

Implications of Mandatory Star Rating on Guest Accommodation Establishments' Expenditures. A Case of Kigali City

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Abstract: This study examined the insights of guest accommodation establishments' clients on the implications of mandatory star rating of such establishments in terms of the standard of amenities and facilities. The study population was comprised of 1100 guests of star rated guest accommodation establishments in Kigali city from whom 293 were sampled to participate in the study using simple random sampling technique and questionnaires were used to collect data. The key findings were the following: Very many guests perceived the physical structure of star rated accommodations establishments to be in good condition and furnishings were liked by many clients. Guest rooms, guest cloakrooms, bathrooms, public areas and recreation facilities, were well maintained as from many guests point of view. Very many guests highly appreciated food service in star rated guest accommodation establishments. Many guests of star rated accommodation establishments perceived safety and security in star rated guest accommodation establishments in Kigali city as satisfactory. The attractiveness of the area surrounding star rated accommodation establishments was highly admired by many guests. Many guests perceived the provision of facilities for disabled people in star rated guest accommodation establishments as being just fairly provided. As far as the provision of shopping facilities in star rated accommodation establishments is concerned, a big number of guests appreciated their provision. The provision of baby sitting facilities is either poorly or just fairly provided and provision of shoe shine facilities in star rated guest accommodation establishments as being either poorly or fairly provided. Basing on the findings, it was concluded that the amenities and facilities of star rated guest accommodation establishments are appreciated by guests with exception of a few.

Keywords: Guest accommodation establishments, implications, mandatory, star rating, standard, amenities and facilities.

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2017, the government of Rwanda started star rating tourism entities like guest accommodation establishments among others. The objective of above activity was to raise the standard of such entities in terms of amenities and facilities so that both domestic and International tourists get satisfaction. The overall outcome of star rating the tourism entities was anticipated to be increased demand for tourism services which would enable the investors in tourism businesses to get higher financial benefits.

This study examined the insights of guest accommodation establishments' clients on the implications of mandatory star rating of such establishments in terms of the standard of amenities and facilities. The reason for examining the insights of clients was to find out the extent to which the anticipated raised standard of amenities and facilities standard have been achieved after the guest accommodation establishments have been star rated. The researcher anticipated that this study findings could enable the Government of Rwanda and other stakeholders in the tourism and hospitality sector to evaluate the outcomes of the mandatory star rating on guest accommodation establishments which form the biggest component of tourism entities in aspects of amenities and facilities standards. This study was carried out in Kigali City where the majority of the star rated guest accommodation establishments are situated. The study population was comprised of 1100 guests of star rated guest accommodation establishments in Kigali city from whom 293 were sampled to participate in the study using simple random sampling technique. The study employed a research design that allowed the use of questionnaires to collect data from participants. The collected data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science, denoted as (SPSS) and presented using tables and charts.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Qi and Qiang (2013), guest accommodation establishment star rating has a similar outcome as word-of-mouth reputation, as it is an indicator of quality and measurement of the level of facilities and amenities. Zablah et al (2011), noted that guest accommodation establishments rating is beneficial to both the customers and the hospitality industry due to the fact that, it strongly brings about improvement of facilities and amenities.

Guest accommodations star rating allows the visitors to easily and accurately identify the types of accommodation establishments they are looking for and encourages hospitality sector investors to improve the level and range of facilities and amenities (Qi and Qiang 2013). Furthermore, guest accommodations establishments' rating system highlights the guest accommodations weaknesses and finally eliminates poor quality facilities and amenities which damage the good reputation of the hospitality industry (Pathak and Modi, 2014)

Zeithaml et al (2009), noted that when guests book an accommodation establishment based on its ratings, they have a certain expectation of high standard amenities and facilities that the establishment is likely to have. If the standard of facility amenities and facilities meets their expectations, consumers will be happy and satisfied because service standard is related with a wide comprehension of amenities and facilities expectations. Knowing what the clients of a guest accommodation establishment expect as a result of its star rate, is the first and most critical step in providing a class amenities and facilities, and misjudging what clients expect can mean losing them to competitors. This means that any variation between clients' expectations and their real experiences influences clients' satisfaction.

