# EFFECTS OF SERVICE RESPONSIVENESS ON GUESTS' SATISFACTION WITH HOMESTAY FACILITIES IN NYERI AND LAIKIPIA COUNTIES, KENYA

## KAKIYA Florah Luvandwa[1], Prof. KIETI Damiannah[2], Dr. KIHIMA Boniface Odiara[3]

[1] Department of Tourism Management, Moi University
[2] Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya
[3] Technical University of Kenya, Nairobi, Kenya

## Abstract

Service responsiveness is an important issue related to organization responsiveness. Meanwhile, the extent to which service responsiveness influences emotions and service outcomes is key in ensuring customer satisfaction. To enhance more integration with the local culture and cuisines, tourists increasingly prefer to stay in accommodation facilities owned by local people. Consequently, the national and the county governments, as well as, other stakeholders in the tourism industry have continued to emphasize the importance of homestays in tourism development. In its Vision 2030, the Kenyan government targets to certify 1000 homestay sites to promote cultural tourism among other forms of tourism. However, the responsiveness of services offered in the homestays and their effect on guest satisfaction is not well documented. Therefore, this study used the case of Nyeri and Laikipia Counties to establish the effects of service responsiveness on guests' satisfaction with homestay facilities. The study was guided by expectancy-disconfirmation theory and adopted both descriptive cross-sectional survey and explanatory designs. The study targeted 56 homestay hosts and 171 guests. Probability Proportion to Size (PPS) sampling was used to sample 85 and 54 guests from Nyeri and Laikipia Counties respectively. Census was used to select 56 homestay hosts. Primary data from guests and hosts was collected using questionnaires while document analysis provided secondary information. Pre-test of research instruments was done on fourteen guests and six hosts in Murang'a County to ascertain the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the guest questionnaire was 0.8 while that of the host questionnaire was 0.9. Linear regression analysis was used to establish the effects of service responsivenes on guests' satisfaction. The research findings that service responsiveness positively affect guests satisfaction in homestay facilities ($\beta$= 0.213, p= 0.018). To improve on responsiveness, the homestay owners need to have training programs intended to improve skills and desire to provide guests with the best possible services. There is need to maintain service provision standards to meet requirements of customers by employees ensuring that every contact with customer is positive to satisfaction.

**Introduction**

The Economic Road Map and Visions of the East African Community member states (Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, South Sudan and Burundi) view tourism development not only as a key pillar for national development, but most importantly as a mechanism to alleviate poverty, generate foreign revenue for the government, and contribute to wildlife conservation. With exception of Kenya and Tanzania, which also have a well-developed coastal tourism segment, the remaining East African Community countries are landlocked, with nature and wildlife remaining as the only core tourism assets. Yet, their Economic Road Map and Visions foresee tourism as a key contributor to    transforming their economies in the years to come. While this sounds like a honourable aspiration, most tourism revenues have been generated through narrow tourism products, such as wildlife and national parks, based on a few species (the big five and the mountain gorillas) (Okello & Novelli, 2014). Other challenges affecting the potential for tourism to flourish include political stability and governance, infrastructure development, service standards, and human capacity just to name a few (Akama & Sterry, 2002).

In 2016, Kenya's travel and tourism sector was larger than mining, chemicals manufacturing and automotive manufacturing combined which ranked travel and tourism as the fifth out of the nine sectors that generate $700 billion shillings of the Kenya's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In relation to Kenya Vision 2030 development blue print, tourism has been identified as one of the key drivers in achieving Kenya's development goals (GOK, 2007). The number of tourist arrivals in Kenya has been improving though it has been affected by global recession and political happenings in Kenya. In realization of Vision 2030, flagship projects have been identified under the tourism component among them being certification of 1000 homestay sites to promote cultural tourism in Kenyan homes (GOK, 2007). However, tourists satisfaction is one of the key factors that influence the number of tourists visiting a country.

Guests are deemed satisfied with the quality of services offered to them if the services are provided in a satisfactory manner which may encourage their longer stays and return visits. Customer satisfaction is an important concept in the field of tourism. According to Kotler and Allen (2007), customer satisfaction is attained when the products and services provided satisfy the expectations of customers. Kotler and Allen (2007) observe that the most significant elements in the definition of customer satisfaction is the notion that satisfaction is a relative concept that entails the expectation of customers and the performance of products and services. Consequently, Babikas, Bienstocks and Van Scotter (2004) defined satisfaction to include the judgement of customers with respect to whether the features of products and services meets, goes above, or falls short of fulfilling the needs of a customer. To ensure customers satisfaction, players in the tourism sector have to ensure responsiveness of services.

Responsiveness is defined as providing prompt services and being willing to help customers. Furthermore, Backman and Munamura (2003) defines responsiveness such as speed and timeliness of service delivery. This consists of processing speed and service capabilities to respond promptly to customer service requests and wait a short and queuing time. More specifically, responsiveness is defined as the willingness or readiness of employees to provide services. It contains the timeliness of service (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Beryl, 1988). It also contains understanding the needs and requirements of the customer, easy operation time, individual attention provided by the staff, attention to the problem and customers' safety in their dealings. Responsiveness can be measured differently in a study but the common indicators or questions include giving individual attention to guests, providing prompt services, willingness of staffs to help guests, and availability of employees when needed.

Tourists visiting the hinterland of Kenya have shown tremendous interest in travelling to cultural/heritage destinations and are now showing increased propensity to stay at the local homestay facilities (Kariru & Aloo, 2014). This trend is evident from the rise in volume of travellers who seek adventure, culture, history and interaction with local people (Christi, 2012). People's inclination to seek out novelty, including that of traditional cultures, heritage and other aspects of the local culture, staying at the facilities built by the local community members may become a new paradigm of tourism in Kenya. Homestay as an accommodation option provides an opportunity through which an individual or group may be exposed to the authentic culture, language and social structures of another country (Mbuthia, Muthoni & Muchina, 2013).

