Key Challenges and Strategies for Enhancing Operational Efficiency Of Hotels in Lusaka, Zambia

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Abstract

This research aimed to explore the key challenges facing hotel managers in Lusaka, Zambia, and suggest strategies for enhancing operational efficiency within the hotel sector. The study's objectives were: (1) to identify these challenges, (2) describe their effects operational efficiency, and (3) explore effective strategies for mitigating these issues. The research focused on various facets of hotel management, including management practices, possible skilled labor shortages, employee morale, advertising and promotion, service delivery, increased use of service technology, and client satisfaction.vision.

Employing a descriptive research design, data was gathered through survey questionnaires distributed to managers, employees, and clients from 116 different hotels in Lusaka. The population encompassed a variety of hotel types ranging from luxury business, and boutique hotels to budget hotels and guesthouses. Data analysis relied on descriptive statistics to summarize responses, providing quantitative insights into the challenges faced by hotel managers and employees in Lusaka.

The findings underscored the need for increased use of service technology ($M=4.25$) and the vital importance of maintaining a high level of client satisfaction ($M=4.54$) as significant operational factors, and suggested strategies for implementing various improvements. Recommendations from the analysis included greater use of mobile applications to streamline routine processes, implementing interactive and role-based training, establishing regular feedback mechanisms, promoting transparent communication, recognizing and incentivizing employee performance, and fostering a long-term training vision.

Keywords: Hotel management challenges; Lusaka, Zambia

Introduction

Hotel services are part of the broader hospitality industry which includes a variety of services, including food and beverages, lodging, events, and travel. This industry has a rich history dating back to ancient times. Inns and taverns were popular in ancient Rome, while the first hotel is believed to have been established in Japan in the eighth century (Kusluvan, 2003). The modern hotel industry began to take shape in the 19th century, with the opening of grand hotels such as the Ritz in Paris and the Waldorf-Astoria in New York City (Chon &

Maier, 2010). Today, the hospitality industry is a diverse and dynamic field that offers a wide range of career opportunities. The industry includes hotels and resorts, restaurants and bars, event planning and management, tourism and travel services, and more. The industry has undergone significant changes in recent years, with technological advancements and changing consumer preferences driving innovation and growth (Deloitte, 2019).

Zambia's hotel industry is a significant contributor to the country's economy, providing employment opportunities and generating foreign exchange earnings. The industry is composed of various sectors including hotels, restaurants, tour operators, and transportation services. Despite its importance the hotel industry in Zambia faces many challenges that threaten its growth and sustainability. One of these is inadequate infrastructure, which includes poor road networks, unreliable power supply, and limited access to water. This makes providing good quality services to their clients so that satisfaction levels are maintained even more vital. A review of the literature found that only a few studies of the hotel industry in Lusaka and its operational challenges have been conducted. Because tourism is of vital importance to national economic growth and development, some aspects of this research gap have been addressed in this study.

Literature Review

The hotel industry uses traditional management theories and best practices based on specific experiences. Current trends focus on different aspects that benefit such businesses, like promoting employee productivity and improving quality and branding. According to Tanwar and Ashfaq (2023), some beneficial practices that have been used successfully in contemporary hotel businesses are as follows.

Unique Selling Elements: This involves analyzing how to make a hotel, restaurant, or other hospitality industry business stand out from its competitors. Each enterprise should have at least three unique or distinctive selling elements that can be used as a cornerstone for marketing elements. These should be distinguishing features that help consumers to understand brand differences and help them to form positive attitudes towards a brand (Tanwar & Ashfaq, 2023).

Company Culture: Organizational culture predicts a hotel's success. One best practice to create a productive corporate culture is using the Cs: communication, coaching, cooperation, and compromise. These encourage employees to be creative, focused, and committed (Tanwar & Ashfaq, 2023). Another study showed that businesses with solid company cultures have better business performance, better reputations, and higher employee retention (Herbert, 2023).

New Media: Management theorists are paying increasing attention to how the hotel industry can use new media for quality control (Tanwar & Ashfaq, 2023). Having a public relations officer or hiring a firm to monitor posts that mention one's business on social media and review sites is vital. Feedback gathered from these sites can be used to pinpoint quality control issues.

