

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN GHANAIAN HOTELS AND RESTAURANTS

¹Kissi, M., and ²Owusu-Mintah, S. B.

^{1&2} Department of Tourism, Cape Coast Polytechnic, P. O. Box AD 50, Cape Coast, Ghana.

mickissi@yahoo.co.uk

omintah2004@yahoo.co.uk

ABSTRACT

Public policy implementation in Ghana, including tourism policy, has been lamented or deplored generally by a majority of Ghanaians. In order to establish the veracity or otherwise of the foregoing assertion, the implementation of tourism quality assurance policies related to hotels and restaurants in Ghana was examined. Generally, the study sought to assess the perception of hotels and restaurants in Ghana of the implementation of tourism quality assurance policies. Specifically, it examined the characteristics of the hotels and restaurants surveyed across the country, sought their perception of the QA Inspectors and functions in their implementation of QA policies; and their assessment of the performance of QA Inspectors. A total of one hundred and forty (140) respondents were surveyed across four regions of Ghana using the non-probability sampling technique of quota sampling in selecting the sample. The data were analysed quantitatively. The study found out that the hotels generally had a positive view of the QA Inspectors and functions of the Ghana Tourism Authority in their implementation of the harmonized standards, in spite of some challenges. Among the nine characteristics of QA Inspectors rated, three were identified as critical and these are that they were knowledgeable about their inspection duties; competent to carry out the inspections; and responsive to questions asked by management and staff of facilities. The main conclusion drawn was that the QA Inspectors could be more effective in their implementation of the harmonized standards if the challenges facing them are addressed.

Keywords: quality assurance , standards, hotels, restaurants

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Hotel Proprietors Act of 1956 defines a hotel as ‘an establishment offering food and drink and sleeping accommodation if so required to any traveller who appears able and willing to pay for services and facilities provided.’ Therefore, by common law a hotel must offer food and accommodation to its guests; but it must also assume a liability for the property of guests, conform to public health and safety regulations, and provide a high standard of cleanliness and sanitation. On the other hand, a restaurant covers a broad range of food service operations. The term comes from the French word *restaurant*, meaning “restorer of energy.” The term was used as early as the mid-1700s to describe public places that offered soup and bread. Today, any public place that specializes in the sale of prepared food for consumption on- or off-premise can be described as a restaurant (Barrows, Powers, and Reynolds, 2012:68).

To ensure that hotels and restaurants in Ghana conform to the foregoing, the *Harmonized Standards for Accommodation and Catering Establishments in Ghana* was formulated in 2004. Following its introduction, the general standards governing the operation of accommodation establishments, contained in the L.I. 1205 (Accommodation and Catering Enterprises Regulations, 1979), was revised, taking into consideration the new areas, which have been introduced as well as inputs from the relevant trade associations. The fusion of the existing standards with the ECOWAS Standards has resulted in the set of standards prescribed in The New Harmonized Standards for Accommodation and Catering Establishments in Ghana which hotels and similar establishments including those that were under construction from 2005 are expected to comply with. The Ghana Tourism Authority which is the main implementing agency

of the Ministry of Tourism, Ghana, has been given the responsibility to ensure its implementation (Tourism Act, 2011, Act 817).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

According to Akyeampong (2007:200), a major problem confronting Ghana's hotel industry and by extension the restaurant industry and indeed the tourism or service sector is the low quality of service; and the negative consequences of the situation for individual customers and Ghana's tourism product as a whole. Further, the countless number of workshops and short courses at which issues of quality and standards are addressed attest to the endemic nature of the problem. However, the Ghana Tourist Authority (GTA), previously known as the Ghana Tourist Board (GTB) has had the responsibility for ensuring quality assurance in the Ghanaian tourism and hospitality industry at the public level since its inception (MoT, UNDP and WTO, 1996). Specifically, the QAD and the regional offices of the GTA are responsible for ensuring quality assurance throughout the country by the application of standards for accommodation, catering and travel enterprises among other functions. They are assisted by the LI 1205, Accommodation and Catering Enterprises Regulations, 1979 and the LI 1293, Tour Operators (Registration and Licensing) Regulations, 1983 in carrying out their QA functions. In order to ensure the implementation of these regulations, inspection schedules or field sheets have been created by the GTA to assist them in this direction.

