# MEDIATING ROLE OF TOURISTS' EMOTIONAL SATISFACTION ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SERVICE QUALITY AND BEHAVIOURAL INTENTIONS IN MAASAI MARA GAME LODGES, KENYA

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**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Hospitality and Tourism Management of Murang'a University of Technology**

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## DECLARATION

### Student's Declaration

I hereby declare that this Thesis is my original work and, to the best of my knowledge has not been presented for a degree award in this or any other university. I understand what plagiarism is and I am aware of the University's policy in this regard. I understand that any false claim in respect of this work shall result in disciplinary action in accordance with the University Anti-Plagiarism Policy.

Caroline Wangari Kihara Date
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### Supervisors' Approval

The undersigned certify that they have read and hereby recommended for acceptance of Murang'a University of Technology a thesis entitled **"Mediating Role of Tourists' Emotional Satisfaction on the Relationship between Service Quality and Behavioural Intentions in Maasai Mara Game Lodges, Kenya"**.

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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my dear family: my husband, Njagi and my children, Githinji, Wangechi and Kihara.

To my dear mum, Mrs. Leah Kihara and in memory of my late dad, Mr. Jeremiah Kihara, for your constant source of inspiration and guidance.

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God bless you all.

## ABSTRACT

Providing high-quality services in game lodges promotes emotional satisfaction and, subsequently, favourable behavioural intentions, leading to enhanced business performance, including market share and profitability. Practical and empirical evidence has demonstrated that visitors have varying degrees of preferences that influence their expectations and satisfaction, which consequently affects their behavioural intentions. Previous studies have, however, paid more attention to the relationship between service quality and behavioural intention, giving little or no attention to emotional satisfaction. In light of this, this study sought to evaluate the mediating role of emotional satisfaction on the relationship between service quality and visitor behavioural intentions among different tourist markets patronizing game lodges in Kenya, taking the Maasai Mara National Reserve and its conservancies as a case study. Specifically, the study sought to establish key dimensions of service quality that influence tourists' overall service quality perception, determine the influence of service quality on emotional satisfaction among tourists patronizing game lodges, determine the influence of service quality on tourists' behavioural intentions of tourists; assess the mediating role of emotional satisfaction on the relationship between service quality and tourists' behavioural intentions; and examine the moderating effect of tourists' nationality on the relationship between service quality, emotional satisfaction, and behavioural intentions. The study population comprised 29 game lodge managers and 2,128,800 visitors. A sample size of 12 game lodge managers was purposively selected to participate in this study. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to obtain the sample size of 337 visitors from the different categories of star-rated game lodges. A mixed research approach was used in the study. Data was collected using structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The instruments were pre-tested for clarity, reliability, and validity. Data was analysed using a structural equation model (SEM) to test hypotheses and relationships among service quality, emotional satisfaction, and behavioural intentions. Thematic data and narrative analyses were used to analyse qualitative data obtained from the interviews. The study found that the overall service quality perception is influenced by customers' assessment of service quality at different levels of service delivery. SEM results further established that the outcome service quality dimension played a more significant role in influencing the overall service quality ($\beta=0.78$, $p<0.05$), followed by physical environment quality ($\beta=0.634$, $P<0.05$) and interaction quality ($\beta= 0.563$, $p< 0.05$). The results support a positive and significant relationship between service quality and emotional satisfaction (T value = 6.886, $p<0.05$) and behavioural intentions ($T=11.705$, $p<0.05$). In addition, mediation results showed that customer emotional satisfaction partially mediated the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions ($z = 5.249$, $p < .05$) while nationality had a significant moderating role in the relationship between service quality and behaviour (International tourist; $\beta = 0.284$. t-value = 6.605, $p < 0.05$; domestic tourist; $\beta = 0.192$. t-value = 3.536, $p < 0.05$). The study thus concludes that there is a significant relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions, moderated by tourists' nationality and partially mediated by tourists' emotional satisfaction. Arising from the findings, the study recommends that the game lodge managers and owners focus on service quality dimensions important to visitors from different nationalities and comprehend their significance in influencing emotional satisfaction and behavioural intentions. Further comparable studies should be carried out in star-rated game lodges as well as unclassified lodges in other tourist regions in Kenya.

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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **AVE** | **:** | Average Variance Extracted |
| **CB-SEM** | **:** | covariance-based structural equation modelling |
| **CFA** | **:** | Confirmatory Factor Analysis |
| **CFI** | **:** | Comparative Fit Index |
| **CR** | **:** | Composite Reliability |
| **DAILYSERV** | **:** | Daily Tours Service Performance |
| **Df** | **:** | Degree of freedom |
| **EDT** | **:** | Expectancy- Disconfirmation Theory |
| **EFA** | **:** | Exploratory Factor Analysis |
| **GDP** | **:** | Gross Domestic Product |
| **GFI** | **:** | Goodness-of-Fit- Index |
| **GoK** | **:** | Government of Kenya |
| **HISTOQUAL** | **:** | Historic Houses Service Quality |
| **HOLSERV** | **:** | Holiday Service Performance |
| **HOQ** | **:** | House of Quality |
| **IBM AMOS** | **:** | International Business Machines Analysis of Moment Structures |
| **KMO** | **:** | Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin |
| **KWS** | **:** | Kenya Wildlife Service |
| **LODGQUAL** | **:** | Lodge Service Quality |
| **LODGSERVE** | **:** | Lodging Industry Service Performance |
| **ML** | **:** | Maximum Likelihood |
| **MoTW** | **:** | Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife |
| **MSA** | **:** | Measure of Sampling Adequacy |
| **NACOSTI** | **:** | National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovations |
| **PLS-SEM** | **:** | Partial Least Squares-Based Structural Equation Modelling |
| **QFD** | **:** | Quality Function Deployment |
| **RMSEA** | **:** | Root Mean Square Error of Approximation |
| **SD** | **:** | Standard Deviation |
| **SE** | **:** | Standard Error |
| **SEM** | **:** | Structural Equation Modelling |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **SERVPERF** | **:** | Service Performance |
| **SERVQUAL** | **:** | Service Quality |
| **SME** | **:** | Small to Medium Enterprises |
| **S-O-R** | **:** | Stimulus-Organism-Response |
| **SPSS** | **:** | Statistical Package for Social Sciences |
| **SQ** | **:** | Service Quality |
| **SRMR** | **:** | Standard Root Mean Square Residue |
| **SRS** | **:** | Systematic Random Sampling |
| **TRA** | **:** | Tourism Regulatory Authority |
| **TRI** | **:** | Tourism Research Institute |
| **UK** | **:** | United Kingdom |
| **UNWTO** | **:** | United Nations World Tourism Organization |
| **USA** | **:** | United States of America |
| **VIF** | **:** | Variance Inflation Factor |
| **WoM** | **:** | Word of Mouth |
| **WTTC** | **:** | World Travel and Tourism Council |

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

**All-Inclusive Travel Package**: Refers to a trip where all expenses are pre-paid as a single price and include transport costs, hotel expenses and expeditions.

**Behavioural Intentions**: Refers to behaviour that customers are likely to show after service Customer satisfaction: Refers to the degree the customers' perceptions of service quality in a lodging facility meet and exceed customer expectations.

**Emotional Satisfaction**: Refers to emotional responses experienced during service delivery and is usually expressed in terms of negative emotions or positive emotions.

**Food and Beverage Experience**: This refers to the quality of meals and interaction with the staff in the restaurants, lounges, and bars within the lodging facilities.

**Front Office Experience**: This is the customer's perception of service delivery at the front office and is measured in terms of staff interaction during the reservation stage, check in and check-out.

**Game Lodge**: an establishment (hotel, camps) that offers accommodation, food and beverage, and other guest services and is located within the Maasai Mara ecosystem, in the Maasai Mara National Reserves and its conservancies.

**Guest**: a tourist patronizing a lodging facility for the provision of accommodation, food and beverage, and other guest services.

**Maasai Mara Ecosystem**: refers to the habitat area for wild animals, and it encompasses Maasai Mara National Reserve and its conservancies.

**Room Experience**: This is the quality of rooms as perceived by the guests and includes room décor and ambience; rooms free of noise; hygienic rooms; availability of efficient room amenities; and good staff interaction.

**Service Quality**: This refers to the customer's overall evaluation process that shows the customer's perception of service quality dimensions: staff-guest interaction quality, outcome/technical quality, and physical service quality dimensions.

**Tourists**: Individuals traveling within Kenyan tourist destinations for less than one year to spend leisure time, business, or other purposes.

**Wildlife Safari**: Refers to nature-based travel to view wild animals.

# CHAPTER ONE
# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background of the Study

The hospitality industry is a key driver of the global economy and an integral part of the travel and tourism industry (Anabila et al., 2022). The tourism industry accounts for 10.3% of the Gross Domestic Product. (GDP) and contributes to socioeconomic development, employment, and poverty reduction (World Travel and Tourism Council [WTTC], 2022). Global tourism involves domestic and international travel for business, leisure, culture, sports, health, and religion, among other reasons (Kara & Mkwizu, 2020). Increased travel in both developed and developing countries (Sota et al., 2020) has seen hospitality services grow into one of the major demands of tourists worldwide (Enilov & Wang, 2022). The increasing demand in this sector has led to the rise of investments in the lodging sector, resulting in stiff competition in the hospitality industry (Chikazhe et al., 2021). Within a challenging and highly competitive hospitality industry, hotel managers find it difficult to distinguish their service provision from those of potential competitors (Keshavarz et al., 2019).

According to United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2022), the Middle East had the highest occupancy rates (65%), followed by Europe (58%) and Africa (56%). America, Asia, and the Pacific had a share of 54% of hotel occupancy. Although Africa accounts for 5% of global travellers, its hotel sector has been recognized as one of the fastest-growing industries in the world. In Africa, travel and tourism contributed 5.9% to the GDP in 2022 (UNWTO, 2023). This growth has been driven by Africa's growing middle class, which seeks quality hotel accommodation (Melber, 2022).

In Kenya, service industries, such as the tourism industry, have emerged as a significant driver of economic growth (Tourism Research Institute [TRI], 2023). Tourism as a sub-sector of the service industry has been recognized as one of the main foreign exchange earning sectors, accounting for 10.4 % of the country's GDP and 4.2% of new investments (TRI, 2023). The lodging industry in Kenya is an important sub-sector of the tourism industry due to its role in the provision of accommodation and other related services to overnight and long-term visitors (TRI, 2023).

Furthermore, the lodging sector is one of the largest contributors to tourism GDP input, accounting for 7.5 % of tourism gross value, and has a growth rate of 16.6 % in the last few years (TRI, 2023). This has been attributed to increased international tourist arrivals and domestic tourism in the past few years (TRI, 2023; UNWTO, 2023; WTTC, 2022;).

Remarkable tourism recovery in Kenya after COVID-19 has also seen an increase in hotel occupancy in lodges and other accommodation facilities from 3,803,000 in 2020 to 5,517,000 in 2022 (TRI, 2023). Notably, hotel occupancy by the domestic market accounted for the greatest share (69.9%) of all bed-night occupancy. This was a good indication that the domestic tourism market largely supported the tourism industry during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is also worth noting that emerging markets, such as the Asian market also contributed significantly to hotel occupancy. However, the traditional markets, such as Europe, registered a decline in room occupancy by 21% of all bed night market share with international tourism markets occupying 48.2% of the total bed nights.

In Kenya, both domestic and international tourists are attracted by numerous tourist attractions such as wildlife safaris among others. These tourists need hospitality services such as accommodation, thus the importance of lodging facilities such as game lodges. Game lodges are classified within the context of resort hotels since they satisfy the classification criteria for resort hotels, as suggested by Fredrick (2019), for their unique location in terms of attractions, scenery, and climate. Game lodges are becoming one of the fastest-growing segments of tourist attractions globally (F. Ali et al., 2016).

In this study, star-rated game lodges refer to classified accommodation establishments located in Kenya's national parks and national reserves, such as Maasai Mara National Reserve. Tourists' patronage of Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) national parks and reserves is an indicator of tourism performance as wildlife tourism is a core product in Kenya's tourism industry. Maasai Mara National Reserve is one of the world's wildlife safari destinations owing to its annual wild beast migration (Chakrabarti & Ekblom, 2024).

Globally, there is an increased demand for nature-based tourism destinations, such as Maasai Mara National Reserve, that attract both international and domestic tourists annually (GoK, 2020). Hence, the provision of superior service quality is critical for the tourism and hospitality industry (Fredrick, 2019) to retain the existing markets and attract emerging markets. According to the Tourism Regulatory Authority (TRA, 2020), the hotel industry comprises about 225 classified hotels ranging from one to five stars, with a total of 16,156 sellable rooms and 26,786 sellable beds. Out of 225 star-rated hotels, 28 hotels are found within the Maasai Mara ecosystem, Narok County in Kenya. Recently, the country has entrenched its long-term national economic blueprint of making Kenya one of the leading top ten tourist destinations of choice offering value for money and a diverse and distinct experience as envisaged in Vision 2030.