According to Ogucha, Riungu, Kiama and Mukolwe (2015), tourists who stay in homestay facilities and interact with local community outside the facility through tourism activities have enhanced local culture. Tourists do so by participating in various touristic activities like cultural festivals, cooking traditional foods among others. Besides, locally owned and operated homestay constitute a suitable small-scale tourist accommodation form for the local community to participate in tourism. The local people become accommodation providers and the house structures change to cater for tourists' needs, and other aspects. Interestingly, policy–makers are now becoming more aware of this new development of tourists staying at the local home facilities (Kenya Community Based Tourism Network, 2003), which necessitates more understanding of service quality attributes and their impacts on guests satisfaction at the homestay facilities (Ogucha *et al.,* 2015).

In Kenya, the Department of Tourism in collaboration with Kenya Community Based Tourism Network (KECOBAT) came up criterion for identifying a homestay for the purpose of accreditation, approval and licensing based on categorization of homestays into; community homestays, farm stay and modern urban private homes graded into classes. However, the criteria is not being adhered to by the homestay owners hence making it difficult to regulate the operation of the homestay facilities and consequently, the quality of services offered in these homestay facilities is not well documented. Also, the urban private homes category does not really fit into the operational definition of homestays. This category is not really a homestay in the strict definition of the term. This is so because of the absence of a family within the home (DoT, 2011).

According to Kanyi (2015) unprecedented demand for homestays rose steadily in Nyeri and its environs when the world celebrated the beatification of Sister Irene Stefani Nyaatha in May, 2015 an event that attracted more than 100,000 pilgrims from around the world. The beatification of Sister Stefani was a great opportunity through which Nyeri County planned to showcase the County's tourism products and put the homestays on a firm path for growth. In addition, they marketed the County's old and new routes to Mt. Kenya and the Aberdares. Located between Mt. Kenya and the Aberdares are two of the biggest national water towers, which are rich in indigenous forests, nature trails, pristine rock formations and waterfalls such as Zaina and Karuru in the Aberdares (Kenya Community Based Tourism Network-KECOBAT, 2017). According to the County Tourism Minister; "while the county is projecting steady growth in tourist numbers in the next two years, there is no guarantee of exponential development in accommodation because this rests in the hands of individual enterprise. This is why the County government is embracing homestays, which provide different experiences to visitors who get to interact with the local community and share their rural life experiences (Weru, 2015). Also, is suitable for urban-based Kenyans who have no roots in rural areas. They learn what goes on in a farm on daily basis and enjoy natural sounds away from the urban bustle (Karunaratne & Jayawardena, 2010).

**Statement of the Problem**

For the homestays to achieve its objective of delivering quality service for its guests, it is imperative to study how services/products offered conceivably meet and even exceed customers' service delivery expectations (Watiki, 2014). Management of homestays seeks to know the level at which the guests are satisfied with their services and the kind of service quality levels their guests would like in order to offer exactly what would be taken positively. Parasuraman *et al*. (1988) indicates responsiveness as one of the five attributes of service quality as a result of their focus group studies with service providers. Manyi (2011) studied the relationship between customer satisfaction and service responsiveness and found out that service responsiveness was significantly related to customer satisfaction. The outcome of the study suggested that to satisfy customers, organizations need to improve responsiveness. These results were consistent with the findings by Akaka (2012). The researcher, however, pointed out that his research work targeted only a few service sectors due to time and money constraint and therefore the study results could not be generalized to other sectors such as the hotel industry. However, these studies by Manyi (2011) and Akaka (2012) were carried out across different technological and social-cultural contexts. The studies also gave conflicting results in regards to service quality dimensions impacting most on customer satisfaction. All the studies however had a consensus that there are effects of service quality attributes on guests' satisfaction.

According to KECOBAT (2015), Kenya has seen increased tourists' numbers especially in areas where traditional tourists' numbers were always low. This has led to the development of homestay facilities in those areas to cater for tourists who are interested in other aspects of accommodation other than hotels and lodges. However, the kind of services offered is not documented, therefore, the responsiveness of services offered and how it influences customer satisfaction in not known. The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) on the economic report on Nyeri County in 2015 noted that homestay tourism was not captured despite the availability of homestay facilities in the county. Furthermore, the Tourism Regulatory Authority undertakes hotel classification leaving the homestay sector largely unregulated with no standards in place. This scenario puts into question whether homestay tourism is given the recognition it deserves bearing in mind the need for the country to achieve vision 2030 and increase the revenue base of the county government. Furthermore, there is no adequate oversight to monitor the operations of the homestays. Therefore, the quality of services offered in these homestay facilities is currently not well known. Hence, this study sought to assess the effects of service quality attributes on guest satisfaction in Nyeri and Laikipia Counties.

The following is the null hypothesis that was tested in this study:

$H_{01}$: Service responsiveness does not affect guest satisfaction with homestay facilities in Nyeri and Laikipia Counties.

**Literature Review**

**Customer Satisfaction**

The term customer satisfaction is largely used in marketing circles. Anderson *et al*. (1994) suggested customer satisfaction measures the extent to which particular product offerings surpass the expectations of customers. More precisely, the term is defined as being the fraction of customers who experience a business or its product offerings and their experiences with the business or the offerings exceeded particular satisfaction benchmarks. Metrics for customer satisfaction are crucial to the management, as well as monitoring, of businesses. Commonly, customer satisfaction, as an indicator of business performance, is incorporated in businesses' balanced scorecards. In highly competitive markets, it is principal differentiator and a principal business strategy element (Wearing, & McDonald, 2008).

