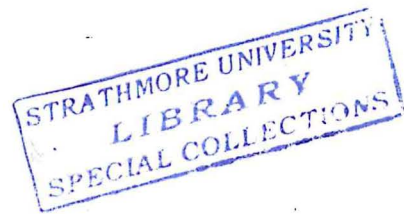


**THE INFLUENCE OF SERVICE QUALITY ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION:
A CASE OF THE KENYAN STANDARD GAUGE RAILWAY**

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078098



**A Research dissertation Submitted to the School of Management and Commerce in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Award of Degree in
Master of Commerce at Strathmore University**

May, 2019

DECLARATION

Declaration

I declare that this work has not been previously submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

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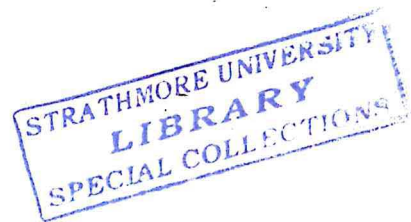
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ABBREVIATIONS

SERVQUAL – service quality model

SERVPEF- The performance component of the service quality scale

E SQUAL- Electronic service quality model



ABSTRACT

The key to sustainable competitive advantage in the public transport industry amidst today's world of dynamic changes in the business environment and intense competition depends on delivering high quality services, which will in turn yield to customer satisfaction, customer retention and business sustainability. Service quality has become a major area of interest in the service industry as customers' needs evolve and become almost insatiable. Service quality is a function of customer satisfaction and a critical issue in the competitive market to determine the sustainability of an organization. A firm's interest to measure and meet customers' requirements is key to influencing brand loyalty in turn generating more business to the company. The purpose of this study was to assess the influence of service quality on customer satisfaction by looking at a case of the Standard Gauge Railway in Kenya. The study examined which dimensions had a positive influence on service quality and which dimensions had the most and least impact on service quality as perceived by train passengers. To achieve this purpose, data was collected from 395 passengers using the services of the train using a structured questionnaire. Service Quality (SERQUAL) model was adopted as a measure of service quality. The findings revealed that all the service quality dimensions (IVs) were found to be positively correlated to customer satisfaction (DV). The spearman correlation analysis showed a moderate relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. The most valued service quality dimension was reliability with responsiveness considered as the least important. The study was only limited to the passenger stream of the standard gauge railway and could also be replicated on the cargo side as well to determine the level of satisfaction.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the study

The rapid competitive business environment has culminated greater heights of ambiguity (Feurer & Chaharbaghi, 1996). The growing ambiguity is the consequence of increased customer anticipations. The development of strategies that will differentiate the organization from its competitors becomes the key success factor as the level of dynamics in business environments increases. One strategy is to ensure service quality with an aim of ensuring that customers are satisfied (Krishnamurthy, SivaKumar & Sellamuthu, 2010). The transport sector for instance has undergone tremendous transformation characterized by the changes in consumer needs, behavior, competitive innovation which has been attributed by technological advancements. The dilution of regional borders and customer empowerment on information such as price transparency and service standards has resulted in giving customers options to move to competitors whom they perceive to be offering services of higher quality (Ghobadian, et. al.1994). Businesses are therefore compelled by necessity rather than choice to raise standards in terms of offering quality services as a way of ensuring customer satisfaction. (Ghobadian & Jones, 1994).

The transport industry in Kenya has an important role in the stimulation of economic prosperity of the nation as people engage public transport to access areas of employment, education, health, recreation and markets for products and services. The demand of public travel demand has therefore increased causing a complexity in the supply of more capacity to manage the menace effectively. The situation has increased traffic jams thus constricting movements to important destinations in many cities in the world. Research conducted in several cities in the world reveal that most travelers express discontent with the quality of services rendered or supplied (Richard, 2005). This is pegged to the fast urban population increase yielding an increase in demand which most transport systems are unable to offer. An assessment of the standard gauge railway train services as a new entrant is therefore critical to shed light on whether the quality of service offered by the train impacts on customer satisfaction.

Service quality is a key factor in assessing the performance of a company as depicted on the value of its products and services (Irfan, Kee & Shahbaz, 2012). Earlier, quality was critical only in the manufacturing industry but during the last couple of decades there has been a remarkable

growth in concern in the service sector around the globe. The vast literature suggests that service sector has risen to be the fastest growing segment in the global economy (Ghobadian, Speller & Jones, 1994). The service sector is cognizant that service quality is the sole source of acquiring competitiveness and sustainability in business. Customer satisfaction on the other hand is a pressing issue mainly because in the service sector client retention is more essential than bringing on board new customers (Kim, Ng & Kim, 2009; Lee, Lee, & Yoou, 2000; Namkung & Jang, 2007; Park, Robertson, & Wu, 2004). Hence, service quality and customer satisfaction as a topic has acquired a sizable attention by both academicians and practitioners encouraging service companies to exert maximum efforts towards client focused services and progressive upgrading so as to ensure customer satisfaction.

In the middle of all changes taking place in the business environs, the service anticipations from clients have increased and their perseverance with bad service is retrogressing (Ghobadian et al, 1994). According to Khudri & Sultana (2015) the delivery of quality services to customers acts as a major tactic for the perpetual existence and prosperity of a business organization. In meeting changing customer requirements, transport service providers have adopted latest technologies that provide services that are cheaper, efficient and while conducting market surveys to create and increase awareness of the service (Shapiro, 2003; Zeithaml & Bitner, 1996). The above factors prompted for an improvement in the rail transport following the launch of the standard gauge railway. The goal of the study was to examine the effect of service quality on customer satisfaction focusing on what was most important in order to put more emphasis to maximize utility.

1.1.1. Service Quality

Service quality can be explained as customers' opinion of how well a service coincides or surpasses clients' anticipation (Nandan, 2010). In accordance with Zeithaml (1988), service quality is the client's judgement about the general distinction or supremacy of a service. Service quality has also been defined as a form of behavior, similar but not equal to gratification that emerges from the assessment of anticipations with performance (Bolton & Drew, 1991; Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1988). A close evaluation of this explanation suggests uncertainty between the meaning and concept of service quality. The mixed attributes possessed

by a service has made it hard to come into a consensus on the meaning of service quality, but a general inference derived from many authors that it is delivering something intangible in way that delights the consumer rendering value to the money spent (Shainesh & Mathur, 2000). In this study, service quality can be explained as the variance between customer's expectation for service performance before the service encounter and their view of the service received.

Service quality persists to be a key area of concern to both practitioners and researchers who appreciate the influence it has on business results, customer satisfaction, future purchase intentions, and financial outcomes (Kennedy, 2011). Customer's expectation serves as a standard for quantifying service quality since quality is perceived to be high when performance surpasses expectation and quality is low when performance does not meet their expectation (Asubonteng et al., 1996). Expectation is described in service quality literature as desires of a consumer on what they feel a service provider should render rather than would offer (Parasuraman et al., 1988). The intangibility of services has rendered the measurement of service quality more complicated (Yarimoglu, 2014).

In conceptualizing the basic service quality model, Parasuraman et al. (1988) proposed five service quality dimensions namely tangibles, empathy, responsiveness, reliability and assurance. Tangibles are described as appearances of material elements whereas reliability is steady and precise performance while responsiveness is helpfulness and assurance is sincerity, security, competence and courtesy and lastly empathy is good communication and customer understanding. A survey instrument called SERVQUAL was developed to measure service quality which is based on the idea that customers assess a firm's service quality by comparing their perceptions of its service with their own expectations (Sivakumar, Li & Dong, 2014). SERVQUAL evaluates the service quality as the variance between expectation and performance and was hence applied in the study.

The research on service quality and customer satisfaction has been replicated in numerous industries such as public transportation. (Aidoo et al. 2013), airline industry (Sultan & Simpson, 2000), banking (Ravichandran, et al., 2010) and internet (Eriksson & Friman, 2007) and there seem to be an agreement on the existence of a positive relationship between service quality and

customer satisfaction. The above researches have alluded to the fact that an improvement of the tangible dimension of service quality may improve customer satisfaction while others conform to the idea that reliability and empathy are the most important dimensions to be considered. The study focused to test the service quality dimensions that mattered most to passengers.

1.1.2. Customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction has been explained as the feeling that one experiences when the service rendered meets their anticipation. According to Deng et al. (2009), it is the ability of a service provider to provide satisfaction of the highest amount and it is critical for product differentiation and setting up a strong relationship with clients. Mohsan et al. (2011) established that client satisfaction has a very important role in client retention nevertheless it may not guarantee repeat business. Customer satisfaction is an important element in setting up a company's performance (Hossan, 2012). Hunt (1977) confirmed that satisfaction is an approval that an experience was good as it was perceived to be. Mittal & Kamakura (2001) realized client satisfaction to be an important part in adding a consumer's desires for future business. Sureshchandar et al. (2002) established that there is a shared connection between service quality and satisfaction. Both service quality and product quality are frequently observed as a basic prerequisite for satisfying and retaining esteemed customers (Muslim & Zaidi, 2005). Studies on service quality and customer satisfaction have been observed in literature to have used customer referrals to others, return purchase, brand loyalty and positive word of mouth as the measures of customer satisfaction. These elements were also adopted for the study.

Sumaedi et al. (2016) established that in the environment of public transport services, passengers' gratification could be explained as a passenger's positive or negative feeling emerging from his or her assessment on the variance between the entire performances of public transport services with his or her expectation. Firms that consistently and progressively please their customers enjoy greater retention and higher returns due to increased clients' loyalty (Wicks & Roethlein, 2009). It is on this basis that it is vital to keep consumers satisfied and this can be done in various ways including by trying to know their expectations and perceptions of services offered by service providers. In service quality satisfaction is usually assessed on the basis of technical and functional quality (Gronroos, 1984). On many cases, consumers do not

possess significant information on the technical attributes of a service therefore; functional quality emerges as the major factor from to form perceptions of service quality (Donabedian, 1980; 1982).

1.1.3. The Standard Gauge Railway

The Standard Gauge Railway is a major project in the Kenya Vision 2030 growth objective. It was aimed at simplifying transport operations across the boundaries and cut down travel expenses, apart from promoting the economy of Kenya and the neighboring countries (“Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway Project,” 2017). The single-track railway between Mombasa and Nairobi has a route distance of 472 km and a total span of 609 km. The line currently runs on diesel while electrification is envisioned in the nearby future. The multiple unit passenger trains’ capacity is determined by the number of wagons in a particular trip travelling at an average speed of 120 km/h shortening the travel time from more than ten hours between to five hours. Passenger stations have been established in the major towns across the Mombasa Nairobi highway.