Hotels, by their nature of services, demand contextualization for perceived service quality constructs (Naderian & Baharun, 2015; Osarenkhoe et al., 2017) owing to increasing demand for service improvement from the guests and the number of tourism markets have reached saturation (B. Ali et al., 2021). Moreover, guests in hotels, including game lodges, are continually looking for better value for their money to visit and recommend to others. Further, earlier research has indicated differences in service quality perception among tourists from different nationalities, which possess challenges in standardization and adoption of service delivery (Tsiotsou, 2019). The provision of high-quality services to guests promotes emotional satisfaction and ultimately favourable behavioural intentions, which in turn enhances the business performance of the lodging industry. This is critical for rated hotel segments, which possess a large market share in the hotel industry worldwide (Assaker, 2020). Research indicates that the lodging industry should comprehend its customers' segments and factors that drive emotional satisfaction and favourable behavioural intentions to have a competitive edge (Assaker, 2020). This subsequently improves the market share and profitability by retaining the existing markets and attracting the emerging tourism markets.

Service quality, customer emotional satisfaction, and behavioural intentions are among the fundamental concepts in service marketing theory and practice (Han et al., 2016). Provision of superior service quality and favourable emotional experiences are

critical in the lodging industry as this increases customer retention as well as attracts new customers in today's stiff global market competition (Shyju et al., 2023). Several studies support that service quality is critical for customer emotional satisfaction in the hotel sector (F. Ali et al., 2016; Birgit, 2019; He et al., 2020; Lee & Yun, 2015; Oh & Kim, 2017; Pizam et al., 2016) and particularly in the upscale segment where visitors have higher service quality expectations in exchange of the higher price paid (Jasinskas et al., 2016).

Higher service quality provision in the lodging industry is a crucial in-service marketing strategy to meet the demands of customers (Keshavarz et al., 2019). Most of the extant evaluation models in service quality have applied conventional methods such as SERVQUAL, SERVPERF, LODGQUAL, and LODGSERVE. However, these models have the limitation of not fully reflecting the correlation between evaluation factors or the hierarchical conceptualization of service quality, thus considered insufficient to measure service quality in lodges.

In recent years, as the service environment has changed, Brady and Cronin (2001) and Dabholkar et al. (1996) have proposed that customers evaluate service quality at several levels of abstraction, that is, sub-dimension, dimension, and the overall service quality level. The authors further assert that Service quality should be conceptualized as a multi-dimensional and hierarchical construct. In this approach, the specific aspects of service quality and its sub-dimensions are evaluated, then the dimensions, and finally the overall service quality. Multi-dimensional and hierarchical model approaches explain the complex process the customers form the service quality perception (A. Hossain et al., 2021). This service quality evaluation process has been effectively applied in the banking industry (Bakar et al., 2017; Hossain et al., 2021), healthcare services (Dandis et al., 2021), mobile communications (Putri et al., 2024) and mobile library service quality (Mamta & Kumar, 2024), leaving a few studies (Clemes et al., 2018; Clemes et al., 2020) in hospitality and tourism industry. The hospitality and tourism industry and, more specifically, the lodging industry literature shows a paucity of researchers using multidimensional and hierarchical models to evaluate service quality at various levels in the extant literature.

The role of emotions has gained much attention in service marketing studies (Mustaffa et al., 2016; Serra-Cantallops et al., 2018). An emotional experience is further considered to play a crucial role in influencing subsequent customer behaviours (Su & Hsu, 2013), such as intentions to revisit intentions and WoM recommendations. In the hotel industry, improving positive emotions leads to enhanced competitive advantage (Jeong et al., 2019). Customer satisfaction is considered a vital element in assessing service quality due to its importance in a business's performance (Birgit, 2019). According to Gunarathne (2014), customer satisfaction can be guaranteed by ensuring high-quality products and services are provided by a business. In the hotel and tourism sector, satisfaction is considered an essential element of the sector's position of value to a client.

In the service industry, customer satisfaction is determined by cognitive and affective evaluation of service quality (Alsaggaf & Althonayan, 2018; Ladhari et al., 2017). The cognitive factor relates to customers' judgment of service encounters. In contrast, the affective indicates customers' emotional satisfaction derived from the service provision, such as joyful/unjoyful, happy/unhappy and pleasant/unpleasant. Previous research has paid much focus on service quality evaluation (Brady & Cronin, 2001; Gronroos, 1990; Parasuraman et al., 1985, 1988) and behavioural intentions (Clemes et al., 2020; Kumar et al., 2021; Wantara, 2013) to evaluate customer satisfaction in the service industry context. Additionally, earlier research has evaluated customer satisfaction based on cognitive aspects, ignoring the emotional aspects. The emotional or affective aspects refer to positive or negative feelings (J. Song & Qu, 2017). Previous research has paid much focus on the Expectancy- Disconfirmation Theory (EDT) in assessing customer satisfaction (Wang et al., 2023). This model is built on the cognitive confirmation or disconfirmation of service expectations against the service perception, which determines satisfaction. However, according to Lo et al. (2015), a focus on the cognitive of customer satisfaction and less focus on the affective or emotional component could lead to the insufficient conceptualization of customer satisfaction. In this regard, Han et al. (2016) have posited emotions as an important component in customer satisfaction and should, therefore, be included as a component in assessing customer satisfaction.

Additionally, the relationship of service quality with consumption emotions has utilized restaurant context (Jeong et al., 2019) or is focused on spa resorts. Still, research specifically examining emotions in the hotel context, such as game lodges, remains scarce (Serra-Cantallops et al., 2020). This study posits that affective (emotional) and cognitive responses are significant predictors of tourist behaviour intention in the lodging industry in Kenya. Previous research has established that cognitive models are limited in the ability to make conclusions on service encounter assessment (Dong & Siu, 2013). Hence, service quality evaluation is viewed from both cognitive and emotional perspectives (Jeong et al., 2019).

Previous research has established the role of emotional satisfaction in enhancing the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions ). It is, therefore, crucial that the lodging industry investors comprehend various tourist markets' service expectations to create memorable experiences and, as a result, create customer loyalty and sustainable business (Pee et al., 2018). This study, therefore, seeks to evaluate the influence of service quality on tourist emotional satisfaction and behavioural intentions, with emotional satisfaction playing the mediating role of the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions. The study was conducted among different tourism markets patronizing lodges in Kenya, taking the Maasai Mara National Reserve and its conservancies as a case.

Tourists' behavioural intentions, such as repeat patronage and positive word-of-mouth (WoM) recommendations, are very crucial in the lodging industry (Singh & Nika, 2019) and are achieved by providing service quality to meet their needs and expectations (Putri et al., 2024). Service quality has, therefore, become the key factor for attracting and retaining customers (Ramamoorthy et al., 2018). Several studies also support service quality as an important factor in offering a business competitive position which is essential satisfaction (Pizam et al., 2016) and customer behavioural intentions (Padlee et al., 2019). The competitive environment in the lodging industry has also seen much attention given to building favourable behavioural intentions (B. L. Cheng et al., 2018). FBI is operationalized as a multi-dimensional construct and is comprised of customer loyalty, recommendations, and positive word of mouth (Aldaihani & Ali, 2018). Similarly, customer emotions influence purchase decisions and subsequent behaviours (K. Sharma et al., 2023).

Game lodges participate in the provision of services in the international arena; thus, understanding tourists' cultural differences in service quality perception becomes a critical success factor (Dedeoğlu et al., 2018). Earlier studies (Šerić, 2018; Suham-Abid & Vila-Lopez, 2019) have indicated differences in service quality perception among tourists from different nationalities, which possess challenges in standardization and adoption of service delivery (Tsiotsou, 2019). Within the international tourism context, cultural values are critical in differentiating service quality perceptions, satisfaction, and behaviour of a specific tourist group (Nguyen Viet et al., 2020). Tourists from different countries have varying preferences that influence their expectations and satisfaction, which consequently affects behavioural intentions (Dedeoğlu et al., 2018). Numerous studies have adopted moderating factors such as generation factor (Hwang et al., 2019), experience (Ban et al., 2022), and gender (J. K. Sharma & Kumar, 2019) in the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions. However, the moderating role of nationality in the relationship between service quality and behavioural intention from the game lodges perspective has not been sufficiently examined (Costa et al., 2016). Culture is a crucial factor in service quality perception (Šerić, 2018). Inadequate research on examining the cultural differences, especially in service quality delivery, might result in an insufficient explanation of customers' behavioural intentions.

The Kenya Vision 2030 aims to make Kenya a leading international tourism destination through the adoption of various service marketing strategies. These marketing strategies target high-end tourists in traditional and emerging markets such as Asian and domestic markets visiting premium parks such as Maasai Mara National Reserve. There is increased international competition between destinations and lodges. According to UNWTO (2023), Kenya is not ranked among the most popular destinations globally. In the African region it faces stiff competition from countries such as Egypt, South Africa and Tanzania. Therefore, Kenya needs to adjust its marketing strategies to have a competitive edge both internationally and regionally. One way to achieve this is for hospitality practitioners and stakeholders to comprehend their customers' preferences based on cultural orientation. Prior studies have mostly emphasised the moderating influence of nationality in developed regions like Europe, America, and Asia, with a few studies conducted in developing countries such as Kenya. This might result in the loss of conventional markets and the prospective rising

markets to other destinations. Therefore, this study sought to investigate the mediating role of emotional satisfaction on the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions with the moderating effect of visitors' nationality in star-rated game lodges, taking Maasai Mara National Reserve and its conservancies in Kenya as a case.

### 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Globally, there is significant growth in the lodging industry as the number of tourists increases each year. This poses a lot of pressure on the industry to offer quality service. Whereas there are numerous studies on the assessment of service quality, a standardized approach to service quality measurement tools is far from maturity. The existing measurement tools such as SERVQUAL, SERVPERF, LODGQUAL, and LODGSERVE are inadequate in capturing comprehensive assessment of service quality in the hospitality industry, hence the need for a tool to measure service quality such as multi-dimensional and hierarchical service quality models. The increased complexity of customers' preferences and demands, compounded with stiff competition, has become a challenge to game lodge managers. Previous research indicates a gap between service quality providers and customers' perception of service quality. In the lodging industry, managers are focusing on service quality elements which may not have a significant impact in shaping customers' satisfaction and behavioural intentions. This demonstrates insufficient identification of the key service quality dimensions. There is also a lack of uniformity concerning which service quality dimensions influence customer emotional satisfaction and have a significant effect on behavioural intentions.

Game lodges participate in the provision of services in the international arena. Thus, comprehending tourists' cultural differences in service quality perception becomes a critical success factor (Dedeoğlu et al., 2018). Earlier studies (Šerić, 2018; Suham-Abid & Vila-Lopez, 2019) have indicated differences in service quality perception among tourists from different nationalities, which possess challenges in standardization and adoption of service delivery (Tsiotsou, 2019). Within the international tourism context, cultural values are critical in differentiating service quality perceptions, satisfaction, and behaviour of a specific tourist group (Nguyen Viet et al., 2020). Tourists from different countries have varying preferences that

influence their expectations and satisfaction, which consequently affects behavioural intentions (Dedeoğlu et al., 2018). This could lead to losing the potential markets to other destinations especially the emerging markets.

Previous research has paid more attention to the relationship between service quality and behavioural intention, giving little attention or no attention to emotional satisfaction. Much focus has been paid to the Expectancy- Disconfirmation Theory in assessing customer satisfaction. This model is built on the cognitive confirmation or disconfirmation of service expectations against the service perception, which determines satisfaction. However, according to (Lo et al., 2015), a focus on the cognitive of customer satisfaction and less focus on the affective or emotional component could lead to the insufficient conceptualization of customer satisfaction. Additionally, the relationship of service quality with consumption emotions has utilized restaurant context (Jeong et al., 2019) or is focused on spa resorts. However, research specifically examining emotions in the hotel context, such as game lodges, remains scarce (Serra-Cantallops et al., 2020). This study posits that affective and cognitive-emotional responses are significant predictors of tourist behaviour intention in the lodging industry in Kenya.

Previous research has established that cognitive models are limited in the ability to conclude service encounter assessment (Dong & Siu, 2013). It is, therefore, crucial that the lodging industry investors comprehend various tourist market service expectations to create memorable experiences and, as a result, create customer loyalty and sustainable business (Shyju et al., 2023). This study, therefore, sought to evaluate service quality, tourist emotional satisfaction, and behavioural intentions among different tourism markets patronizing lodges in Kenya, taking the Maasai Mara National Reserve and its conservancies as a case. By addressing both cognitive and emotive aspects of service quality, this study sought to provide a holistic explanation of how emotional satisfaction drives tourist behaviours and loyalty. Such insights are critical for designing focused marketing strategies and quality improvement programs, allowing Kenyan game lodges to effectively cater to both mainstream and expanding markets, thereby increasing customer loyalty and maintaining a competitive advantage.

## 1.3 Study Objectives

### 1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of this study was to evaluate service quality and determine the mediating role of tourists' emotional satisfaction on the relationship between service quality and tourists' behavioural intentions in Maasai Mara game lodges.