A higher star rating is likely to motivate accommodation establishment managers to improve their operations and deliver an optimum level of amenities and facilities standards which ultimately attracts more clients (Schneider and Bowen, 2009).

Mehta et al (2010), stated that when guests book a guest accommodation establishment based on its ratings, they have an expectation of high standard of amenities and facilities that the establishment is likely to have and if the amenities and facilities they find are similar to their expectations, clients will be happy and satisfied. Ryals and Knox (2011), noted that clients satisfaction results from the degree of perceived level of amenities and facilities standard provided by a particular star rate of a guest accommodation establishment. The higher the perceived level of the amenities and facilities standard, the more satisfied the clients are, which in turn creates loyalty and results in clients returning to the guest accommodation establishment and also recommending it to others.

According to Raj (2007), to ensure superior standard of amenities and facilities in a guest accommodation establishments, the management of such establishments have to seek star rating requirements. This activity is necessary for improvement of establishments' amenities and facilities standards and ensuring customer satisfaction. It is necessary for the management to pay more attention to the improvement of the establishment's management itself, in particular to an overall remarkable management and improvement of the standard of the amenities and facilities, involving all employees in this process so as to fulfill the basic requirements for being awarded with a star. A research done by Peppard (2010), found out that the higher the guest accommodation establishment category according to the star classification system, the greater the standard of amenities and facilities provided by them. The benefits are extremely fruitful and can help in advancing the brand value of the establishment, because customers, after all, are satisfied only when they use superior amenities and facilities in the *best possible* manner.

3. FINDINGS

The third question of this study was to examine the perception of guests towards star rated guest accommodation establishment's facilities and amenities. This question was set due to the fact that the amenities and facilities constitute key attributes assessed during star rating process and the establishments having many and quality amenities and facilities usually get higher stars which improves their image and can as a result bring about increased number of guests. To begin with, the guests who were 293 were asked to rate the physical structure of the guest accommodation establishments. The physical structure of guest accommodation establishment is composed of the building's exterior landscape grounds, interior public space and guest rooms. The data in table 1, show that 11.6% of the

respondents rated the physical structure of the guest accommodation establishment to be excellent, 64.5% rated the physical structure as being very good, 17.1% considered the structure to be good, 6.1% felt they are fair while 0.7% were of the view that the physical structure of star rated guest accommodation establishments to be poor.

Table 1. State of establishment physical structure

	Perception	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Excellent	34	11.6	11.6	11.6
	Very good	189	64.5	64.5	76.1
	Good	50	17.1	17.1	93.2
	Fair	18	6.1	6.1	99.3
	Poor	2	.7	.7	100.0
	Total	293	100.0	100.0	

Another element of guest accommodation establishment that guests were asked to rate is finishing which are composed of floor and wall coverings, curtains, lighting fixtures, appliances and furniture. As regards to the rating of furnishing by guests, the information in figure 1, shows that 27.65%, rated it as excellent, 46.76% considered furnishings to be very good and 10.92% rated furnishings of star rated guest accommodation establishment as being good, 13.56% rated them as fair while only 1.02% considered furnishings to be poor.