The significance of customer satisfaction is compressively discussed in various sources. According to Derek (2004), there are several ways in which customer satisfaction is important to businesses. First, customer satisfaction is one of the foremost client loyalties and repurchase intention indicator. It indicates the possibility that particular customer will make successive purchases from businesses. Second, customer satisfaction is a major differentiation point especially in highly competitive markets. Competitive businesses make it a crucial business strategy element. Third, customer satisfaction decimates client churn. Customer satisfaction helps in the reduction of the churn. Fourth, customer satisfaction heightens the lifetime value of customers to businesses. Highly satisfied customers contribute significantly to the revenue bases of businesses over time. Fifth, customer satisfaction decimates undesirable word of mouth. It reduces the number of customers who share their bad experiences with given businesses with other actual or possible customers. Lastly, a wide-ranging search for the pertinent literature shows that customer satisfaction helps in client retention (Weirmair & Fuchs, 1999).

Wang (2007) refers customer/guest satisfaction as an overall assessment of customers on various attributes of a product. The overall perception can be directly measured, an overall judgment of a product made through an evaluation of quality and benefit as well as cost and effort. Customers are said to be satisfied when they get more benefits than the value for their money, time and effort. To measure customer satisfaction, therefore perceived value is a suitable factor. Tourist satisfaction is considered to be an important element to maintain competitive business in the tourism industry because it affects the choice of destination, and the consumption of products and services. Measuring satisfaction of homestays provides information related to how well a homestay destination meets the guests needs and therefore, helps homestay destination marketers develop their products and services which are appealing to guests

Kangogo (2013) studied customer satisfaction on performance of the hotel industry in the western tourism circuit of Kenya. The study established that customer satisfaction was influenced by a number of attributes like staff relations with guests, décor of the hotel, and quality of foods among other. The same was noted by Mbuthia (2013) in the study on hotel service responsiveness in relations to domestic guests' perceptions and satisfaction in Kenya. The above authors underscored that customers consider a number of attributes that are all anchored on service quality delivery. However these studies focused on hotels but not homestays. It can be argued from the reviewed literature that much of the studies on customer satisfaction in homestays have been done elsewhere in the world, with limited information on the Kenya situation. The tourism industry itself is grappling with the issue of service responsiveness and recognizes that this is the key to long term success (County Government of Nyandarua, 2014). It is therefore important to conduct a study to establish whether homestays are meeting guests' expectations in an attempt to improve on the quality of services and products offered.

**Effect of Service Responsiveness on Guests' Satisfaction**

The process in which service providers react quickly to resolve customer problem positively within a given time is called responsiveness. This dimension of service quality is perceived through the people aspect of service quality. However, information technology advancement like emails, webpage and customer service interface improves the responsiveness of service delivery firm. Virima, Sandada and Chuchu (2019) examined the impact of service responsiveness on customer satisfaction in internet provision services of Zimbabwe. The study employed a cross-sectional quantitative design from which a sample of 341 successfully completed questionnaires was obtained. The results of the study indicated that responsiveness displayed a positive statistically significant impact on customer satisfaction.

Ibrahim, Hassan and Basit (2015) examined the impact of service responsiveness on customer satisfaction in Maldives tourism industry. A descriptive and explanatory research design was selected for this study. A total of 120 samples from different types of tourist establishments, such as Resorts, Guest Houses and Safari Boats were taken using random probability sampling. The results of this study confirmed service responsiveness to have positive and significant impact on customer satisfaction. Tiedemann, Birgele and Semeijn (2009) examined increasing hotel responsiveness to customers through information sharing. The study used a descriptive research design. The results indicated that market orientation seems to be an important basis for cross-functional and inter-organizational information sharing. Information exchange, both internal and external, can explain over 50 per cent of customer responsiveness, as perceived by hotel managers.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study focused on the effect of service responsiveness on guests' satisfaction. The study was based on a consumer behaviour model, which postulates that consumer satisfaction is a function of both expectations related to certain attributes and judgements of performance regarding these attributes (Bolton & James, 1991). Consumer behaviour model uses Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory to examine the satisfaction of consumers. Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory currently dominates the study of consumer satisfaction and provides a fundamental framework for this study. As described by Oliver (1980) expectancy-disconfirmation theory consists of two sub-processes having independent effects on customer satisfaction: the formation of expectations and the disconfirmation of those expectations through performance comparisons. Expectancy-disconfirmation theory holds that consumers first form expectations of products' or services' (the service quality attributes in this study) performance prior to purchase or use. Subsequently, purchase and use contribute to consumer beliefs about the actual or perceived performance of the product or service. The consumer then compares the perceived performance to prior expectations. Consumer satisfaction is seen as the outcome of this comparison.

Moreover, consumer's expectations are confirmed when the product or service performance matches prior expectations; negatively disconfirmed when product or service performance fails to match expectations and positively disconfirmed when the perceived product or service performance exceeds expectations. Dissatisfaction comes about when a consumer's expectations are negatively disconfirmed, that is, the product performance is less than expected (Clemons & Woodruff, 1992).

In the context of homestay, Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory was used to understand the relationship between the guests' desires and the genuine encounter which therefore shows that service quality attributes have different impact in influencing guests' satisfaction. The homestays operators would understand the gaps in the services/goods provided to the guests. In instances where homestay hosts over promise, this can help to evaluate and manage guest expectations; promise less and offer more. At last, the guest is content with the experience.
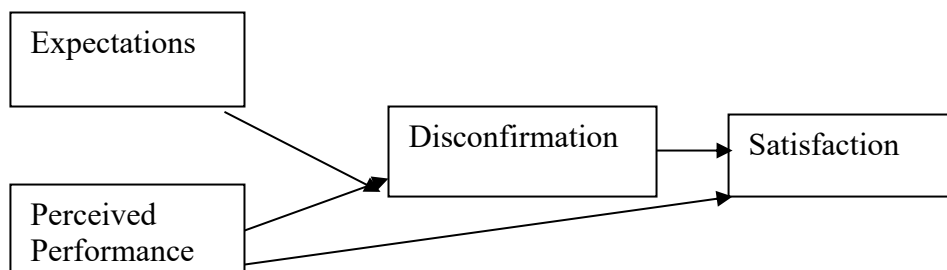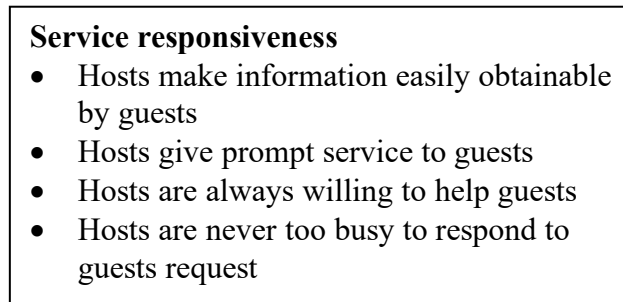