### 1.3.2 Specific Objectives

i) To establish key dimensions of service quality that influence the tourist's overall service quality perception in Maasai Mara game lodges in Kenya.
ii) To determine the influence of service quality on emotional satisfaction among tourists patronizing Maasai Mara game lodges in Kenya.
iii) To determine the influence of service quality on the behavioural intentions of tourists patronizing Maasai Mara game lodges in Kenya.
iv) To assess the mediating role of emotional satisfaction on the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions of tourists in Maasai Mara game lodges in Kenya.
v) To examine the moderating effect of tourists' nationality on the relationship between service quality, emotional satisfaction, and behavioural intentions in Maasai Mara game lodges in Kenya.

## 1.4 Research Hypotheses

The study tested the following null hypotheses.

i) **$H_{01}$**: There is no influence of service quality on tourists' emotional satisfaction among tourists patronizing Maasai Mara game lodges in Kenya
ii) **$H_{02}$**: There is no influence of service quality on the behavioural intentions of tourists patronizing Maasai Mara game lodges in Kenya
iii) **$H_{03}$**: Emotional satisfaction has no mediating role in the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions of tourists patronizing Maasai Mara game lodges in Kenya
iv) **$H_{04}$**: Tourists' nationality has no moderating effect on the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions among tourists patronizing Maasai Mara game lodges in Kenya

## 1.5 Significance of the Study

The contribution of this study is twofold. First, on theoretical contributions and second on managerial contributions and implications.

This study sought to make the following theoretical contributions culminating from the study objectives. First this study contributes immensely to the theoretical background of hotel industry service marketing existing literature by providing a thorough examination of the key dimensions that influence customer perception of service quality. It is also worth noting that this study's finding supports the empirical finding on the use of third order hierarchical model to conceptualize service quality multi-dimensional constructs and the relationship that exists among other service marketing constructs such as emotional satisfaction and behavioural intentions. This approach will help to overcome the inadequacy of traditional service quality measurements such as SERVQUAL, SERVPERF, LODGQUAL, HOLSERV, LODGSERV, and HISTOQUAL. This is a significant input to service marketing, especially in the little-researched area of the cross-cultural differences in service perception among the traditional, domestic, and emerging tourism markets in game lodges in Kenya.

This research also identifies the mediating role of emotional satisfaction in the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions in the lodging industry. The relationship between service quality may not be straightforward and this highlights the crucial role customer emotional satisfaction plays in building favourable behavioural intentions.

Finally, the theoretical contribution of this study is the provision of a comprehensive and integrative model of behavioural intentions in the lodging industry. The theoretical model developed and tested in this study has empirically tested the interrelationship among three marketing constructs in a single modelling framework simultaneously.

The multi-dimensional and hierarchical assessment of service quality is a holistic modelling framework that enables the service quality constructs to be assessed separately. This enables the management in the lodging industry to gain more insight into how the guests assess the service quality in their properties. Suppose guests'

expectations are not met during service delivery, which affects the overall service quality. In that case, the managers can evaluate the performance on three primary service dimensions (interaction quality, outcome quality, and servicescape). Once the problem is identified, further investigation can be carried out on sub-dimensions such as employee conduct competence, caring, room quality, dining experience, reception, and waiting time. The information gained can be used to formulate relationship quality improvement, standard operating procedures, and service recovery programs. This benefits tourism and hospitality marketers and hotel investors to retain the existing tourism markets, meet service expectations in the new emerging tourism market, improve the foreign exchange, create more jobs, and reduce poverty levels, among others.

The customer emotional satisfaction constructs influence behavioural intentions and act as a link between service quality perception and behavioural intentions. Thus, the managers in star-rated lodges should constantly monitor and follow up on the tourists' feedback that would express different levels of emotional satisfaction to improve or maintain a service environment that would increase satisfaction or manage situations that would cause dissatisfaction.

### 1.6 Scope of the Study

This study was conducted to assess service quality and its influence on tourists' emotional satisfaction and behavioural intentions among tourists patronizing star-rated game lodges in the Maasai Mara ecosystem in Kenya. The study sought to assess the key service quality dimensions that influenced the overall service quality perception of tourists in star-rated game lodges. Further, it sought to determine the influence of service quality on customer emotional satisfaction and behavioural intentions.

The study also examined the mediating role of tourists' emotional satisfaction and the moderating effect of nationality between service quality and behavioural intentions, respectively. This study was conducted in the Maasai Mara ecosystem that comprised the Maasai Mara National Reserve and its conservancies within the Narok tourist region in Kenya. The participants of this study were limited to managers and visitors in the twenty-nine-star-rated game lodges in the Maasai Mara ecosystem. Game

lodges in Maasai Mara National Reserve and its conservancies were chosen because of their popularity based on wild beast migration and diverse wildlife that attracts both domestic and international tourists.

### 1.7 Limitations of the Study

This study is location-specific to Maasai Mara National Reserve and its conservancies that have different cultures and geographical locations and hence may not be generalized to other tourist regions. The sample selected for this study may not be representative as it included tourists who visited the game lodges at the Maasai Mara ecosystem during a specific period of the year. Other tourists who visited game lodges at other times were missed or the number was very minimal. Additionally, the study used purposively selected managers for in-depth interviews. This may not fully represent the opinions of all managers, implying that the results must, therefore, be generalized with caution.

### 1.8 Conceptual Framework

The research proposed a conceptual framework model (Figure 1.1) that depicts the hypothesized relationship between perceived service quality and tourist behavioural intention through the mediating role of emotional satisfaction and moderating effect of tourists' nationality.

The primary dimensional levels were made up of three primary service quality dimensions, namely environment quality, interaction quality and outcome quality. The three primary service quality dimensions indicate the tourists' overall service quality perception of tourists patronizing game lodges in the Maasai Mara ecosystem. In the lodging industry, customers evaluate the physical environment based on accommodation physical facilities, which constitute the sub-dimensions such as accommodation infrastructure, social contacts, and safety. Service quality evaluation on personal interaction quality focuses on service delivery and, more specifically, on the interaction between staff and customers. The sub-dimensions of personal interaction comprised employees' interpersonal skills, employees' professional skills, and customer care. On the other hand, outcome quality or technical quality refers to customer experiences after service delivery. Four sub-dimensions, namely, food and beverage quality, room quality, front desk quality, and waiting time, were used as

indicators of outcome quality as conceptualized by Wu and Ko's (2013) multi-dimensional and hierarchical service quality model.

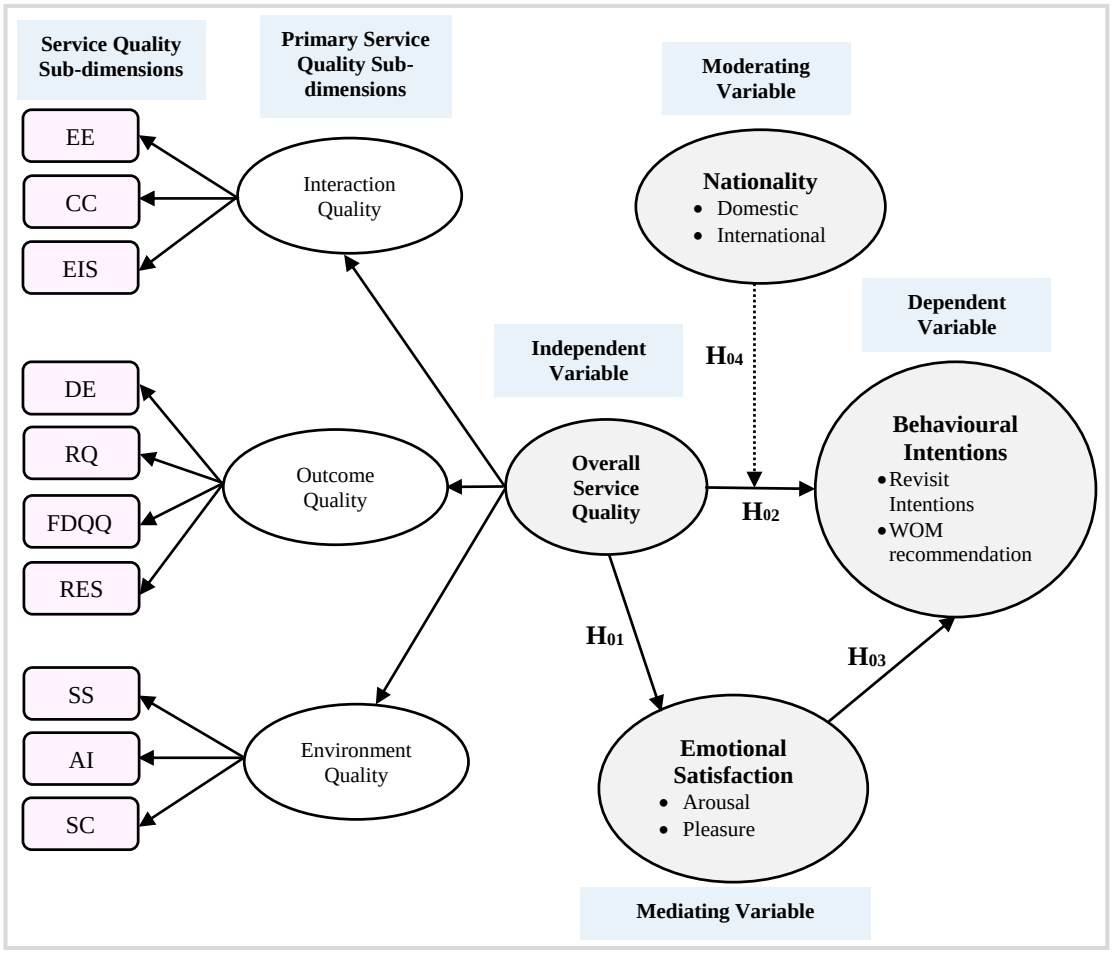


**Figure 1. 1: Study Conceptual Framework**

**Key**

**EE**: Employees Expertise
**CC**: Customer Care
**EIS**: Employees Interpersonal Skills
**DE**: Dining Experience
**FDQ**: Front Desk Experience
**SS**: Safety and Security
**SS**: Safety and Security
**AI**: Accommodation Infrastructure
**SC**: Social Contacts
**RM**: Room Quality
**RES**: Responsiveness

Further, the conceptual model shows the probable relationship between service quality, emotional satisfaction, and behavioural intentions. Specifically, customer perception of service quality is likely to have a positive effect on behavioural intentions. Service quality is an important factor in offering a business a competitive position, which is essential for customer satisfaction (Pizam et al., 2016) and favourable behavioural intentions. Favourable behavioural intention is operationalized as a multi-dimensional construct and is comprised of tourists' revisit intentions and positive word-of-mouth.

The conceptual model reflects the mediation effects that signify a significant association between the independent variable (predictor) and dependent variable (criterion). The independent variable was the overall service quality, while the dependent variable was the behavioural intentions. Tourists' emotional satisfaction is the variable that mediates the relationship between service quality dimensions and tourist behavioural intentions.

Customer satisfaction is determined by cognitive and affective evaluation of service quality. The affective component indicates customers' emotional satisfaction derived from the service provision. An emotional experience is further considered to play a crucial role in influencing subsequent customer behaviours, such as intentions to revisit and WoM recommendations. In the hospitality industry, improving positive emotions leads to enhanced competitive advantage and is considered a vital element in assessing service quality due to its importance in a business's performance (Birgit, 2019). The study adopted the pleasure, arousal, and dominance scale proposed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974). The dominance scale was not used in this study. Pleasure was measured using three items, namely happy, pleasant, and appreciative, while three items measured arousal and comprised excited, joyful, and enjoyable.

Finally, the model also indicates the moderating role of tourists' nationality as a variable that measures the degree of the relationship between service quality as the independent variable and behavioural intentions as the dependent variable. Visitors patronizing Maasai Mara game lodges come from different cultures and countries. This leads to different service quality perceptions and subsequently affects the customers' behavioural intentions, such as the WoM recommendations and the intention to revisit. Moderation effects of the international tourism market and domestic tourism market were considered.

### 1.9 Contributions of the Thesis

A comprehensive hierarchical model (CHM) used in this study provides an integrative approach to service quality measurement as well as the analysis of the interrelationship among higher-order constructs. Thus, the CHM provides a suitable framework for researchers seeking to determine the interrelationship for other types of game lodges in Kenya. This framework also acts as a blueprint for further research on various types

of lodges that constitute the global hospitality industry.

The research also offers a thorough evaluation of service quality in Game Lodges by testing the multi-dimensional and hierarchical model. The results support variations in service quality dimensions (sub-dimensions and primary dimensions), implying that service quality studies can unveil different dimensions in different settings. This study, therefore, adds knowledge to the existing consumer behaviour literature.

Additionally, the results of this study present empirical evidence that emotional satisfaction plays an important role in service experience and behavioural intentions in game lodges. This represents a significant contribution to existing knowledge on conceptualizing satisfaction in the theory and practice of the hospitality industry. The study supports the evaluative response coping framework as proposed by Bagozzi (1992) that cognitive evaluation precedes emotional responses. In the present study, the $R^2$ value was .48, which was moderate, and this implies the existence of other determinants of emotional satisfaction.

