EXAMINATION OF GUESTS' CHOICE FOR STAR-RATED HOTELS IN GHANA

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study was conducted to investigate the factors that impact guests' choice of star-rated hotels in Ghana.

Design/Methodology/Approach: A survey and questionnaire were used to collect data from 100 guests from 10 selected star-rated hotels. The guests were selected using a convenience sampling technique. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Findings: The survey found that the primary factors influencing customers' decisions on star-rated hotels include cleanliness, external presentation, pricing value, security and safety, expected service quality, comfortable amenities, and facility amenities. The study also found that guests' demographic profiles influenced the choice of a star-rated hotel.

Research Implications/Limitations: The study focused on 1-5-star rated hotels in Accra, Kumasi, and Sunyani.

Practical Implications: It is anticipated that the knowledge emanating from the study will guide hotel proprietors to have an overview of the required needs of guests. The study recommends that hotel owners should focus more on cleanliness, external appearance, price value, security, and safety to attract and retain guests.

Social implication: This study would help researchers understand the societal dynamics and cultural nuances that shape guests' preferences and perceptions in the context of the hospitality industry in Ghana.

Originality/Value: Prior studies have mostly concentrated on the more general factors that affect guests' hotel choices, and relatively little is known about how guests pick hotels based on their star ratings. This study proposed a conceptual framework that adapted multi-lingual staff, disability friendliness and demographic traits, and inferential statistics such as factor analysis and regression to ascertain the extent of the impact on guests' choice of star-rated hotels which is missing in the literature review.

Keywords: Choice. criteria. guests. hotel. Star-rated.

INTRODUCTION

To guarantee a constant and similar level of service quality, hotels strive to attain some level of uniformity. One requirement is that they have a reliable system that assesses and certifies the standard of hotels' quality, including their amenities and services, about how closely they adhere to a particular international standard. Most often, guests choose a hotel based on its rating (Sota et al., 2020).

However, the features and services that are provided in hotels of a certain grade differ greatly from one nation to another. According to Tsao (2018), the absence of a worldwide hotel rating system is what caused the discrepancy in hotel ratings reported by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) and the International Hotel and Resorts Association (IH&RA) in 2004. According to Sota et al. (2020), the majority of nations have national standard grading systems that are produced by governmental or commercial agencies, as well as by user evaluations on websites.

More than 14 million rooms in more than 160,000 star-rated hotels throughout the world may accommodate millions of individuals working in a variety of job categories (Denysenko and Breus, 2020; Denysenko and Budiakova, 2020; UNWTO, 2019). According to Industrial Development Corporation (2014), reported by Adedipe (2018), there are over 99,000 star-rated hotels in Africa, with about 44,000 in North Africa and 54,000 in Sub-Saharan Africa.

According to Ismagilova et al. (2017), hotels are rated using symbols resembling stars, with one star denoting the most basic facilities and comfort levels and five stars denoting the most lavish amenities and services. Using symbols and terminology like stars, diamonds, crowns, suns, and letters, hotels are assessed following their many attributes (Martin-Fuentes et al., 2017). The usage of star ratings is widespread and has been going on for more than a century (Martin-Fuentes et al., 2017). Although there are other criteria for ranking hotels, the star rating system is the most popular (Adedipe, 2018). Hotels are rated one, two, three, four, or five stars based on the amenities and services they provide to visitors, according to UNWTO (2019). The number of rooms, the standard of in-room amenities, food, and drink options, the kind of service provided, the level of service quality, the hotel setting, and the mix of business services are all included in the star rating indications (Kruger et al. 2019; Fredrick & Authority, 2019).