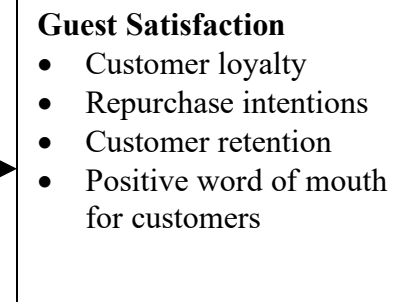**Figure 1: Oliver's expectancy- disconfirmation theory**

**Conceptual Framework**

The study assessed the effect of service responsiveness on guest satisfaction in homestay facilities. Herein, satisfaction is considered as the entire result of the evaluation of various experiences given to a guest visiting a homestay. Figure 2.3 presents the conceptual framework that guided the study.

**Independent Variables**                                        **Dependent Variable**

| **Service responsiveness**<br>• Hosts make information easily obtainable by guests<br>• Hosts give prompt service to guests<br>• Hosts are always willing to help guests<br>• Hosts are never too busy to respond to guests request | → | **Guest Satisfaction**<br>• Customer loyalty<br>• Repurchase intentions<br>• Customer retention<br>• Positive word of mouth for customers |
|---|---|---|

**Figure 2: Conceptual Framework**

**Research Methodology**

The study adopted both descriptive cross-sectional survey and explanatory designs. Descriptive cross-sectional survey has the advantage of using questionnaires to collect primary data from a large sample size within a very short duration. The explanatory design was used because of causal relationship under investigation, that is, the effects of service quality attributes on guests' satisfaction. The target population for the current study comprised of all the guests who stayed in the homestays in Nyeri and Laikipia counties in the months of April 2017 to May 2017. There are 36 and 20 homestay facilities registered by the Department of Tourism of Nyeri and Laikipia Counties' respectively. The total number of guests was 323 and 188 for Nyeri and Laikipia Counties respectively for the three years (2014-2016) and was used to estimate 2017 guest arrivals by doing an average for the 3 years. An average of 108 and 63 homestay guests were obtained in Nyeri and Laikipia Counties respectively. In total, the number of homestay guests was 171 from both counties.

**Sample Size and Sampling Procedure**

The study used Yamane (1967) formula;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where '**n**' is the desired sample size, '**N**' is the population size, and '**e**' is the margin of error (0.05) to determine the sample size of homestay guests. In this study, N = Average tourist arrival in the homestays for the three years. The sample size for guests in both counties were computed as follows.

a) Sample size of homestay guests in Nyeri County

$$n = \frac{108}{1 + 108(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = 85 \ guests$$

b) Sample size of homestay guests in Laikipia County

$$n = \frac{63}{1 + 63(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = 54 \ guests$$

All the 36 and 20 homestay facilities in Nyeri and Laikipia Counties were used in the study. Probability Proportion to Size (PPS) sampling technique was used to select the sample of guests visiting homestays. The technique was chosen since the bed capacity in the homestay varies which leads to different number of guests in each homestay. This sampling technique ensured that larger homestays had more respondents sampled as compared to the smaller ones.

The research used both primary and secondary data. The secondary data was obtained from textbooks related to the study, magazines, journals, presented conferences and previous reports as well as the internet. Primary data was collected through administering of structured questionnaires to homestay host and guests. The questionnaire used in this study was pre- tested through a pilot study before actual data collection to assess the validity and reliability of the research instrument. After data collection, the questionnaires were evaluated for errors before analysis. After sorting the questionnaires, data was coded and entered, into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 24. Data was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution and measures of central tendency were used to analyse the demographic data. The study also used cross tabulation to understand the relationship between two categorical variables. Inferential statistics included regression analysis. Specifically, a regression model was used to determine any existing effect of independent variable, responsiveness and the dependent variable, guest satisfaction. The analysed data were presented using charts and tables.

The regression analysis fitness model was set as:

$Y = \beta_o + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \varepsilon$

Where: Y= Guest satisfaction; $B_0$ -Constant term; $\beta_1$ - Regression coefficient that represent the condition of the independent variable to the dependent variables; $X_1$ - Service responsiveness; $\varepsilon$- This is a provision for error, which may be caused by extraneous factor

**Research Findings and Discussions**

A total of 139 questionnaires were administered to the guests out of which 123 were returned and found valid for analysis. Likewise, 56 questionnaires were administered to the homestay hosts where 48 questionnaires were returned and found valid for data analysis. The response rate for guests and homestay owners/hosts were 88.48% and 85.71% respectively. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2009) 50% response rate is adequate, 60% good while above 70% is rated very well. Based on this assertion, the response rate for this study was above 70%.

**Guests General Information**

General information explored included gender, age, region of origin, source of information of the homestay, average expenditure, nature of visit and number of visits to the homestay. General information of the guests in the two counties was 56% males and 44% females. Based on the age 10.7% were aged between 20-29 years, 58.7% aged 30-39 and lastly 20% were aged 50 years and above. The third demographic information illustrates the origin of the guests visiting the homestays, 45.3% were Americans which composed the majority of the guests in homestays. According to the source of information 34.7% indicated that they got information through a friend, 32% mentioned internet, 17.3% identified TV and Radio advertisement while 16% mentioned brochures as the source of information. The results further revealed that majority of the guests, that is, 36% had expenditure which includes accommodation, transport, meals, excursion, and entertainment among other was between $585-$682 while 33.3% had expenditure of between $683-$799. The results on the nature of visit of the respondents showed that 48% of the

respondents visited for educational purposes, followed by cultural visits (29.3%) and leisure visits (22.7%).