### 1.10 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is presented in five chapters. Chapter one is the introduction and begins with highlighting the background information of this study and then introduces the problem statement, study objectives and hypotheses. The significance of the study, its limitations, and its conceptual framework are also highlighted in this chapter.

Chapter two presents the Literature review and comprises theoretical models underpinning this study and an empirical literature review guided by study objectives. Finally, a summary of research gaps emanating from existing literature is also highlighted.

Chapter three presents the research methodology and outlines the research design, description of the study area, target population, sampling procedures and sample size, data collection procedures, research instruments, data analysis procedures and ethical considerations.

Chapter four presents the results and discussions of the study findings as per the study objectives. The summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study are covered in chapter five. The study addresses the summary of the findings as per the study objectives, the conclusion drawn from the findings and recommendations for practice, policies and future studies. References and appendices are also included.

# CHAPTER TWO
# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews existing literature, specifically theoretical and empirical findings underpinning service quality, tourist emotional satisfaction, and behavioural intention in lodges. The chapter is organized under the following sub-topics: dimensions of service quality, service quality and behavioural intentions, service quality and tourists' emotional satisfaction, the mediating role of tourists' emotional satisfaction and finally, the moderating role of tourists' nationality on the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions. The chapter also highlights the overall gaps in the reviewed literature and later describes the conceptual framework for this study.

## 2.2 Theories and Models Underpinning the Study

This research is anchored on several theories and models that have been applied to service quality, emotional satisfaction, and behavioural intentions. This section discusses theories and models in detail showing their applicability in this research.

### 2.2.1 Stimulus-Organism-Response

Stimulus-organism-response framework (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) postulates that when an individual encounters environmental stimulus (S), he or she develops internal states expressed as affective and cognitive reactions (O), which cause positive or negative behavioural responses (R). The stimuli include all factors that are external or contextual determinants that impact the internal states of the organism (Kim et al., 2020). The theory also upholds that stimuli may be external environment or social psychological stimuli (Lee et al., 2011, as cited in (H. C. Wu et al., 2022). Organism refers to the internal state of individuals' mental and cognitive reactions and explains how these individuals mediate or moderate the relationships between stimulus and response (H. C. Wu et al., 2022). After an individual's psychological or cognitive reactions, he or she would make an internal or an external behavioural response to the external environment (C.-C. Chen & Yao, 2018). Individuals' attitude manifests themselves as an internal response, while an individual's specific behaviour expresses the external environment (Su & Swanson, 2017).

The S-O-R theoretical framework approach is used in this research as a foundation to explain the relationship between service quality, tourists' emotional satisfaction, and behavioural intentions. In the context of this research, different environmental stimulus affects the tourists' cognitive and affective reactions, which results in their behavioural responses. As indicated earlier, S-O- R defines stimuli to include social psychological stimuli (W. Cheng et al., 2020). Thus, tourists' perception of service quality in star-rated game lodges is regarded as social psychological stimuli. Tourists' emotional satisfaction, on the other hand, is regarded as a cognitive-affective state (Su & Swanson, 2017) and can be considered as an organism (W. Cheng et al., 2020). Behavioural intention constructs such as intention to revisit, positive WoM, and willingness to pay higher premiums have been considered as a response to specific stimuli (Kumar et al., 2021; Yadav et al., 2021).

The justification for choosing the S-O-R theory for this research is based on two important reasons. Firstly, the S-O-R theory applicability has been verified in earlier studies to predict consumers' behaviour in the context of the tourism and hospitality industry (W. Cheng et al., 2020; Hameed et al., 2021). Secondly, the S-O-R theoretical framework provides a well-structured position to explain the relationship between service quality (stimulus) and behavioural intentions (response), as well as the mediating role of tourists' emotional satisfaction (organism) (Pizam et al., 2016).

### 2.2.2 Value-Percept Display Theory

Value-percept display theory was proposed by Westbrook and Reilly (1983). This theory opposes the expectancy/disconfirmation theory (EDT), which has previously received much focus in customer satisfaction evaluation (Wang et al., 2023). In value-percept display theory, customer satisfaction, and dissatisfaction is a post-purchase evaluation process. According to this theory, customer satisfaction is conceptualized as a positive emotional state resulting from service quality evaluation as leading individual values. This theory supports the unexpected sequence of post-purchase cognitive-affective processes. Emotional satisfaction is influenced by cognitive evaluative processes where the service quality perceptions are compared with customers' value. Though this theory has received little attention (Mustaffa et al., 2016), its theoretical perspective has guided various research to understand customers' behaviour concerning the emotional satisfaction concept (Mustaffa et al., 2016; Zhang

et al., 2019).

### 2.2.3 Theory of Reasoned Action

The theory of Reasoned Action, as proposed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1975), is a widely used model in service marketing and social psychology. It is one of the models that is widely used in predicting customers' behaviour and behavioural intentions (Shen & Wu, 2022). In addition, various studies have verified and confirmed the applicability of TRA in predicting customers' behaviour in the hospitality and tourism industry (Jang & Cho, 2022; Memarzadeh et al., 2017; H. Song et al., 2022; Untaru et al., 2016). TRA proposes four constructs: behaviour, behavioural intention, attitude and subjective norm. Firstly, behaviour is presumed as an antecedent of behavioural intentions, as an individual's behaviour is likely to be influenced by behavioural intentions. Secondly, behavioural intention is considered the basis for a behaviour that is dependent on an individual's approach to responding to a particular behaviour. Thirdly, attitude is concerned with an individual's evaluation of specific behaviour and has been defined as an individual's positive or negative evaluation of performing the behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975). That is, individuals perform behaviours in which they have positive attitudes and avoid behaviours in which they have negative attitudes. This theory posits that attitudes toward specific behaviour are based upon expectations or beliefs of behaviour outcome. Finally, the subjective norm is viewed as the person's perception that most people who are important to him or her think he or she should or should not perform the behaviour in question (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975). The subjective norm component of TRA highlights the significance of social influence on an individual's behaviour, which is based on his or her belief in significant others (Hussain et al., 2016). Thus, the TRA framework makes two propositions. First, it predicts the return intentions of tourists patronizing lodges in Maasai Mara, which is crucial to assessing an individual's attitude toward behaviour. Second, subjective norm assesses the influence of a significant other (such as family members, friends, etc.) on an individual's behaviour. There is an assumption that an individual's behavioural intention is influenced by attitude and subjective norms.

### 2.2.4 Service Quality Models

Service quality is an important factor in running tourism and hotel businesses. Notwithstanding the numerous studies recognizing the importance of service quality, there has been no consensus on a particular service quality model most appropriate to measure service quality in service industries. Service quality has been conceptualized differently by different authors, and as such, methodological and application issues have been raised concerning its operationalization.

This study adopted a multi-hierarchical service quality model. The Multidimensional and hierarchical model, as proposed by Brady and Cronin (2001), was built by adapting and adopting some constructs from the previous models. This model was also adopted by Dabholkar et al. (1996), who supported the idea that service quality perception is multidimensional and hierarchical. This model suggests that customer service quality perception is based on their evaluation of three primary dimensions, namely, interaction quality, outcome quality, and physical environment quality. Outcome and interaction quality have been adopted from the Grönroos (1984, 1988) model (Nordic school), the technical and functional quality, while the third dimension, the physical environment quality, was adopted from Rust et al. (1994), the service environment. This approach also adapts some constructs from the American school of thought, namely reliability, responsiveness and empathy.

Numerous types of research (Clemes et al., 2018) have identified interaction quality as a fundamental component in service delivery, especially on the part of service providers. It forms the basis on which employees' attitudes and conduct, expertise and problem-solving skills are captured. Interaction quality focuses on the customers-employees interaction and thus plays a critical role in customers' perception of the overall service quality. (M. J. Hossain, 2016). Several sub-dimensions under interaction quality have been identified and include attitude and conduct, expertise and problem-solving (Prediger et al., 2024). Attitude and conduct, which have also been captured as interpersonal qualities, are expressed during employee-customer interaction and include reliability, responsiveness and empathy items as adapted from the SERVQUAL model. Thus, attributes such as friendliness, warmth, helpfulness, and courtesy denote good employee interaction skills. Employee expertise or professional skills are expressed through employees' ability to perform various tasks

and are supported by attributes such as reliability, responsiveness and assurance. Problem-solving skills refer to employees' ability to resolve customer complaints and this expresses empathy attribute.

Outcome quality or technical quality refers to customer experiences after service delivery. Numerous studies have also supported its critical role in service quality evaluation. Waiting time, tangibles, and variance have been proposed as sub-dimensions of outcome quality. The higher the number of variables or sub-dimensions, the higher the opportunity of improving explanatory power and predictive validity. Ability to perform various tasks and is supported by attributes such as reliability, responsiveness and assurance. Problem-solving skills refer to employees' ability to resolve customer complaints and this expresses empathy attribute.

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Physical environment quality refers to the degree to which environment attributes of service quality provided influence customer perception of the overall service quality. In the hospitality and tourism industry and, more specifically, the lodging industry context, ambient conditions, design, décor, security, social interactions and safety have been identified as major dimensions of physical environment quality.

The multidimensional and hierarchical model approach argues that the primary dimensions of service, such as quality interaction, outcome quality and physical environment quality, are explained by sub-dimensions. The multidimensional and hierarchical model represents a new approach to evaluating service quality perception as it has strong empirical support and, at the same time, combines several models. This model is applicable in a variety of service evaluations of the sub-dimensions to form an organization's service delivery based on each of the three primary dimensions. This means that customers perceive service quality based on aggregated evaluation of multiple levels and finally add all these evaluations to form overall service quality perception. Industries, unlike the previous models, such as the SERVQUAL and the

SERVPERF, were limited because primary dimensions and sub-dimensions may be modified depending on service industries. Numerous studies have adopted it and modified dimensions in specific service industries. As such, it is imperative to develop a psychometric sound measurement to comprehend customers' preferences by analysing their perceptions of the services provided.

### 2.3 Dimensions of Service Quality in the Lodging Industry

Service quality has attracted attention in research due to its significant influence on various industries' performance (W.-J. Chen, 2013; B. L. Cheng et al., 2018; Sari et al., 2018). Several studies support service quality as an important factor in offering business competitive weapons which is essential for customer emotional satisfaction and Customer behavioural intentions (Clemes et al., 2020). Parasuraman et al. (1988) revealed that service quality relates to the company's capacity to comply with or exceed the expectations of customers. It is the difference between what the customers expect of a service and the apparent service. Therefore, high-quality service will positively influence the sustainability of an organization due to its indirect influence on a company's profitability through aspects such as customer loyalty and behavioural intentions (Monferrer et al., 2019).

Most studies have focused on conventional service quality scales such as SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al., 1988), HOLSERV (Kalnaovakul & Promsivapallop, 2023), and LODGSERV (Knutson et al., 1990), among others whose applicability in the hotel industry has required modifications to cover other service quality dimensions. For instance, Keshavarz and Jamshidi (2018) added a convenience dimension while modifying the LODGSERV scale and categorized convenience service quality under process quality in line with the LODGSERV dimension. Keshavarz and Jamshidi (2018) conducted a study on service quality dimensions in four and five-rated hotels in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The sample size for the study was 384, but 480 questionnaires were distributed based on Fincham's (2008) 1.25 rate. From the study, it was evident by the findings that service quality dimensions were categorized into process quality dimensions and outcome quality dimensions, thus extending the outline in the LODGSERV dimension which included the process quality dimensions only. The process quality dimensions included tangible, responsiveness, reliability, assurance, empathy and convenience aspects while the outcome quality dimension

included valence, waiting time and sociability aspects.

Beheshtinia and Farzaneh Azad (2019) conducted a study to develop a hybrid model for service quality measurement under a budget constraint. The study was conducted in the hotel industry in Iran's Rasht City and utilized quality function deployment (QFD) with House of Quality (HOQ), SERVQUAL and Kano models being considered. Through mathematical simulation, optimization was used to select different activities within a given customer's budget. From the findings, a hybrid model was developed comprising SERQUAL constructs and technical requirements. The SERVQUAL constructs that were of high importance in the hybrid model included room security, clean and well-maintained laundry, well-designed shops, children's playground equipment, availability of an all-time exchange system, and medical services. On the other hand, technical requirements that were of high significance in the hybrid model were the presence of well-trained staff, knowledgeable technicians, mechanized services such as laundry services, codification of standards in health and sanitary, and a well-functioning online website for services such as reservations.

Rauch et al. (2015) measured dimensions of service quality in middle-level hotels in the United States of America. The study aimed to re-categorize the service quality items under the SERVQUAL model. The study was conducted on non-brand affiliated hotels within the scope of oceanfront destinations. A questionnaire with 27 SERVQUAL items was utilized. Through the principal component analysis that utilized a Varimax rotation, three categories emerged: the service product, service delivery and service environment. The service product included quality constructs such as conference facilities, quality of gift shop, room service, indoor and outdoor pool, pickup from the airport, children's programs, lounge facilities, location, restaurant facilities and beach area. The service delivery constructs included reservation services (accuracy, ease and courtesy), accuracy and courtesy in check-ins/outs, and courtesy of the staff.