From these beneficial practices that were briefly described (Tanwar & Ashfaq, 2023), a clear relationship between tourism and hotel management may be seen. Customer satisfaction is important in tourism because it leads to positive word of mouth, leads to repeat customers, and customer feedback may be used to improve products and services. In hotel management, unique selling elements help customers form positive attitudes toward brands, and good company culture ensures better business performance. From both approaches, the customer is the center of attention, and most direct or indirect efforts are designed to satisfy the customer.

The hotel industry is a crucial sector in the global economy, generating significant revenue and providing employment opportunities. However, this industry faces various challenges that affect its performance. This part of the literature review aims to examine the challenges faced by the industry globally then narrowed to look at challenges faced in Zambia.

Challenges Facing the Hotel Industry

The hotel industry is also facing significant technological disruption, with new technologies such as artificial intelligence, automation, and blockchain transforming the industry. These technologies are changing the way hotels and restaurants operate, leading to new business models and operational efficiencies. Chatbots can enhance customer interactions, providing quick responses to inquiries, and offering personalized recommendations.

According to the Goehring and Marshall (2020) from the IBM Institute for Business Value, AI-powered analytics and machine learning algorithms help in collecting and analyzing vast amounts of guest data, enabling hoteliers to personalize services and offers based on individual preferences. This leads to higher guest satisfaction and loyalty. However, the adoption of these technologies also presents challenges, such as the need for staff retaining and the high cost of implementing new technologies.

Challenges Facing the Hotel Industry in Zambia

The largest numbers of accommodation facilities in Zambia are lodges (48%), followed by hotels (22%), and guesthouses (19%). Banda and Chipepo (2018) stated that infrastructure is a major challenge for the hotel industry in Zambia. The lack of adequate infrastructure, such as roads and transportation systems, can make it difficult for tourists to access different destinations. This can lead to reduced demand for hotel services in certain areas. Poor infrastructure in Zambia, such as lack of quality road networks, air transport, and communication systems among others limits the ability of tourists to reach the tourism sites and hence the development of the hotel industry in Zambia.

Poor infrastructure in Zambia, such as lack of quality road networks, air transport, and communication systems among others limits the ability of tourists to reach the tourism sites and hence the development of the hotel industry in Zambia (World Bank, 2023). According to a report by the World Bank (2011), "Security is a major factor for tourists in Lusaka, Zambia." Tourists expect to feel safe and secure when visiting a new place. A failure to provide this can lead to reduced demand for tourism services, and hence the hotel industry.

Safety and security concerns have been cited as a major challenge for this industry. In Lusaka, Zambia, incidents such as theft, muggings, fraud, scams, and car jackings can deter tourists from visiting and staying in the country.

The quality of service provided by some hotels in Zambia has been criticized as being inconsistent and below international standards. Some examples of these services are poor housekeeping, slow or inconsistent service, transportation issues, lack of amenities, and unfriendly staff. Poor service can affect the country's reputation as a tourist destination in a negative way. As highlighted by Sigala (2020), the quality of service provided by some hotel establishments in Zambia has been poor, which has led to reduced demand for their hospitality services. In addition, this affects the country's reputation as a tourist destination.

Skills shortages are also a significant challenge for the hotel industry in Lusaka, Zambia. The industry has been affected by skills shortages, particularly in management positions, concierge services, chefs, and sales and marketing managers to mention a few positions. This affects the quality of service and limits the growth potential of the industry. As noted by Chikwaba and Matafwali (2024), the hotel industry in Zambia faces skills shortages, which can limit the quality of service provided and the growth potential of the industry. Poor management practices such as a lack of transparency, ineffective communication, inadequate leadership, inefficient resource allocation, resistance to change, nepotism and favouritism are significant challenges facing Zambia's hotel industry. Many hotel managers lack the necessary skills and expertise to effectively manage their establishments.

Limited investment in the tourism sector has also been cited as a challenge for the hotel industry in Zambia (Tembo & Deka-Zulu, 2021). This can limit the development of infrastructure, training opportunities, and other initiatives that can improve the industry. According to Tembo & Deka-Zulu (2021), the hotel industry in Zambia faces limited investment, which can limit the development of infrastructure, training opportunities, and other initiatives that can improve the industry.