When considering a hotel, one of the criteria that guests consider is the star rating (Yilmaz, 2020). This rating system is used to easily communicate the quality of accommodation and can be a key factor in someone's decision to book a hotel. But what factors specifically affect a hotel's star rating? The star rating is mostly a reflection of the hotel's calibre (Hung, 2017). The cleanliness of the rooms, the standard of the facilities, the level of service offered by the employees, and the general atmosphere of the property all have an impact on a hotel's star rating (Nunkoo et al., 2020). Hotel size influences its star rating as well;

generally, larger hotels are given more stars (Castro & Ferreira, 2018). In addition to location and accessibility, the range of amenities and services provided, safety and security precautions, and general reputation are all variables that might affect a hotel's star rating (Cró & Martins, 2018). The several certifications a hotel holds, such as a green certification or a hospitality certification, may also have an impact on its star ranking (Luo & Fan, 2019). The hotel sector is fiercely competitive, and many guests may base their decision on a hotel's star rating (Li et al., 2020).

The products and services given at a hotel of a certain grade vary widely from country to country, although the choice of hotels by guests is a prominent issue in the existing literature. The narrative has mostly been on the more general factors that affect guests' hotel choices, and relatively little is known about how guests pick hotels based on their star ratings and the degree to which demographic profiles impact guests' hotel choices in Ghana. This study was conducted to investigate the factors that impact guests' choice of star-rated hotels in Ghana.

THEORIES UNDERPINNING THE STUDY
Definitions of hotel rating

The term "hotel rating," also known as "hotel grading," is frequently used to classify hotel businesses according to a variety of parameters (WTO, 2014, cited by Tefera & Migiro, 2018). Hämmerli (2018) states that "hotel rating denotes a system, duly published, in which accommodation establishments of the same type (e.g., hotels, motels, inns, etc.) have been conventionally broken down into classes, categories or grades." This is consistent with the common physical and functional characteristics that have been identified at the governmental, business, or other levels of the private sector. WTO and IH&RA (2004) cited by Tsao (2018) further stated that "hotel rating systems were produced primarily to protect consumers."

Maslow's hierarchy of needs
This perspective contends that there is a hierarchy of human wants, ranging from more basic requirements such as physical survival to more lofty requirements such as self-actualization (Hale et al., 2019). Before taking into account higher-level wants like luxury and self-esteem in the context of hotel selections, customers may give fundamental needs like safety and comfort priority (Chalakova, 2018).

Expectancy-value theory
According to this theory, people's decisions are influenced by the significance they attach to certain outcomes and how they expect those outcomes to affect their decisions. When choosing a hotel, guests might weigh the anticipated benefits—such as comfort, amenities, and service quality—against the perceived drawbacks—such as cost and inconvenience (Daley & Zeidan, 2020).

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Theory of planned behavior

This theory contends that people's views, perceptions of social standards, and feelings of behavioural control all have an impact on how they intend to behave. When choosing a hotel, customers may be affected by their opinions of the establishment's reputation, the advice of others (subjective norms), and their perception of their power over the hotel's availability (perceived behavioural control) (Verma & Chandra, 2018).

Social exchange theory

According to this theory, people weigh the advantages and disadvantages of their social contacts before deciding how best to balance their costs and benefits. When choosing a hotel, customers can weigh the advantages of the accommodations, services, and surroundings against the drawbacks, such as cost, inconvenience, and potential hazards (Nasrolahi Vosta & Jalilvand, 2022).

Diffusion of innovation theory

This theory explains how new ideas, products, and services are adopted and distributed throughout a society. Customers may be persuaded to choose a particular hotel based on how perceived innovation, such as the employment of cutting-edge technology, environmentally friendly practices, or distinctive services, aligns with their interests and beliefs (Min et al., 2019).

Empirical Review

The variables influencing hotel choice in the Nigerian state of Anambra were examined by Anetoh et al. (2022). A convenience sampling technique was used to sample 384 visitors using a cross-sectional survey. The primary tool was a structured questionnaire. The study found that factors such as location, accessibility to security, physical facilities, and hotel room quality affected travellers' decisions on which hotels to stay at.

