%), Ethiopia (2%), South Africa (2%), Sudan (2%) and Tanzania (2%). Asian countries also had a significant representation with China (2%), India (2%), Japan (2%) and Korean (4%).

Table 4.6: Respondents by their nationality

Nationality	Frequency	Percentage
Kenyan	12	24
American	7	14
British	11	22
Indian	1	2
Finish	1	2
Chinese	1	2
Nigerian	1	2
Tanzanian	1	2
Korean	2	4
Sudanese	1	2
South African	1	2
Congolese	2	4
Japanese	1	2
Ghana	2	4
Ugandan	2	4
Scottish	1	2
Ethiopian	1	2
Jamaican	1	2
Poland (polish)	1	2
Total	50	100

This is a pointer to the fact that emerging markets are increasing their footprint in the Kenyan tourism sector. Establishments in Kenya therefore have no option but to rate their hotels to ease the decision making of these key customers. This will ensure they are able to gauge the service levels and facility availability. The study further sought to understand the reasons behind tourists' visitation (Table 4.7) and business (42%) emerged as the main motivation of the visits.

Table 4.7: Reasons for visiting

Reasons	Percentage
Business/conferences	42
Leisure	40
Study Education	8
Medication	4
Church mission	4
Adoption of a child	2
Total	100

Not surprising leisure (40%) was second reason why they visited. Establishments should therefore ensure they have adequate business, conference facilities and leisure offerings to compete effectively in the marketplace. Studying (8%), medication (4%), church mission (4%) and children adoption (2%) were also mentioned as reason behind the visits.

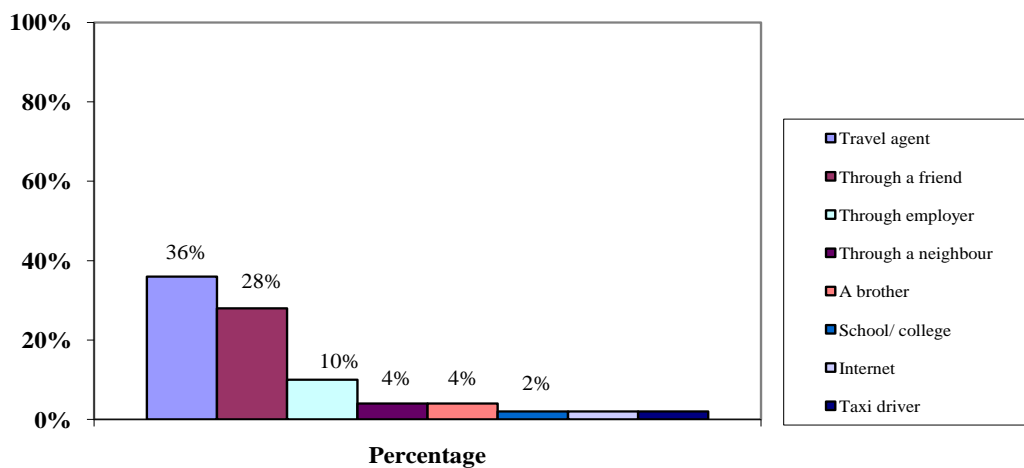


Figure 4.1: Method of knowing hotels

According to Figure 4.1, travel agents (36%) and word of mouth (28%) were the main source of awareness hotels tourists were using. Employers (10%), neighbours (4%) and close family (4%) were also mentioned as other sources of awareness. To take advantage of these powerful marketing channels hotels must ensure they provide world class service. In order to maintain this, conformity to an establishment’s rating is crucial. Establishments which plan to

grow their business as well as revenue therefore must rate hotels.