Zambia's hotel industry also faces a significant challenge in terms of marketing and promotion. The country has not invested enough in promoting its tourism sector, resulting in low levels of tourist arrivals (Silungwe et al., 2020). In addition, there is limited cooperation between the government and private sector in promoting the industry (Bwanga & Kanyamuna, 2023). Political instability is another significant challenge facing Zambia's hotel industry. Political instability has a negative impact on tourism, as tourists are likely to avoid visiting countries that are unstable politically (Aisen & Veiga, 2011). Political and social demonstrations often happen in Lusaka, and these events can sometimes become violent. In addition, political instability can lead to a decline in foreign direct investment (FDI) in the hospitality industry (Dalyop, 2019).

Research Problem

The hotel industry in Lusaka, Zambia, faces major operational challenges including unreliable infrastructure and utilities, a shortage of skilled labor, and difficulties in adopting new technologies. All these issues impact service quality, guest satisfaction, and overall efficiency. This research aimed to gather primary data that could be used to analyze these

issues, as well as propose strategic solutions to help hotel managers and other stakeholders enhance operational performance and competitiveness in the hotel sector.

Objectives

1. What are the key challenges faced by hotels in Lusaka, Zambia, and how do they affect operational efficiency?

2. How can hotel stakeholders in Lusaka, Zambia, effectively address the key challenges they face and implement strategies to enhance operational efficiency?

Methodology

The target population for this study comprised managers and employees from various categories of hotels in Lusaka. To ensure diverse representation, purposive sampling was employed to select hotels across different types including, including luxury, business, budget, boutique hotels, guesthouses and service apartments, reflecting varied operational contexts within Lusaka's hotel sector. From these categories, a sample of 117 hotels was selected, based on accessibility and willingness to participate in the study; this sample represented about 40% of the population of hotels in Lusaka.

The questionnaire mainly consisted of closed-ended questions using a 5-point Likert scale to measure participants' level of agreement or disagreement with statements related to hotel management challenges and possible solutions. Because of a paucity of previous hotel studies in a Zambian context, survey items were initially developed based on the experiences of the Zambian author. To enhance validity and reliability, this draft instrument was reviewed by three experienced researchers using the Item-Objective Congruence method. Their feedback and suggestions were incorporated into the final version of the instrument, and all items received scores of .at least 0.65. This validation process helped confirm that the questions were aligned with the research objectives, clearly worded and appropriate for the hotel industry context in Lusaka, Zambia. After examining the research instrument, permission and ethical approval for the study was granted by the Asia-Pacific International University Research Committee (AIU.RO.15 (3)/2023, 23 August 2023).

Data collection was conducted using self-administered questionnaires distributed to a convenience sample of employees, managers, and clients across the selected hotels to obtain various perspectives about hotel challenges and possible solutions. The quantitative data from the closed ended questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics including mean, standard deviation, and frequency distributions with results presented in tables. The data were coded and keyed into a statistical software package for analysis.

Research Results

The demographic breakdown of hotel staff in Lusaka, Zambia revealed valuable insights pivotal to understanding the workforce composition to assess challenges confronting hotel management, and strategies for enhancing operational efficiency. A total of 117 respondents returned the surveys; their demographic information is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 *Respondent Demographic Information*

Age	Count	Percentage
18-27	19	16.24
28-37	78	66.67
38-47	17	14.53
48-57	3	2.56
Gender		
Female	50	42.74
Male	67	57.26
Position		
Advertising and Marketing	16	13.68
Chef/Cook	9	7.69
Hotel Housekeeper	11	9.40
Hotel Manager	20	17.09
Hotel Receptionist	18	15.39
IT Staff	4	3.42
Restaurant Manager	15	12.82
Server	24	20.51

The table illustrates a significant presence of staff in the 28-37 age group, comprising 66.67% of respondents, and provides a foundation for exploring the dynamics and perspectives of this group. Gender distribution showed a relatively balanced representation between male (57.26%) and female (42.74%) employees, revealing an inclusive environment.

Table 2 shows distribution of hotel staff across different establishments. The largest numbers of respondents were from Budget hotels, constituting slightly more than one quarter of the sample. Business hotels follow closely at 19.66%, while Luxury hotels made up 18.80%. Boutique Hotels, Serviced Apartments, and Guesthouses were also represented, contributing 12.82%, 11.97%, and 9.40%, respectively. For instance, while all hotel types reported concerns related to workforce shortages, the nature and severity of these challenges varied significantly depending on hotel size and clientele. Respondents from Budget hotels emphasized cost constraints, whereas luxury hotels were more focused on maintaining service standards amidst skilled labor shortages. This range of perspective not only broadens the analytical depth of the study, but it also enhances its relevance to a wide array of stakeholders. Managers can draw on these differentiated insights to design more tailored interventions and address the specific needs of each hotel category, rather than applying one-size-fits-all approach to sector development.