Sahni (2021) also, studied determinants impacting Indian customers' decision-making while booking a hotel in India. The study revealed that price, service quality, safety, and security were major factors influencing guests' decisions in selecting hotels in India.

In a related study, Hui et al., (2021) pinpointed that making a hotel disability-friendly not only caters to the needs of disabled visitors but also influences their choice of star-rated hotels. Hotels that accommodate the needs of all visitors, regardless of their physical abilities, are more likely to be considered by guests with disabilities (Hui et al., 2021).

Spoerr (2020) researched the preferences of German hotel guests. A survey and questionnaire were delivered to 404 respondents to collect data for the study. According to the poll, cleanliness, room pricing, and security protocols were the three main factors that guests considered while selecting a hotel.

Mwebaza (2018) sought to determine the elements that affected visitors' decisions about lodging options in Kampala Central Division. Sixty respondents were used to collect the data. According to the survey, the most appealing and significant elements that affect guests' decisions to stay at a hotel are the staff's high level of customer service, the hotel's safety and security, and the cleanliness of the rooms.

Soulidou et al.'s (2018) study sought to identify the key factors that Greek visitors evaluate when choosing a hotel. The study used surveys and questionnaires to gather information from 472 visitors. According to the poll, cleanliness, price, and staff friendliness were the three key factors visitors consider when choosing a hotel.

Richard and Masud (2016) looked at factors influencing travellers' hotel selections in Ghana. The study employed a descriptive survey methodology, collecting data from 150 hotel customers via questionnaires and conducting interviews with important hotel staff. The data was investigated using descriptive statistics based on frequencies and percentages. According to the survey, Ghanaian customers' traditional views and their relationship to religion both have a significant impact on how often they use hotel services.

Demographic Factors on Guests' Choice of Star-rated Hotels

Finding out how demographic characteristics influenced tourists' hotel preferences was the aim of Rai (2020). Using a questionnaire, information was acquired from the respondents. The demographics of the visitors have no impact on the hotels that are selected, claims the report.

Tefera and Migiro (2018) investigate the impact of demographic traits on travellers' decisions about the star rating of hotels. A questionnaire served as the major tool. The findings of the study demonstrated that the tourists' demographic factors, such as age, gender, level of education, and marital status, had an impact on the hotels they chose to stay in.

In a related study, Uca et al. (2017) investigated how demographic characteristics affected the choice of hotel in Istanbul Province. Data from 400 visitors were gathered using questionnaires. The study found that the respondents' demographic makeup affected customers' choice of hotels.

A study conducted by Pai and Ananthakumar (2017) found that older guests prefer to stay at higher-rated hotels, while younger guests may be more willing to stay in lower-rated hotels (Pai & Ananthakumar, 2017). This may be due to differences in preferences for luxury and amenities, as well as differences in available budgets.

Conceptual Framework
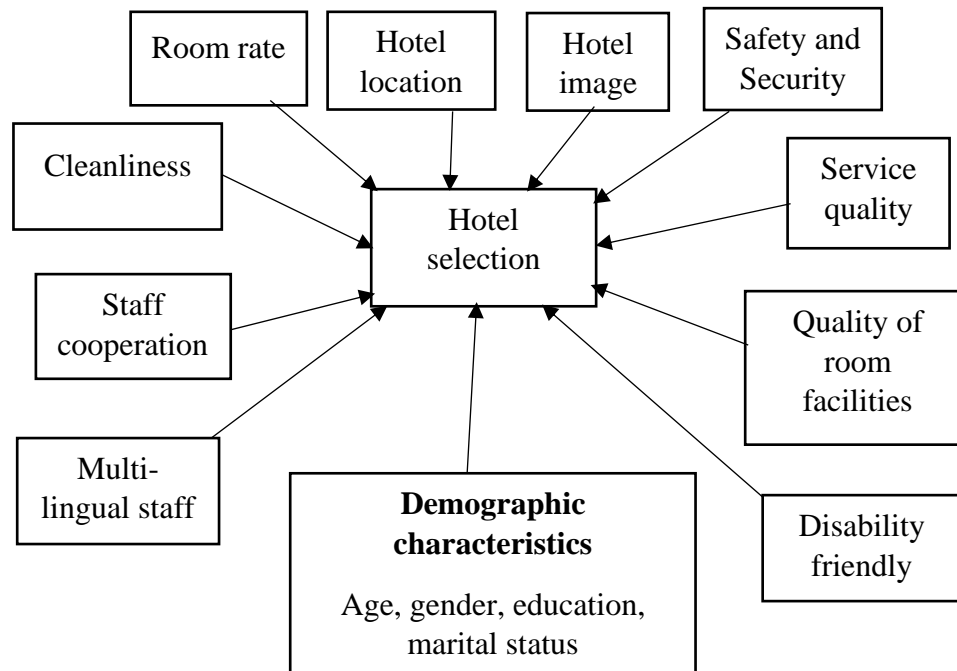
Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Source: Authors' construct