On the other hand, service environment constructs included the nature of the facilities (whether well-maintained or clean) and the quality of the rooms in terms of maintenance and cleanliness. However, the study was conducted on oceanfront facilities that are characterized by leisure travellers and ignored other kinds of business

hotels. The study also excluded brand-affiliated hotels and high-ranking hotels (5-star rated). This study considered the service quality constructs for highly rated and low-rated hotels to categorize the service quality constructs of tourists in game lodges in the Maasai Mara ecosystem.

A study by Caber and Albayrak (2018) assessed service quality dimensions for daily tourists in Turkey. The study intention was to develop a scale for measuring service quality for daily tourists, the DAILYSERV scale. The study utilized the SERVQUAL items, from which 45 items were developed for screening. For the scale development, first and second scale purifications were done. First, scale purification was conducted through exploratory factor analysis (EFA) utilizing principal component extraction with Varimax rotation. The second scale purification utilized the items obtained in the first scale in new data collection, which were further assessed using principal component analysis with Varimax rotation utilizing Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of adequacy in sampling and Bartlett's sphericity test. The second scale was then validated using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). From the findings, the DAILYSERV model developed comprised 22 items that were categorized into 6 dimensions: transportation (clean vehicle, comfortable vehicle, well-trained drivers, politeness and respectfulness of the driver, driver's appearance); tour guide (knowledgeable, fluent spoken language, responsiveness to questions, friendliness and kindness, problem-solving skills); food and beverage facility (clean facility, meals variety, quality meals, personnel appearance, politeness and respectfulness, facility atmosphere); shopping facility (cleanliness, quality products, personnel appearance, fluency in foreign language, politeness and respectfulness); stopover facility (cleanliness, reasonable prices, personnel appearance, fluency in foreign language, politeness and respectfulness); museums and sites (cleanliness, no overcrowding, safety, sufficient time allowed in the sites). The study classified food and beverage and facilities encountered at stopovers as the highest-ranking DAILYSERV dimensions. However, these models have the limitation of not fully reflecting the correlation between evaluation factors or the hierarchical conceptualization of service quality, thus considered insufficient to measure service quality in lodges.

In recent years, as the service environment has changed, Brady and Cronin (2001) and Dabholkar et al. (1996) have proposed that customers evaluate service quality at several levels of abstraction, that is, sub-dimension, dimension level, primary dimension level, and the overall service quality level. The authors further assert that service quality should be conceptualized as a multidimensional and hierarchical construct. In this approach, the specific aspects of service quality, that is, sub-dimensions are evaluated, then extracts the primary dimensions and finally evaluates the overall service quality. The multi-dimensional and hierarchical model approach explains the complex process the customers form the service quality perception (A. Hossain et al., 2021). This service quality evaluation process has been effectively applied in the banking industry (Bakar et al., 2017; A. Hossain et al., 2021), healthcare services (Dandis et al., 2021), mobile communications (Putri et al., 2024) and mobile library service quality (Mamta & Kumar, 2024), leaving a few studies (Clemes et al., 2018, 2020; Nunkoo et al., 2017; H.-C. Wu & Ko, 2013; H.-C. Wu & Mohi, 2015).

A. Hossain et al. (2021) conducted a study among 61 banks in Bangladesh to test a comprehensive multidimensional and hierarchical model of service quality with higher-order psychometric constructs. Data was collected using self-administered questionnaires and was analysed using confirmatory analysis and structural equation analysis techniques. Their study finding affirmed the application of the multidimensional and hierarchical model in service quality evaluation. Outcome quality, interaction quality and environment quality were the three primary service quality dimensions that were adopted. At the same time, valence, waiting time, reliability, attitude, expertise, problem-solving, ambient conditions, equipment, and physical appeal were the nine sub-dimensions identified in that study. The findings further indicated that environment quality was the most important indicator of overall service quality, followed by outcome quality and interaction quality. These findings implied that customers' focus has shifted from intangible service quality to tangible service quality. In addition, actual service outcome quality is given priority as they are the critical tangible evidence of service encounters that establish long-term relationships with customers. However, due to access to adequate information customers' interaction quality was not found to be a priority in determining overall service quality. In regards to the service quality sub-dimensions, waiting time, employee attitude, and ambient conditions were the important indicators of the

outcome, interaction quality, and environment quality respectively.

A similar study in retail banking services was conducted by Bakar et al. (2017), who also used a multidimensional and hierarchical approach to service quality evaluation among 522 bank customers. Data was collected from self-administered questionnaires and analysed using exploratory factor analysis (EFA), CFA, and SEM modelling. Outcome quality, physical environment quality, and interaction quality were the primary dimensions that were adopted for this study. Through EFA, fourteen sub-dimensions were identified, namely attitude, behaviour, expertise, problem-solving, information ambient and equipment, and physical appeal. Social factors, waiting time, convenience, valence, security, privacy, speed of decision and speed. Interaction quality was explained by five factors that consisted of attitude, behaviour, expertise, problem solving and information. Ambient and equipment, physical appeal, and social factors formed the sub-dimension set for the physical environment. Waiting time, convenience, valence, security, privacy, speed of decision and speed were the four sub-dimensions of outcome quality. Their findings indicated that interaction quality was the key driver of service quality, followed by outcome quality and physical environment quality. Further, the study findings revealed that waiting time, employee attitude, and ambient conditions were key sub-dimensions that influenced outcome, interaction, and physical environment quality.

Dandis et al. (2021) study investigated the impact of multi-dimensional service quality on WoM in campus healthcare centres in Jordan. Convenience sampling was used and data was collected using self-administered questionnaires among 407 students-patients. Data were analysed using multiple regression methods. Results of the study revealed that administration quality, interpersonal quality, and technique quality had a significant relationship with overall service quality and WoM. However, environmental quality showed no significant relationship with Service quality. At the sub-dimension level, the study findings revealed that interaction activity was the most significant predictor of the overall service quality that subsequently influenced WoM.

In China, Zhao and Chen (2013) tested a multi-dimensional and hierarchical model for the assessment of libraries' M-service quality. Data was collected from 400 library users in three Chinese universities. The study findings empirically supported the multi-dimensional and hierarchical model, which includes four primary dimensions,

namely service environment, service interaction, information control, and service effects, with twelve service quality sub-dimensions.

In the hospitality and tourism context, several studies have determined key service dimensions using the multi-dimensional and hierarchical model (Clemes et al., 2018; Clemes et al., 2020; Nunkoo et al., 2017; H.-C. Wu et al., 2015). Clemes et al. (2018) conducted a study in upscale restaurants in Malaysia. Data were analysed using exploratory factor analysis confirmatory and structural equation modelling. The empirical findings support variation in service quality structure. That outcome quality was the most important indicator of the overall service quality, followed by the physical environment and interaction quality. The finding further revealed that food quality had the highest degree of relationship with outcome quality. Restaurant ambience was the most important indicator of the physical environment, while employees' interpersonal skills were the most important indicator of interaction quality.

H.-C. Wu et al. (2015) examined the relationship among revisit intentions, customer satisfaction, corporate image, emotions and service quality in the hot springs industry. A multi-dimensional and hierarchical model was used as a framework to evaluate service quality. An exploratory research design and convenience sampling were adopted. A total of 480 questionnaires were distributed, out of which 423 were returned, yielding a response rate of 88.1%. Using exploratory factor analysis, four primary dimensions and 13 sub-dimensions were identified. The four primary dimensions comprised interaction quality, physical environment quality, outcome quality and access quality. The sub-dimensions consisted of employees' professionalism, employees' ability, employees' conduct, aesthetics, ambience, cleanliness, environment facility, lighting, pleasant experience, the accuracy of billing, socialization, convenience and information. The Physical environment was considered a key element of the overall service quality perception while access quality was identified as the least indicator of service quality perception. Further, results indicated that employees' professionalism, aesthetics, ambience, pleasant experience and convenience as the key drivers of interaction quality, physical environment, outcome quality and access quality, respectively.

Clemes et al. (2020) tested a comprehensive hierarchical model in 17-day spas in Thailand, and a third-order conceptualization of service quality was included in the model. Using EFA and SEM to analyse data collected from 620 customers. The results of this study affirm the hierarchical conceptualization and evaluation of service quality. Four primary dimensions and 9 sub-dimensions were identified. The primary dimensions comprised interpersonal, environmental, administrative and technical quality. The sub-dimensions consisted of communication skills, friendliness, outcome, staff expertise, timeliness, operation and program variety. The study found administrative quality as the most important indicator of service quality, followed by technical quality, interpersonal quality and environmental quality. Communication skills were the key driver of interaction quality, and tangible sub-dimension was the most important indicator of environment quality. Timeliness and staff expertise were the most significant indicators of administrative service quality and technical service quality, respectively.

In South Africa, Nunkoo et al. (2017) conducted a study among 690 guests staying in different accommodation establishments. In this study, service quality was conceptualized as a second- order factor and ten sub-dimensions were identified, namely accommodation infrastructure and room quality. Front desk quality, food and beverage quality, safety and security, attitude and behaviour of employees, expertise of employees, customer interaction, sociability and waiting time. These authors argue that the guests in accommodation facilities evaluate service quality as a higher-order factor that forms a meaning that is common to all dimensions.

### 2.4 Service Quality and Emotional Satisfaction of Tourists

Several studies support that service quality is critical for customer emotional satisfaction (F. Ali et al., 2016; Birgit, 2019; He et al., 2020; Oh & Kim, 2017; Pizam et al., 2016). An emotional experience is further considered to play a crucial role in influencing subsequent customer behaviours (Su & Hsu, 2013). In the hotel industry, improving positive emotions leads to enhanced competitive advantage (Jeong et al., 2019). Customer satisfaction is considered a vital element in assessing service quality due to its importance in a business's performance (Birgit, 2019). According to Gunarathne (2014), customer satisfaction can be guaranteed by ensuring high-quality products are provided by a business. In the hotel and tourism sector, satisfaction is

considered an essential element of the sector's position of value to a client.

Previous research suggests that customer satisfaction levels are determined by cognitive and affective emotional dimensions (Ladhari et al., 2017). The cognitive factors refer to the service quality evaluation, whereas the affective or emotional factor indicates customer emotional satisfaction derived from the service provision (Rahman et al., 2019). However, previous research has paid more focus on the Expectancy-disconfirmation theory in assessing customer satisfaction (Wang et al., 2023). This model is built on the cognitive confirmation or disconfirmation of service expectations against the service perception, which determines satisfaction. However, according to Alsaggaf and Althonayan (2018), a focus on the cognitive of customer satisfaction and less focus on the affective or emotional component could lead to insufficient conceptualization of customer satisfaction. In this regard, Han et al. (2016) have posited emotions as an important component in customer satisfaction and should, therefore, be included as a component in assessing customer satisfaction. The relationship between service quality and emotional satisfaction is based on the evaluative–response-coping framework as proposed by Bagozzi (1992). According to this framework, cognitive evaluation precedes customer emotional satisfaction.

The relationship of service quality with consumption emotions has utilized the restaurant context (Jeong et al., 2019) or is focused on spa resorts. However, research specifically examining emotions in the hotel context, such as game lodges, remains scarce (Serra-Cantallops et al., 2020). This study posits that affective (emotional) and cognitive responses are significant predictors of tourist behaviour intention in the lodging industry in Kenya. Previous research has established that cognitive models are limited in the ability to make conclusions on service encounter assessment (Dong & Siu, 2013). Hence, service quality evaluation is viewed from both cognitive and emotional perspectives (Jeong et al., 2019). It is, therefore, crucial that the lodging industry investors comprehend various tourist markets' service expectations to create memorable experiences and, as a result, create customer loyalty and sustainable business. Mustaffa et al. (2016) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between service quality, emotional satisfaction and behavioural intention among international students in public universities in Malaysia. Online questionnaires were distributed to 381 international students using stratified random sampling. The

structural equation model (SEM) data analysis technique was used to test and confirm the relationship among service quality, emotional satisfaction and behavioural intentions. The study findings showed that the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions was partially moderated by emotional satisfaction with a significant effect.

A study was conducted by Ladhari et al. (2017) to examine service quality perception on emotional reaction and subsequent behavioural intentions in a utilitarian service setting. Data was collected from 189 patients who visited the optometry clinic. The findings confirmed the positive influence of perceived service quality on emotional satisfaction.