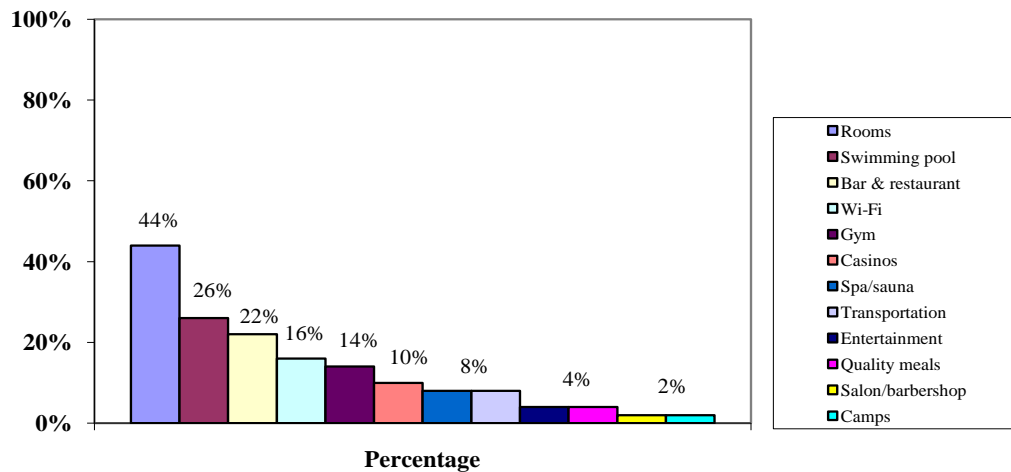


Figure 4.2: Services and amenities expected from hotel.

The study further sought to understand the services and amenities in the rated hotels and how they influenced the rating of hotels. The findings are shown in Figure 4.3. From the findings, majority of the establishments consider having mini bars in the rooms (32%) as an important factor in the classification of the hotels. Other factors include casinos (28%), gym (20%) and conference facilities (18%).

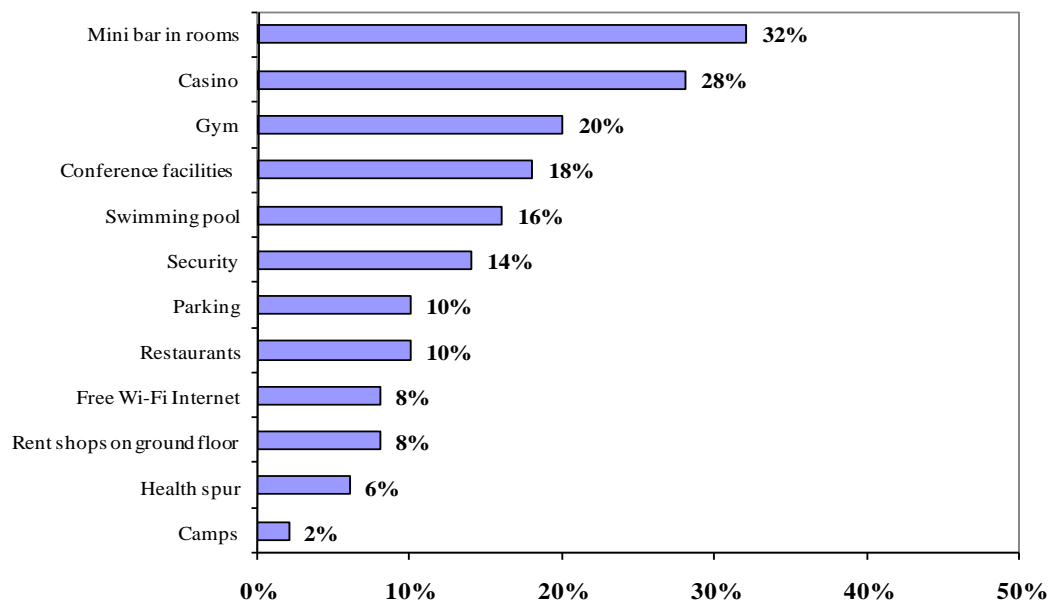


Figure 4.3: Services and amenities within the hotel

Table 4.8: Recommendations to establishments

Response	Percentage
Excellent	32
Improvement of wellness facilities	8
Add more personnel	6
Access to free Internet	4
Improve of customer care	4
Meeting points should be more sound proof	4
Add more parking space	4
Add a dance hall	4
Total	100

Table 4.8 sought to generate recommendations to establishments straight from tourists. Overall majority of the tourists (32%) were more than happy with services and amenities standards. A few however felt that there should be improvements in wellness facilities (8%), increasing number of staff (6%) and providing access to free internet (4%). There were also calls for improvement in customer services (4%), an area that establishments should always strive to improve on.

4.2 Research Findings as per Specific Objectives

4.2.1 Relationship between revenue per room and hotel rating

The study sought to establish the relationship between revenue per room and hotel rating using mean scores of the average cost of rooms in the sample.