When choosing a hotel, there are various factors that guests consider as indicated in the framework. The authors adopt the first eight variables, and they also modify the final three variables as new factors.

Hotel location is crucial because it can impact a guest's overall experience. It should be in a convenient and accessible location with easy access to transportation, tourist attractions, and amenities. A hotel in a prime location can make a guest's trip more enjoyable, while a poorly located hotel can make it more challenging (Masiero et al., 2019).

Safety and security are also important components that travellers consider when selecting a hotel. A hotel should have safety features like security cameras, 24/7 security personnel, and secure locks on doors and windows. Guests should feel safe and secure in their hotel rooms and the surrounding area (Anichiti et al., 2021).

The hotel should be cleaned and well-maintained, with fresh linens, towels, and a spotless bathroom. A clean hotel room can make a guest feel more comfortable and at ease during their stay (Mody et al., 2023).

One of the most crucial variables that customers take into account when choosing a hotel is the room rate. The cost of the accommodation should be fair and within the range of the

visitor's budget. Additionally, this cost ought to be reasonable given the calibre of the hotel's accommodations, extras, and services (Mody et al., 2023).

When choosing a hotel, customers must take into account the cooperation of the staff. The hotel staff should be friendly, helpful, and responsive to the needs of the guests. A positive interaction with staff can make a guest's stay more enjoyable and memorable (Sudhagar & Rajendran, 2017).

A good hotel image can be built through positive reviews, ratings, and testimonials from past guests. A hotel with a good image is likely to attract more guests and have a higher occupancy rate (Cuesta-Valiño et al., 2023).

Service quality is another factor guests consider when choosing a hotel. A hotel with excellent service quality means that the hotel staff is attentive, efficient, and responsive to the needs of the guests (Aras et al., 2023).

The quality of room facility is another important factor that guests consider when selecting a hotel. The room should be clean, well-maintained, and equipped with modern amenities such as a comfortable bed, air conditioning, and high-speed internet connectivity. The presence of additional facilities such as a gym, swimming pool, or spa can also be a deciding factor for some guests (Patrick et al., 2019).

The multi-lingual staff is another crucial component that travellers consider when selecting a hotel. A hotel with multi-lingual staff means that the hotel staff can communicate with guests in different languages, making it easy for guests to ask questions, make requests, or resolve issues. This can be particularly important for international guests who may not speak the local language (Memarzadeh & Anand, 2018).

Disability friendliness is a critical component that guests consider when selecting a hotel. The hotel should have facilities and services such as wheelchair ramps that cater to the needs of guests with disabilities (Swanepoel, 2020).

When choosing a hotel, customers also take into account demographic traits. The age, gender, marital status, and educational background of the guests are examples of demographic factors (Pumpuni, 2022).