The standard gauge railway replaces the old meter gauge railway which suffered from a number of challenges including poor maintenance, a narrow gauge which limited the speed to 40 km/h and low equipment availability. The status of the Kenya Railway Corporation locomotives immensely affected their reliability. A number of serious accidents that led to damage and loss of cargo as well as loss of human lives were also experienced due to the age of locomotives compounded by recurrent human errors including negligence by the maintenance crew often leading to derailments.

The transition from the old meter gauge railway to the standard gauge railway has extensively addressed the technical quality dimension and the corporate image dimension identified by Gronroos. The technical quality dimensions include five output linked attributes consisting of employees’ practical ability, employees’ proficiency, technical solutions, machine quality and computerized systems (Gronroos, 1993). The corporate image dimension explained as the customer’s general opinion of the supplier. The outcome of a service process is not the only thing customers look at but are also interested in how the service is provided therefore

introducing the third dimension of service quality, the functional quality. Whereas customers have generally expressed satisfaction with the service there is a need to examine the extent to which customers are satisfied and to examine what service quality dimensions mattered most.

1.2. Problem statement

In public transport, challenges in ineffectiveness and inefficiency exist throughout the world both in the developed and developing countries in varying amounts (Richard, 2005). They tend to be more severe in the developing world where population increase is more rapid and shortage of resources is famous. Low quality services which yield low value for money, low standards of safety and efficiency, traffic congestion are some of the effects of poor services. The old tendency of doing business as usual is slowly drifting away as businesses become customer oriented which calls for continuous assessment of service delivery practices against the existing regulatory framework, customer perceptions and international standards (Cronin, Brady & Hult, 2000). The existence of further innovations in the developed countries conforms on the evident that customer satisfaction is almost insatiable demanding constant attention and improvements not to mention in the developing countries (Jam'aa, 2015).

In the transportation environment, passenger satisfaction is achieved by the comparison of prior travel expectations and post-travel experiences. Succinctly, when experiences of a passenger compared to the anticipation yields in feeling of gratification, then satisfaction is created. A customer is deemed to be either satisfied or dissatisfied as a consequence of either positive or negative difference between expectations and perceptions. In a study with reference to the private colleges in Pakistan, Bharwana et al (2013) examined dimensions of service quality which youngsters in colleges deemed most important. Service quality attributes including tangibles, empathy, reliability, responsiveness and assurance were utilized in the study. 180 students were randomly chosen for the objective of the study from various levels of education. The outcome confirmed that service quality was found to be a very significant factor to satisfaction. All the dimensions of service quality were found to be positively correlated while empathy showed a negative relationship with service quality and with satisfaction of customers. Assurance and tangible had a greater rating than other perspectives of SERVQUAL while empathy has lowest score (Bharwana, Bashir & Mohsin, 2013).

Manani et al. (2013) examined the main factors influencing customer satisfaction at Kenya Airways. The study adopted a descriptive survey design to acquire information on important determinants of customer satisfaction for passengers at Kenya Airways. The respondents comprised of passengers who had travelled by Kenya airways within six months. The sample size of this study was 100 passengers. The study outcome found that baggage security, appropriate correspondence with clients to inform them on status of their flights, availability of variety of food and capacity of the airline to inform to travelers regarding the weather on their destinations were the important factors of customer satisfaction with passengers. Empathy by airline crew towards the disabled people onboard, weather status prevailing at the destinations were mostly observed to increase greatly the level of customer satisfaction (Manani, Nyaoga, Bosire, Ombati & Kongere, 2013).

Wachira (2017) evaluated the influence of service quality on customer satisfaction in the commercial banks in Nairobi. In order to attain this objective, data was collected randomly from 401 respondents chosen from the overall population of clients holding accounts in the Tier I commercial banks in Nairobi. A structured questionnaire was employed to collect primary data from the bank customers and a descriptive and correlational research design was used in the study. Bank Service Quality model was adopted to evaluate service quality. The study findings indicated that service quality had an effect on client satisfaction. The most valued dimension of service quality was reliability.

In view of the contextual differences, the study sought to evaluate the influence of service quality on customer satisfaction a case of the Kenyan standard gauge railway amidst the substantial amounts of investments incurred to test whether they would have any effect to impact on satisfaction. The study aimed to test whether similar results will be observed as key attributes of the physical and technical elements were enhanced.

1.3. Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study was to establish the influence of service quality on customer satisfaction on the standard gauge railway passenger train. The specific objectives for the study are:

- i. To determine the influence of tangibility on customer satisfaction among passengers using the standard gauge railway passenger train.
- ii. To establish the influence of empathy on customer satisfaction among passengers using the standard gauge railway passenger train.
- iii. To assess the influence of reliability on customer satisfaction among passengers using the standard gauge railway passenger train.
- iv. To examine the influence of responsiveness on customer satisfaction among passengers using the standard gauge railway passenger train.
- v. To evaluate the influence of assurance on customer satisfaction among passengers using the standard gauge railway passenger train.

1.4. Research questions

- I. To what extent does tangibility affect customer satisfaction among passengers using the standard gauge railway passenger train?
- II. To what extent does empathy influence customer satisfaction among passengers using the standard gauge railway passenger train?
- III. To what extent does reliability impact on customer satisfaction among passengers using the standard gauge railway passenger train?
- IV. To what level does responsiveness dictate customer satisfaction among passengers using the standard gauge railway passenger train?
- V. To what extent does assurance influence customer satisfaction among passengers using the standard gauge railway passenger train?

1.5. Scope of the Study

The study sought to assess the influence of service quality on customer satisfaction a case study on standard gauge railway. The focus was on the passengers using the SGR train to and from Mombasa. Passengers targeted were those who were either waiting to travel and/or those who had finished their journey as well as those travelling. Furthermore, the study confined itself to user responses and did not include staff viewpoints. The study respondents consisted of 395 passengers and the study used questionnaire to collect the information.

1.6. Significance of the study

The study provides a tool for line managers in the public land transport services sector to gauge the level of customer satisfaction and explore avenues to improvement.

Secondly it also provides provide a basis of improvement on future developments by manufacturers and policy makers based on the feedback from the active users. The research information will provide vital data to the policymakers and regulators of transport industry to design new strategies and policies for enhanced services in the transport sector.

Thirdly it also aims in maximizing utility on the standard gauge railway in its useful life for a quick payback of the investment incurred. The provision of quality public transport service will promote a modal choice from private means to public means across the world.

Lastly, it also extends the existing body of knowledge on the impact of service quality on customer satisfaction. Future scholars will also benefit from the results of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on theories anchoring the study, previous studies carried on customer satisfaction and service quality. It also highlights the various approaches organizations use to measure service quality and customer satisfaction.

2.2. Theoretical Foundation

The research was based on two theories namely expectancy disconfirmation theory and the equity theory.

2.2.1. Expectancy-Disconfirmation theory

Oliver (1977; 1980) suggested the Expectancy-Disconfirmation paradigm to be the most promising theoretical framework for evaluating client gratification inferring on the inadequacies of the early models of client satisfaction (Yuksel, 2008). The theory infers that clients buy product and services with prior purchase anticipations regarding the anticipated performance. The levels of expectations then serve a benchmark which the product is judged. As an example, immediately the product or service has been utilized, the results are then compared with the expectations. If the end result meets the anticipation confirmation happens. Disconfirmation happens wherever there's a distinction between the expectations and the outcomes.

A client is happy or discontented as a result of either positive or negative distinction between anticipations and opinions. Thus, once service performance is healthier than what the client had at first expected, there's a positive disconfirmation between expectations and performance which ends up in satisfaction, whereas once service performance is evidently, there's a confirmation between expectations and perceptions which ends up in satisfaction. In distinction, once service performance isn't nearly as good as what the client expected, there's a negative disconfirmation between expectations and perceptions that causes discontentedness (Rod, Ashill, Shao & Carruthers, 2009).

In the transport sector when customer's expectations are high and performance is low, disconfirmation will result. On the other hand, when expectations are low, high performance will result to a surprise effect and there will be satisfaction (Oliver, 1980). This theory shows that there is need to gauge the level of expectation of customers and work on exceeding the expectations to create high levels of customer satisfaction (Wachira, 2017). The experience for new users will be measured against their personal expectations and what they could have probably heard about the train while repeat customers will benchmark the services against the previous experience which will highly determine future purchase intentions. This links up with the study on how first time users make or derive standards of measurement prior service encounter.

2.2.2. The Equity theory

In accordance with the Equity Theory, satisfaction occurs when customers regard their output and input ratio as being reasonable (Swan & Oliver, 1989). Equity models are derived from the Equity Theory (Adams, 1963), and are anchored on the notion of input-output ratio, which plays an important role in satisfaction. The theory suggests that parties to an exchange will feel satisfied if in their minds, the proportion of their output to inputs is fair (Oliver & DeSarbo, 1988). A person feels equitably treated or not may depending on various factors including the price paid, the benefits accrued, the time and effort expended during the dealings and the experience of previous transactions (Woodruff et al 1983). This infers that comparative standards may take different forms. This theory shares resemblances with the Comparison Level Theory which suggests that bases of comparison applied by customers in gratification judgments may be more than just anticipations.

Erevvels and Leavitt (1992) contend that equity models can provide a comprehensive picture of consumer satisfaction in circumstances that may not be netted using old satisfaction models. They may be particularly beneficial in modeling situations where satisfaction with the other party is regarded to be an important element of the transaction. The level of satisfaction in railway transport is based on the perceived value or benefit that customers believe they get from the services offered. If customers feel that their input through deposits or time is reciprocated with quality service, they will be satisfied.

Jarvis (2016) established that service quality is achieved if there is fair investment in the supply of satisfying experience to the consumers. This implies that expenses incurred in the enhancement of service provision may reduce the profit margin. The price levied is almost equal to the cost that was incurred in the provision of the services. The profit margins become low in the short run but in the long-run performance of the business is higher than those charging higher prices and not investing in superior processes and systems to satisfy the customers. The attraction of new customers to use the SGR for example needs investment in service quality, which can differentiate this mode of transport from the rest, hence achieve more repeat customers as well as customer referrals. The theory links up with the study signifying the importance of value for money as perceived by customers on the services or goods acquired.

2.3. Empirical Review

The section reviews literature on service quality dimensions and the link between service quality and client satisfaction. The construct of service quality as articulated by Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry (1985) has been broadly studied in various sectors. In a practical view it can be implied that marketers are likely to envisage and plan the actions in improving the services by appreciating the influences of various attributes on customer gratification.