**Table 1: Guests General Information**

| | | Frequency (N=123) | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 69 | 56 |
| | Female | 54 | 44 |
| Age | 20-29 | 13 | 10.7 |
| | 30-39 | 72 | 58.7 |
| | 40-49 | 13 | 10.7 |
| | 50 and above | 25 | 20 |
| Origin | Asia | 15 | 12 |
| | America | 55 | 45.3 |
| | Europe | 25 | 20 |
| | Africa | 28 | 22.7 |
| Source of information | Through Friend | 42 | 34.7 |
| | Through Internet | 40 | 32.0 |
| | Through TV and Radio advertisement | 21 | 17.3 |
| | Brochures | 20 | 16.0 |
| Expenditure | Up to $584 | 21 | 17.3 |
| | $585-$682 | 44 | 36.0 |
| | $683-$799 | 41 | 33.3 |
| | Above $799 | 17 | 13.3 |
| Nature of visit | Educational | 59 | 48.0 |
| | Leisure | 36 | 29.3 |
| | Cultural | 28 | 22.7 |
| Number of visits | Once | 28 | 22.7 |
| | Twice | 58 | 46.7 |
| | Thrice | 26 | 21.3 |
| | Four times and above | 11 | 9.3 |

The study sought to document the tourism activities undertaken within the purview of the homestay. This was necessary in order to have a better understanding of the products available. Evidently (see table 4.3), a wide variety of activities were undertaken at the homestays, which included picking tea (29.3%), milking of cows (44%) and cultivation of horticulture crops such as fruits and vegetables (26.7%).

**Table 2: Activities Guests Participated in**

| | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Picking tea | 36 | 29.3 |
| Milking of cows | 54 | 44.0 |
| Cultivation of horticulture crops | 33 | 26.7 |
| **Total** | **123** | **100.0** |

**Homestay Hosts General Information**

The first demographic information was the gender of the guests where 64% were male and 36% were female. 16.7% aged 20-29 years, 22.9% represent age 30-39 years while 27.1% were aged 40-49 years and 33.3% of the guests were aged 50 years and above. The other factor was the levels of education where majority (50%) had attained diploma and degree. The other demographic factor, illustrates the professional training of the hosts where 18.8% were from the field of tourism

and 52.1% represent engineers and 16.1% were trained as agricultural officers. The study further established that the hosts were mainly motivated by economic and social needs (80.4%) while the rest was due to cultural needs.

**Table 3: Homestay Hosts Characteristics**

|  |  | Frequency (N=48) | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 31 | 64.0 |
|  | Female | 17 | 36.0 |
| Age | 20-29 | 8 | 16.7 |
|  | 30-39 | 11 | 22.9 |
|  | 40-49 | 13 | 27.1 |
|  | 50 and above | 16 | 33.3 |
| Highest education levels | Diploma | 24 | 50.0 |
|  | Degree | 24 | 50.0 |
| Professional training | Tourism | 9 | 18.8 |
|  | Engineering | 25 | 52.1 |
|  | Agriculture | 8 | 16.6 |
|  | Teaching | 6 | 12.5 |

**Homestays Profile**

With respect to homestay profile, the study collected the following information; number of rooms, charges, nature of package and meals offered. From table 4.5 above, the hosts (62.5%) indicated that they have 6-10 guest rooms while 16.7% had a capacity of 11-15 guest rooms and 12.5% had 15 guest rooms and above. The second factor was the amount charged to the guests per day where 60.4% charged below Ksh 2999, 22.9% of the hosts charged between Ksh.3000 and 5999 while 16.7% charged between Ksh 6000 and 8999. Frequently attracted tourists were for educational purposes (39.6%) followed by cultural (31.3%) and the others were milking of cows and farming to be specific.Table 4.5 shows that the best package was all inclusive' at 27 % followed by guiding services (22.9%) then full board and bed & breakfast at 18.8%. Homestays provided varieties of meal packages where 64.6% gave breakfast and dinner while 20.8% provided breakfast, lunch, dinner and refreshment to their guests. The study also sought to determine the menu where 20.8% of the homestay served nonindigenous (non-traditional) cuisines, 25% traditional cuisines while 37.5% served both traditional and non-traditional cuisines. Most of the homestays (60.4%) provided guiding services and 39.6% did not provide guiding services.

**Table 4: Homestays Profile**

|  |  | Frequency (N=48) | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| Homestay Visitors' Room Capacity | 1-5 rooms | 4 | 8.3 |
|  | 6-10 rooms | 30 | 62.5 |
|  | 11-15 rooms | 8 | 16.7 |
|  | 15 rooms and above | 6 | 12.5 |
| Nature of the Visit by the guests | Educational | 19 | 39.6 |
|  | Cultural | 15 | 31.3 |
|  | Relaxation | 3 | 6.3 |
|  | Medical | 11 | 22.9 |
| Charges per day in the homestay | Kshs 2,999 and below | 29 | 60.4 |
|  | Kshs 3,000 – 5999 | 11 | 22.9 |
|  | Kshs 6,000 - 8,999 | 8 | 16.7 |
| Package | Bed only | 3 | 6.3 |
|  | Bed and breakfast | 9 | 18.8 |
|  | Half board | 3 | 6.3 |
|  | Full board | 9 | 18.8 |
|  | All inclusive (Accommodation, meals and guiding services) | 13 | 27.1 |
|  | Guiding services | 11 | 22.9 |
| Meals | Breakfast only | 7 | 14.6 |
|  | Breakfast and dinner only | 31 | 64.6 |
|  | Breakfast, lunch, dinner and refreshment | 10 | 20.8 |
| Menu | Traditional cuisines | 12 | 25 |
|  | Non indigenous | 10 | 20.8 |
|  | Both traditional and Non-traditional cuisines | 18 | 37.5 |
| Provision of guides | Yes | 29 | 60.4 |
|  | No | 19 | 39.6 |