Some of the areas that the schedules cover in accordance with the Harmonized Standards are: Current details of establishment; guest rooms in operation; information on management; information on the availability and acceptability of facilities and services; tariffs; membership of relevant trade association; information on mandatory staff; and mandatory documents to be checked. Some of the mandatory documents required to be checked by the QAD are: Environmental health permit from the relevant district assembly; report from the Ghana National Fire Service; half yearly medical reports on staff; food hygiene permit; and menu cards and drink lists. The foregoing shows that the areas covered by the inspection schedules for QA inspections in Ghana are comprehensive indeed (GTB, 2008b, c).

However, In order to assess the implementation of the QA policies, the perception of the management of hotels across the country would be relevant in determining whether the QAD of the GTA have been effective in ensuring quality in the tourism and hospitality industry in Ghana. It would also bring to the fore the challenges militating against the achievement of quality assurance in the industry.

1.3 objectives

The main objective of this study was to assess the perception of hotels in Ghana of the quality assurance officers of the GTA. The specific objectives of the study were to:

- evaluate the hotels' and restaurants' perception of the characteristics of the QA Officers and functions in their implementation of QA policies.
- Ascertain the hotels and restaurants' assessment of the performance of QA Officers, whether they have been improving over time, and the challenges they face from them.

2.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study mainly employed the descriptive research design. This study design attempts to describe systematically a situation, problem, phenomenon, service or programme, or provides information about a community, or describes attitudes towards an issue (Kumar, 1999).

Sarantakos (2005) affirms Kumar's (1999) definition of descriptive research by asserting that it 'aims to describe social systems, relations or social events,' (p.10).

Neuman (2006) also offers a similar definition of descriptive research as Kumar (1999) and Sarantakos (2005) by interpreting it as presenting, 'a picture of the specific details of a situation, social setting, or relationship; it focuses on "how?" and "who?" questions: How did it happen? Who is involved?'" Neuman (2006) is of the opinion that a great deal of social research is descriptive; and also descriptive researchers use most data-gathering techniques—surveys, field research, content analysis, and so on. Again, much of the social research found in scholarly journals or used for making policy decisions is descriptive. Further, descriptive and exploratory research often blur together in practice (p.16).

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005), descriptive research involves either identifying the characteristics of an observed phenomenon or exploring possible correlations among two or more phenomena. They further stated that it does not involve changing or modifying the situation under investigation, nor is it intended to determine cause-and-effect relationships (p.179). Amedahe and Asamoah Gyimah (2002) also stated that descriptive research ranges from simple surveys that do little more than ask questions and report answers about the status of a phenomenon to studies that present explicit statements about relationships between variables. Descriptive research was used for the study because it was the most appropriate in assessing and outlining very accurately perception of hotels and restaurants in Ghana of the QA officers and functions of the GTA.

2.1 Sources of data

The study used both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data was collected from the management of hotels and restaurants across the country. For secondary sources of data, relevant books, journal articles, and information from the internet and government sources were used.

2.2 Research instrument

The research instrument used for data collection was questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into two main sections, namely, the characteristics of the organisation; and respondents' perception of the QA inspectors and functions of the GTA. The questionnaire included both open and close-ended questions and they were completed by the respondents themselves.

2.3 Study population

The management of some selected accommodation and catering establishments in the sample regions across the country constituted the target population for this study. There was a total of 592 registered accommodation and catering establishments in the sample region; out of which 140 of them were sampled making a sampling rate of 23.65 percent. Basically, questionnaires were administered to these respondents soliciting their perceptions of the QA officers and functions of QAD of the GTA.