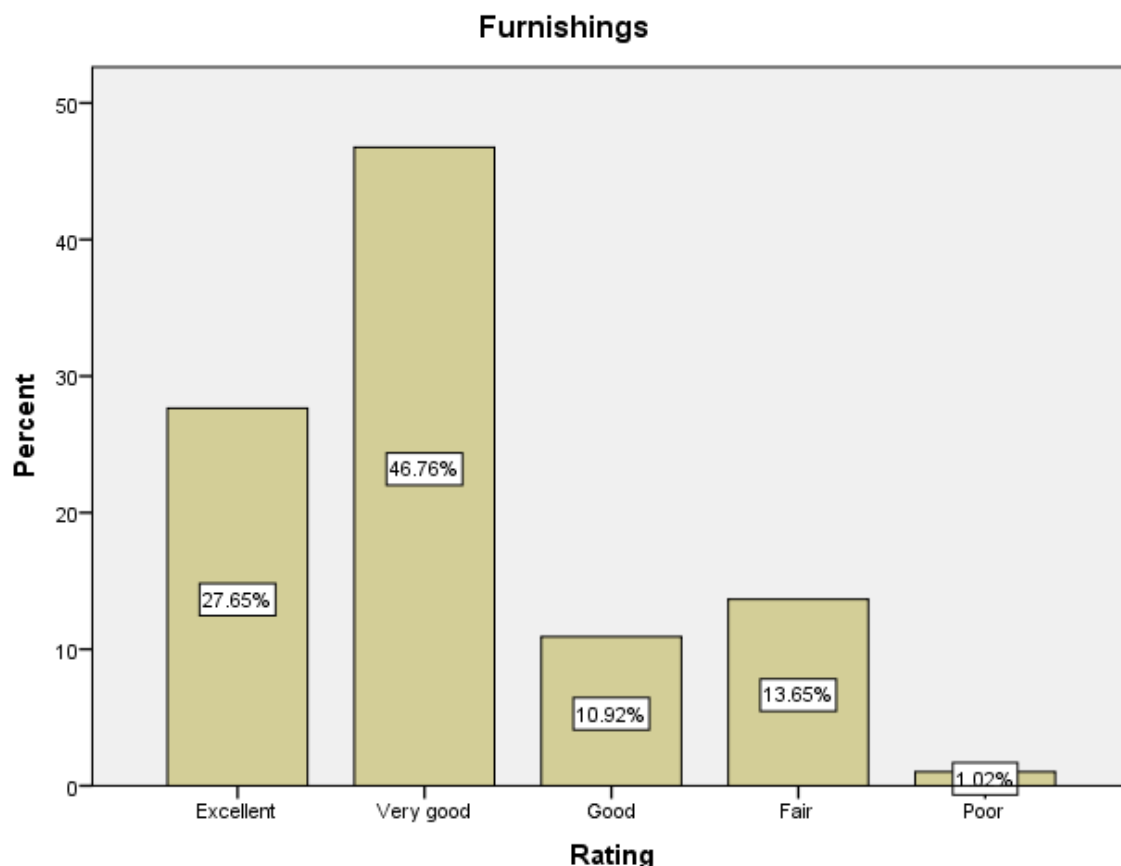


Figure 1. Guests rating of furnishings

The guests were further requested to rate the maintenance level of star rated guest accommodation establishments. The specific elements requested for rating were maintenance level of guest rooms, guest cloakrooms, bathrooms, public areas and recreation facilities. The findings in figure 1, show that 34.8% rated the maintenance of star rated guest accommodation establishments as being excellent, 33.4% considered maintenance to be very good, 17.1% felt the maintenance was good, 14.0 % rated the maintenance to be fair while only 0.7% rated maintenance of guest rooms, guest cloakrooms, bathrooms, public areas and recreation facilities as poor.

Table 2. Maintenance of guest accommodation establishments

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Excellent	102	34.8	34.8	34.8
	Very good	98	33.4	33.4	68.3
	Good	50	17.1	17.1	85.3
	Fair	41	14.0	14.0	99.3
	Poor	2	.7	.7	100.0
	Total	293	100.0	100.0	

Another aspect of the guest accommodation establishment that was rated by guests was food service. The guests' evaluation covered restaurant and room service, food quality and variety, table setting and presentation. As regards to food service in star rated accommodation establishments and as shown in table 3, the majority of the guests representing 37.5% considered it to be very good. The next big number (30.7%) rated food service to be excellent. In addition, 22.9% indicated that food service was good, 7.2% pointed out that it was fair and only 1.7% considered food service to be poor.