2.3.1. Service quality and customer satisfaction

The topic service quality and customer satisfaction have been regarded as the key overriding theories in service marketing because eventually they lead to the enhancement of client loyalty on a product or service (Krishnamurthy et al., 2010). Customer satisfaction has been regarded to be centered on the clients' experience on a specific service interaction (Cronin and Taylor, 1992). It conforms that service quality is a key determinant of client satisfaction since quality of service arises as a result of the superior services rendered by service providers in companies. Passenger satisfaction in the transportation context is achieved by the comparison of prior travel expectations and post-travel experiences. In summary, when passenger experiences compared to the expectation yields in the feeling of gratification, then satisfaction is achieved (Eboli & Mazzulla, 2009). In reference to marketing literature, Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction have been theorized as discrete yet nearly related concepts (Siddiqi, 2011). The two ideas have a

positive link (Beerli et al., 2004) with two contrasting perspectives. Numerous researchers imply that service quality contributes to customer satisfaction (Kassim & Abdullah, 2010; Kumar et al., 2010).

On the other hand, Beerli (2004), Eboli & Mazzulla (2012) view client satisfaction as one of the determinants to evaluate the quality of service. Oliver (1993) suggested that service quality would be an antecedent to client satisfaction irrespective of whether these concepts were incremental or once off.

Scholars have attained precision on the definition and assessment of service quality and client satisfaction. Satisfaction and service quality bear some similarities; however, generally satisfaction is a broader concept, whereas service quality is specifically on dimensions of service (Wilson et al., 2008). Despite the fact that other factors such as price and product quality can influence customer satisfaction, perceived service quality is also a component of customer satisfaction (Zeithaml et al. 2006). The study will focus on various dimensions of service quality namely tangibles, empathy, responsiveness, reliability and assurance and their impact on customer satisfaction.

2.3.1.1. Tangibility and customer satisfaction

Services are categorized as imperceptible as they cannot be felt, seen or touched (Berry et al. 1985). Nevertheless, tangibility could be attained through physical elements such as equipment which customers perceive as evidence of service quality (Kotler & Keller, 2015). Literature review suggests that there is no sufficient guidance as to whether or not the physical environment really matters to customers. A review of early service quality researches has established opposing reactions on the significance of physical elements, some concluding that it is relatively insignificant while others reiterated its importance.

In a study conducted by Bharwana et al. (2013) to determine service quality dimensions which mattered most to youth in colleges, the results from 180 students randomly selected revealed that tangibles and assurance had a greater score than all other perspectives of the SERVQUAL

model. The outcome was based on the length of service encounter which made tangibles an important factor as students spent a greater part of the day in school.

The findings concurred with a research done by Kehn & Reimer (2005) that tangibles aspects had an immense effect on the intangible attributes of service quality; furthermore, they established that the gross impact of tangibles on perceived service quality is significantly immense than the immediate effect, which infer that the intangibles have a facilitative role on tangibles. Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry (1991) highlighted that the physical environment had no impact on a consumer's total quality perceptions of a bank, insurance and a telephone company. Equally, Cronin & Taylor (1992) established that the physical attributes of the service environment had no impact on customers' quality perceptions of a dry cleaning and pest control companies and had only a partial influence on quality perceptions for fast food restaurants and banks. A conflicting view on the interceding function of an interactive feature on the tangible dimension was explained by Bateson (1995), who contended that the tangible elements of an institution dictates behavior to an encounter with a service.

According to Munusamy, et al. (2010), tangibility of services can be added by ensuring that the equipment used such as computers are of the best quality, the chairs that customers seat as they wait for services are of good quality and the employees should also treat the customers well to enhance the tangibility of the services delivered. All these factors help the customers feel that they are paying for something that can be seen. They have to compare these aspects with other service providers to get the assurance that they are getting satisfactory services that are worth their money.

2.3.1.2. Reliability and customer satisfaction

Munusamy et al. (2010) explained reliability as punctuality and precision in service delivery. It is also defined as possessing the capacity to render the proposed service promptly, dependably and accurately(Ghobadian et al., 1994).

In a study conducted by Wachira (2017) in an attempt to assess the effect of service quality to customer satisfaction in the context of Nairobi County in Kenya, reliability was concluded to be the most important dimension of service quality suggesting that consumers had a high affinity for

banks that were consistent and dependable in their performance. The study variables which included effectiveness & assurance, access, price, tangibility, service portfolio and reliability were used to assess service quality in the commercial banks.

The arguments above have corresponded with several researches conducted in different parts of the world. According to Mohammad & Alhamadani (2011), reliability as a service variable has a significant influence on consumer satisfaction. Wolfenbarger & Gilly (2002) established that reliability ratings were the strongest determinant of customer satisfaction and the second strongest predictor of intentions to repurchase on site. Additionally, Kennedy (2011) noted that customers will not seek services from providers whom they are not sure that they can get services. They will always seek services from those providers they are assured that they will always get services. The time taken to try and seek services from unreliable provider is costly for some customers. If the customers feel that they can easily get a bus to their destination but are not assured of a train, then they are likely to always choose a train. Reliability assures that there is convenience for the customers. In the transport sector, reliability can be observed in relation to any distractions when it comes to reaching the destination that is intended. An example is where the railway does not experience congestion, as compared to buses or trailers, which would lead to delay in reaching the desired destination.

2.3.1.3. Assurance and customer satisfaction

Assurance has been described as confidence, the feelings of trust and security that an employee inspires in a customer when dealing with an organization (Parasuraman et al, 1985). Auka, *et al.* (2013) established that if customers obtain tailored and timely services from staff who were cordial and proficient, then their level of trust with the institution was elevated. Ultimately this yields in higher levels of customer satisfaction. Endowed workers have a capacity to establish tailor made customer's needs, provide better solutions and recognize repeat customers.

Kitapci et al. (2014) in a study to assess the impact of dimensions of service quality on patient satisfaction in the public health care industry in Turkey established that assurance and empathy were the most significant dimensions as perceived by patients. The study adopted the SERVQUAL model where 369 patients who utilized the hospital services were interviewed on

what aspects they regarded most important to provide a basis for further improvements (Kitapci, Akdogan, & Dortyol, 2014).

Gummerus et al., (2004) emphasize that assurance guarantee that the organization will continue to offer the same level of quality services. The employees have to evaluate the needs of the customers, understand their feedback, and then rectify any problems that may have been faced during service delivery. Training the employees in the way they handle customers also help ensure that the employees are always satisfied with what the company offers. The customers are satisfied when assured that the quality they received was not temporary, but is the commitment of the organization to offer the same all the time. Such customers can refer their relatives and friends to the service provider because they are confident that such people will be happy with the same services.

2.3.1.4. Responsiveness and Customer Satisfaction

Responsiveness is defined as the ability to deal with complaints effectively and promptly (Ghobadian et al., 1994). It conforms to a company's ability and willingness to avail a prompt response when customers experience problems (Zeithaml et al., 2002). Understanding customer needs and customizing the service based on responsive feedback improves service satisfaction and trust (Gummerus et al., 2004).

A company striving to keep its customers happy is likely to impact on customer loyalty. Authorities not addressing customer inquiries may increase client discontentment with the company and push them to acquire a competitor's services. A company prioritizing responsiveness creates a better opportunity to serve clients whenever problems occur proactively.

Andaleeb (2001) conducted a study in Bangladesh targeted at establishing the importance of service quality on customer satisfaction in the government hospitals. Using systematic sampling 216 surveys were completed and through regression analysis and factor analysis a significant relationship was established between the five service quality dimensions and patient satisfaction. The effect of responsiveness on patient satisfaction was also observed to be relatively significant. The magnitude of the effects of responsiveness was relatively lower than the effects of discipline

and assurance. However, this did not suggest that responsiveness was not important or should be ignored in hospitals' bid to enhance service quality. Instead, this implied that greater gains in patient satisfaction can be realized by attending more to discipline and assurance in hospitals (Andaleeb, 2001).

Nazi (2012) explains that customers make decisions within a short period, depending on the information that they have at hand. Responding to the customers immediately shows the customers they are always available to serve them and that their complaints will be handled even after the customers have left from the company. Such responsiveness instills confidence and trust in the business where the customer is seeking services. In the modern world, technologies such as social media and phones provide a medium of improving on responsiveness to the customers; hence solve their problems in the shortest time possible.

2.3.1.5. Empathy and Customer Satisfaction

Empathy reveals the extent to which a service is customized to meet a customer's needs (Lee, 2005). Empathy has a principal role in ensuring a satisfactory customer experience. Reimer and Kehn (2018) agree that empathy is very crucial when it comes to achieving customer satisfaction. The employees have to be trained to ensure that they can easily connect with the customers. One has to understand their feelings and frustrations and reassure them that things will be better. This can help make them feel to be respected and valued. In such a case, the business would not just be making money, but wishing the customers well in their personal life. If the employees show empathy, the customers develop the view that they are valued and heard by such a business. This attracts them to the company even in the future, hence good performance.

2.4. Gaps in research

The intangibility nature of service alongside frequent changes and evolution in consumer preference make it a challenge to measure and replicate service delivery (Berry et al. 1985). This emerges from the fact that it is often difficult to perceive what goes on in customer's mind, considering that, customer's tastes and preferences change rapidly (Nazi, 2012). This issue has remained a challenge, regardless of the numerous studies in this area (Munusamy, *et al.*2010).

Organizations have an integral task of ascertaining customer's needs, wants and interest, and struggle to satisfy them efficiently and effectively to gain competitive advantage and ensure sustainable growth and increased revenue streams, since service quality varies by characteristic of customers and context (Lee 2011).

In Sweden, Friman & Fellesson (2009) conducted a study to measure service quality and customer satisfaction in the public transportation. Data was collected from 6,021 respondents from six cities through telephone surveys selected randomly. The study findings revealed that the citizens from Vienna city were the most satisfied while the citizens from Oslo were the least satisfied with the public transport. The relationship between vehicles per kilometer per inhabitant was found to be insignificant indicating that the actual conditions of the travel systems were of more importance (Friman & Fellesson, 2009). Park et al. carried out a study in Australia in order to establish the influence of specific attributes of an airline service quality at the domestic terminal of Sydney airport. A total of 620 questionnaires were administered randomly at different timings of the day over a 2-week period. The dimensions adopted in the study included in flight service, airport service, reservation and ticketing, employee service, reliability, pricing and airline image. The results established that employee service and inflight service were key drivers of satisfaction which was out rightly related to the future of Australian domestic passengers behavioral intentions (Park, Robertson, & Wu, 2006). The literature reviewed suggested that numerous researches on service quality have been done more in the industrialized countries with a keen interest to address the service gaps through constant monitoring and evaluation of services.