2.4 Sampling procedure and sample size

This study used the non-probability sampling technique of quota sampling in selecting the sample for the study. It must be noted that non-probability sampling techniques do not claim representativeness and are usually used for qualitative studies (Kumar 1999; Sarantakos 1998). According to DePoy and Gitlin (1998), the key to using non-probability sampling is to attain the greatest degree of representation as possible and to clearly identify to your readers the limitations

of your findings. The researcher was therefore guided by the foregoing, in the use of the non-probability sampling method of quota sampling in the selection of the sample.

Quota sampling is a procedure in which the researcher sets a 'quota' of respondents to be chosen from specific population groups, defining the basis of choice (example, region, or grade of accommodation or catering establishment) and determining its size (example, 20 accommodation or catering establishments from each region). The choice of the actual respondents is usually left up to the researcher (DePoy & Gitlin, 1998; Kumar, 1999; Sarantakos, 2005).

The justification for the use of quota sampling for the selection of a sample is to ensure a representative sample for a study or sampling population. Specifically, quota sampling was employed to select a sample of the management of the accommodation and catering establishments in the case study regions across the country, namely the Greater Accra, Ashanti, Northern and the Central regions. The various grades of accommodation and catering establishments in the four regions were identified and their numbers collated. Then, samples were selected from each of the grades for the study. The breakdown is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Study population and sample of manager respondents

HOTELS	GAR		AR		CR		NR		Total	
	Total Number	Sample	Total Number	Sample	Total Number	Sample	Total Number	Sample	Total Number	Sample
5-Star	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
4-Star	4	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	1
3-Star	13	6	5	5	5	5	-	-	23	16
2-Star	65	12	25	7	9	2	5	2	104	23
1-Star	59	3	20	2	5	5	7	1	91	11
Budget	266	3	139	4	9	4	25	3	439	14
Guest Houses	92	7	26	6	11	8	6	8	135	29
Total	500	33	215	24	62	24	43	14	820	95
Restaurant	92	13	38	11	14	11	7	3	151	38
Traditional										
Catering	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Establishment										
Fast Food	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	2	-	4
Pub	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Total	92	17	38	12	14	11	7	5	151	45
GRAND TOTAL	592	50	253	36	76	35	50	19	971	140

Source: GTB (2006, 2007, 2008a)

GAR-Greater Accra Region; AR-Ashanti Region; CR-Central Region; NR-Northern Region

3.0 DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

The data collected from the questionnaires were edited, coded and processed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, version 17.

The data were initially summarised into frequencies and percentages and cross tabulations carried out to examine relationships between and among various variables, in order to provide answers to the research objectives.

3.1 Characteristics of Accommodation and Catering Establishments Surveyed

Of the 140 hospitality facilities surveyed, 35.7% were from the GAR, followed by the AR (25.7%), the CR (25%) and the NR (13.6%). Also, 47.1% of the hospitality facilities were hotels, followed by restaurants (27.1%), guest houses (20.7%), traditional catering establishments (2.9%), fast food joints (0.7%) and a pub (0.7%) (Figure 1).