**Tourism potential of the Homestays**

With respect to tourism potential of the homestays, the study collected the following information; tourism activities within the homestays, ways of marketing, outstanding features in the homestays, safety measures and type of clientele. As shown in table 4.9, hosts that provided nature walks accounted for 33.3%, coffee and tea picking accounted for 20.8%, while in tea/coffee factory visit accounted for 12.5%. The hosts mentioned friends or relatives (66.7 %) as their major marketing avenue followed by internet (20.8 %). The most outstanding features that attracted the guests was serene environment (43.8%).The study found that mostly of the homestays are located less than 30 minutes' drive from the nearby urban centre (62.5%). Homestays that used both security personnel and CCTV cameras accounted for 66.7%.

**Table 5:  Tourism potential of the Homestays**

|  |  | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| Tourism activities | Tour to community farms, | 8 | 16.7 |
|  | Tea/coffee factory visit | 6 | 12.5 |
|  | Local cuisine cooking lessons | 4 | 8.3 |
|  | Coffee and tea picking | 10 | 20.8 |
|  | Nature walks | 16 | 33.3 |
|  | Bird watching | 4 | 8.3 |
|  | **Total** | **48** | **100** |
| Marketing | Friends/relatives | 32 | 66.7 |
|  | Internet | 10 | 20.8 |
|  | Brochure | 6 | 12.5 |
|  | **Total** | **48** | **100** |
| Outstanding feature | Accessibility from the urban Centre | 6 | 12.5 |
|  | Serene environment | 21 | 43.8 |
|  | Surrounding landscapes | 8 | 16.7 |
|  | Birds and animals | 7 | 14.6 |
|  | Privacy | 8 | 16.7 |
|  | **Total** | **48** | **100** |
| Distance to the nearest urban centre | Less than 30 minute drive | 30 | 62.5 |
|  | 30 minute drive | 18 | 37.5 |
|  | **Total** | **48** | **100** |
| Safety | Employing security personnel | 16 | 33.3 |
|  | Both security personnel and CCTV | 32 | 66.7 |
|  | **Total** | **48** | **100** |
| Clients Profile | Repeat clients | 10 | 20.8 |
|  | New clients | 6 | 12.5 |
|  | Referral  clients | 32 | 66.7 |
|  | **Total** | **48** | **100** |

**Descriptive analysis of independent variables**

The broad objective of this study was to establish the effect of service responsiveness on guest satisfaction in homestay facilities in Central Kenya Tourism Circuit. In this regard the study found it prudent to explore the effect of service responsiveness on guest satisfaction in homestay facilities in Central Kenya Tourism Circuit. Likert data collection instrument was used to collect primary data regarding the effects of service quality attributes on guest satisfaction on homestay services. A five (5) point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree; 2= Disagree; 3= Neutral; 4= Agree; 5=Strongly Agree) was used to solicit views from the respondents. The upper and lower limits were set based on mean analysis of Likert scale data. A mean score of 1.0 - 1.80 depicted not satisfied, 1.81 - 2.60 indicates slightly satisfied while mean score of 2.61 - 3.40 indicates satisfied, 3.41 - 4.20 indicates  very satisfied  and  4.21 - 5.0 indicates  extremely satisfied. In other words, a mean score of 2.61 and above indicates that the guests were satisfied with the quality of service offered in the homestay facilities and mean score equal to or below 1.81 signifies dissatisfied guests.

**Effect of service responsiveness on guests' satisfaction with homestay facilities**

The objective aimed at establishing the effect of service responsiveness on guest satisfaction with homestay facilities in Nyeri and Laikipia Counties. According to the results presented in table 4.15, the hosts were always willing to help guests (M=3.6911), they were never too busy to respond to guests requests (M=3.3659), they provided information to guests (M=3.2602) and gave

prompt service to the guests (M= 3.2195). The standard errors were from 0.1052 to 0.1223 while the percentage of the mean range was between 73.82 and 59.19. The standard error was less than 1 which depicts the mean was accurate.

**Table 4.15: Effect of service responsiveness on guests' satisfaction with homestay facilities**

|  | N | Mean | Percentage | Std. Error |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| The hosts are always willing to help guest | 123 | 3.6911 | 73.82 | 0.1052 |
| The hosts are never too busy to respond to guest requests | 123 | 3.3659 | 67.32 | 0.1223 |
| The hosts make information easily accessible by guests | 123 | 3.2602 | 65.20 | 0.1141 |
| The hosts give prompt service to the guest | 123 | 3.2195 | 63.39 | 0.1157 |

**Guests satisfaction**

The study also sought to illustrate the overall guests' satisfaction with homestay facilities in Nyeri and Laikipia Counties. As shown in Table 4.16, Next time, I shall need homestay services, I will purchase from this homestay (M=3.4797) showing satisfaction in the likert five scale, The homestay meets all the requirements that I see reasonable (M=3.3740) while value for money spent in the homestay for products/services (M=3.3577). Extra effort to visit the homestay again (M=3.1789) which indicated a moderate extent and the homestay is worth recommending to friends and relatives (M=2.9593). The difference was a result of the scores given by the respondents. The respondents depicted they are willing to purchase even if there was no much recommendation since the guests can receive the best services within the homestay. The standard errors were from 0.1311 and 0.1087 while the percentage mean range was between 89.59 and 59.00.