A study conducted in Ethiopia by Abebe-Tessera et al. (2016), investigated the effect of service quality on the satisfaction of customers in the hotel sector. The items in the SERVQUAL model guided the study in determining the indicators of service quality. On a sample size of 130 guests in Addis Ababa's hotels, questionnaires were distributed. The relationship between service quality dimensions and satisfaction was tested using correlation analysis and regression analysis. The findings demonstrated that three dimensions in the SERVQUAL model, in essence, empathy, tangibles and responsiveness, had a significant effect on the satisfaction of customers in Ethiopia's hotel sector. The study recommended that there exists no one unique way of service quality improvement in the hotel sector and suggested that studies should be conducted in different settings to come up with customized suggestions for improving service in a given area. It is through this recommendation that the current study will be founded, thus changing the setup to Kenya and widening the scope of service quality and satisfaction indicators.

Another study by Watiki (2014) was conducted in Nairobi County, Kenya to assess how service quality related to satisfaction of customers in hotels. The objectives of the study were guided by the five constructs of the SERVQUAL model (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy). On a sample size of 173 guests, questionnaires were distributed. Structural equation modelling was used to respond to the relationship between each tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and satisfaction. The findings found a significant relationship between tangibility, reliability, assurance and empathy with satisfaction. No significant

relationship was found between reliability and satisfaction.

Kuo et al. (2018) analysed the effect of service quality on satisfaction. The focus of the study was on the service quality of tour guides for tourists visiting Taiwan. The study adopted service quality dimensions in Huang et al. (2010) of competence, empathy, skills in problem-solving and interpersonal skills. Satisfaction indicators were overall satisfaction with the performance of the guide, satisfaction with the performance of the tour guide in comparison with expectations and satisfaction of the tour guide in comparison with the perceived conception of a tourist on who an ideal guide is. The study found that the problem-solving skills of a tour guide had a significant effect on the satisfaction of a tourist.

Ibrahim et al. (2015) conducted a study on service quality impact on satisfaction of customers in the tourism sector of Maldives. Performance-only measure (SERVPERF) dimensions of service quality were used. The sample size for the study was 120 tourists selected from different tourist settings, for example, resorts, boat rides, and guest houses. Through correlational and regression analysis, a significant and positive relationship was found between reliability, tangibles, responsiveness, and satisfaction. The fact that different tourist establishments were considered gave a general overview of the relationship between service quality and satisfaction. However, no impact and dimensional relationship was given for a particular industry, thus producing a gap for the current study.

Sulkaisi et al. (2021) used the SERVQUAL service quality dimensions to evaluate the effect of service quality on the satisfaction of tourists in Indonesia's Adityawarman Museum. Satisfaction was conceptualized as the magnitude of consumer expectations and the magnitude of performance by the service provider. Analysis was through SEM. The study found a significant direct influence of service quality on the satisfaction of tourists. However, one weakness was noted by Sulkaisi et al. (2021): the aggregation of SERVQUAL components to determine overall service quality rather than assessing the influence of each of the indicators in SERVQUAL on satisfaction. The current study exploits this weakness by assessing the influence of each of the indicators of service quality on satisfaction rather than aggregation, as per Sulkaisi et al. (2021).

In Vietnam, Thi et al. (2020) assessed the influence of SERVQUAL components on the satisfaction of international tourists. The items in the questionnaires were compressed using EFA but were not re-categorized (the authors still maintained the dimensions of service quality in SERVQUAL but fewer items). Through SEM, the findings of the study demonstrated that reliability possessed the strongest effect on satisfaction, with tangible also having a significant effect on satisfaction. The other three dimensions, responsiveness, assurance and empathy, did not have a significant relationship with satisfaction.

Kwok et al. (2016), while conducting a study for tourists travelling to Malaysia assessed how service quality influenced satisfaction. The study adopted all the 22 items utilized in the SERVQUAL model to measure service quality and five items: satisfaction with the choice of trip, satisfaction on feeling towards the trip, satisfaction with the decision for the trip and satisfaction to recommend. Both the independent and dependent variables were measured on a Likert Scale. Through structural modelling, a positive relationship that was significant was found between quality of service and satisfaction. The study, however, did not evaluate the significance of each of the components in SERVQUAL in influencing satisfaction, a gap that the current study will address.

### 2.5 Service Quality and Behavioural Intentions of Tourists

The ever-changing competitive environment in the hotel industry has witnessed more research on examining customer behavioural intentions (F. Ali & Amin, 2014; Hussein & Hapsari, 2021; Kumar et al., 2021; Su et al., 2016). Behavioural intention is often operationalized as a multi-dimensional construct and comprises customer revisit intentions, recommendations, and positive word of mouth. The extant literature supports service quality as an antecedent of behavioural intention in the hotel sector, specifically in star-rated lodges where customers expect a higher service experience (Jasinskas et al., 2016).

A study conducted in Ukraine by Tran (2020) assessed how service quality influenced the behavioural intentions of middle-income group tourists. The study employed a questionnaire comprising the first 22 items in the SERVQUAL model as outlined in Parasuraman et al. (1988). The behavioural intention was conceptualized as the

purchase intention of the tourists. Through CFA and structural equation modelling, significant items in the SERVQUAL model were identified, and their effect on tourists' behavioural intentions was assessed. The findings of the study demonstrated that service quality had a positive influence on tourists' purchase intention. However, the study was limited to middle-income tourists and the author could not access high-income level tourists.

Additionally, the study did not assess the indirect influence of service quality on behavioural intention and only considered purchase intention as the only indicator for behavioural intention. Based on the limitations, the study for future research recommended that an examination of both the direct and indirect influence of service quality on behavioural intention should be conducted. A recommendation that the current study sought to adopt.

Pandey and Sahu (2020) modelled the relationship between service quality and the behavioural intention of tourists in India's Golden Triangle. Service quality was operationalized as interaction quality with the service providers at Golden Triangle Heritage Site, while behavioural intention was conceptualized as destination attachment and e-WoM. A cross-sectional survey research design was adopted on 327 foreign tourists. The study adopted quantitative data that was analysed through SEM. From the results, it was revealed that service quality (interaction quality) had a positive effect that was significant on destination attachment and e-WoM. The major limitation of this study was that it was conducted in a heritage site. Therefore, the findings could not be generalized for other tourism set-ups, such as adventure tourism, ecotourism, and game tourism, among others. Additionally, only interaction quality (as service quality), destination attachment, and eWoM were adopted in the study. The current study expanded these limitations by widening the scope to capture other service quality aspects and behavioural intentions indicators.

Seetanah et al. (2020) conducted a study on the effect of service quality in the airport on the revisit intention of tourists at Mauritius' Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam (SSR) Airport. A sample size of 1,721 tourists was selected, upon which questionnaires were distributed. Through exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with varimax rotation, the service quality components for the airport were grouped into three: core services for passengers, support services for passengers, and management services for visitors.

Multinomial Probit analysis was used in assessing the significance of service quality on revisit intention. From the findings, services at the airport significantly affected the likelihood of revisiting by the tourists. The study was, however, not without limitations. First, the dichotomous measure of revisit intentions and use of service quality at the point of entry (the airport) rather than at the destination. Through such limitations, the current study intends to widen the scope of Seetanah et al. (2020) by broadening the scale for revisiting intentions and considering service quality dimensions at the exact tourist destination, namely the Maasai Mara National Reserve.

A study was conducted in China by Chi et al. (2020) to evaluate the perceived service quality of tourists and its effect on loyalty. The focus of the study was China's rural tourism sector. Twelve dimensions of service quality were considered (travel environment, culture, local cuisine, artefacts, transport, infrastructure for tourism, accommodation quality, services, shopping, activities, learning and hospitality) and measured by 40 items in total. Loyalty was conceptualized as the intention to revisit, willingness to pay for products that seemed special and word of mouth (WoM). Questionnaires were distributed to 636 Chinese tourists. Analysis was conducted using Principal Component Analysis and CFA after which the compressed dimensions of service quality were fitted using SEM to test their significance on loyalty. The results of the study unearthed four factors of service quality, re-categorized as infrastructure and transportation, hospitality and learning, handicraft and heritage and rural environment had a significant effect on rural tourism loyalty.

Daskalaki et al. (2020) applied the SERVPERF model of service quality dimensions to assess the influence of service quality on tourists' future behaviour in Thessaloniki, Greece. The study was conducted on 632 visitors selected from The Museum of Archaeology and Science and Technology Museum. All the SERVPERF dimensions (tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy) were considered in the study. Data collected was quantitatively analysed using correlation analysis. From the findings, a moderately significant positive correlation was found between the five SERVPERF dimensions and the future behavioural intentions of tourists. The current study adopted the recommendations by Daskalaki et al. (2020) of using a different service quality model and quantitative analysis techniques to test the influence of service quality on tourists' behavioural intentions.

## 2.6 The Mediating Role of Emotional Satisfaction

Emotions have been defined as a mental state of readiness that arises from cognitive appraisals, events, or thoughts (Bagozzi et al., 1999). Emotions are considered critical factors in influencing consumer behaviour (Gaur et al., 2014, cited in Batra & Taneja, 2021). Several studies have supported the mediation role of emotional satisfaction on the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions in service industries. Mustaffa et al. (2016) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between service quality, emotional satisfaction and behavioural intention among international students in public universities in Malaysia. Online questionnaires were distributed to 381 international students using stratified random sampling. The structural equation model (SEM) data analysis technique was used to test and confirm the relationship among service quality, emotional satisfaction and behavioural intentions. The study findings revealed a partial mediation role of positive emotional satisfaction between service quality and favourable behavioural intentions.

In the hospitality industry, Keshavarz and Jamshidi (2018) conducted a study in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, which evaluated the mediating role of satisfaction in the relationship between service quality and behavioural intention. The service quality components were compressed into process quality and outcome quality. The behavioural intention was in terms of loyalty. The data collected was analysed through SEM. The direct relationship between process quality and outcome quality with loyalty was not significant. However, the relationship turned significant once the mediating role of satisfaction was incorporated into the structural equation model.

The mediating role of satisfaction on the effect of service quality on behavioural intention was evaluated in India by Kumar et al. (2021). The study was conducted in the hotel industry and targeted customers who ordered food online in Mumbai, India. Service quality dimensions employed were adopted from Parasuraman's (1988) SERVQUAL model and included website design, reliability, responsiveness, trust and personalization. Customer satisfaction was operationalized using Oliver (1980) and Taylor and Baker (1994) to include satisfaction with the decision made, choice of repetition and satisfaction from experience. Behavioural intention followed guidelines in Zeithaml et al. (1996) to include revisit intentions and intention to recommend. The relationship between the variables was tested using multiple linear regression, while

hierarchical regression tested the mediating effect. The findings revealed that service quality had a direct significant relationship with behavioural intention. However, the addition of satisfaction as a mediating variable strengthened the relationship between service quality and behavioural intention.

In the United Arab Emirates hotel sector, Alketbi et al. (2020) evaluated service quality's influence on behavioural intention (retention and loyalty). Satisfaction was employed as a mediating variable. The findings of the study did not break down the variables into any components but rather used their aggregates in evaluating the perceived relationship. From the study's findings, service quality significantly influenced satisfaction which then influenced customers' retention and loyalty.

Jeong et al. (2019) evaluated the factors influencing the behavioural intentions of tourists taking part in sports tourism in Gyeongju City, Korea. The study targeted participants in the 2018 marathon and engaged 400 participants. Among the factors included in the study were event quality, satisfaction and behavioural intention all with 7-Likert scale items. The Quality of the event service was categorized into game quality, interaction quality, outcome quality and environment quality. Satisfaction was conceptualized in terms of the city being better than expected, worth visiting, and overall satisfaction, while behavioural intention was in terms of recommendation intentions and revisit intentions. Structural equation modelling was used in the analysis. From the findings, service quality significantly influenced behavioural intentions positively when satisfaction was considered as the mediating variable.

Jayampathi and Munasinghe (2019) included satisfaction as a mediating variable in the relationship between service quality and behavioural intention in Sri Lanka's SME hotels. The study adopted the SERVQUAL model in service quality measurement, while the behavioural intention was measured through re-visit intentions. Through bi-variate correlation and multi-variate regression analysis, the relationship between service quality and re-visit intention was assessed. A positive relationship was found between quality of service and intention to re-visit, with no significant association between service quality and intention to re-visit when satisfaction was incorporated as the mediating variable.

In Madura, Indonesia, Wantara and Irawati (2021) conducted a study on the effect and relationship between service quality and behavioural intention (intention to re-visit). The study targeted Muslim tourists visiting Madura, a Sharia tourist destination. Questionnaires were used in data analysis. Path analysis that deployed SEM was used in assessing the direct and indirect relationship between service quality and intention to revisit, with satisfaction as the mediating variable. The results confirmed a direct relationship between service quality and intention to re-visit. Tourists' satisfaction as a mediating variable contributed positively to the service quality influence on the re-visit intentions of Muslim tourists.