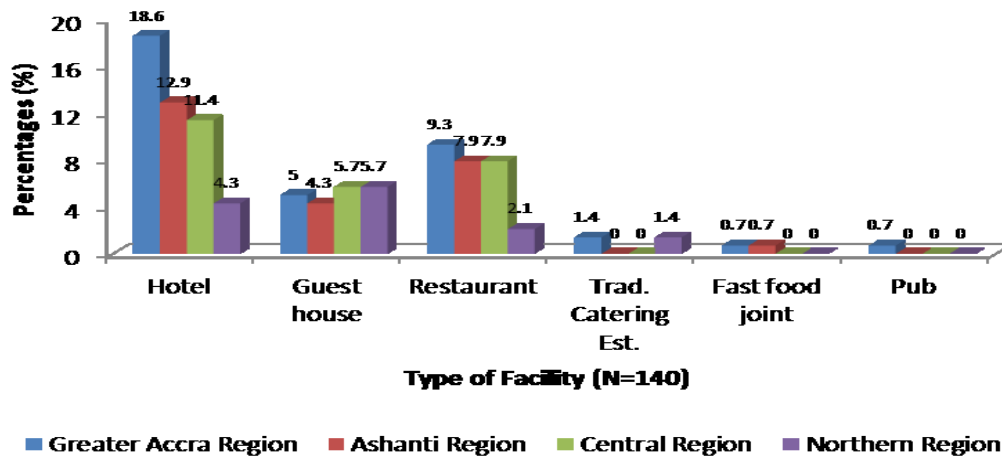


Figure 1: Type of facility by region

Hotels constituted the highest percentages of the hospitality facilities surveyed in most of the regions, with the following breakdown: the Greater Accra (18.6%), Ashanti (12.9%) and the CR (11.4%). The NR had the highest percentage of its hospitality facilities being guest houses (5.7%) (Figure 1).

3.2 Knowledge of inspection types by region

According to Van Meter and Van Horn (1975:465-6), effective implementation requires that a programme’s standards and objectives be understood by those individuals responsible for their achievement, which in the case of this research, includes, the management of accommodation and catering establishments in the country. Thus, finding out from them their knowledge of inspection types, among other factors, is very relevant for this study.

From the analysis of data collected a majority (87.9%) of the management of all the accommodation and catering establishments surveyed, said they knew of the types of inspections carried out on their premises. A greater proportion of the managers in all the four regions also said, they knew of the types of inspections with GAR (34.3%), AR (22.1%), CR (19.3%) and NR (12.1%).

3.3 Management Perception of QA Functions and QA Inspectors

According to Van Meter and Van Horn (1975:471), although the impacts of economic, social, and political conditions—of which public opinion is a part— have received little attention, they may have a profound effect on the performance of implementing agencies. They stated further that, among other things, consideration should be given to the nature of public opinion and the importance of the related policy issue; and the extent to which private interest groups mobilize in support or opposition to policy. From the foregoing, therefore, it was important to assess the perception of the management of accommodation and catering establishments towards the QA functions and the inspectors of the GTA, in order to know how it affects the implementation of the *Harmonized Standards for Accommodation and Catering Establishments in Ghana* (HSACEG) (GTB, 2005).

3.4 Managers’ rating of QA Inspectors over the period 2006-2008

According to the conceptual framework, each of the components of the policy implementation processes must be filtered through the perceptions of the implementer, within the organisation or jurisdiction where the policy is delivered. In this study, the policy implementers are the QA Inspectors. Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) also suggested that, three elements of the response of the implementers may affect their ability and willingness to carry out or implement the policy. These elements were the implementers’ comprehension and understanding of the policy, the direction of their response toward it (acceptance, neutrality, rejection), and the intensity of that response.

Table 2: Managers’ rating of QA Inspectors (2006-2008)

Characteristics	A (3)	U (2)	D (1)	Total	Mean
Knowledgeable about their inspection duties	138(3)	1(2)	1(1)	417	2.98
Competent to carry out the inspections	130(3)	7(2)	3(1)	407	2.91
Courteous to staff of your facility	127(3)	3(2)	10(1)	397	2.84
Responsive to questions asked by management and staff of your facility	131(3)	6(2)	3(1)	408	2.91
QA Inspectors communicated well with the management and staff of facility	129(3)	2(2)	9(1)	400	2.86
QA Inspectors were credible	126(3)	4(2)	10(1)	396	2.83
QA Inspectors demonstrated an understanding of their inspection jobs	126(3)	2(2)	12(1)	394	2.81
They were ethical	126(3)	3(2)	11(1)	395	2.82
They were sincere and genuine	127(3)	1(2)	12(1)	395	2.82

Source: Field Survey

N= 140

Note: A= Agree; U = Uncertain; D = Disagree; and Av. Rank=Average Rank.