**Table 7: Guests satisfaction**

|  | N | Mean | Percentage | Std. Error |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Next time, I shall need homestay services, I will purchase from this homestay | 123 | 3.4797 | 89.59 | 0.1223 |
| The homestay meets all the requirements that I see reasonable | 123 | 3.3740 | 67.48 | 0.1127 |
| There is value for money spent in the homestay for products/services | 123 | 3.3577 | 67.15 | 0.1178 |
| I intend to continue to be customer of this homestay | 123 | 3.3333 | 66.66 | 0.1087 |
| Overall, I am very satisfied with the homestay | 123 | 3.3252 | 66.50 | 0.1240 |
| Questions and concerns raised by guests are responded satisfactorily | 123 | 3.2764 | 65.53 | 0.1271 |
| The homestay satisfies my needs | 123 | 3.2683 | 65.37 | 0.1095 |
| I am ready to make an extra effort to visit the homestay again | 123 | 3.1789 | 63.58 | 0.1311 |
| Service and products offered in the homestay are of quality standards | 123 | 3.1626 | 63.25 | 0.1150 |
| Was your expectations met | 123 | 3.0407 | 60.81 | 0.1234 |
| The homestay is worth recommending to friends and relatives | 123 | 2.9593 | 59.19 | 0.1229 |

**Results of the Regression Analysis**

Regression analysis was used in order to establish the effects of service responsiveness on guests' satisfaction with homestay facilities in Nyeri and Laikipia Counties. In testing the hypothesis, a regression equation model was used in the form of:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{service responsiveness } + \varepsilon$$

Model summary in Table 8 below shows the output for model fitness and value of adjusted R squared of 0.111. This shows that the independent variable (Responsiveness) tested had a variation of 11.1% on the guests' satisfaction with homestay facilities in Nyeri and Laikipia Counties at 95% confidence interval. This therefore means that other factors not accounted in this study contribute 88.9% of the guest satisfaction. Additionally, the findings show that there was a weak positive relationship between the study variables as shown by R which is the correlation coefficient of 0.385.

**Table 8: Model summary**

| R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|---|---|---|---|
| 0.385[a] | 0.148 | 0.111 | 1.13645 |

Table 9 presents the analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the service responsiveness and the guest satisfaction with homestay facilities in Nyeri and Laikipia Counties. The findings revealed F value of 4.061, which was statistically significant at 0.002. This depicts a linear relationship among the variables under study and also that the model had a less than 0.05 likelihood of giving a wrong prediction. Further, the independent variable (responsiveness) used were statistically significant in predicting the guest satisfaction with homestay facilities in Nyeri and Laikipia Counties at 95% confidence level.

**Table 9: ANOVAa table**

| Model | | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Regression | 26.225 | 1 | 26.225 | 20.9995765 | 0.002[b] |
| | Residual | 151.109 | 121 | 1.24883471 | | |
| | Total | 177.333 | 122 | | | |

a. **Dependent Variable: Guest satisfaction**
b. **Predictors: (Constant), Responsiveness**

Y (Guest satisfaction) = 0.695+ 0.213* Responsiveness + ε

From the regression coefficient results in table 4.10, it is evident that taking other independent variables at zero, a unit increase in responsiveness will lead to 0.213 increase in guests satisfaction. At 5% level of significance, the standardized coefficients show that service responsiveness affect guest satisfaction with homestay facilities positively and significant ($\beta=0.213$, t= 2.403, p= 0.018). From the research findings, positive effect was found on all the dimensions of service quality.

**Table 4.20: Regression model Coefficientsa**

| | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| (Constant) | 0.695 | 0.721 | | 0.964 | 0.337 |
| Responsiveness | 0.213 | 0.089 | 0.231 | 2.403 | 0.018 |

**a. Dependent Variable: Guest satisfaction**

## Testing of Hypothesis

**$H_{01}$: Service responsiveness in homestay facilities does not significantly affect guests' satisfaction in homestay facilities.**

As revealed in Table 4.10, there is a positive, significant effect of service responsiveness on the guest satisfaction (Beta value of 0.213 and p-value of 0.018). Since the P value was less than 0.05 level of significance, the study rejects the null hypothesis and accept alternative hypothesis that service responsiveness significantly influence the guests satisfaction with homestay facilities in Nyeri and Laikipia Counties.

## Discussion of the Findings

Services responsiveness had positive effect on homestay guest satisfaction in both Nyeri and Laikipia counties. Indeed, a unit increase in responsiveness led to 0.213 increases in guests' satisfaction. However, there is a concern among homestay guests on aspect of responsiveness in both counties when the following items were studied: availability of information to guests, service promptness and being available to respond to customer needs simply because responsiveness can affect the customers' satisfaction positive when properly addressed by the managers or the host of this homestays.

Rao and Sahu, (2013) provides contrary results when they identified responsiveness as a key service quality attribute to customer satisfaction. The main items of concern here were that staffs were responding quickly to customer request and staffs were willing to help customers, including providing directions around hotel was key in grading responsiveness. These findings were in line with the findings of Watiki (2014) who found out that responsiveness was statistically significant at 5% level of significance.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concludes that service responsiveness has a positive and significant effect on Homestay Guests' Satisfaction in Nyeri and Laikipia Counties. Responsiveness positively affect the guest satisfaction in the homestays in the two counties. The hosts make information easily accessible to guests, prompt services were provided, willingness to help guests and guests request were responded to promptly in the homestays.

To improve on responsiveness, the homestay owners need to have training programs intended to improve skills and desire to provide guests with the best possible services. There is need to maintain service provision standards to meet requirements of customers by employees ensuring that every contact with customer is positive to satisfaction.

## Recommendations for Further Studies

The research findings reveal that there is 88.9 percent of the variance in guest satisfaction that is not explained by service responsiveness. There is need to carry out a study to establish other factors that guest satisfaction. The study used SERVPERF model to determine guests' satisfaction. The study suggests further studies to use other models that measure service responsiveness. The

study was limited to two counties, which include Nyeri and Laikipia Counties. Therefore, there is a need to carry out a study in homestays in other counties in Kenya.