In Kenya, researches in service quality have been extensively carried out in the airline industry, banking industry, educational sector and tourism industry. Akama & Kieti (2003) conducted a study to measure tourist satisfaction with the Kenya's wildlife safari at Tsavo national park. A total of 200 international tourists were interviewed and the results portrayed that majority of the respondents were satisfied with the experience. The aim of the study was to investigate the argument on the reduction of quality of parks in Kenya using Tsavo as a case study. In this regard it may be argued that probably there exist other exogenous factors that are responsible for

the reduction of the quality of the parks and that and that the product was not a determinant of the decline (Akama & Kieti, 2003).

Auka (2013) carried out a study to evaluate the consequence of service quality dimensions on customer loyalty to the retail banks. The study investigated the link between service quality dimensions and customer loyalty. In order to establish the relationship data was gathered from a sample of 384 customers of retail banks on the 5 service quality dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. The outcome indicated that all the variables of service quality had a positive and significant effect on client loyalty in retail banking .The findings reinforced the need for bankers to put an emphasis on the underlying service quality dimensions in order to establish and uphold customer loyalty (Auka, 2013).

Buluma (2012) evaluated the case for Kenya Railway Corporation, to understand the link between service quality and customer satisfaction. The study was based on survey questions with passengers randomly sampled from various coaches in trains heading to various destinations within the country. The findings reveal that there is a need to review customer's views from time to time so as and make changes depending on needs. This includes when it comes to scheduling, since there is a need to have flexibility of the trains heading various destinations as well as the timing of the trains. The breakdown of the trains during the journey is another source of customer dissatisfaction. Generally, customers wish to travel at different times and having a more flexible schedule determines satisfaction of the customers. The condition of the seats was also an important issue for the railway transport in Kenya.

Due to the major differences that exists in terms of geographical differences, social differences, cultural differences, and economic differences between the countries i.e. Malaysia and the Middle East where most studies have been carried out the same generalization cannot be made in an African country like Kenya. This implies that both a knowledge gap and literature gap does exist. How the high end and low end customers in the developed countries perceive tangibles, empathy, responsiveness, reliability and assurance is deemed to be different from how customers in Kenya perceive the SERVQUAL dimensions based on the various differentiating factors. It is therefore equally important, to study customer satisfaction with service quality in emerging

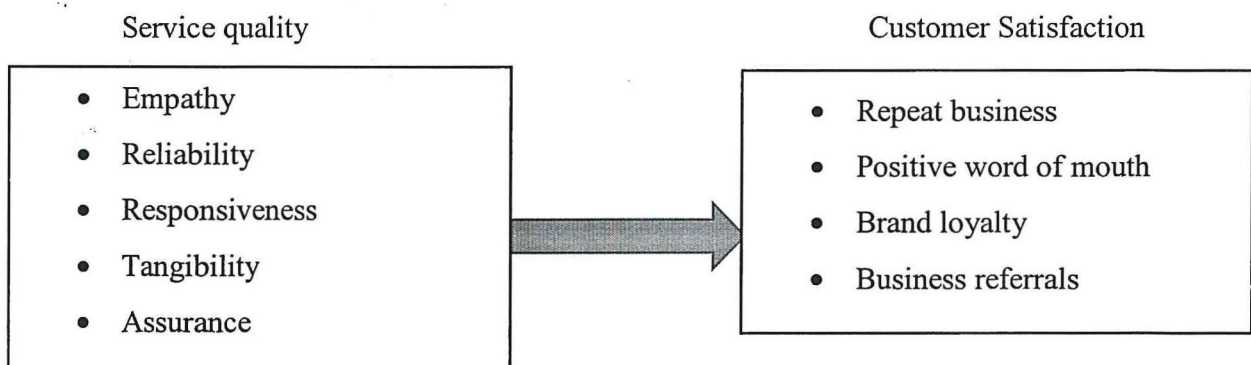
countries, where service industries are among the fastest growing sectors. Very few studies have been conducted in Kenya on service quality as well as performance in the transport sector especially on the SGR since it is a new thing in Kenya. It is from this background that this study seeks to determine customer satisfaction with service quality, a case study of the Kenyan standard gauge railway amidst the substantial developments in infrastructure to test whether passengers are satisfied with the services rendered and point out areas of weaknesses that deserve more attention to maximize on the utility.

2.5. Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature reviewed, the conceptual framework below was designed. The diagram illustrates the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction will be the dependent variable and will measure service quality in relation to five service quality dimensions namely empathy, tangibles, responsiveness, assurance and reliability to establish their impact on customer satisfaction yielding repeat business, a positive word of mouth; brand loyalty and business referrals.

Figure 2.1: Service quality and customer satisfaction

Independent variables Dependent variable



Source: Researcher (2019)

2.6. Operationalization of the Study Variables

This research revolves around concept of service quality and customer satisfaction. Service quality is the dependent variable while customer satisfaction is independent variable.

Variable	Constructs	Operational definition	How it is measured	Source
Independent variable (service quality)	Empathy	-Ability to put oneself in the shoes of the customer -This helps understand their needs	5-point Likert scale	Lee, 2005
	Reliability	-Ability to deliver promised services reliably and in a consistent manner	5-point Likert scale	Munusamy, et al. (2010)
	Assurance	Ability of the firm and its employees to inspire trust and confidence	5-point Likert scale	Parasuraman et al. 1985
	Tangibles	Physical evidence of the service	5-point Likert scale	Kotler & Keller, 2015
	Responsiveness	Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service	5-point Likert scale	Zeithaml et al., 2002
Dependent variable Customer satisfaction	Positive word of mouth	A satisfied customer tells others the good attributes about a product, or service	5-point Likert scale	Edvardsson et al. (2000)
	Brand loyalty	The extent of the faithfulness of a consumer to a particular brand	5-point Likert scale	Anderson, et al. (2004)

		expressed through their repeat purchases irrespective of the marketing pressure by other competing brands			
	Repeat business	The buying of a product by a consumer of the same brand name previously bought on another occasion.	5-point scale	Likert	Edvardsson et al. (2000)
	Referrals to others	Acquiring new customers who are suggested to by existing customers	5-point scale	Likert	Anderson, et al. (2004)

2.7. Chapter Summary

In summary the chapter highlighted on the theories which embody the study namely expectancy disconfirmation and equity theory. The two theories emphasize on how satisfaction is realized based on the quality of service. The relationship between service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction was reviewed against various studies conducted in different settings. The section also highlighted gaps in research and how the current study comes in to add value in the existing literature.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology which was employed in the research. It covers research design, population and sampling, data collection methods and data analysis.

3.2. The Research Design

The research design which was available to answer questions concerning the state of the problem under investigation was mostly quantitative (Kothari, 2004). The study therefore adopted a descriptive research design to understand the level of passenger satisfaction on the standard gauge railway train and the service quality dimensions that have an effect on satisfaction. Descriptive design was used since it is helpful in depicting accurate status of events and giving in-depth analysis of variables under study as well as collecting large amount of data in an economical way (Wu, Lin & Hsu, 2011). Correlation coefficient technique was adopted to ascertain the extent to which service quality impacts customer satisfaction on passengers using the train. This research design has been chosen because it attempts to explore the degree of relationship between two variables (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

3.3. Population of the study

The population for this study was passengers using the standard gauge railway train services. According to the Kenya Railway reports (2018), the capacity of the train is determined by the number of wagons which vary depending on the traffic. On average the full capacity of the train is up to 1062 passengers. The study focused on the period between December 2018 and February 2019. During this time, SGR made an average of four trips per day (2 from Mombasa and 2 from Nairobi). The study used data from Kenya Railways Corporation to arrive at the population of passengers that used the train during this period. Therefore, 412,745 passengers used SGR between December 2018 and February 2019 and this was used as the study population.

3.4. Sampling design

A Fisher based formula below (Cochran., 1963; Gorstein, 2007) was applied to arrive at a sample size. The sample size was derived by computing the minimum sample size required for accuracy in estimating proportions by considering the standard normal deviation set at 95% confidence level (1.96), percentage picking a choice or response (50% = 0.5) and the confidence interval (0.05 = ±5).

The formula was:

$$n = \frac{z^2 (p) (1-p)}{c^2} \\ \frac{1 + \frac{z^2 (p) (1-p)}{c^2 * N}}$$

Where:

n = sample size

z = standard normal deviation set at 95% confidence level

p = percentage picking a choice or response

c = confidence interval

N – Population size (412,745)

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 (0.5) (1-0.5)}{0.05^2} \\ \frac{1 + \frac{1.96^2 (0.5) (1-0.5)}{0.05^2 * 412,745}} \\ = 384.12$$

Therefore, a sample of 384 respondents was proposed but to cater for attrition, 400 respondents were selected for the study.

3.5. Data Collection Method

The study employed a structured questionnaire to collect primary data from the train passengers. The questionnaire was administered following convenient sampling to sample from the general target population using the train services. Questionnaires had four sections; section A consisting of passengers demographic, section B consisting of questions about which service quality dimensions were most important in the train service and section C consisted of the service dimensions and their impact on customer satisfaction. Section D collected data on Customer satisfaction with a focus on (perception and expectation) and service quality dimensions (assurance, tangibles, reliability, responsiveness and empathy).

3.6. Data analysis

Data analysis involves the systematic application of statistical tools to process data into meaningful information (Lewis-Beck, 1995). Data collected was sorted according to the categories presented in the questionnaire. The completed questionnaires were edited to check for completeness and consistency. Using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 25, raw data obtained from the questionnaires was then be checked for completeness and errors through identifying unusual, problematic and extreme values. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation), Spearman's rho correlation analysis and regression analysis were then conducted in that order. Spearman's rho correlation analysis was conducted to determine whether there is a relationship between the dependent and the independent variables and the strength of the relationship if present (Winter, Gosling & Potter, 2016). The correlation coefficient value from this analysis determined the measure of linear association between two variables where the coefficient should always be between -1 and +1. A coefficient of -1 means that variables are perfectly related in a negative linear sense, 0 means that there is no relationship between the variables and +1 indicates that the variables are perfectly related in a positive linear sense (Cooper & Schindler, 2014).

A regression analysis was then carried out. In this a model of relationship is hypothesized in the form $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X + \varepsilon$ where β_0 and β_1 are model parameters and ε is a probabilistic error term that accounts for any variability in Y that cannot be explained by the linear relationship with X (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). Dependent variable of customer satisfaction was regressed against

the independent variables of tangibility, responsiveness, reliability, empathy, and assurance. The equation was as shown below:

$$CS = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Tang.} + \beta_2 \text{Resp.} + \beta_3 \text{Rel.} + \beta_4 \text{Emp.} + \beta_5 \text{Assur.} + \epsilon_i$$

Where;

CS – Customer Satisfaction

Tang. – Tangibility

Resp. – Responsiveness

Rel. – Reliability

Emp. – Empathy

Assur. - Assurance

$\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4, \beta_5$ = coefficients for which we are trying to predict the value of Y.