The foregoing suggests that assessing the characteristics of QA Inspectors is important for ensuring the effectiveness of the implementation of the QA policies of the GTA. From Table 2, it can be seen that a majority of the managers rated QA Inspectors who had visited their facilities for inspections over the past three years, favourably, based on the characteristics assessed. The three statements most managers agreed with are that: QA Inspectors were knowledgeable about their inspection duties; they were competent to carry out the inspections; and they were

responsive to questions asked by management and staff of facilities; and with respective mean scores of 2.98; 2.91 and 2.91.

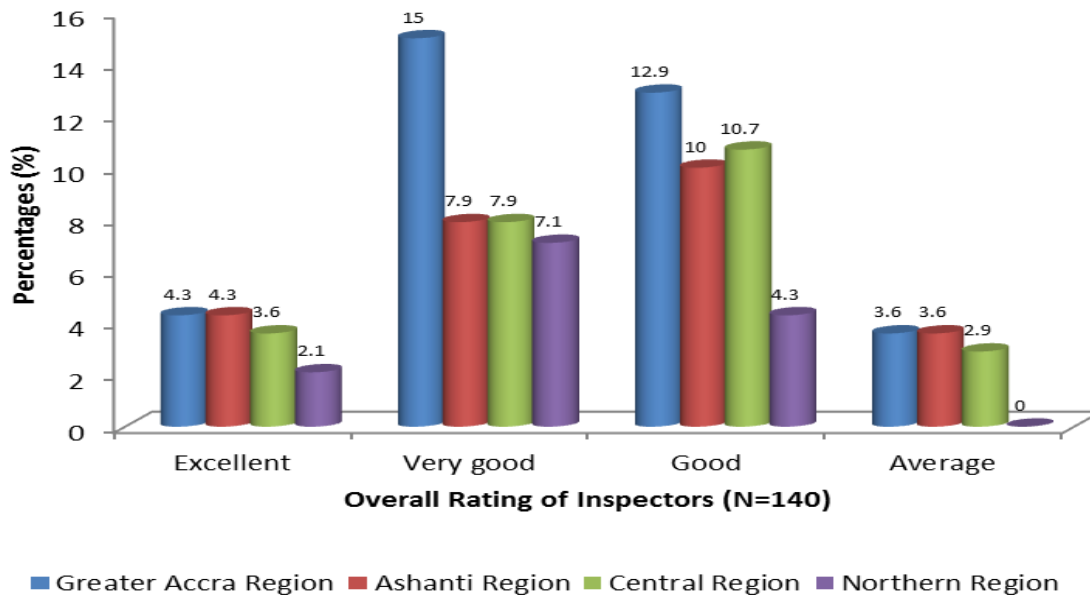


Figure 2: Overall rating of inspectors by region
Source: Field Survey

The foregoing concerns tend to support the perception of stakeholders, including the general public that some QA Inspectors were not ethical or credible in their interactions or relationships with the management of some of the tourism and hospitality facilities they inspected, in terms of their collection of bribes, which tended to compromise the quality of their inspection functions. On the overall rating of the performance of QA Inspectors, 37.9% each of the managers felt, QA Inspectors’ performance was “Very Good,” or ‘Good,’ respectively (Figure 2). We could also say that, 90.1% of managers rated the overall performance of QA Inspectors from ‘Excellent,’ through ‘Very Good,’ to ‘Good.’ This shows that a majority of managers had a favourable perception of the performance of QA Inspectors.

3.5 Improvement in the performance of QA inspectors over the period 2006-2008 from the perspective of hospitality facilities

The data collected on improvement in the performance of QA Inspectors was important for this study because, it would help to establish whether progress was being made in the effective implementation of QA policies, and the factors which account for the state of affairs concerning the improvement in the performance of QA Inspectors over the period.