Table 4.9: Cost per room in Kenyan Shillings

Hotel Rating	Mean Score (Ksh)
1 star	1,924
2 star	2,823
3 star	2,457
4 star	5,350
5 star	10,166

This specific question aimed to answer the relationship between revenue per room and hotel rating. The mean score was calculated in order to understand the central tendency of the amount charged by hotels. As evidenced by Table 4.9, there is a direct correlation between rating of an establishment and charges per room. The direct result of this is that establishments with higher ratings are likely to have more revenues.

Table 4.10: Correlation between hotel rating and room charges

Pearson Correlation	1	0.484**
Sum of Squares and Cross-products	69.220	96,047.959
Covariance	1.413	2,000.999
N	50	49
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).		

On further analysis to uncover the strength of relationship between hotel rating and room charges, it emerged that there is a positive relationship between these two variables as indicated in Table 4.9. Higher ratings of hotels led to increased room charges which translated to higher revenues for the establishment. It is therefore quite clear that ratings are used as pricing tools by establishment. Tourists are therefore willing to pay extra for higher ratings since they expect better services and amenities. This is further supported by Israel and Uriely (2000) who found out that the rating of establishment is a predictor of hotel pricing. The analysis in Table 4.10 sought to examine the relationship between gross revenue and hotel rating.

As indicated in Table 4.11, there was a positive relationship between hotel ratings and earnings of establishments.

Table 4.11: Correlation between hotel rating and earnings

Pearson Correlation	1	0.453**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0.001
Sum of Squares and Cross-products	69.220	5,551,934,940.000
Covariance	1.413	113,304,794.694
N	50	50
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).		

Higher ratings led to increased earnings for the establishments. This is an indication that hotel rating acts as promotional tool given the fact that hotels with higher ratings have higher sales volumes as well as occupancy rate. This is further supported by Vallen and Vallen (2005) who noted an approximately 20% increase in sales among top-rated hotels.

4.2.2 Relationship between service quality and hotel rating

The study further sought to examine the relationship between service quality and hotel rating levels by uncovering the requirements of the rating process. The results of the study are presented in figure 4.4. This process partly fulfills the physical requirements amenities which Callan (1993) outlined. This is a fundamental requirement since the rating process entails improvement of the current establishment facilities with end result being better amenities.