**References**

Akaka, K. (2012). Service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction in the Kenyan telecommunications service industry: A case of Nokia Siemens Networks.*Unpublished masters thesis.* Nairobi: University of Nairobi, School of Business.

Akama, J., & Sterry, T. (2002). *Cultural tourism in Africa: strategies for the new millennium.* In Proceedings of the ATLAS Africa International Conference. December 2000, Mombasa, Kenya.

Anderson, W., & Fornell, C. (1994). Customer satisfaction, market share and profitability: Findings from Sweden. *Journal of Marketing, 58*(3), 57–58. Retrieved from http://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2346752.

Babikas, E., Bienstock, C., & Van Scotter, J. (2004). Linking perceived quality and customer satisfaction to store traffic and revenue growth. *Decision Sciences.* Retrived from http://doi.org/10.16373/j.cnki.ahr.150049.

Backman, K. F., & Munamura, I. E. (2003). Ecotourism in Sub-Tourism Africa. *Economic Policy Review, 9*(1), 7–26. Retrived from http://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.233111.

Bolton, R., & James, H. (1991). A Multi-Stage model of customers' assessments of service quality and value. *Journal of Consumer Research, 17*(375–384), 169–178.

Christi, M. (2012). Forecasting profitability and earnings. *Journal of Accounting and Economics*, *8*(6), 53–68. Retrieved from http://doi.org/10.5296/ijl.v8i6.10265.

Clemons, S., & Woodruff, R. (1992). Broadening the view of consumer dissatisfaction: A proposed means-end disconfirmation model of CS/D. *American Marketing Association,* 413–421. Retrived from http://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004

County Government of Nyeri. (2017). *Tourism and hospitality*. Retrieved from www.nyeri.go.ke: http://www.nyeri.go.ke/pp. 91.

Derek, R.A. (2004). *Customer satisfaction research management,* Milwaukee, Wisconsin: ASQ Press, pp. 21.

DoT. (2011). *Approved criteria for homestays.*Nairobi:  Directorate of Tourism.

GoK (2007). *The Kenya Vision 2030.* Nairobi: Government Printer.

Ibrahim, H. Z., Hassan, Z & Basit A (2015). Impact of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction in Maldives Tourism Industry. *International journal of Accounting, Business and Management, 3*(2), 161-176.

Kangogo, E. J. (2013). Principles of management accounting. *European Journal of Business and Social Sciences, 5*(14), 87–100.

Kanyi, J. (2015, May 16). 'Sister Stefani's beautifiaction is a lifetime event'. Daily Nation *Retrived from https://www.nation.co.ke › Business.*

Kariru, A., & Aloo, C. (2014). Customers' perceptions and expectations of service quality in hotels in western tourism circuit, Kenya. *Journal of Research in Hospitality, Tourism and Culture, 2*(1), 1–12.

Karunaratne, W., & Jayawardena, L. (2010). Assessment of customer satisfaction in a five star hotel. A Case Study. *Tropical Agricultural Research, 21*(3), 258–268.

Kenya Community Based Tourism Network (KECOBAT). (2017). Retrieved from http://www.kecobat.org/programmes/homestays-development.html.

Kotler, P., & Allen, R. (2007). Customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. *European Journal of Business and Management.*

Manyi, J. (2011). The relationship between customer satisfaction and service quality: A study of three service sectors in Umea.*Unpublished masters thesis.* Sweden: Umea University, School of Business.

Mbuthia, S., Muthoni, C. & Muchina, S. (2013). Hotel service quality: perceptions and satisfaction among domestic guests in Kenya. *Arabian Journal of Business and Management, 2*(8), 22–32.

Mugenda, A., & Mugenda, H. (2009). Quantitative methods in socio-economic research. *Tourist Areas of Brunswick, 15*(4), 385–404.

Ogucha, E., Riungu, G., Kiama, R., & Mukolwe, E. (2015). The influence of homestay facilities on tourist satisfaction in the Lake Victoria Kenya Tourism Circuit. *Journal of Ecotourism, 14*(2), 278–287.

Okello, M. M. & Novelli, M. (2014). Tourism in the East African Community (EAC): Challenges, opportunities, and ways forward. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*. 14. 53-66. 10.1177/1467358414529580.

Oliver, R. L. (1980). Acognitive model of the antecedents and consequences of satisfation decisions. *Journal of Marketing Research,17*(4),460-469.

Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. A. & Berry, L. L. (1988). SERVQUAL: A multiple- item scale for measuring consumer perceptions of service quality. *Journal of retailing, 64(1), 12-40.*

Rao, P., & Sahu. P. (2013). Impact of service quality on customer satisfaction in hotel industry. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science,*18 (5), 39-44.

Tiedemann, N., Birgele, M. & Semeijn, J. (2009). Increasing hotel responsiveness to customers through information sharing. *Tourism Review, 64*, 12-26.

Virima, M., Sandada, M. & Chuchu, T. (2019). The impact of service quality drivers on customer satisfaction in internet provision services of Zimbabwe. *JBRMR, 14*(1), 1-15.

Wang, Y. (2007). Customized authenticity begins at home. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 34(3), 789–804. Retrieved from http://ijecm.co.uk.

Watiki, C. (2014). Service quality and customer satisfaction in hotels in Nairobi, Kenya. Published masters thesis. University of Nairobi, Retrived from http://doi.org/10.1108/18325910710732867.

Wearing, S., & McDonald, M. (2008). The development of community-based tourism: Rethinking the relationship between tour operators and development agents as intermediaries in rural and isolated area communities. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism,* 10, 191–206.

Weirmair, K., & Fuchs, M. (1999). Measuring tourist judgment on service quality. *Annals of Tourism Research, 26*(4), 1004–1021.

Weru, G. (2015, May 2). 'Homestay' deal opens new doors to tourism cash. Daily Nation *Retrived from https://www.nation.co.ke › Business.*