Overall, each of these factors can play a role in a decision made by guests to choose a particular star-rated hotel. However, the relative importance of each factor may vary depending on the individual and their specific needs and priorities.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a survey design that aims to gather data about a population from a sample of individuals (Kuranchie, 2021). The respondents were out there in the field and it was not difficult getting them who were many and available for this study. Hence the

survey design for the study was appropriate. The convenience sample approach was used to select 100 guests from 10 star-rated hotels, who were ready and willing to respond to the questionnaire when the researchers visited them at the facility. The study further employed cluster sampling techniques to select star-rated hotels. The cluster sampling technique is the process of selecting units from similar groups or areas of study whereby, the population is divided into groups and then samples are drawn in succession (Sarantakos, 2005 as cited in Kuranchie, 2021). The researchers used a cluster sampling method since the star-rated hotels were large and scattered over a large geographical area. This approach also, helped the researchers to save time and cost of soliciting data over scattered areas.

Subsequently, 1–5-star hotels were drawn from Accra, Kumasi, and Sunyani. The choice of 1–5-star hotels was based on the fact that such hotels have higher occupancy rates and are recognised based on hotel products and services, facilities, and other amenities offered to guests (Ghana Tourism Authority, 2020). To maintain the standard of excellence required to sustain their rating, star-rated hotels are also managed by more innovative employees who are more well-qualified (Ordanini & Parasuraman, 2011). This strategy was also feasible because the researchers had a complete list of all the 4,190 officially registered accommodations in the country (Tourism Report, 2022).

For confidential reasons, the names of selected hotels were not mentioned. This is because star-rated hotels in this study, especially high-rated ones were very particular about anonymity since they did not want to be caught up in any issues which might affect their image.

In furtherance, the guests' responses to a close-ended questionnaire were utilized to compile the data since it was easier and quicker for the guests to answer. Colleague lectures were given to look over the surveys to confirm their accuracy, which served as their validation.

Demographic characteristics were analysed in frequencies and percentages (%) counts guests' choices for star-rated hotels were analysed in factor analysis and regression was run to ascertain the extent of the impact on guests' choice of star-rated hotels.

Finally, an introductory letter for permission to obtain information from the guests was sent to the managers for the researchers to carry out a study in their hotels. After that, before giving out the questionnaires, the researchers got the participants' approval. Verbal permission was employed since none of the respondents signed the consent forms.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Information of Respondents

From Table 1, 52% of the guests were male respondents and 48% were female respondents. Concerning the age groups, 48% of the guests were aged between 30-39 years, 22% were aged between 40-49 years, 19% were 20-29 years and 11% were 50 years and above. Additionally, 58% of the guests had attained a Diploma/HND certificate, 28% had a degree certificate and only 14% had attained SHS education. Moreover, 56% of the guests were single and 44% were married. The survey also reveals that 38% of the guests had been visiting the hotels for 1-2 years, 28% had visited less than a year, 24% had visited for 3-5 years and 10% had been visiting the hotels for more than 5 years.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	52	52
Female	48	48
Age range (years)		
20-29	19	19
30-39	48	48
40-49	22	22
Above 50+	11	11
Educational level		
Degree	28	28
DIP/HND	58	58
SHS	14	14
Marital status		
Single	56	56
Married	44	44
Number of years of visiting the hotel		
<1 year	28	28
1-2 years	38	38
3-5 years	24	24
More than 5 years	10	10

Source: (Field Survey, 2022)