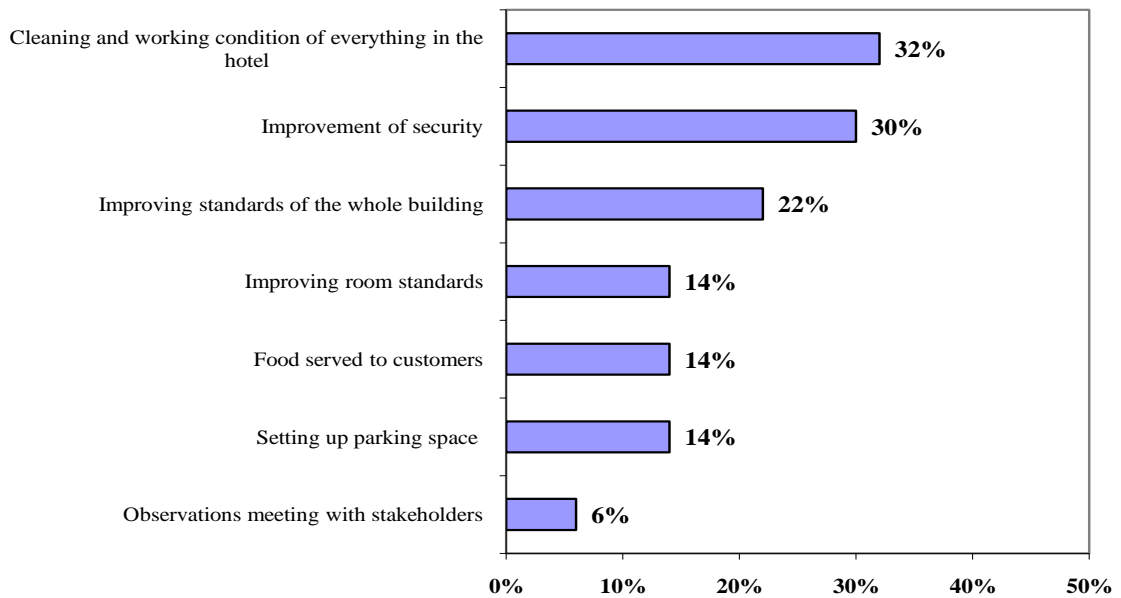


Figure 4.4: Rating process procedure

Related to the previous question, the analysis in Figure 4.4 sought to understand the process of establishment rating. Overall, the process entailed improvement of the services amenities. This is evidence that the process entails improving as well as standardizing amenities and service provision to meet international levels. This makes it easy for foreign tourists to differentiate establishments' services. Cleanliness of the establishment (32%), improvement of security (30%) and overall standard of the building (22%) emerged key points of focus during the rating process. Establishments wishing to undertake rating process in the future will therefore need to ensure they have adequate resources allocated in these three key areas. Setting up parking space, improving room standards as well as food served to customers each at 14% were also mentioned as some of the areas that were evaluated during the rating process.

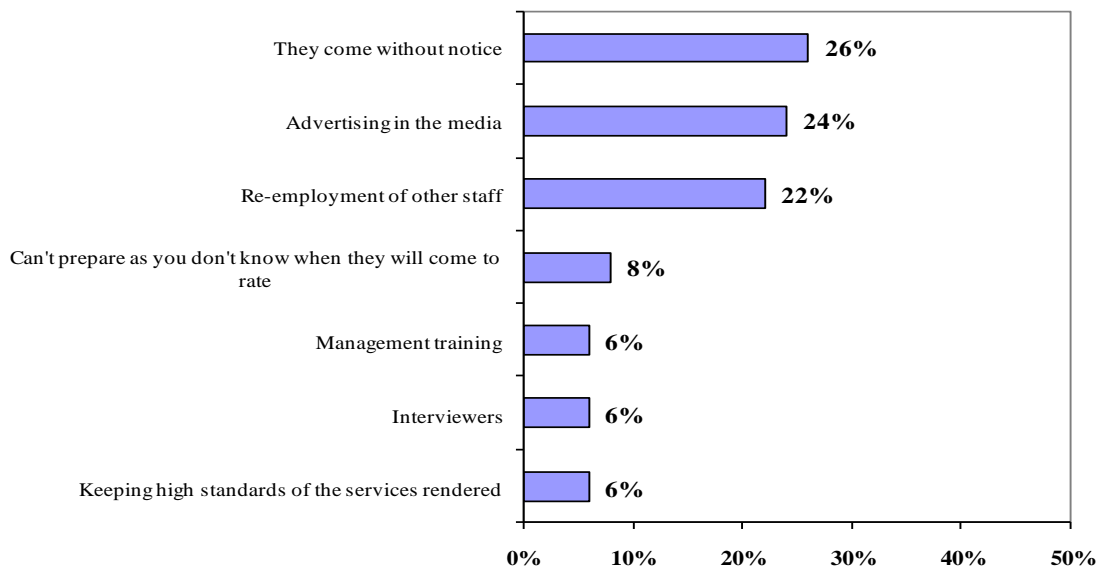


Figure 4.5: Preparation for the rating process

Figure 4.5 also sought to understand the initial process – preparation – of establishment rating. Similar to the setting up process, the preparation entailed improvement of the infrastructure of the establishment. This entailed advertising in the media 24% and improving the workforce of the establishment 22%. More importantly there was the element surprise as 26% of establishments were visited without notice. This discourages prior preparation for the rating process hence ensuring SERVQUAL of the establishments is always up to standard. This question (Table 4.12) sought to check whether there is significant increase in the levels of quality of service with increase in hotel rating. From the findings it was observed that hotels with higher ratings had more as well as better amenities For example establishments which had rating of 1-3 star had only a maximum of 8 amenities/facilities.