β_0 = constant.

ϵ_i – Error term

Testing the Model

Correlation Coefficient (R)

This helped the researcher determine to what degree variable movements are associated. Correlation coefficient is usually within range of values between -1 and 1 (Huber & Elvezio, 2009). A correlation of -1 indicates a perfect negative correlation while a correlation of 1 indicates a perfect positive correlation. 0 indicates no relationship. The closer the correlation coefficient is towards -1 or 1, the stronger the association between the variables.

Coefficient of Determination (R²)

This enabled the researcher to explain how well the response variable variation is explained by the linear model. A model fits the data if the differences between the observed values and the model's predicted values are small and unbiased (Allen, 2004). R² ranges from 0 to 1. The closer the R² is to 1 the better the model fits the data.



3.7. Research Quality

Research quality was confirmed through evaluating reliability and validity of the study. Reliability describes the extent to which data collection methods and analytics measures used in a study would result to consistent outcomes if the study is replicated (Saunders et al., 2012). Reliability was attained through standardization of the ratings, use of a suitable population sample, use of precise measurement scales to avoid rounding off of figures. Cronbach's alpha was also used to gauge the consistency and measure the reliability of the research. The reliability and internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha. The test was utilized to check if questionnaires with multiple Likert scale questions are reliable. SPSS software was used to compute the Cronbach's Alpha. From the test, the overall reliability scale was 0.72 with the independent variables exhibiting the following coefficients of alpha: tangibility (0.73), reliability (0.66), assurance (0.70), responsiveness (0.69), and empathy (0.75). Validity, on the other hand, was concerned with the accuracy of the measurement; it measures the extent to which the research measures what it was intended to measure. Pilot tests were conducted for the questionnaire, to check for any weakness and errors in design of the instrument hence ensuring validity.

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Tangibility	19.92	5.334	.378	.729
Reliability	20.18	5.376	.510	.663
Responsiveness	19.76	5.589	.362	.689
Assurance	19.79	6.347	.386	.704
Empathy	19.21	6.328	.345	.754

Source: Primary Data (2019)

3.8. Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations of research were complied with. The research ethical clearance was sought from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) as well as letter of Authorization to carry our research from Strathmore University. The management of Kenya Railways Corporations that manages SGR was notified about the research and permission sought to conduct the research among its customers. The researcher sought Informed consent from the participants where they were explained the purpose of the study. Participation was voluntary and coercion and / or force were not allowed at any time. It was made clear to the participants that they had the right to decline participation and the right to privacy and protection. The respondent's names have not been disclosed in respect to their anonymity. All the data was treated with confidentiality it deserves, and all ethical principles governing research as stipulated by Strathmore Business School followed.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the results on the findings from the study. The data was collected from the passengers using the standard gauge railway train services.

The findings are organized according to the objectives. First, the demographic information of respondents is presented followed by information responding to each of the specific objectives. The study had an anticipated sample size of 400 respondents however, 395 questionnaires were filled giving a response rate of 98%.

4.2. Demographic Information

The study presents respondents' information in terms of their gender, age and the source of their livelihood.

4.2.1. Distribution of respondents by gender

Majority of the sampled passengers composed of females at 52.5% whereas males were at 47.8% as shown in Table 4.1. This is because the females were more welcoming and willing to spare some time to respond to the questions of the study.

Table 4.1: Respondents by gender

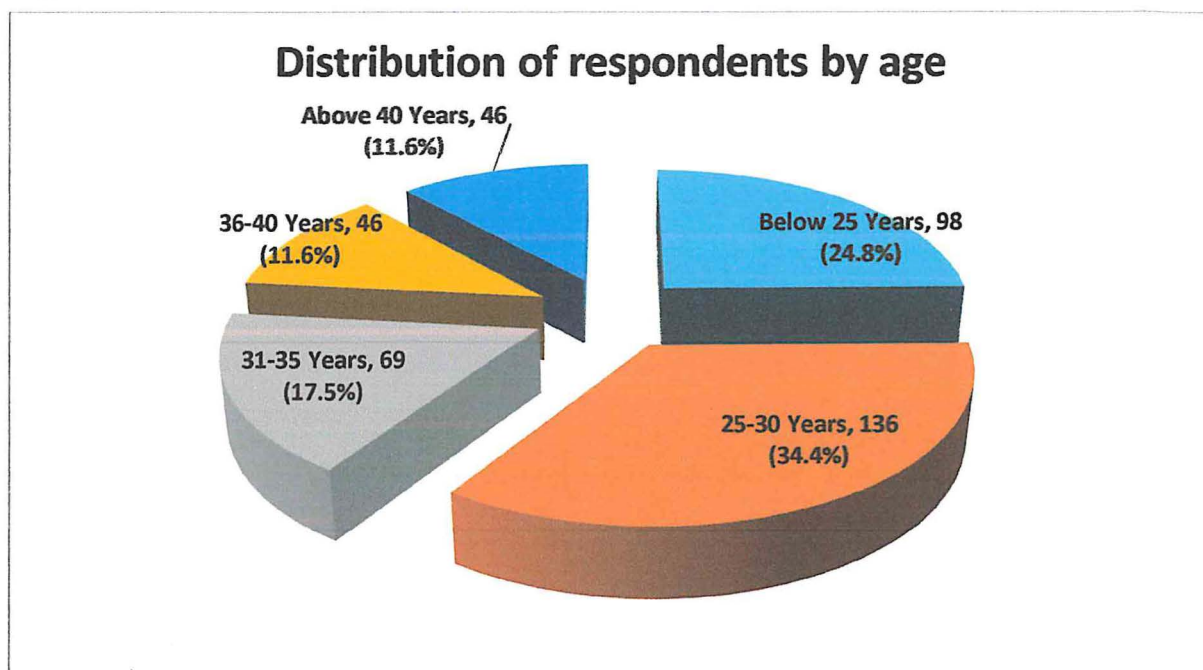
	Frequency	Percent
Female	206	52.2
Male	189	47.8
Total	395	100.0

Source: Primary Data (2019)

4.2.2. Distribution of respondents by age

Study targeted respondents of different ages. Respondents were aged between the below 25 and the above 40 age categories. In this study the majority of respondents (34.4%) were aged between 25 and 30 years followed by those aged below 25 years (24.8%). Respondents aged between 31-35 years constituted 17.5%, those aged between 36-40 years were 11.6% whereas respondents above 40 years constituted 11.6% of the respondents as shown in Figure4.1.

Figure 4.1: Respondents' by age



Source: Primary Data (2019)

4.2.3. Major sources of Livelihood

The respondents were involved in various economic activities where they derived their livelihood from. A high proportion of the respondents were employed whereas business people were the third largest group in the respondents. This implied that the train services were utilized to enable people respond to both official duties and personal reasons. Students signified the second largest group of respondents in this study who either were reporting back to school or going home for holidays. A small portion of the respondents were engaged in other activities. Farmers represented the smallest portion of the study respondents as shown in Table 4.2. The travel reasons varied from one passenger to another.

Table 4.2: Sources of livelihood

	Frequency	Percent
Employed	246	62.3
Student	62	15.7
Business person	41	10.4
Other	39	9.9
Farmer	7	1.8
Total	395	100.0

Source: Primary Data (2019)

4.2.4. Number of times the respondent has used the new train

Among the introductory questions was whether this was the first time the respondents were using the new (standard gauge railway) train. The study found that it was the first time for majority of the respondents (51.9%) to use the new train whereas 48.1% reported to have used the new train previously as shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Whether the respondent had used the new train

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	205	51.9
No	190	48.1
Total	395	100.0

Source: Primary Data (2019)

4.2.5. Other mode of transport used previously

During respondents' previous trips to and from Nairobi, various other means were used. Some had previously used more than one means. In this regard, an overwhelming 85.8% reported to have used buses while 61% they had used private cars. Moreover, 60.8% indicated they had used airplanes and 37% reported to have used shuttles. This shows that there are available alternatives to SGR but its speed gives it a competitive edge over the others.

Table 4.4: Other mode of transport used previously

	N	Percent
Bus	339	85.8%
Private car	241	61.0%
Airplane	240	60.8%
Shuttle	146	37.0%

Source: Primary Data (2019)

4.3. Dimensions of service quality and customer satisfaction

The study sought to identify the influence of service quality and customer satisfaction. Respondents' perception on the quality of service was varied, ranging from least to very important as shown in Table 4.5.

Important aspects identified by respondents were responsiveness of the staff/company, reliability, empathy, tangibility and assurance. Weighting the responses, reliability was identified as the most important dimension of service quality with a mean score of 4.52. This was followed by assurance with a mean score of 4.46; tangibility with a score of 4.41 and 89.7% of the respondents reporting it is an important aspect; empathy and responsiveness with mean scores of 4.37 and 4.36 respectively as shown in Table 4.5.

This implies that passengers value reliability more than other aspects because they want a service that will be available every time when they need it. Comfort and treatment by staff were deemed secondary requirements.

Table 4.5: Perception on service quality

		Least Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Important	Very Important	Total	Mean	Std. Deviation
Responsiveness	N	7	11	32	126	219	395	4.36	0.881
	%	1.8	2.8	8.1	31.9	55.4	100.0		
Reliability	N	5	7	12	124	247	395	4.52	0.755
	%	1.3	1.8	3.0	31.4	62.5	100.0		
Assurance	N	2	10	23	131	229	395	4.46	0.761
	%	0.5	2.5	5.8	33.2	58.0	100.0		
Empathy	N	5	2	37	147	204	395	4.37	0.778
	%	1.3	0.5	9.4	37.2	51.6	100.0		
Tangibles	N	9	4	28	129	225	395	4.41	0.848
	%	2.3	1.0	7.1	32.7	57.0	100.0		

Source: Primary Data (2019)

4.3.1. The influence of tangibility on customer satisfaction

The study sought to establish the extent to which Tangibles (as outlined above) are important in terms of service provision. Tangibles included the physical facilities of the train: seating comfort, seat space and legroom, on-board entertainment services and appearance of the employees. Based on results presented in Table 4.6, a large proportion of respondents was skewed towards the perception that cleanliness of the station and the coaches creates a good atmosphere for passengers (4.36). Moreover, with a mean score of 4.32, 91.3% of the respondents agrees that the modern appearance of the train station increases the ambiance and a warm reception to the passengers in transit creating a lasting impression. This was closely followed by 88.4% of the respondents agreeing that a neat professional staff provides a warm reception and excellent customer service while on board (mean score of 4.31).