From the data collected, a majority (75%) of managers felt QA Inspectors had improved upon their performance over the past three years, whereas 22.9% felt they had not improved upon their performance; and 2.1% were uncertain as to whether QA Inspectors had improved upon their performance or not.

For the 75% of managers who felt QA Inspectors had improved upon their performance over the period their reasons were that QA Inspectors had applied new techniques over the period; they

were making sure the right things were done; their interactions with staff had improved; they were well trained, which showed in their performance; management of tourism and hospitality facilities have over the period responded positively to the recommendations of the QA Inspectors; and, QA inspections have been made a routine exercise and thus leading to QA Inspectors improving upon their performance over the period.

For the managers (22.9%) who felt there had not been improvement in the performance of QA Inspectors over the period, their reasons were that: QA Inspectors asked the same questions and virtually did the same things any time they came on inspections. It was only when there was a major event, like the CAN 2008 (African Cup of Nation hosted by Ghana in January-February 2008), that QA Inspectors were more meticulous or particular in their inspections. Also, some QA Inspectors do not do thorough inspections; and, there were long breaks in-between inspections.

3.6 Challenges facing Managers of Accommodation and Catering Establishments

Identifying some of the challenges managers face from QA Inspectors would be a good step in addressing these challenges, so as to make the implementation of QA policies more effective. From the data collected, 32.14% of managers said they face no challenges from QA Inspectors. For those managers who said they face challenges from QA Inspectors, they asserted that: Some QA Inspectors were rude and intolerant towards staff of facilities (12.14%); unannounced visits by QA Inspectors (7.86%); huge requirements expected to be met before the issuance of operational certificates for facilities (5.71%); and, lack of adequate time given to implement recommendations by QA Inspectors, (5.71%), among other challenges.

4.0 CONCLUSION

This study has tried to assess the perception of hotels and restaurants in Ghana of the QA officers and functions of the GTA. This was done as part of the assessment of the state of tourism public policy implementation in Ghana, using a study of the QAD of the GTA from the perspective of hospitality facilities.

On the evaluation of the hotels' and restaurants' of the characteristics of the QA Officers and functions, it could be concluded that a majority of the respondents rated the overall performance of the QA officers as very good and therefore were positively disposed to their performance. They were of the opinion that QA Inspectors were competent and knowledgeable about their inspection duties; and were responsive to questions asked them. This implies that the hotels and restaurants are likely to co-operate with QA inspectors in the performance of their functions; and that QA inspectors are positively disposed to their functions. Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) assert that the direction of an implementor's response to their functions—either accepting it, being neutral about it, or rejecting it—may affect their ability and willingness to carry out those policies or functions (p.472). In this case, QA officers' ability and willingness seem to favour the implementation of QA policies.

On whether the performance of QA Officers has been improving over time, a majority of respondents were of the opinion that they had improved. This shows that progress was being made in the implementation of QA policies over the years. Some of the factors given for the improvement were that that QA Inspectors had applied new techniques over the period; they were making sure the right things were done; their interactions with staff had improved; they were well trained, which showed in their performance over the period. One of the reasons that

was attributed to the foregoing was that, QA inspections have been made a routine exercise; thus leading to QA Inspectors improving over the years.

The major challenges that respondents said they faced from QA Officers were that, some QA Inspectors were rude and intolerant towards staff of facilities; QA Inspectors unannounced visits to facilities was a problem for respondents; respondents were required to meet huge requirements before the issuance of operational certificates for facilities; and, respondents were not given adequate time to implement recommendations made by QA Inspectors.

5.0 Recommendations for Further Research

It is recommended that further studies be conducted on:

- The perceptions of the Quality Assurance Department of its implementation of the Harmonised Standards
- Public policy implementation in other departments and units of the GTA and the MoT, Ghana;
- How the formulation of tourism public policy in Ghana relates to its implementation;
- The role played by tourism industry associations or federations like the Ghana Tourism Federation (GHATOF) and its specific enterprise associations, in the implementation of tourism public policy within their establishments; and

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