### 2.7 Moderating Role of Tourists Nationality

Tourists have varied perceptions of travel attributes (Nguyen Viet et al., 2020). Despite rapid globalization, differences still exist between tourists from different nationalities (Suham-Abid & Vila-Lopez, 2019). Nationality has been used in several studies to indicate membership to a specific country, and its application is often seen in cross-cultural studies (Ergün et al., 2022; Guan et al., 2022; Mariani et al., 2020; Ruiz-Molina et al., 2023; Šerić, 2018) to reflect beliefs, practices, symbols, norms and cultural values prevalent among people in a society. Different tourists' nationality provides the basis for cultural diversity which reflects different cultural values that influence perceptions and behavioural intentions (W. Cheng et al., 2020). In the effort to support how culture determines individual behaviour, the theory of practice, as proposed by Bourdieu (1977), justifies the links between cultural disposition and practice. From this theory's perspective, culture is a result of shared beliefs, values, behaviours, and attitudes that are widely established within a community. Thus, guests from different cultural backgrounds may have different perceptions of the same service experience in game lodges.

Tourism is an international phenomenon; thus, comprehending culture is critical. Hofstede (2007) has defined culture as the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes one group or category of people from another. Hofstede et al. (2010) contend that individuals with similar cultural orientations share the same values. Based on Hofstede culture theory, six dimensions have been identified. These include power distance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, long-term/short-term orientation, indulgence/restraint, and uncertainty avoidance. Power distance

describes the acceptance of human inequality and disparity amongst members of society. The Individualism vs femininity dimension indicates the degree of emotional roles between men and women. Masculinity stresses achievement and success, while femininity focuses on building good relationships. Individualism/ collectivism is concerned with how individuals regard themselves and also how they compare themselves with other members of society. Individualistic cultures are concerned with oneself, while collectivist culture has social dependence. The long-term/short-term orientation culture dimension relates to the basis of peoples' efforts. In contrast, the indulgence/restraint dimension relates to the degree of fulfilment or control of human desires. Finally, uncertainty avoidance refers to the degree of tolerance.

Despite Hofstede culture theory criticism, a vast number of cross-cultural studies in hospitality and tourism have applied this theory to service quality evaluations, service expectations and service recovery. Thus, a study conducted by Mariani and Predvoditeleva (2019) in Russian hotels empirically concluded that consumers from individualistic societies have higher expectations than collectivist societies who regard outcome service quality as being more important than process service quality. They further argue that masculine societies are less tolerant of service failures and are keen on reliability and responsiveness. Another study conducted by Jahandideh et al. (2014) between Chinese and Arab hotel guests' complaints behaviour reveals that Chinese culture focuses on collectivism while Arabic cultural values focus on uncertainty avoidance.

Numerous studies have examined the moderating role of nationality in the hospitality and tourism industry (Dedeoğlu et al., 2018). They examined the moderating role of tourists' nationality in influencing service quality perceptions, destination affective image and revisit intentions. The study was conducted on German and Russian tourists who visited Alanya during the high peak season. To test the moderating role of nationality between the two nationalities, structural equation modelling and multiple group analysis were used. The findings of this study indicated a significant difference between German and Russian tourists in terms of service perceptions, destination affective image, and revisit intentions. However, this study focused on revisiting intentions as the only indicator of behavioural intentions. Based on the limitations, the research recommends the examination of other behavioural constructs, such as WoM

recommendations. A gap that the current study sought to fill.

Coves-Martínez et al. (2023) study asserts that the cultural orientation of a specific country explains different behaviour patterns. The study was conducted among 482 Spanish and British tourists who resided in hotels in Tunisia. Using the SEM technique, significant cultural differences were demonstrated between the two nationalities. The moderating role of cultural differences was greater for Spanish tourists, whose cultural orientation is collectivist, than the British tourists, who have an individualistic cultural orientation. This study has its limitations as it focussed on the international tourist market and, more especially, the European tourism market. The study also ignored the inclusion of the domestic market. This study, therefore, sought to examine the moderating role of nationality across a wide range of tourism markets, including the domestic market.

A study by Zgolli and Zaiem (2017) investigated the moderating role of nationality in the relationship between customer-to-customer interaction and tourist behaviour. The study was based on a sample of 519 tourists from Tunisia, France, Germany, Britain, and Italy who patronized three and five-star hotels in Tunisia. Quota sampling method was adopted, and data was collected using interviews and questionnaires. The results of this study indicated that nationality moderated the relationship between customer-to-customer interaction and tourists' behaviour intentions.

B. L. Cheng et al. (2018) study in Malaysia examined the moderating effect of the domestic tourism market that constituted Malaysian and the international tourism market that comprised non-Malaysian who patronized hotels in Kuala Lumpur. Data was collected through the questionnaires distributed to 500 tourists at the entry and exit points at Kuala Lumpur International Airport. Using the SEM technique, the beta coefficient of the difference between the two groups was not significantly different. Thus, no moderating effect of nationality was found. This research further recommends the use of a triangulation research approach to have a clear understanding of the differences between domestic and international tourists. This study adopted this approach to fill in this gap.

A recent study by Ergün et al. (2022) was conducted in Side, a popular destination in Turkey. The study examined the moderating role of nationality on destination loyalty and travel intentions. Data was collected from 395 tourists from Europe and Asia. Using regression analysis, the study indicated a direct moderating role of nationality. When the destination loyalty of both Asian and European tourists increased, the travel intention also changed positively. This study is limited to two nationalities and the inclusion of more tourist markets would give a more comprehensive picture of the moderation effect. Additionally, the research used a quantitative research approach. Therefore, there is a need to use a mixed research approach to have a more comprehensive evaluation of the mediation effect of nationality.

Šerić (2018) conducted a cross-cultural study on perceived quality in upscale hotels in Italy and Croatia. Data was collected from 335 guests in Italy and 475 in Croatia. The moderating effects of national culture were evaluated in each country. The findings of this study found significant differences in service quality perceptions among hotel guests of different nationalities.

Tourists' nationalities demonstrate different cultural values, which ultimately influence service quality perception and behavioural intentions (Pantouvakis, 2013). Within the international tourism context, cultural values are critical in differentiating service quality perceptions, satisfaction and behaviour of a specific tourist group. Tourists from different countries have varying preferences that influence their expectations and satisfaction, which consequently affects behavioural intentions (Dedeoğlu et al., 2018). Several moderating factors have been used as a link between service quality and behavioural intentions, such as generation factor, gender (Hwang et al., 2019), and experience (Ruiz-Molina et al., 2023). However, the moderating role of nationality has not been sufficiently examined (Dedeoğlu et al., 2018).

Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory (2011) explains culture as a shared mental program that separates a group of people from others in a given environment. Several studies allude to the notion that different people and nations are rooted in different cultural values that influence their behaviour. Culture comprises sub-cultures and groups that have the same values. These cultures consist of nationalities, religions, ethnic groups, and geographical regions. Although reviewed literature shows that cultural difference has significant influences on customers' perception of services

offered, there is scant literature on cross-cultural research on tourists' behavioural intentions (Huang and Crotty, 2019, cited in Ruiz-Molina et al., 2022). Furthermore, most studies on cross-cultural studies have paid much focus on demographic characteristics such as age, gender, income, marital status and religiosity (Antony et al., 2018; Henrique & Matos, 2015; Warsame & Ireri, 2018). Additionally, most cross-cultural studies have been conducted between countries of the same region, such as Europe, Asia, or America, and a few have been conducted between countries of different regions.

## 2.8 Chapter Summary

The first research gap relates to the adoption of a multi-dimensional and hierarchical model in evaluating service quality (Brady & Cronin, 2001). Researchers support this framework as it overcomes some weaknesses observed in the traditional service quality measurement tools such as SERVQUAL, which is extensively applied in service industries. However, there is limited research on its application in evaluating service quality in the lodging industry. Its application has been widely used in the banking sector, health, and spa industries. Several researchers have emphasized the need to further investigate the multi-dimensional and hierarchical modelling approach with different service industries to validate its application in service industries such as the hospitality industry. Additionally, there is limited empirical research that identifies the importance of ranking service quality dimensions (primary dimensions and sub-dimensions) as perceived by tourists patronizing game lodges.

The literature reviewed reveals that guests' perception of the service delivery is based on a blend of attributes. Service expectations are measured on how well-perceived service quality confirms or disconfirms their expectations. The literature has shown that service quality dimensions vary according to the type of service examined and the type of tourists catered for. Therefore, it is important to establish these dimensions according to the different services provided to tourists patronizing game lodges in Kenya.

However, despite the increased focus on the emotional dimension of service experience, there is less theoretical background and empirical findings underpinning the influence of service quality perception on customer emotions in the lodging

industry (He et al., 2020; Ladhari, 2017). Moreover, numerous studies on emotions have utilized a restaurant context (Jeong et al., 2019) or have focused on service recovery. Little research has focused on the role of emotions in non-recovery and non-restaurant settings such as lodges in the tourism market in Kenya. The literature has also revealed inadequate empirical studies on tourists' nationality as the moderating role between service quality and behavioural intentions. Several studies have focused on the moderating effect on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Additionally, some studies have focused on demographic factors such as age, travel arrangement, gender, and marital status. In conclusion, Table 2.2 gives a summary of the knowledge gaps existing in the reviewed literature.

**Table 2.1: Summary of Gaps**

| Topics | Sources | Key Contribution | Knowledge Gap |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Models and Theoretical Framework** | Parasuraman et al. (1988)<br>Mei et al. (1999)<br>Knutson et al. (1999)<br>Cronin and Taylor (1992) | Earlier models that propose service quality measurement tools, such as SERVQUAL, SERVPERF, HOLSERV and LODGSERV, | • These service quality scales consider only process quality attributes rather than service outcomes;<br>• These models have the limitation of not fully reflecting the correlation between evaluation factors or the hierarchical conceptualization of service quality. Thus, considered insufficient to measure service quality in-game lodges;<br>• Lacks validity across different countries and is not valid for other types of accommodation such as game lodges; and<br>• It is not comprehensive and suitable for different service industries, such as the lodging industry. |
| **Service Quality Dimensions** | Hossain et al. (2021)<br>Bakar et al. (2017)<br>Clemes et al. (2018)<br>Clemes et al. (2020)<br>Keshavarz and Jamshidi (2018)<br>Rauch et al. (2015)<br>Wu et al. (2015)<br>Nunkoo et al. (2018) | Application of multi-dimensional and hierarchical model in the service industry<br><br>Process and outcome quality in 4-5 star-rated hotels.<br><br>Hotel performance in a Mid-scale setting<br>• Multi-dimensional and hierarchical model application in the hotel industry. | Application of multi-dimensional and hierarchical model in banking, health and mobile industry. Limited literature in the application of multi-dimensional and hierarchical models in the assessment of service quality perception in the hospitality industry and specifically in the game lodges<br><br>• Uses the LODGESERV model, which is a deficit in the hierarchical conceptualization of service quality;<br>• The study also excluded brand-affiliated hotels and highly-ranking hotels (5-star rated);<br>• Service quality was conceptualized as a second-order factor. The current study conceptualizes service quality as a third-order factor and<br>• Application of multi-dimensional and hierarchical model. |
| **Behavioural intentions** | Tran (2020)<br>Pandey and Sahu (2020)<br>Seetanah et al. (2020) | Service quality influenced the behavioural intentions of middle-income group tourists.<br>• Interaction service quality had a positive effect that was significant on destination attachment and e-WoM.<br>• Services at the airport significantly affected the likelihood of revisiting by the tourists. | The study did not assess the indirect influence of service quality on behavioural intention and only considered purchase intention as the only indicator for behavioural intention. This study includes other indicators, such as WoM recommendations.<br>• Only interaction service quality, destination attachment and eWoM were adopted in the study. The current study expanded these limitations by widening the scope to capture other service quality aspects and behavioural intentions indicators. |

**Table 2.1:** *Continued*

| Topics | Sources | Key Contribution | Knowledge Gap |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Mediating role Emotional satisfaction** | Mustaffa et al. (2016)<br>Keshavarz and Jamshidi (2018)<br>Kumar (2020)<br>Jeong et al. (2019)<br>Kim et al. (2019)<br>Jayampathi et al. (2019)<br>Wantara and Irawati (2021) | • The relationship between service quality, emotional satisfaction and behavioural intention among international students in public universities in Malaysia.<br>• Mediating role of satisfaction in sports tourism<br>• Used cognitive aspect of customer satisfaction in SME hotels<br>• The mediating role of tourist satisfaction | Previous studies are limited to public universities, restaurants, sports tourism, and spa tourism.<br>• More attention is given to cognitive aspects of satisfaction, and little attention is given to affective or emotional aspects of satisfaction. |
| **Moderating role of nationality** | Dedeoğlu, et. al. (2018) | • The significant moderating role of nationality between destination image and revisit intention | • The study focused on revisiting intentions as the only indicator of behavioural intentions. Other indicators of behavioural intentions, such as WoM, were not included in the study.<br>• Service quality was not included in this study. |
| | Zgolli and Zaimen (2017) | • Nationality moderated the relationship between customer-to-customer interaction and tourist behaviour among domestic and international tourists. | • The study focused on one aspect of service quality (sociability). Other attributes of service quality, such as staff-customer interaction, physical environment and outcome quality, are excluded.<br>• A quantitative research approach was used.<br>• There is a need to use a mixed-research approach to have a more comprehensive evaluation of the mediation effect of nationality. |
| | Cheng et al. (2018)<br>Ergun et al. (2022) | • No moderating effect on both domestic and international tourists.<br>• Using regression analysis, the study indicated a direct moderating role of nationality. | • The studies focus on a limited number of nationalities and the inclusion of more tourist markets would give a more comprehensive picture of the moderation effect.<br>• These studies focused on the international tourism market and specifically the European and Asian tourism markets; little attention has been given to African tourism markets.<br>• There is limited inclusion of domestic markets.<br>• The moderating role of nationality is insufficiently examined in the Kenyan context. |

# CHAPTER THREE
# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 Introduction

Chapter three of this study comprised the research design that guided this study, study area, target population, sampling techniques and the sample size, data collection procedures, data analysis techniques, and finally, ethical considerations.