Besides, 84.1% of the respondents agreed that the overall appearance of the train instills confidence to the passengers on the capacity of the train to take them to their respective destinations safely prompting repeat travels (with a mean score of 4.18) and 81.8% further agreed that clarity of information given in timetables enables passenger to organize themselves to report and board in time rendering them satisfied (mean score of 4.13). Additionally, it was the opinion of 62.8% of the respondents that food facility in the train sustains the passengers during the hours of transit hence assuring satisfaction (mean score of 3.58) whereas 64% of the respondents opined that medical facility in the train assures safety during emergency cases (mean of 3.69).

The most important aspects of tangibility were reported to be cleanliness of the station; and coaches creating a good atmosphere for passengers waiting to board the train with the possibility of influencing others. The modern appearance of the train station increases the ambiance and a warm reception to the passengers in transit creating a lasting impression while the least important aspects of tangibility were reported to be food facility at an average score of 3.58 and the medical facility in the train (mean score of 3.69) as shown in Table 4.6. Essentially, when the environment is clean, there is more comfort. The appearance of the train stations is very appealing to the eyes and this would also make people want to repeat trip.

Table 4.6: Level of agreement with statements regarding tangibility dimension

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	Mean	Std. Deviation
Clarity of information given in timetables enables passenger to organize themselves to report and board in time rendering them satisfied	n	10	17	45	163	160	395	4.13	0.951
	%	2.5	4.3	11.4	41.3	40.5	100.0		
Cleanliness of the station and the coaches creates a good atmosphere for passengers awaiting to board the train who could possibly influence others to use the train	n	11	4	19	157	204	395	4.36	0.851
	%	2.8	1.0	4.8	39.7	51.6	100.0		
Modern appearance of Station increases the ambience and a warm reception to the passengers in transit creating a lasting impression	n	10	4	34	149	198	395	4.32	0.869
	%	2.5	1.0	8.6	37.7	50.1	100.0		
Overall appearance of the train instills confidence to the passengers on the capacity of the train to take them to their respective destinations safely prompting repeat travels	n	9	4	50	174	158	395	4.18	0.860
	%	2.3	1.0	12.7	44.1	40.0	100.0		
A neat professional staff provides a warm reception and excellent customer service while on board	n	10	1	35	159	190	395	4.31	0.844
	%	2.5	0.3	8.9	40.3	48.1	100.0		
Food facility in the train sustains the passengers during the hours of transit hence assures satisfaction	n	37	43	67	151	97	395	3.58	1.232
	%	9.4	10.9	17.0	38.2	24.6	100.0		
Medical facility in the train assures safety during emergency cases	N	38	19	85	138	115	395	3.69	1.214
	%	9.6	4.8	21.5	34.9	29.1	100.0		

Source: Primary Data (2019)

4.3.2. The influence of reliability on customer satisfaction

Reliability referred to the ability to perform service dependably and accurately, such as punctuality, efficiency of the check-in process, and convenience and accuracy of reservations and ticketing. Three aspects were measured in this dimension. Generally, providing on time train services promoted continuity and promptness hence leading to customer satisfaction as was the

opinion of 87.3% of the respondents with a mean score of 4.31. Moreover, 89.3% of the respondents agreed that maintaining the frequency of trains as scheduled helps passengers meet their respective schedules timely while only 4.1% of the respondents held a contrary opinion. Additionally, 80% of respondents agreed with the statement that dependability in handling passengers' service problems boosts confidence with superiority of the train service (a mean score of 4.11).

In a nutshell, the most important aspect of reliability was providing on time train services and promptness rated at 4.31, maintaining the frequency of trains as was rated at 4.30 whereas dependability in handling passengers service problems boosts confidence with superiority of the train service was rated as the least important at 4.11 as shown in Table 4.7. Customers always want services as soon as they require them and this would make them perceive the service provider well. Some of the passengers have very tight schedules and knowing that they would get to their destination as when planned would enable them to prefer the service over the other alternatives.

Table 4.7: Level of agreement with statements regarding reliability dimension

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	Mean	Std. Deviation
Maintaining the frequency of trains as scheduled helps passengers meet their respective schedules timely and in turn builds brand loyalty	N	9	7	26	166	187	395	4.30	0.851
	%	2.3	1.8	6.6	42.0	47.3	100.0		
Providing on time train services promotes continuity and promptness hence leading to customer satisfaction	N	5	5	40	156	189	395	4.31	0.805
	%	1.3	1.3	10.1	39.5	47.8	100.0		
Dependability in handling passengers service problems boosts confidence with superiority of the train service	N	5	4	70	179	137	395	4.11	0.817
	%	1.3	1.0	17.7	45.3	34.7	100.0		

Source: Primary Data (2019)

4.3.3. The influence of assurance on customer satisfaction

Assurance (ability to inspire trust and confidence in (knowledge to answer questions and ensure safe Performance as well as show courtesy toward passengers). Similarly, in this dimension three aspects were measured where respondents were required to give their level of agreement or disagreement with the statements. In this regard, most of the respondents tended to agree with the three statements given. For instance, 78.2% of the respondents agreed that courtesy of staff on train provides harmony to the passengers on board prompting a positive word of mouth. Further, 90.1% of the respondents that being informed if there are delays helps passengers reorganize their schedules appropriately whereas 90.6% of the respondents agreed that staff having knowledge to answer passengers' questions increases satisfaction from the service provided.

This implies that staff having knowledge to answer passenger's questions was rated the most important aspect of assurance at an average score of 4.36, being informed if there are delays was rated at 4.34 while courtesy of staff on train was rated the least important aspect of assurance at an average score of 4.15, as shown in Table 4.8. It is the wish of every customer to get adequate information and feedback in order to make informed decisions. When staff are able to respond to the concerns especially if and when there are delays in services and being assured that the problem is being solved they feel more at peace and willing to use the services again.

Table 4.8: Level of agreement with statements regarding assurance dimension

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	Mean	Std. Deviation
Courtesy of staff on train provides harmony to the passengers on board prompting a positive word of mouth	n	0	11	75	154	155	395	4.15	0.821
	%	0.0	2.8	19.0	39.0	39.2	100.0		
Being informed if there are delays helps passengers re organize their schedules appropriately	n	4	4	31	170	186	395	4.34	0.752
	%	1.0	1.0	7.8	43.0	47.1	100.0		
Staff having knowledge to answer passengers questions increases satisfaction from the service provided	n	4	5	28	177	181	395	4.36	0.693
	%	1.0	1.3	7.1	44.8	45.8	100.0		

Source: Primary Data (2019)

4.3.4. The influence of responsiveness on customer satisfaction

Responsiveness was measured through willingness to help passengers solve service problems (ticket cancellation and baggage loss), response to emergency situations, as well as prompt and accurate baggage delivery. Based on Table 4.9, majority of the respondents agreed that indeed the statements regarding responsiveness were important in informing customer satisfaction. On this note, 88.6% of the respondents agreed that willingness of staff to help customers enhances reliability of the train service while only 1.8% held a contrary opinion. This was similar for 90.1% of the respondents who agreed that prompt service enhances customer satisfaction as well as agreement that availability of staff in handling requests makes passengers more comfortable (92.1%).

Therefore, prompt service was rated as the most important aspect of responsibility with a mean score of 4.40. Besides, availability of staff to handle requests was rated at 4.32 while willingness to help the customers was rated as the least important aspect of responsibility at 4.20. This implies that customers will be satisfied with availability willingness of staff to respond to their concerns. This creates a good name for the service providers and encourages the customers to even recommend the service to their friends and colleagues.

Table 4.9: Level of agreement with statements regarding Responsibility aspect

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	Mean	Std. Deviation
Willingness to help you enhances reliability of the train service	N	5	2	38	214	136	395	4.20	0.732
	%	1.3	0.5	9.6	54.2	34.4	100.0		
Prompt service enhances customer satisfaction	N	0	1	38	158	198	395	4.40	0.670
	%	0.0	0.3	9.6	40.0	50.1	100.0		
Availability of staff in handling requests makes passengers more comfortable while in transit	N	5	6	20	192	172	395	4.32	0.750
	%	1.3	1.5	5.1	48.6	43.5	100.0		

Source: Primary Data (2019)

4.3.5. The influence of empathy on customer satisfaction

Empathy aspect focused on the behavior of SGR staff in dealing with passengers in a caring manner, understanding their needs, having their best interest at heart, as well as availability of Carriers (Coolie and trolley) and coach attendant/helper. Generally, there was a strong agreement that the aspects of empathy have an importance in customer satisfaction. Putting it into perspective, 84.6% of the respondents agreed that dealing with customers/passengers in caring fashion when they make inquiries builds loyalty, 89.1% were in agreement that understanding the passengers needs when they make inquiries assist in making referrals and increase business, 88.9% acknowledged that having passengers best interest at heart makes them feel appreciated and satisfied, 92.4% concurred that availability of coach attendant/helper in the train assists passengers with any challenges that may arise, whereas 87.1% agreed that availability of carriers enables passenger move with their luggage comfortably.

On this note, therefore, having passengers' best interest at heart was rated as the most important aspect of empathy at an average of 4.35 while dealing with you in caring fashion when you make inquiries builds loyalty was rated as the least important aspect of empathy at an average of 4.15 as shown in Table 4.10. Generally, everybody feels at home where they are loved and their

interests catered for. Behavior and attitude of staff can motivate customers and make them be interested with the services again. This is probably why the SGR staff take their customers' interests at heart and treat them with a caring fashion since it makes customers feel loved and appreciated by the staff. With this kind of treatment, referring other persons becomes easy and this promotes the company.