Table 2. Results of Factor Analysis

Factors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Rotated component matrix: Summary of the exploratory factor analysis results for the hotel attributes (N = 100)							
Safety	0.784						
Security	0.771						
Prompt service		0.689					
Service quality		0.768					
Staff cooperation		0.709					
Multi-lingual staff		0.571					
Cleanliness			0.821				
Room Decoration			0.847				
Location				0.705			
Room size				0.652			
Hotel ambiance					0.820		
Hotel image					0.810		
Price of hotel room rate						0.779	
Product price						0.816	
Access to gym facilities							0.625
Sick bay							0.619
Quality of room facilities							0.694
Disability friendly							0.568
Eigenvalues	9.28	2.52	2.31	1.69	1.45	1.35	1.31
Percentage of variance	15.43	14.66	11.76	9.36	8.11	7.30	6.26
Cumulative variance (%)	72.90	66.53	59.32	51.21	41.85	30.09	15.43
Cronbach's α		0.719					0.561
Spearman correlation coefficient	0.788		0.627	0.722	0.555	0.615	
Mean	5.60	5.09	6.86	4.80	5.82	5.62	4.52
Std. Deviation	1.161	0.978	1.262	1.915	1.164	1.142	1.418

Source: (Field Survey, 2022)

We initially determined the eigenvalues for each element before extracting the factors. According to the analysis, 7 components had eigenvalues greater than Kaiser's cutoff of 1. We employed a rotated component version to deliver a trustworthy content interpretation. As stated in Table 2, seven factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 were derived.

According to the traits of the variables that made up each component, we labelled them as factor 1 security and safety, factor 2 expected service quality, factor 3 cleanliness, factor 4 comfort features, factor 5 external presentation, factor 6 price value, and factor 7 facility amenities. The major factors identified include cleanliness, external appearance, price value, and security and safety.

Since the reliability coefficients for the variables were greater than the advised -level of 0.5, the analysis was deemed statistically trustworthy and internally consistent (Mair, 2018). For components 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6, researchers calculated the Spearman correlation coefficient rather than Cronbach's alpha because these factors only have two qualities.

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Moreover, these coefficients were higher than 0.5, which is regarded as a reliable indicator (Hughes, 2018).

To make the data comparable, we calculated the means for each component. Following cleanliness in importance were external appearance, price/value, security, and safety. This suggests that a hotel that prioritizes cleanliness, outward appearance, value for money, and safety and security will be more likely to draw in and keep guests. These results are to the findings of Soulidou et al. (2018) that guests give cleanliness a high priority when picking a hotel. The environment a visitor is in can have a significant impact on their initial impression of a hotel (Choi & Kandampully, 2019). The present findings are consistent with the findings of Spoerr (2020) that cleanliness, economic value (room rates and merchandise pricing), and security are the three most vital hotel factors influencing the choice of hotels. The study's findings support those of Irvania et al. (2017), who discovered that while choosing a hotel, tourists consider safety and security. Pricing is one of the primary factors that influence consumers to acquire a certain good, and the better the prices, the more buying options are available (Brata et al., 2017). According to Havidz and Mahaputra (2020), the price of a product is one of the important marketing tools to attract customers to purchase that product.

The study found that the expected service quality (rapid service, service quality, staff collaboration, and multilingual employees) had a significant impact on visitors' selections to stay in star-rated hotels. The choice of hotels made by visitors can be greatly influenced by the level of service provided. This suggests that hotels with a focus on good customer service, teamwork, and multilingual personnel are more likely to draw in and keep customers. These elements are crucial for providing a satisfying visitor experience, establishing a solid reputation, and distinguishing out in the cutthroat hospitality sector. These findings corroborated Vencataya et al. (2019) study, which showed that prompt service delivery had a substantial impact on consumers' hotel choices. This confirms Yilmaz's (2018) contention that a positive customer-staff interaction influences consumer decisions to purchase hotel items and revisit. Having a multi-lingual staff can greatly influence guests' choice of star-rated hotels. In a globalised world, guests come from all corners of the world, with different languages and cultures. A hotel that has staff members who can communicate with guests in their native language can provide a more personalized experience, making guests feel more comfortable and valued.

The study also revealed that comfort features (location, room size) influenced guests' choices of star-rated hotels. This implies that guests may consider hotels that are conveniently located near attractions, restaurants, and public transportation. They may also value hotels that offer easy access to business centres or other important destinations. Guests may prioritize hotels that offer spacious and comfortable rooms that can accommodate their needs. The study finding is in line with Masiero et al. (2019) that hotel location significantly affects guests' hotel choices. Kim et al. (2019) study, found that

guests considered convenient hotel location, not price, as the most important consideration when selecting a hotel to stay at.