Table 2 *Hotel Types*

Type of Hotel/Lodge/Guesthouse	Count	Percentage
Boutique Hotel	15	12.82
Budget Hotel	32	27.35
Business Hotel	23	19.66
Guesthouse	11	9.40
Luxury Hotel	22	18.80

Type of Hotel/Lodge/Guesthouse	Count	Percentage
Serviced Apartment	14	11.97
Total	**117**	**100%**

Table 3 illustrates respondents' work experience in the hospitality industry, as well as their duration of service at their current hotels in Lusaka, Zambia.

Table 3 *Respondents' Work Experience*

	In Hospitality Industry		At Current Hotel		In Current Position	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
1 to 2 years	24	20.51	62	52.99	38	32.48
3 to 4 years	39	33.33	28	23.93	44	37.61
5 to 6 years	34	29.07	22	18.80	24	20.51
7 to 9 years	11	9.40	5	4.28	10	8.55
≥10 years	9	7.69			1	0.85
Total	**117**	**100%**	**117**	**100%**	**117**	**100%**

The demographic and employment data in the tables above reveals a workforce that is moderately experienced in the hospitality industry, yet relatively transient in both job tenure and organizational loyalty. The sample reflected a broad mix of hotel types, with strong representations of business hotels and budget hotels, offering a well-rounded view of the sector in Lusaka. Most respondents reported three to six years of industry experience, indicating operational familiarity, while long-term service of over 10 years was rare. Short durations at current hotels and in current roles suggest high stuff turnover, possibly linked to limited advancement opportunities, wage concerns, or unstable employment conditions. These patterns underscored the need for more strategic human resource practices focused on retention, career development, and organizational stability within Lusaka's hospitality industry.

Table 4 below presents an overview of the diverse professional backgrounds of respondents before their current roles. The table indicates that a significant portion, 16.24%, had previous experience in Advertising and Marketing, showcasing a valuable skill set related to promotion and visibility. Additionally, 18.80% were in Chef/Cook positions, emphasizing the culinary expertise within the workforce. The presence of 15.38% Hotel Receptionists reflects a prior focus on customer-facing roles, contributing to a customer-centric culture.

Table 4 *Respondents' Previous Work Positions*

Work Positions	Count	Percentage
Advertising and marketing	19	16.24
Assistant hotel manager	11	9.40
Chef/Cook	22	18.80
Hotel Housekeeper	11	9.40
Hotel Manager	5	4.27
Hotel Receptionist	18	15.38
IT staff	4	3.42
Restaurant manager	3	2.56

Work Positions	Count	Percentage
Server	24	20.51
Total	**117**	**100%**

Respondents' previous work experience revealed a workforce with strong foundations in operational roles, particularly in food service and customer-facing positions. Marketing and advertising skills were well represented, suggesting awareness of the importance of promotion in hospitality. While many bring practical and service-oriented expertise, few had backgrounds in upper management, indicating potential gaps in strategic leadership experience. These skill sets highlighted opportunities for internal career development and targeted upskilling.

Table 5 below presents respondents' levels of agreement with statements related to skills shortage in the hotel industry, part of the broader section on hotel operational issues and challenges.

Table 5 *Hotel Skills Shortages*

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev
Hotel management skills for effective leadership.	4.04	0.42
Need for skill enhancement among assistant managers.	3.03	0.41
The hotel struggles with recruiting and retaining qualified personnel.	3.06	0.97
Receptionists possess skills for exceptional customer service.	4.17	0.46
Security team has required training and skills.	3.44	0.91
Importance of marketing skills, strategies for hotel visibility/reputation.	4.56	0.50
Team lacks specific marketing skills.	3.08	1.20
The hotel currently lacks IT skills needed for smooth operations.	2.66	0.56
Need for improved skills among hotel housekeepers.	2.61	0.52
Chefs, cooks, and servers possess specific culinary skills and techniques for enhanced dining.	3.30	0.87
Average Scores for Category	**3.40**	**0.68**