Table 4.10: Level of agreement with statements regarding empathy dimension

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	Mean	Std. Deviation
Dealing with you in caring fashion when you make inquiries builds loyalty	N %	5 1.3	9 2.3	47 11.9	195 49.4	139 35.2	395 100.0	4.15	0.810
Understanding the passengers needs when they make inquiries will assist in making referrals and increase business	n %	5 1.3	1 0.3	37 9.4	179 45.3	173 43.8	395 100.0	4.30	0.753
Having passengers best interest at heart makes passengers feel appreciated and satisfied	n %	9 2.3	6 1.5	29 7.3	144 36.5	207 52.4	395 100.0	4.35	0.861
Availability of coach attendant/helper in the train assists passengers with any challenges that may arise	n %	5 1.3	0 0.0	25 6.3	196 49.6	169 42.8	395 100.0	4.33	0.707
Availability of Carriers enables passenger move with their luggage comfortably	n %	9 2.3	13 3.3	29 7.3	179 45.3	165 41.8	395 100.0	4.21	0.886

Source: Primary Data (2019)

4.4. Relationship between service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction

4.4.1. Customer satisfaction constructs

Customer satisfaction was measured through comfort on the long train journey seating on comfortable seats and air conditioned wagons, recognition when the cabin crew attend to passengers diligently and effectively, clarity of information given in timetables enables passenger to organize themselves to report and board in time rendering them satisfied, food

facility in the train sustains the passengers during the hours of transit hence assures satisfaction, as well as prompt service enhances customer satisfaction. As evidenced in table 4.11, more than half of the respondents strongly agreed that they feel comfortable on the long train journey seating on comfortable seats and air conditioned wagons while 2.3% of the respondents strongly disagreed. In terms of feeling recognized when the cabin crew attended to the customer diligently and effectively, 35.9% strongly agreed while only 2.5% strongly disagreed. In terms of clarity of information, 40% of the respondents strongly agreed while only 2% strongly disagreed. There was a varied reaction in terms of food facility in the train sustains the passengers during the hours of transit hence assures satisfaction where 24.1% of the respondents strongly agreed, 39.2% of the respondents agreed, 16.7% of the respondents remained neutral, 10.9% of the respondents disagreed and another 9.1% of the respondents strongly disagreed. A high proportion of the respondents at 49.4% strongly agreed that prompt service enhances customer satisfaction.

Table 4.11: Level of agreement with statements regarding customer satisfaction constructs

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	Mean	Std. Deviation
I feel comfortable on the long train journey seating on comfortable seats and air conditioned wagons	n %	9 2.3	23 5.8	20 5.1	145 36.7	198 50.1	395 100.0	4.27	0.960
I feel recognized when the cabin crew attend to me diligently and effectively	n %	10 2.5	30 7.6	29 7.3	184 46.6	142 35.9	395 100.0	4.06	0.982
Clarity of information given in timetables enables passenger to organize themselves to report and board in time rendering them satisfied	n %	8 2.0	16 4.1	45 11.4	168 42.5	158 40.0	395 100.0	4.14	0.916
Food facility in the train sustains the passengers during the hours of transit hence assures satisfaction	n %	36 9.1	43 10.9	66 16.7	155 39.2	95 24.1	395 100.0	3.58	1.222
Prompt service enhances customer satisfaction	n %	0 0.0	6 1.5	35 8.9	159 40.3	195 49.4	395 100.0	4.37	0.710

Source: Primary Data (2019)

The most important aspect of customer satisfaction constructs was prompt service which was rated at an average 4.37 while the least important aspect of customer satisfaction construct was food facility in the train which was rated at an average of 3.58.

4.5. Inferential statistics

4.5.1. Correlation analysis

Table 4.12: Spearman's Rho Correlation coefficients

	Responsiveness	Reliability	Assurance	Empathy	Tangibles
Customer satisfaction	0.405**	0.283**	0.390**	0.434**	0.423**
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

Source: Primary Data (2019)

A spearman's Rho correlation was carried out to establish the relationship between customer satisfaction and various dimensions of service quality. All the service quality dimensions (IVs) were found to be positively correlated to customer satisfaction (DV). For instance, there was a positive moderate correlation between responsiveness ($\rho = 0.41$, $p < 0.01$), assurance ($\rho = 0.39$, $p < 0.01$), empathy ($\rho = 0.43$, $p < 0.01$) as well as tangibles ($\rho = 0.42$, $p < 0.01$) and customer satisfaction. Meanwhile, there was also a positive though weak correlation between reliability and customer satisfaction ($\rho = 0.28$, $p < 0.01$). These relationships were significant at $p < 0.01$.

4.5.2. Regression analysis

Table 4.13: Regression model summary

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.523 ^a	.274	.264	.609
a. Predictors: (Constant), Empathy, Reliability, Tangibles, Responsiveness, Assurance				

Source: Primary Data (2019)

Coefficient of Determination explains the extent to which the change in the dependent variable can be explained by the change in the independent variables or the percentage of variation in the dependent variable that is explained by all the independent variables. An R-square value of 0.274 was established and adjusted to 0.264. This means that the independent variables could only explain 26.4% of the perceived change in customer satisfaction.

Table 4.14: The ANOVA Table

		ANOVA ^a				
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	54.364	5	10.873	29.330	.000 ^b
	Residual	144.203	389	.371		
	Total	198.567	394			

a. Dependent Variable: Customer satisfaction

b. Predictors: (Constant), Empathy, Reliability, Tangibles, Responsiveness, Assurance

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test the overall significance of the regression model. The null hypothesis for this test is that the independent variables do not have explanatory power ($\beta_1=\beta_2=\beta_3=\beta_4=\beta_5=0$). The p-Value of 0.001 means that the R squared is significantly greater than zero thereby our predictors are able to account for a significant amount of variance in customer satisfaction. With a significant p-value, we reject the null hypothesis and adopt the alternative hypothesis and conclude that the predictors have explanatory power. Therefore the regression model is significant ($F_{(5,389)} = 29.330, p < 0.001; R^2 = 0.27$).

Table 4.15: Regression coefficients**Coefficients^a**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.589	.227		6.996	.000
	Tangibles	.158	.046	.189	3.459	.001
	Responsiveness	.141	.045	.175	3.128	.002
	Reliability	.017	.052	.018	.333	.740
	Assurance	.120	.055	.129	2.206	.028
	Empathy	.164	.052	.180	3.132	.002

a. Dependent Variable: Customer satisfaction

$$CS = 1.589 + 0.158Tang. + 0.141Resp. + 0.017Rel. + 0.120Assur. + 0.164Emp.$$

Where;

CS – Customer Satisfaction

Tang. – Tangibility

Resp. – Responsiveness

Rel. – Reliability

Emp. – Empathy

Assur. - Assurance

With a significant p-value ($p < 0.05$), it means that tangibility, responsiveness, assurance and empathy dimensions have a significant influence on customer satisfaction. The study revealed that all factors kept constant, a unit increase in perceptions on tangibility dimension would significantly increase customer satisfaction by 0.158 points. Moreover, a unit increase in perceptions on responsiveness dimension would significantly increase customer satisfaction by 0.141 points other factors held constant. This would be the case with assurance where a unit increase would have a significant effect on customer satisfaction by increasing perceptions by 0.120 points when other factors are held constant. In addition, other factors controlled at zero, an

increase in perceptions on empathy aspect by 1 point would significantly increase the perception on customer satisfaction by 0.164 points.

4.6. Chapter Summary

The study sought to examine the individual service quality dimension and their influence on customer satisfaction among users of SGR. The chapter began by discussing findings from the questionnaires under response rate, demographic characteristics and descriptive results from specific question on the questionnaire about each dimension studied, that is, tangibility, reliability, assurance, responsiveness, and empathy. A correlation analysis was then applied to determine the association between the independent and dependent variable as shown in the conceptual framework and fitness for purpose of the model for the study being done. Finally these variables were put in a regression model to determine significance of their relationship the dependent variable (customer satisfaction).

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSIONS CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the discussions, summary of findings, conclusion and recommendations from the study. Limitations of the study as well as areas of further research are also highlighted.

5.2 Discussion of findings

The study sought to establish the influence of service quality on customer satisfaction on the standard gauge railway passenger train. The study findings explored the dimensions of service quality that have an influence on customer satisfaction on standard gauge railway passenger train. The study further sought to establish the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction on passengers using the services offered by the Standard gauge railway where all the service quality dimensions (IVs) were found to be positively correlated to customer satisfaction (DV).

5.2.1. The influence of tangibility on customer satisfaction

In regard to the first objective, the study explored the influence of tangibility on customer satisfaction among passengers of SGR train. Looking at dimension, tangibility focused on physical facilities of the train: seating comfort, seat space and legroom, on-board entertainment services and appearance of the employees. The most important aspects of tangibility were reported to be cleanliness of the station; and coaches creating a good atmosphere for passengers waiting to board the train with the possibility of influencing others. The modern appearance of the train station increases the ambience and a warm reception to the passengers in transit creating a lasting impression while the least important aspects of tangibility were reported to be food facility and the medical facility in the train. This finding supports that of Reimer and Kehn (2005), who noted that the “tangibles” dimension has a substantial impact on the intangible dimensions of service quality and that the total consequence of tangibles on perceived service quality is significantly immense than the direct effect, which implies that the intangibles have a facilitative role on tangibles. Moreover, the finding also conforms to the finding of Munusamy, et al. (2010), who averred that tangibility of services can be added by ensuring that the equipment used such as computers are of the best quality, the chairs that customers seat as they

wait for services or as they get services are of good quality and the employees should also treat the customers well to enhance the tangibility of the services delivered. This means that SGR must endeavor to ensure that the wagons are well maintained to retain the cleanliness, comfort and the overall appearance. This will be important in attracting customers and promote customer referrals and repeat business for the users.

5.2.2. The influence of reliability on customer satisfaction

The second dimension was reliability which focused on the ability to perform service dependably and accurately, such as punctuality, efficiency of the check-in process, and convenience and accuracy of reservations and ticketing. Of these, the most important aspect of reliability was providing on time train services and promptness, maintaining the frequency of trains whereas dependability in handling passengers' service problems boosts confidence with superiority of the train service was rated as the least important. This finding supported that of Kennedy (2011) who noted that customers will not seek services from providers whom they are not sure that they can get services. They will always seek services from those providers they are assured that they will always get services. Further, Mohammad and Alhamadani, (2011), concurred that reliability as a service dimension has an important effect on customer satisfaction. Even though reliability was positively correlated with customer satisfaction, regression analysis showed that customers change in perception would not significantly change satisfaction levels. Moreover, Auka, *et al.* (2013) established that when customers obtain timely and tailored services from employees who are cordial and proficient, then their level of trust with the institution is elevated. This ultimately results in high levels of customer satisfaction. Basically, when customers are sure that they will not be delayed in their journey, more often than not, they tend to be loyal to that service. Convenience and accuracy in reservations (not error prone) as well as efficient check-in processes would work to attract and retain more customers. It is therefore, needful for SGR to improve their reliability to beat off competition from their rivals.