Regression Analysis Results

Multiple regression analysis was done on the variables that affect visitors' choices of star-rating hotels in Accra, Kumasi, and Sunyani since the measurements used to evaluate the essential factors in the model are quantitative scales. The tables (3, 4, 5, and 6) below show the findings as follows:

Table 3. Regression model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.780	.768	.402	.174

Dependent variable: Star-rated hotel

According to Table 3, the dependent variable's observed and predicted values are positively correlated, with an R-value of 0.780. The absolute value of R reveals the strength of a link; greater absolute values indicate closer ties. An improved positive correlation between the observed and anticipated values is shown, for instance, by the R-value of 0.780. The dependent variable (star-rated hotel) has a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.768, meaning that independent factors predicted and explained 76.8% of its variation (safety and security, expected service quality, cleanliness, comfort features, external presentation, price value, and facility amenities).

Table 4 ANOVA for Factors Influencing Guests' Choice of Star-rated Hotels

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	109.726	16	6.858	2.018	.001
Residual	282.098	83	3.399		
Total	391.824	99			

Dependent Variable: Star-rated hotel

The entire model had an excellent match, according to the ANOVA in Table 4 (F-value=2.018 and p-value=0.001<0.05). This suggests that there is a statistically significant between security and safety, expected service quality, cleanliness, comfort amenities, external presentation, price value, facility amenities, and choice of star-rated hotels.

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Table 5: Regression coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.484	1.379		2.526	.132
Safety and Security	.246	.060	.345	3.134	.002
Expected service quality	.187	.068	.273	2.867	.013
Cleanliness	.314	.094	.375	3.102	.000
Comfort Features	.216	.083	.158	2.668	.023
External Presentation	.321	.093	.321	3.114	.000
Price Value	.195	.081	.319	4.012	.000
Facility Amenities	.206	.078	.288	3.456	.004

Dependent Variable: Star-rated hotel

The derived constant (t = 2.526) had a t-value that was significant at the 95% level (Sig. F < 0.05), which supported the model's fitness. The choice of star-rated hotel was shown to be positively influenced linearly by cleanliness, exterior presentation, and pricing value β=03.75, p=0.000<0.05, β=0.321, p=0.000<0.05, and β=0.319, p=0.000<0.05), respectively. Security and safety, predicted service quality, comfort features, and facility amenities, on the other hand, had p-values of 0.002, 0.013, 0.023, and 0.004, respectively. The final model should keep their coefficients at a 5% level of significance and a 95% level of confidence. The beta coefficients show how much each independent variable (security and safety, expected service quality, cleanliness, comfort amenities, external presentation, pricing value, and facility amenities) has on the dependent variable (star-rated hotel).

Table 6. Impact of Demographic Characteristics on the Choice of Star-rated Hotels

Impact of demographic characteristics on the choice of star-rated hotels	Mean	Std. Dev.
The gender of the guest(male/female) influences the choice of a star-rated hotel	3.46	0.69
Different age groups have significant influences on the star-rated hotel choice	3.29	0.72
Level of education influences the choice of a star-rated hotel	3.29	0.80
The marital status of guests influences the choice of a star-rated hotel	3.19	0.85
Average mean	**3.30**	

Source: (Field Survey, 2022)

The average mean value (3.30) from Table 6 suggests that demographic factors affect customers' choice of star-rated hotels. The majority of guests agreed (mean=3.46) that the gender of the guests (male or female) affects the selection of star-rated hotels. The choice of star-rated hotels made by guests appears to be significantly influenced by gender. Although gender can influence tourism research (Assaker, 2020), a recent study (Albayrak & Caber, 2018) contends that women are more important in determining the leisure and tourist activities for intimate groups like couples and families. Additionally, Remoaldo et al. (2020) emphasize that when it comes to engaging in creative guest activities, female visitors express "intention" and "total satisfaction" more strongly than male guests do. The

implication is that the sex of people has a significant influence on choosing a star-rated hotel for socialization and relaxation.