The data in Table 5 highlighted key areas of strength and concern regarding skills within the hotel industry. High mean scores for leadership (4.04) and customer service by receptionists (4.17) suggest confidence in the frontline workers and managerial capabilities. However, the lower scores for assistant manager development (3.03) and IT skills (2.66) point to a gap in mid-level leadership and technical operations. The high importance placed on marketing (4.56) contrasted with a lack of marketing skills (3.08). This may suggest a disconnect between strategic needs and actual competencies. Overall, the findings show a need for targeted training, especially in the marketing, information technology, and housekeeping roles to address operational inefficiencies and improve service quality.

Table 6 provides a summary of respondents' levels of agreement with statements related to management skills in the Zambian hotel industry.

Table 6 *Hotel Management Skills*

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev
Effective communication of expectations and goals.	3.86	0.75
Inadequate leadership skills hinder performance.	2.83	0.67
Strong leadership skills in guiding the staff.	3.76	0.76
Lack of effective performance evaluation and feedback.	3.13	0.34
Clear support and guidance from the management team.	3.76	0.76
Collaboration with other departments for seamless operations.	3.76	0.76
Average Score for Category	**3.52**	**0.67**

This table reveals a generally positive perception of management skills, particularly in communication and leadership support. The low score for inadequate leadership hindering performance (2.83) suggests overall strong leadership impressions, though some gaps may remain, along with inconsistent performance evaluation and feedback systems (3.13). The relatively low standard deviations, especially in performance evaluation (0.34), indicate consistent participant views in this area. These findings suggest that while foundational management skills are present, enhancements in evaluation process and addressing specific leadership weaknesses are essential for boosting overall performance.

There was general agreement that effective communication of expectations and goals by hotel managers was evident, as reflected by a mean score of 3.86.

Table 7 presents service technology perceived needs in the hospitality industry.

Table 7 *Hotel Use of Service Technology*

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev
Internet of Things enhances guests' overall experience.	4.63	0.48
Internet of Things improves operational efficiency.	3.57	0.56
Online check-in enhances guest experience.	4.48	0.50
Mobile-enabled check-ins streamline processes.	4.54	0.50
Service tech enhances customer satisfaction.	4.15	0.66
Effective online booking for guest reservations.	4.56	0.50
Automated messaging for important updates.	4.54	0.50
Contactless payment enhances payment experience.	3.53	0.53
Average Score for Category	**4.25**	**0.53**

Notably, respondents stated that guests highly appreciate the implementation of Internet of Things (IoT), with a mean score of (4.63), indicating a significant enhancement in their overall experiences. Mobile-enabled check-ins and effective online booking systems also received positive feedback, scoring (4.54) and (4.56), respectively. These findings suggested a positive correlation between adoption of service technology and improved guest satisfaction. However, respondents indicated a slightly lower mean score (3.57) for IoT's link to operational efficiency, indicating a potential area for further exploration and optimization. Overall, these results underscored the importance of leveraging service technology to enhance both guest experiences and operational processes in the hospitality sector.

Table 8 provides an overview of hotel revenue-related aspects, shedding light on various factors influencing income and operational strategies.

Table 8 *Hotel Revenue Enhancement and Operational Strategies*

Factor/Strategy	Mean	Std. Dev
High year-round occupancy	3.41	0.59
Seasonal occupancy fluctuations	3.38	0.54
Strategies for off-peak income boost	3.42	0.61
Impact of pricing strategy on income	3.45	0.53
Substantial income from Food &Beverage offerings	3.51	0.61
Enhancing income through diverse Food & Beverages	3.44	0.53
Low service worker income affecting motivation	3.17	0.50
Difficulty attracting talent due to low wages	3.56	0.58
Average Score for Category	**3.42**	**0.56**

Notably, respondents perceived that hotels had achieved consistent year-round occupancy, with a mean score of (3.41), indicating stability in this aspect. Strategies for off-peak income boost and the use of pricing strategies to increase income were also viewed positively, with mean scores of (3.42) and (3.45), respectively. The importance of diverse food and beverage offerings generated substantial income, with a mean score of (3.51). However, challenges such as low service worker motivation and difficulties in attracting talent due to low wages were also evident, with mean scores of (3.17) and (3.56), respectively. These findings suggest opportunities for addressing workforce-related issues to enhance overall hotel performance. Overall, the table provides a valuable snapshot of key revenue-related considerations in the hotel industry.