5.2.3. The influence of responsiveness on customer satisfaction

The third service quality dimension was responsiveness which was measured through willingness to help passengers solve service problems (ticket cancellation and baggage loss), response to emergency situations, as well as prompt and accurate baggage delivery. In this regard

therefore, prompt service was rated as the most important aspect of responsibility whilst the availability of staff to handle requests while willingness to help the customers was rated as the least important aspect of responsibility. This finding conforms to the finding of Nazi (2012) who explains that customers make decisions within a short period, depending on the information that they have at hand. Immediate response to customers shows the customers they are always available to serve them and that their complaints will be handled even after the customers have left from the company. Such responsiveness instills confidence and trust in the business where the customer is seeking services. This further supports the finding of Zeithaml et al., (2002) who stated that responsiveness confirms a company's ability and willingness to avail a prompt service when customers have queries or problems. A moderate positive correlation ($\rho=0.41$) shows that increase in responsiveness would lead to increase in satisfaction levels. In regard to responsiveness, understanding customer needs and crafting the service based on responsive feedback enhances service satisfaction and also trust (Gummerus et al., 2004). Having responsible staff and management means customers' issues and property will be valued. Most customers become satisfied especially when their concerns are well addressed and their luggage taken care of. When one loses their stuff, they will most likely be dissuaded to use the service again.

5.2.4. The influence of assurance on customer satisfaction

Another service quality dimension was assurance which focused on the ability to inspire trust and confidence in knowledge to answer questions and ensure safe performance as well as to show courtesy toward passengers. The aspect of staff having knowledge to answer passengers' questions was rated the most important aspect of assurance, passengers/ customers being informed if there are delays while courtesy of staff on train was rated the least important aspect of assurance. As Gummerus et al., (2004) observed, assurance guarantee that the organization will continue to offer the same level of quality services enhances confidence on the part of customers. This therefore means that there is need for the employees to evaluate the needs of the customers, understand their feedback, and then rectify any problems that may have been faced during service delivery. The customers are satisfied when assured that the quality they received was not temporary, but is the commitment of the organization to offer the same all the time.

5.2.5. The influence of empathy on customer satisfaction

The last aspect the study focused on was empathy which the behavior of SGR staff in dealing with passengers in a caring manner, understanding their needs, having their best interest at heart, as well as availability of carriers and coach attendant/helper. On this note, therefore, having passengers' best interest at heart was rated as the most important aspect of empathy at an average of 4.35 while dealing with you in caring fashion when you make inquiries builds loyalty was rated as the least important aspect of empathy at an average of 4.15. This supports the finding of Reimer and Kehn (2018) agree that empathy is very crucial when it comes to achieving customer satisfaction. The employees have to be trained to ensure that they can easily connect with the customers. One has to understand their feelings and frustrations and reassure them that things will be better. This suggests that employees' attitudes are very instrumental in enhancing empathy. Staff with positive attitude towards their work, will have the best interest of the company at heart and this will make them handle customers in a caring manner, help them out whenever they have problems and listen to their needs.

5.3 Conclusion

The study's broad objective was to establish the influence of service quality on customer satisfaction on the standard gauge railway passenger train. On the first objective, the study concluded that the dimensions of service quality have an influence on customer satisfaction on standard gauge railway passenger train. Important aspects identified by respondents were responsiveness of the staff/company, reliability, empathy, tangibility and assurance. In this regard, reliability was identified as the most important dimension of service quality closely followed by assurance, tangibility, empathy and responsiveness. This suggests that SGR should ensure that all these aspects are incorporated within their working environment as they play a big role in promoting their business. It will enable repeat business, enhance customer referrals, promote brand loyalty and make customers talk positively about the services rendered.

In regard to the relationship between service quality dimensions; tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy and customer satisfaction on passengers using the services offered by the Standard gauge railway, all the service quality dimensions (independent variables) were found to be positively correlated to customer satisfaction (dependent variable).

This showed a causal relationship where change in perception of the service quality dimensions resulted in a change in perception on satisfaction in the same direction. Therefore, it is vital for SGR to make sure that all the dimensions are well taken care of to promote satisfaction from different customers. This is because customers drive their satisfaction from varied dimensions thus improving on some and leaving the others will mean attracting a certain group of customers and ignoring the rest.

5.4 Recommendations

Rail transport has the potential to transform the transport industry due to its speed and ability to carry a large number of passengers, offering an unmatched opportunity for rail transport through the Standard Gauge Railway. In order to tap into this opportunity, SGR needs to ensure individual customer experiences meet their expectations. While the study has established that customer satisfaction is a factor of service quality, it suggests the following recommendations based on its findings:

The management should continue to maintain train promptness which was a strong indicator of customer satisfaction in the train. The authorities should install a system that will encourage passenger confidence on the SGR's team ability to solve passenger problems. The train staff ought to be trained to maintain staff knowledge on key questions that customers asked to ensure continued satisfaction in the services the SGR offer. The crew should exercise empathy when dealing with customers through the availability of coach attendants on the train to assist passengers with luggage carriers for comfortable luggage handling.

The business development team should conduct routine surveys to point out on service gaps and propose strategies to counter them so as to ensure continuous service improvement and maximize on passenger satisfaction. Customer loyalty as a consequence of service quality should also be appreciated and rewarded to build brand devotion.

5.5 Limitations of the research

The study only focused on the express train schedules as opposed to the inter county train, as a result this could have omitted the diversity in the findings from responses captured from dwellers of towns located in between the two major terminals.

The data was collected between February and December which may have excluded travel seasonality for other people travelling for various reasons.

Suggested areas for further research

The study focused on the influence of service quality on passengers using the SGR. Similar research can be conducted on the cargo stream of SGR. Future studies can also consider adding more dimensions that may be of importance to passengers.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION



27 April, 2018

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Facilitation of Research for Mwinvi Khatib Omar Student No. 078098

Mr. Mwinvi Khatib Omar is a postgraduate student in our Master of Commerce (MCom) programme. In partial fulfilment of the MCom degree, students are required to carry out a research project and write a thesis on a contemporary subject within their field of specialisation. Among other activities, the project involves data collection and analysis.

Khatib is requesting to gather information to be used in his research. The information he will obtain from your organization will be used for this academic purpose only and will be kept confidential. The results of the survey will be in summary form and will not disclose any individual, company name or company information in any way.

Our MCom seeks to establish links with industry, and one of these ways is by directing our research to areas that would be of direct use to industry. We would be glad to share the findings with you after the research, and we trust that you will find them of great interest and of practical value to your organization.

The research study is entitled “**Influence of service quality on customer satisfaction: A case of the Kenya Standard Gauge Railway (SGR).**”

We appreciate your support and shall be willing to provide any further information if required.

Yours faithfully,



Quindos Karanja
Coordinator – Master of Commerce (MCom)
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APPENDIX II: QUESTIONNAIRE

Respondent profile

1. Gender (Please tick one) Male Female

2. What is your age bracket (Please tick one)

 Below 25 Years 25 – 30 years 31 - 35 years 36 – 40 years
 Above 40 years

3. . What is your major source of livelihood?
 Businessperson Employed Student Farmer Others: _____

4. Is this your first time using the new train? Yes No

5. Which other modes of public transport travel have you used?

 Bus
 Airplane
 Shuttles
 Private Car

Section B: Service quality dimension

Please tick the extent to which the following service dimension aspect are important to you.						
		Least important	Somewhat important	Neutral	Important	Very Important
	Responsiveness (willingness to help passengers solve service problems (ticket cancellation and baggage loss), response to emergency situations, as well as prompt and accurate baggage delivery)					
	Reliability (ability to perform service dependably and accurately, such as punctuality, efficiency of the check-in process, and convenience and accuracy of reservations and ticketing.)					
	Assurance (ability to inspire trust and confidence in (knowledge to answer questions and ensure safe Performance as well as show courtesy toward passengers.)					

	Empathy (Dealing with passengers in a caring manner and understanding their needs and having their best interest at heart. Availability of Carriers (Coolie and trolley)					
	Tangibles (physical facilities of the train: seating comfort, seat space and legroom, on-board entertainment services, appearance of the employees					

Do you have any additional dimension you want to add that you feel is of significance regarding the services offered by the train?

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.....

SECTION C: Service quality and customer satisfaction

Please Indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements as they relate to service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction in the train. (On a scale of 1-5) where 1 = strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= Neither Agree nor Disagree 4 = agree and 5= strongly agree						
		1	2	3	4	5
Tangibles						
i. Clarity of information given in timetables enables passenger to organize themselves to report and board in time rendering them satisfied						
ii. Cleanliness of the station and the coaches creates a good atmosphere for passengers awaiting to board the train who could possibly influence others to use the train						
iii. Modern appearance of Station increases the ambiance and a warm reception to the passengers in transit creating a lasting impression						
iv. Overall appearance of the train instills confidence to the passengers on the capacity of the train to take them to their respective destinations safely prompting repeat travels						
v. A neat professional staff provides a warm reception and excellent customer service while on board						
vi. Food facility in the train sustains the passengers during the hours of transit hence assures satisfaction						

	vii. Medical facility in the train assures safety during emergency cases					
	Reliability iii. Maintaining the frequency of trains as scheduled helps passengers meet their respective schedules timely and in turn builds brand loyalty					
	ix. Providing on time train services promotes continuity and promptness hence leading to customer satisfaction					
	x. Dependability in handling passengers service problems boosts confidence with superiority of the train service					
	Assurance xi. Courtesy of staff on train provides harmony to the passengers on board prompting a positive word of mouth					
	xii. Being informed if there are delays helps passengers re organize their schedules appropriately					
	iii. Staff having knowledge to answer passengers questions increases satisfaction from the service provided					
	Responsiveness xiv. Willingness to help passengers enhances reliability of the train service					
	xv. Prompt service enhances customer level of satisfaction					
	xvi. Availability of staff in handling requests makes passengers more comfortable					

	while in transit					
	Empathy Dealing with passengers in caring fashion when they make inquiries builds loyalty					
	iii. Understanding the passengers needs when they make inquiries will assist in making referrals and increase business					
	xix. Having passengers best interest at heart makes passengers feel appreciated and satisfied					
	xx. Availability of coach attendant/helper in the train assists passengers with any challenges that may arise					
	xxi. Availability of Carriers enables passenger move with their luggage comfortably					

SECTION D: Customer Satisfaction

Kindly indicate whether customer satisfaction impacts on the following (On a scale of 5) where 1 = strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= Neither Agree nor Disagree 4 = agree and 5= strongly agree		1	2	3	4	5
i.	I feel comfortable on the long train journey seating on comfortable seats and air conditioned wagons.					
ii.	I feel recognized when the cabin crew attend to me diligently and effectively					
iii.	I feel proud and appreciated when my queries are sorted out promptly					
iv.	I feel confident knowing that the train will make it through my destination timely					
v.	I feel assertive knowing that my ticket will be refunded once I do my cancellation					