Table 4.12: Types of amenities offered (in %, multiple responses)

RESPONSE	1 star	2 stars	3 stars	4 stars	5 stars	Total
Base	10	13	14	10	3	50
Bar & restaurant	80	69	86	90	67	80
Rooms/ conference rooms	30	31	43	60	33	40
Entertainment	30	46	43	20	33	36
Swimming pool	10	23		20	67	16
Gym	10	15	14	10	33	14
Spa/ sauna	0	8	14	10	33	10
(Wi-Fi) the Internet	0	8	21	10	0	10
Salon & barbershop	20	0	0	0	33	6
Casinos	0	0	0	20	33	6
Laundry	10	0	7	10	0	6
Safe custody of valuables	0	0	7	20	0	6
Electrical key	0	0	7	10	0	4
Information center	0	0	0	10	0	0

These establishments also lacked high-end amenities such as Spas, Saunas and Casinos. On the other hand 4-5 star hotels had more than 9 amenities/facilities. High-end amenities were also included in their menu. In order to cater for the more discerning customers, establishments with higher ratings are likely to have wider offerings as opposed to those with lower ratings. Consumers also expect establishments with higher ratings to be more expensive and to have more amenities and facilities. The implication of this is that these hotels are required to increase their investments to widen their services and amenities.

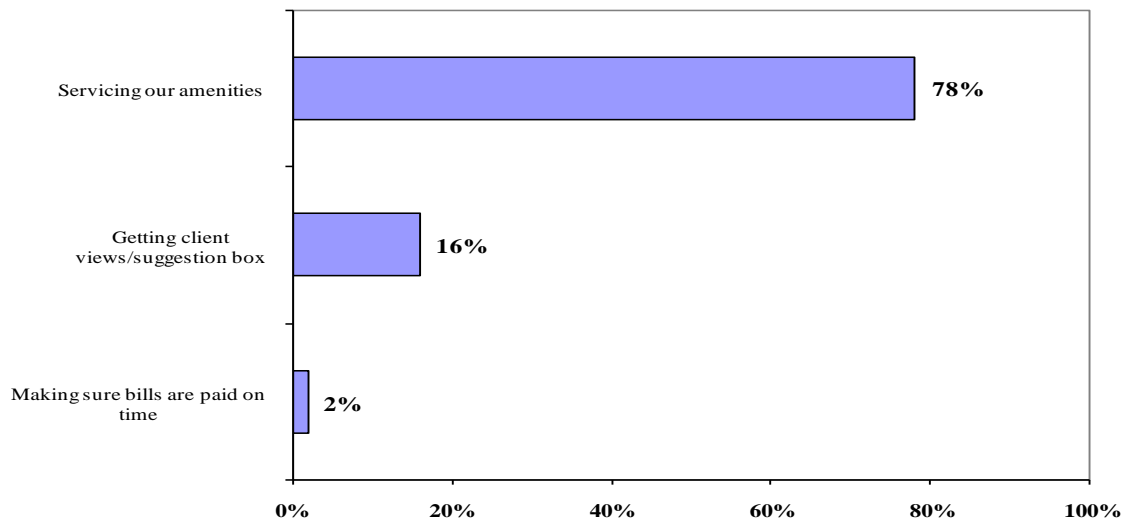


Figure 4.6: Methods of ensuring services amenities are provided

Figure 4.6 sought to test the levels of quality of service with increase in hotel rating. It also tried to understand how establishments maintained the service offering after the rating. Majority (78%) of these establishments are constantly servicing their amenities in order to maintain these standards. Since the rating process does not end with first assessment but rather it seeks to provide an avenue where establishments can continue maintaining their current standards or even improve to the next level of rating. Establishments will therefore not rest on their laurels after the initial rating but will rather seek to continuously maintain and improve their rating. As observed earlier, rating is a process rather than a one-off exercise. It also entails surprise visitations by the rating agencies which therefore forces establishments to continuously maintain their service standards. The findings also indicated that 16% of the establishments sought feedback from clients in order to ensure the service standards are up to standards. 2% indicated that they made sure bills were paid on time in order to maintain their service standards. The study further sought to know from the respondents whether hotel rating had any financial implications. The findings are presented in Figure 4.7.