Table 9 reports views about employee morale in the hotel industry in Lusaka.

Table 9 *Hotel Employee Morale*

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev
Low morale negatively impacts performance and productivity.	2.95	0.61
Lack of recognition and rewards leads to job dissatisfaction.	2.22	0.57
Insufficient training results in decreased motivation.	2.95	0.61
Inadequate communication leads to low morale.	2.22	0.57
High stress and burnout contribute to low morale.	2.80	0.44
Absence of a positive work culture leads to turnover.	2.95	0.61
Average Score for Category	**2.68**	**0.57**

The mean scores offered an informative view of respondent sentiments, revealing concerns such as low employee morale, insufficient training, or a poor work culture negatively affecting performance and leading to turnover (Mean=2.95 for each factor). Lack of recognition contributing to dissatisfaction (2.22) and inadequate communication mechanisms (Mean=2.22 for each) were seen as less important issues. The findings underscore the significance of addressing stress and burnout due to excessive workloads (2.80) and fostering a positive work culture (2.95) to mitigate turnover rates. This insight

provides a valuable understanding of aspects influencing employee morale in the hotel industry in Lusaka, emphasizing the need for targeted improvements in these areas.

Table 10 explores advertising and promotion strategies across the sampled hotels.

Table 10 *Hotel Advertising and Promotion*

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev
Crucial advertising for brand awareness and customer base.	3.28	0.64
Positive impact of well-executed campaigns on occupancy and revenue.	3.58	0.59
Challenges in developing compelling materials for effective communication.	3.03	0.61
Necessary investment in targeted efforts for competitive positioning.	3.33	0.72
Essential role of digital channels, like social media, in effective promotion.	3.61	0.52
Vital inclusion of online travel agencies in effective advertising.	3.06	0.63
Missed opportunities due to inadequate advertising and promotion strategies.	2.78	0.85
Average Score for Category	**3.24**	**0.65**

Mean scores offered glimpses into respondents' perspectives, indicating that advertising for brand awareness and customer base was deemed important (3.28). Furthermore, a positive link between well-executed campaigns on occupancy and revenue was acknowledged (3.58), along with the essential role of digital channels, such as social media, in effective promotion (3.61). Respondents emphasized that targeted investments were needed for competitive positioning (3.33) However, challenges in developing compelling materials for effective communication (3.03) and inclusion of online travel agencies for successful advertising (3.06) were seen as less critical issues. The same was true of missed opportunities due to inadequate advertising and promotion strategies, which garnered the lowest mean score in this section of 2.78. This data provides valuable insights into the advertising landscape within the local hotel industry, highlighting both strengths and areas for improvement.

Table 11 offers insights into the various dimensions of quality service delivery in hotels across Lusaka, Zambia. The mean scores provided a snapshot of respondents' views on different aspects of service excellence.

Table 11 *Quality of Hotel Service Delivery*

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev
Personalized service is essential for memorable experiences.	3.50	0.50
Consistent exceptional service is key for customer satisfaction.	3.74	0.44
Quality service requires well-trained and customer-oriented staff.	3.46	0.50
Challenges in maintaining consistent service standards.	3.16	0.37
Providing high-quality service is essential for customer expectations.	4.65	0.48
Average Score for Category	**3.70**	**0.46**

Personalized service was deemed essential for creating memorable experiences, receiving a mean score of 3.50. Respondents highly valued consistent, exceptional service, reflected in the substantial mean score of 3.74, underscoring its pivotal role in ensuring

customer satisfaction. Recognizing the importance of well-trained and customer-oriented staff members also received a high mean score of 3.46, while challenges in maintaining consistent service standards were not as significant an issue, with a mean score of only 3.16. The paramount importance attributed to providing high-quality service that meets and exceeds customer expectations, was evidenced by an impressive mean score of 4.65.

Table 12 provides valuable insights into client satisfaction within the hotel industry in Lusaka, Zambia. The mean scores offered a central measure, showcasing the perceived importance of various factors contributing to customer contentment.