Table 3. Food service

	Perception	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Excellent	90	30.7	30.7	30.7
	Very good	110	37.5	37.5	68.3
	Good	67	22.9	22.9	91.1
	Fair	21	7.2	7.2	98.3
	Poor	5	1.7	1.7	100.0
	Total	293	100.0	100.0	

As far as guests' safety and security is concerned, the data in table 4, indicates that the majority of the respondents which is equivalent to 44.4% rated guest safety and security to be excellent. In addition, 27% considered guest safety and security to be very good and 20.8% were of the view that guest safety and security was good. Additionally, 6.8% felt guest safety and security was fair, whereas a small number (1.0%) rated the guest safety and security in star rated accommodation establishments as being poor.

Another attribute of a guest accommodation establishment which is usually appreciated by guests which is given key attention during star rating is attractiveness of the surrounding area. In consideration of this aspect, guests were asked to rate the attractiveness of the surrounding area of star rated guest accommodation establishments in terms of safety, serenity, accessibility directional signage. The data displayed in table 4 show that more than half (60.8%) of the guests rated the attractiveness of the surrounding area of star rated guest accommodation establishment to be excellent. Furthermore, 25.3% rated the same attribute as very good, 7.8% rated it as good, 5.5% indicated that it was fair while only 0.7% the surrounding area of star rated guest accommodation establishment to be poor.

Furthermore, 27.0 % considered guest' safety and security in star rated guest accommodation establishments to be very good, 20.8% were of the view that it's good, 6.8% evaluated it as fairly provided while 1.0% considered guests' safety and security to be poor.

Table 4. Guests' safety and security

	Perception	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Excellent	130	44.4	44.4	44.4
	Very good	79	27.0	27.0	71.3
	Good	61	20.8	20.8	92.2
	Fair	20	6.8	6.8	99.0
	Poor	3	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	293	100.0	100.0	

Guest accommodation establishments are expected to be visited by all categories of people including the physically disabled ones. Therefore, while designing such establishments, facilities like ramps and /or lifts (access systems) for physically challenged people should be put into consideration and during assessment for star rating such facilities are observed by the assessors. In view of this aspect, guests were asked rate the provision of access systems for physically challenged people. The findings in table

5, show that the majority (30.7%) of the guests rated provision of access systems for physically challenged people to be fair. The next big percent (26.6 %), rated the provision of access systems for physically challenged people as being good, 23.9% rated provision of access systems for physically challenged people as excellent, and 15.4% considered the systems to very good while only 3.4% rated the provision of access systems for physically challenged people in star rated guest accommodation establishment to be poor.

Table 5. Provision of access systems for physically challenged people

	Perception	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Excellent	70	23.9	23.9	23.9
	Very good	45	15.4	15.4	39.2
	Good	78	26.6	26.6	65.9
	Fair	90	30.7	30.7	96.6
	Poor	10	3.4	3.4	100.0
	Total	293	100.0	100.0	

One of the facilities that is assessed during star rating exercise is shopping space. Guests often need services like printing, internet café and buying items like toothpaste and tooth brush without getting out of the establishment in which they are accommodating. The respondents to this study were therefore requested to rate the provision of shopping facilities in the establishments in which they were accommodating. As illustrated in table 6, more than a half of the guests (54.3%), rated the provision of shopping facilities as being excellent. Many others or 30.7% rated the provision shopping facilities in star rated guest accommodation establishments to be very good. Furthermore, 13.7% considered the provision of shopping facilities to be good, 1.0% rated the facilities as being far and only 0.3% of the guests rated the provision of shopping facilities in rated guest accommodation establishments as being poor.