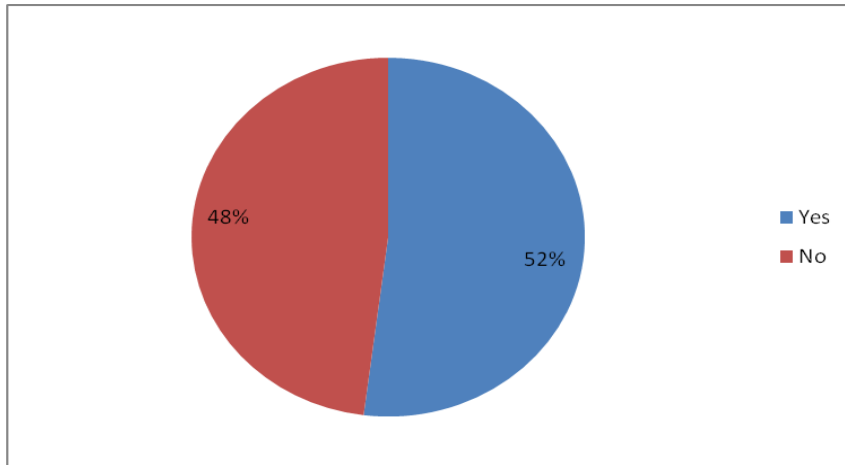


Figure 4.7: Financial Implications of Rating System

From the findings, 52% indicated that rating of hotels has an impact on the financial turnover of the hotel. It thus can be deduced that hotel rating impacts positively on the financial turnover of rated hotels.

4.2.3 Relationship between hotel charges and different rating status

The study further sought to link earnings from establishments with financial implications arising of improved amenities and service offering. It was evident that continuous servicing carries with it financial implications to the hotels as evidenced by 98% of the respondents who believed it did. Establishments which intend to improve their rating and achieve higher room revenue focused on improvement in their properties' tangible assets. Further to this recruiting qualified personnel and maintaining and upgrading guest facilities and surroundings was also vital. This evidence that establishments are required to increase investments in order to maintain and improve their current rating. This question (Table 4.13) sought to specifically point out the amount of investment required to maintain these standards.

Table 4.13: Average cost used in providing services and amenities

Establishment rating	Cost in Kshs per month
1 star	207,500
2 star	388,750
3 star	593,929
4 star	730,000
5 star	1,133,333

Expectedly, this financial burden was more pronounced among hotels with higher ratings. Establishments with higher ratings have more financial responsibilities in terms of amenities, facilities and staff. The implication of this is that they will incur higher costs to maintain their standards as compared to other hotels with lower ratings. This question (Table 4.14) sought to unearth challenges facing establishments in Kenya. It was evident that challenges hotels are facing are arising from the unpredictable macro-economic environment (Vallen & Vallen, 2005).

Table 4.14: Challenges facing establishments

Challenges	Percentage
Competition from other hotels	50
High cost of food/ fluctuation of food commodity	16
Limited Space	12
Insecurity	10
Stubborn customers/ rude customers	8
Fluctuation of foreign exchange	8
Lack of customers	6
Noise from the staff	6
Language barrier	6
Poaching of staff from other hotels	6
Total	100

Half of the hotels mentioned they were facing stiff competition from other establishments which means other players were continuously improving their service standards to attract new and retain existing customers. Others mentioned it was cost of food (16%), limited space (12%) and insecurity (10%) which made some of the establishments not to operate at full capacity.

This particular variable (Table 4.15) sought to uncover areas which might have been left-out during the discussion with respondents. It was clear that the discussion touched on key pain-points of establishments. Some however felt that people who conduct hotel should be well updated with the happenings in the industry (4%). Others also recounted the issue of stiff competition (4%) within the industry, tough economic conditions (2%) and insecurity (2%).

Table 4.15: Comment by tourists

Response	Percentage
No comment	80
People who do ratings on hotels should be up to date	4
Competition is very high	4
Tough economic conditions	2
Security is paramount	2
Improve on cleanliness	2
Total	100

In overall most tourists indicated that Kenya is a hospitable country.

The study sought to know the factors considered by tourist when choosing a hotel. The findings are presented in Figure 4.8. From the findings 70% of the respondents consider hotel charges as an important factor when choosing a hotel while 6% consider location as a factor. Even though charges were mentioned as a key driver for tourists (Figure 4.8) all the other factors (quality of service, amenities, hotel rating and security) which are a direct result of rating of an establishment are equally important.