Table 12 *Hotel Client Satisfaction*

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev
Ensuring customer satisfaction is paramount...	4.51	0.50
Exceeding customer expectations is crucial...	4.50	0.50
Effective communication enhances satisfaction	4.56	0.50
Consistently delivering excellent services...	4.51	0.50
Proactively resolving customer issues is vital	4.61	0.49
Engaging in feedback collection improves...	4.52	0.50
Average Score for Category	**4.54**	**0.50**

Ensuring customer satisfaction emerged as a top priority, with a robust mean score of 4.51. Similarly, meeting and exceeding customer expectations were considered crucial, reflected in a mean score of 4.50. Effective communication played a pivotal role in enhancing satisfaction, with a notable mean score of 4.56. The commitment to consistently delivering excellent services and personalized experiences was evident, as indicated by a mean score of 4.51. Proactively addressing and resolving customer issues was highlighted as vital, with a mean score of 4.61. Engaging in regular feedback collection for understanding and improvement also received a positive acknowledgment, as reflected in a mean score of 4.52. This data succinctly captures respondents' sentiments surrounding client satisfaction, emphasizing key areas that demand attention and excellence in service delivery.

Discussion

Analyzing the data collected from hotel employees in Lusaka, Zambia revealed critical operational challenges affecting the hospitality sector. These challenges span management practices, workforce issues, service quality, marketing, and use of technology, offering a comprehensive view of the industry's current state. Respondents highlighted inconsistent service standards and leadership gaps, pointing to the need for improved managerial training. These findings align with existing research emphasizing the importance of effective leadership in service quality (Olsen et al., 2008; Jones & Robinson, 2018).

Another persistent issue was the difficulty of retaining and attracting skilled labor, largely attributed to low wages. Supporting literature has linked competitive compensation to workforce stability (Brown et al., 2019; Milkovich & Newman, 2016). Low morale rooted in insufficient recognition and rewards mirrored Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959),

suggesting a need for engagement strategies like employee recognition programs and regular feedback mechanisms.

Service quality concerns reflected in the data also support established frameworks such as SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al., 1988), reinforcing the need for ongoing staff training to meet customer expectations. Another key theme was personalized services, in line with the findings of Berry et al. (1995), with recommendations including tailored guest experiences and customized amenities to boost satisfaction and loyalty.

The marketing challenges, specifically in terms of advertising and promotion, highlighted missed opportunities to attract guests. Aligning with Kotler (2011) and Smith (2002), the findings suggested leveraging digital platforms like social media and email campaigns to better engage with both local and the international markets. While some progress in service technology was noted, gaps in usability and training have persisted. Solutions such as intuitive mobile check-ins and multilingual automated messaging systems could be recommended to enhance guest experiences, in harmony with the broader literature on technology adoption (Rogers, 2003; O'Connor et al., 2020).

It is safe to say these findings echo other global and local research studies, while offering specific context and insights into the Lusaka hotel sector. Addressing management skills, staff motivation, service quality, marketing strategy, and tech integration are all vital for long-term competitiveness and guest satisfaction.

Conclusion and Suggestions

This research paper explored the diverse challenges confronted by hotel managers in Lusaka, Zambia, shedding light on their effects on operational efficiency within the local hotel industry. Through an examination of various dimensions, including workforce challenges, revenue dynamics, and strategies for improvement, the study revealed a detailed understanding of the complex landscape of hotel management in Lusaka.

These findings serve as a valuable resource for hotel managers in Lusaka, offering practical insights into navigating the challenges within the local hospitality landscape. By connecting these findings to established theories and evidence, the paper provides relevant and applicable recommendations for addressing workforce challenges, adapting strategies, and staying abreast of global trends. The insights gained from this study contribute to the ongoing discourse on hotel management in Lusaka, providing a foundation for future research and industry improvements.

This analysis of operational efficiency in Lusaka's hotel industry draws from a representative dataset to unveil critical trends and challenges. By relating these findings to existing theories and literature, the analysis provides a helpful understanding of the intricacies involved in optimizing operational efficiency within the unique context of Lusaka, Zambia. The identified trends highlight the interconnected nature of infrastructure, human resources, adoption of technology, and management practices in shaping the operational landscape of the local hotel industry. Addressing these challenges through targeted interventions, informed by both empirical findings and theoretical frameworks, is imperative for ensuring sustained operational excellence and contributing to the broader discourse on hospitality management.

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