Table 6. Provision of shopping facilities

	Perception	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Excellent	159	54.3	54.3	54.3
	Very good	90	30.7	30.7	85.0
	Good	40	13.7	13.7	98.6
	Fair	3	1.0	1.0	99.7
	Poor	1	.3	.3	100.0
	Total	293	100.0	100.0	

Star rated guest accommodation establishment are expected to provide baby sitter facilities to guests. Breast feeding mothers who are in the establishment for attending meetings or conferences are supposed by have space where to live their babies and some body attending to them. With regard to provision of baby sitter facilities, the information in table 7 stipulate that the numerous number (48.5%) of guests rated provision of baby sitter facilities to clients by star rated guest accommodation establishments as poor and 30.7%, indicated that provision of such facilities was fair. On the contrary, 10.2% of the guests rated the provision of baby sitter facilities in star rated guest accommodation establishment to be good, 7.2% rated such facilities as being very good and very few clients representing 3.4% rated the provision of baby sitter facilities as being excellent.

Table 7. Rating of provision of baby sitter services

	Rate	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Excellent	10	3.4	3.4	3.4
	Very good	21	7.2	7.2	10.6
	Good	30	10.2	10.2	20.8
	Fair	90	30.7	30.7	51.5
	Poor	142	48.5	48.5	100.0
	Total	293	100.0	100.0	

The last attribute of a guest accommodation establishment that guests were requested to rate was provision of shoe shine facilities. Guest accommodation establishment are expected to have shoe shine facilities and during assessment for star rating, assessors check for availability of such facilities. The data in table 8, indicates that the majority of the client respondents (44.71%) rated the provision of shoe shine facilities in star rated guest accommodation establishments as being poor. In addition, several

other respondents (26.96%), rated the provision of shoe shine facilities as fair. On the other hand, 13.65% rated the provision of shoe shine facilities as good, 10,58% rated it as being very good, whereas 4.10% of the guests considered the provision of shoe shine facilities as being excellent.

Table 8. *Provision of shoe shine facilities*

	Perception	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Excellent	12	4.1	4.1	4.1
	Very good	31	10.6	10.6	14.7
	Good	40	13.7	13.7	28.3
	Fair	79	27.0	27.0	55.3
	Poor	131	44.7	44.7	100.0
	Total	293	100.0	100.0	

4. CONCLUSION

The amenities and facilities constitute key attributes assessed during star rating process and the establishments having many and quality amenities and facilities usually get higher stars which improves their image and can as a result bring about increased number of guests. One of the guest accommodation establishments facility that draws the attention of guests is the physical structure which is composed of the building's exterior landscape grounds, interior public space and guest rooms.

This study established that very many guests perceived the physical structure of star rated accommodations establishments to be in good condition. The furnishings of star rated accommodation establishments were liked by many guests. As regards to the maintenance level of guest rooms, guest cloakrooms, bathrooms, public areas and recreation facilities, the study revealed that all the above facilities are well maintained from many guests point of view. Another aspect of the guest accommodation establishment that was rated by guests was food service. The guests' evaluation covered restaurant and room service, food quality and variety, table setting and presentation. The findings to do with food service indicates that very many guests highly appreciate food service in star rated guest accommodation establishments.

The study further revealed that many guests of star rated accommodation establishments perceived the availability safety and security in star rated guest accommodation establishments in Kigali city as satisfactory. The attractiveness of the area surrounding star rated accommodation establishments was also found to be highly admired by many guests.

Guest accommodation establishments are expected to be visited by all categories of people including the physically disabled ones. Therefore, while designing such establishments, facilities like ramps and /or lifts (access systems) for physically challenged people should be put into consideration. However, this study found out that many guests perceive the provision of such facilities in star rated guest accommodation establishments as being just fair.

As far as the provision of shopping facilities in star rated accommodation establishments is concerned, the study revealed that a big number of guests appreciate their provision. Star rated guest accommodation establishment are expected to provide baby sitter facilities to guests. Breast feeding mothers who are in the establishment for attending meetings or conferences need specific space where to live their babies with some body attending to them. However, this study found out that the provision of such services is either poorly or just fairly provided.

Star rated guest accommodation establishment are expected to have shoe shine facilities. Nevertheless, this study found out that the majority of the client respondents perceived the provision of shoe shine facilities in star rated guest accommodation establishments as being either poor or fair.

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