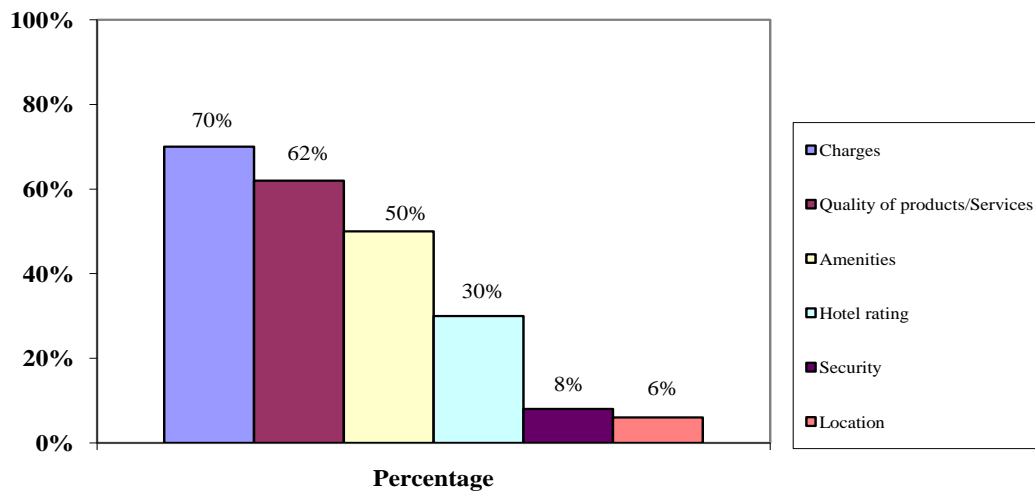


Figure 4.8: Factors considered when choosing hotel

Those who mentioned charges are also cognizant of the importance of rating as a key variable in pricing of an establishment. Rating therefore provides an avenue for them to compare pricing (value for money) of different establishments

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The study sought to examine the implication of rating on the revenues of establishments. It specifically sought to:-

1. To examine the relationship between revenue and hotel rating.
2. To examine the relationship between service quality and hotel rating status.
3. To compare hotel charges and different hotel rating status.

5.1.1 Relationship between revenue and hotel rating

The study findings confirmed that there was a significant increase in the hotel revenues with increased hotel rating. From our analysis it was quite evident that hotel ratings had strong relationship with the revenues of an establishment. It was also evident that tourists use recommendations from travel agents and word of mouth when selecting establishments who base their recommendations on hotel rating (service quality standards). This was a strong indication that for hotels to increase earnings they also need to improve their ratings. This might not be the only ingredient to success since they also need to market the establishment but it is a good start for the establishments.

5.1.2 Relationship between service quality and hotel rating

Further to this it was also evident that there was significant increase in the levels of quality of service with increase in hotel rating. The downside to this was that there were higher costs of improving and maintaining these standards. This however is toned down by higher revenues. It was also evident from the study that tourists factor in hotel charges and quality of services which are a direct result of hotel rating. Establishments will therefore be required to rate themselves in order to ensure their service quality matches the expectations of customers.

5.1.3 Comparison between hotel charges and hotel rating

This study also confirmed that there was a significant increase in the amount of hotel charges with increased level of hotel ratings. There was a positive correlation between these two variables, an indication that hotels with higher ratings also had higher room charges. Among tourists it was also quite evident that an establishment rating guided their choice of a hotel.

Ratings helped them in making objective judgment on service expectations from an array of establishments. Overall rating of establishments is a key cog in a hotel business. This is because it provides useful information to the target users on the kind of service they should expect. It also provides guidance to employees within the establishment on the level service standards they should maintain. In summary, hotel ratings act as guiding tool for both the establishment and the end users.

5.2 Recommendations

5.2.1 Recommendations to hotel establishments

From the findings it is evident that rating of establishments provides hotels with a strong foundation for marketing as well growing their revenue. From the findings, to say rating of an establishment is important in the hotel industry is an understatement. Indeed, rating of an establishment is seen as a basic requirement for anyone in this business. It is therefore crucial for establishments to rate their hotel businesses if they wish effectively compete in the market place. Since this process is a continuous, managers in these establishments should also ensure service standards are always maintained.