The guests agreed (mean=3.29) that different age groups have a significant impact on the star-rated hotel choice. This implies that different age groups have different priorities and preferences when it comes to choosing a hotel. Hotels that cater to the needs and preferences of different age groups can attract and retain guests across a wide range of demographics. Players in the tourism sector consider age as a crucial demographic component since it is possible to predict visitors' leisure demands depending on their age (Mieczkowski, 2017). According to Ma et al. (2018), age has a favourable impact on people's desire to unwind and explore nature. Age was shown to be the primary variable in Jönsson and Devonish's (2018) research on motivational variations depending on demographic aspects of visitor behaviour. For instance, younger generations say they are more inclined to stay at a hotel with a high star rating because they want to engage in engaging social activities, but older generations say they want to unwind (Jönsson and Devonish, 2018). Additionally, according to Jönsson and Devonish (2018), younger travellers favour star-rated hotels where they may engage in a variety of sports activities, whereas elderly travellers place greater value on learning about the local culture and people.

Additionally, guests agreed (mean=3.29) that educational levels influence the choice of a star-rated hotel. The level of education has been sufficiently explored as a critical determinant of star-rated hotel image and choice (Chen et al., 2017). Chen et al. (2017) found that the level of education is a critical determinant of the lifestyle of guests on vacation as well as their travel behaviour. The same concept was investigated on how it influences star-rated hotel choice in Serbia and was found to be significant (Gürdoğan, 2022).

Finally, the guests agreed (mean=3.19) that the marital status of guests influenced the choice of a star-rated hotel. One aspect that influences travel decisions is marital status (Kattiyapornpong & Miller, 2016). The administration of a five-star hotel requires this information so it can predict the travel preferences of its visitors. Married people spend less time on leisure activities than single persons, according to Passias et al. (2017). This is so that married couples may spend less time travelling for the holidays or taking part in guest activities due to social and family duties (Parnell et al., 2017). Guests who are not married seek adventure activities in a star-rated hotel more than married guests while married guests perceive star-rated hotels with "resort and resort activities" to be attractive (Huang & van der Veen, 2019). According to the literature, Passias et al. (2017) found that mothers who were never married had more free time than mothers who were married. The implication is that marital status influences guests' choice of star-rated hotel and single people have more time to spend at star-rated hotels.

CONCLUSION

This research investigated guests' choice of star-rated hotels in Ghana and engaged guests on reasons for their choice of star-rated hotels. The study revealed that cleanliness, external presentation, price value, security and safety, expected service quality, comfortable amenities, and facility amenities were identified as the main factors that guests considered when selecting star-rated hotels. The study also showed that guests' demographic factors influenced the choice of star-rated hotels.

Theoretical Implications

The study's findings have provided information on guests' preferences for star-rated hotels in literature from Ghana, a developing country where guests' preferences for star-rated hotels are highly distinctive and dissimilar from those of industrialised countries. The evidence emanated from the study has helped to advance understanding of the impact of guests' demographic profiles on the choice of star-rated hotels. This study has further, provided empirical data on the current Conceptual Framework in literature which seems not known to exist in a developing country, Ghana. Thus, this stride helps to expand the literature in that respect. The study offers a greater knowledge of guest behaviour and decision-making processes within the hospitality business by examining the numerous factors that affect guests' selections of hotels. This aids in the development of more thorough theories and models that can explain and forecast guest preferences and decisions during the hotel booking process.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study have provided hotel proprietors with information on how to improve guest standards in light of contemporary guest expectations. The information gained from the study will thus give hotel owners knowledge on how to have a general understanding of what customers need and how to personalise services to satisfy those demands.

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