5.2.2 Recommendations for further studies

Main findings of this study are limited to South Rift and Nairobi tourist circuits. The study did not cover establishments in Mombasa and Mt Kenya tourism circuit which has a significant number of tourists and hotel establishments. This might have left out critical findings from this important tourist destination. Further studies should cover other tourist regions as it may bring out insights which would be crucial in the tourism industry. This study is broadly based on quantitative data targeting tourists and managers in different hotels. As such it lacks critical information with regards to understanding the process of rating as well important components of hotel rating. Further qualitative studies with industry experts might bring to fore this important information.

This study did not have a long coverage period which should be the case when trying to understand relationship between different variables. In trying to understanding the impact of hotel on the business the ideal situation would have been to interview hotels before and after being rated. But due to limitations of funds this was not the case. Further studies should therefore have longer coverage as well pre and post rating analysis. Different authors have

suggested to apply Augmented Dickey Fuller (ADF), Phillip- Perron (PP) unit root test, and Engle-Granger Co-integration analysis for this kind of research but due to the unavailability of long period time series data, the analysis of this study is limited to the use of simple statistical tool such as correlation analysis. Further research should cover, besides these tools, extensive statistical tools mentioned above using large number of data.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: Management Staff Questionnaire(MSQ)

Questionnaire No. _____

HOTEL ESTABLISHMENT

Kindly, respond to the questions below by either filling in answers in the blank spaces or ticking in the boxes provided.

SECTION I

1. Indicate number of years of establishment's operation.

- (a) 5 yrs
- (b) 10 yrs
- (c) 15 yrs
- (d) 20 yrs
- (e) Over 20 yrs

2. Establishment rating.

- 1 star 2 star 3 star
- 4 star 5 star

3a. Annual turnover (Before Tax).

Ksh.....

b. Annual turnover (After Tax).

Ksh.....

SECTION II

5. What are the charges per room in Kshs.?

6a. What did the process entail?

.....
.....
.....

b. How did you prepare for the process?

.....
.....

7a. Was there any financial implication of being rated?

- (a) Yes

(b) No

b. What was the financial implication of the rating?

.....
.....

8a. Which type of amenities does your establishment have?

.....
.....

b. which type of services does your establishment offer?

.....
.....
.....

c. How do you ensure services and amenities provided by your establishment are as per the establishment rating?

.....
.....

d. Does this(Q8c) have any financial implication?

(a) Yes

(b) No

e. On average how much does it cost your establishment in ensuring services and amenities provided are as per the establishment rating? Ksh

9. Which challenges does your establishment face?

.....
.....

10. Any other comment?

.....
.....

APPENDIX II : Tourist Client Questionnaire (TCQ)

Questionnaire No. _____

Kindly, respond to the questions below by either filling in answers in the blank spaces or ticking in the boxes provided.

SECTION I

1. Indicate your age bracket.

2. Gender.

Male [] Female []

3. Marital status.

Single [] Married []

4. Nationality

(a) Kenyan []

(b) American []

(c) British []

(d) Other (Specify) _____

5. Reason of visit

(a) Business []

(b) Leisure []

(e) Other (Specify) _____

SECTION II

6. How did you become aware of the hotel you are in currently?

.....

7. Which factors did you put into consideration when choosing your current hotel?

(a) Quality of products/services []

(b) Amenities []

(c) Hotel Rating []

(d) Charges []

(e) Others (Specify)

8. Who influenced your choice of the hotel you are currently in?

a) Family []

- b) Friend []
- c) Colleague []
- d) Tour Agent []
- e) Advertisements []
- f) Others Specify.....

9. How important are the following factors when choosing a tourist hotel.

(Rate as follows) **1-** Not Important at all **2-** Not Important **3-** Average **4-** Important **5-** Very Important

	1	2	3	4	5
(a) Quality of products/services	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
(b) Amenities	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
(c) Hotel Rating	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
(d) Charges	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
(e) Others (Specify) _____	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

10 (a) Which type of services and amenities did you expect from the establishment you are in currently?

.....

10 (b) Which services and amenities does the establishment currently have?

.....

10(c) Has your expectation of the services and amenities met?

Yes []

No []

11(a) How much do you pay per night in US dollars?

11(b) Do you feel it is value for money as per your expectation?

Yes []

No []

12. What would you recommend to the management of the establishment in order to serve you better?.....

13. Any other comment.....

APPENDIX III : Map of the Study Area