## 3.2 Research Design

Research design refers to a plan or a procedure intended to provide an appropriate framework for the research process (Creswell, 2009). This study was guided by an epistemological research approach and Pragmatism paradigm, along with a cross-sectional survey research strategy and embedded mixed research approach.

### 3.2.1 Research Philosophy and Paradigm

Research philosophy refers to systems of beliefs and assumptions in knowledge development (Saunders et al., 2009). These assumptions guide methodological choice, research strategy, data collection procedures and data analysis techniques. There are three views on research philosophy: epistemology, axiology and ontology (Saunders et al., 2019). This research adopted epistemological, philosophical assumptions guided by pragmatic paradigms. Epistemology is viewed as the theory of knowledge underlying research. It involves knowledge and expresses the understanding of what is entailed in knowing, that is, how we know what we know (Crotty, 1998). Epistemology focuses on providing a philosophical stance and is concerned with scope, validity, and methods of acquiring knowledge, such as what constitutes a knowledge claim, how knowledge is acquired and how the extent of its applicability can be determined (Moon & Blackman, 2014). Therefore, the epistemological assumptions provide the rationale for research decisions and indicate beliefs regarding the relationship between the researcher and those under investigation.

A paradigm is defined as a basic set of beliefs that guide action (Guba, 1990). Paradigm answers the question of the relationship of thinking to_be and reveals the theoretical worldview. Whereas epistemology is a belief around knowledge, the research paradigm is viewed as a set of assumptions that build the approach to the

research process and is considered to be informed by the epistemology stance. However, it is worth noting that research paradigms are influenced by the researcher's areas of discipline, belief and experience (Creswell, 2009). It informs the purpose, design, methodology and methods of research (Newman, 2003) as well as data analysis and interpretation (Slife, 1995).

There are four research paradigms, namely, positivism, interpretivism, critical realism and pragmatism, which differ with regard to axiology, ontology and epistemology research assumptions. In contrast to other positivism and interpretivism that focus on methods, the Pragmatic worldview gives more attention to the research problem and uses all the available approaches to understanding the problem (Creswell, 2018; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

Pragmatism embraces the use of mixed methods as it provides an efficient and applied research philosophy. Though there have been limitations with epistemological rigour in mixed methods, strong support emerges from classical pragmatists who rejected positivism. Thus, pragmatism is beyond finding the truth and reality to solve human problems. Based on Creswell (2018), there are several justifications for using pragmatism as a research philosophy in this study. Firstly, pragmatism is not limited to a single philosophical approach and reality. This applies to mixed-method research, where the researcher draws freely from quantitative and qualitative assumptions. Secondly, there is a wide choice of methods, techniques, and procedures the researcher can select to meet the purpose of the research. Thirdly, a pragmatic worldview is not an absolute unity. Therefore, mixed-method research seeks several approaches for data collection and analysis. Fourthly, truth is essential for pragmatism. Thus, in mixed-method research, qualitative and quantitative data are used to conceptualize the research problem more appropriately. Lastly, pragmatism provides an opportunity for the application of multiple methods, different worldviews, different assumptions as well as numerous forms of collecting and analysing data. Pragmatism has been acknowledged as the most suitable philosophical approach for justifying the use of mixed methods research. It considers the research question to be more important than the methods used.

For this reason, this study adopts a pragmatism research philosophy. Reality that exists independent of human perception. It, therefore, seeks to verify the relationship between measurable variables in a universal cause-effect way. Further, quantitative applies a deductive approach that is associated with hypothesis testing to modify or support the existing theories.

### 3.2.2 Mixed Research Approach

In the mixed method approach, quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis phases are integrated with the quantitative phase influencing the qualitative phase (Leavy, 2017). As in other areas of research, the integration of the two forms of data presents a complete approach to the phenomenon under investigation than either qualitative or quantitative research design alone (Palinkas et al., 2015). Qualitative research methods are used to obtain an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. In contrast, quantitative methods are used to test study hypotheses as proposed on an existing conceptual model and aimed at providing better inferences and minimizing uni-method bias (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

In this study, primary data was collected qualitatively through in-depth interviews with the game lodge managers and quantitatively using semi-structured questionnaires administered to selected visitors in star-rated game lodges. The secondary data from published literature and journals were used to enrich the study findings.

According to Creswell (2018), there are four mixed methods designs namely, exploratory, explanatory, embedded research designs and triangulation design. In this study, an embedded mixed-method approach was adopted. The embedded mixed research approach entailed the collection of quantitative and qualitative data sequentially. Data was collected in two phases. The first phase entailed the collection of quantitative data among the tourists who patronized the star-rated game lodges. In contrast, the qualitative data collection phase entailed in-depth interviews with game lodge managers. The intent of collecting qualitative data was to support the quantitative set of data.

### 3.2.3 Research Strategy

A cross-sectional survey strategy was utilized in this study. The choice of this approach was based on the research objectives of this study. This entailed explanatory hypothesis testing that employed a deductive approach. Surveys are popular in social science as they are cheap and utilize questionnaires that are distributed to a sizeable population, which facilitates the collection of a large amount of data. The survey sample is drawn from a specific population, and structured questionnaires or interviews are used (Saunders et al., 2019). In this study, structured questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from visitors residing in game lodges, and this was complemented with qualitative data collected through interviews with managers in game lodges.

## 3.3 Description of the Study Area

This study focused on game lodges in the Maasai Mara Ecosystem (Fig.3.1), which has been recognized as a unique ecosystem (Nampushi & Nankaya, 2020; Pedroso & Biu Kung'u, 2019).

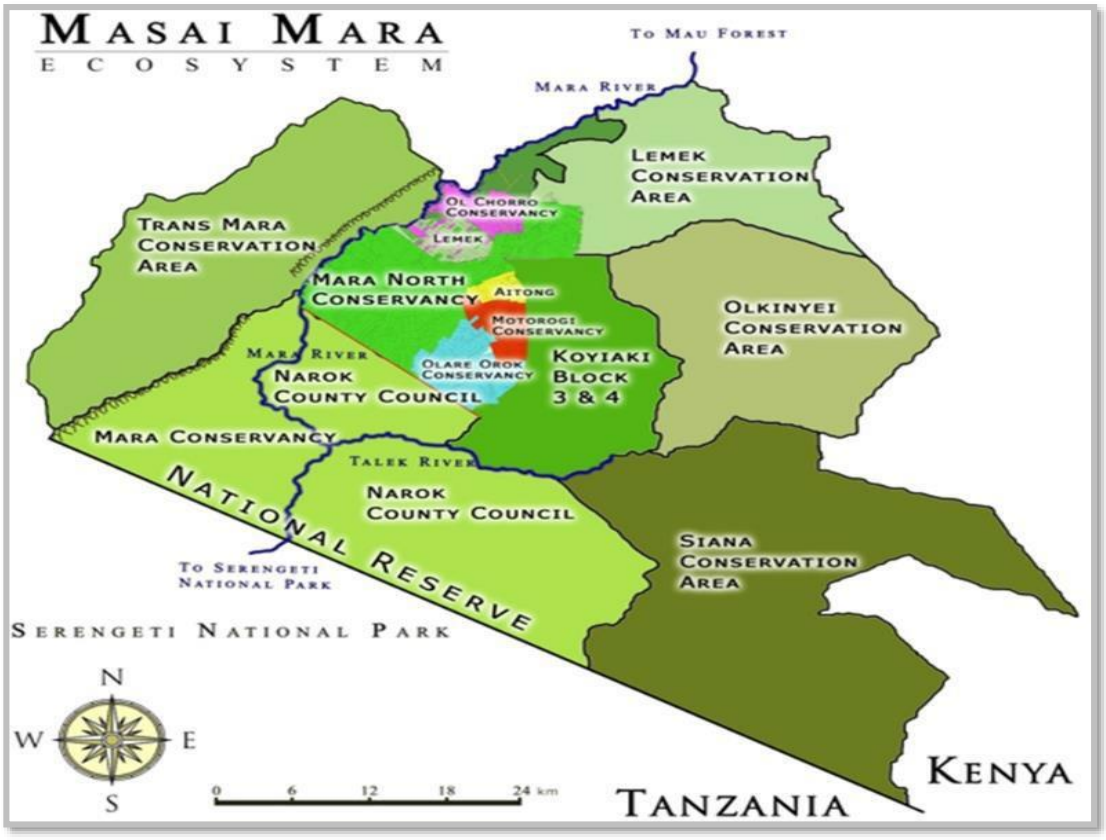


**Figure 3. 1: Maasai Mara Ecosystem**

Source: http://www.maranorth.com/Ecosystem.html

The Maasai Ecosystem is situated along the international borders between Kenya and Tanzania in East Africa (34.7$^{o}$ to 35.4$^{o}$ E, 1.2$^{o}$ to 1.7$^{o}$ S) at 1,500-2170 attitude. It lies 270 Km from Nairobi in Narok County and borders Serengeti National Park on the Tanzanian border (Nampushi & Nankaya, 2020). Within the Maasai Mara ecosystem is the Maasai Mara National Reserve and a number of conservancies where 25% of Kenya's wildlife is found. Maasai Mara National Reserve covers 1673 km2 of 40,350 km2 of the area that forms the northern portion of the Serengeti-Mara system that extends from Tanzania to Kenya. It is one of the KWS wildlife-protected areas and falls under the jurisdiction of the county government of Narok. There are 15 Conservancies within the Maasai Mara ecosystem. In this study, data was collected from two conservancies where three of the classified lodges were located and included: Mara, Naboisho, and Ol Kinyei conservancies.

Maasai Mara ecosystem has two administrative regions, namely, the Mara Triangle, administered by the Mara North Conservancy, and the Narok County on the eastern side of River Mara. Maasai Mara has also been divided into zones based on the number of visitors. The high-use zone (HUZ) covers the administrative regions of Narok County and the Mara Triangle. The second Zone is known as the Low Use Zone (LUZ) and finally the ecological zone (EZ). It is further divided into five area zones, namely, the North Zone, East Zone, South Zone, west Zone, and Central Zone. To accommodate this high tourist traffic, several high-end lodges have been developed in Maasai Mara National Reserve and its environs (Chiro, Chiro, Abita, and Thuo, 2020). The choice of Maasai Mara Narok ecosystem was based on tourist popularity (GoK, 2022) attributed to the fact that Maasai Mara National Reserve is one of Kenya's leading wildlife reserves. It is also the world's top tourist attraction due to its spectacular wild beast migration, abundance of variety of large wildlife that includes the big five, and availability of high-standard facilities and hotels (Chakrabarti & Ekblom, 2024).

### 3.4 Target Population

The target population constituted game lodge managers and all tourists selected from 29 star-rated game lodges in the Maasai Mara ecosystem. This was based on the existing classification of lodging facilities by the Tourism Regulatory Authority (Appendix 3) in the Narok Tourist Region, where Maasai Mara National Reserve and

its conservancies are located (TRA, 2020).

A lodge manager was selected from each of the 29 game lodges, thus giving a total of 29 respondents for the qualitative data collection phase. The lodge managers were chosen as they were considered to have a wide experience with customers' expectations and preferences, customer emotional satisfaction, and behavioural intentions. The target population of tourists patronizing the star-rated lodges in the Maasai Mara ecosystem was determined by calculating the bed-night occupancy in game lodges. According to GoK (2021), there were, on average, 2,148,800 bed nights (customers) between 2018 and 2020 in game lodges in Kenya, as shown in Table 3.1. This number of tourists was targeted.

**Table 3.1: Number of bed nights in Game lodges (2018- 2020)**

| Year | 2018 | 2019 | 2021 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total number of bed-nights (000') | 957.6 | 939.7 | 251.5 | 2148.8 |

### 3.5 Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

#### 3.5.1 Sample Size

To determine the sample size for tourists, Yamane's (1967) formula was used as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

- *n* is the desired sample size of tourists;
- *N* is the target tourist population, and
- *e* is the sampling error of 0.05 at a 95% level of confidence.

Therefore,

$$n = \frac{2{,}148{,}000}{1 + 2{,}148{,}800(0.05)^2} = 337$$

Based on the computation, a sample size of 337 tourists was therefore selected to participate in this study.

### 3.5.2 Sampling Technique

The sampling technique refers to procedures the researcher adopts to systematically select a subset or a representative of items or individuals from a pre-defined population to serve as a data source for research (G. Sharma, 2017). This study adopted a multi-stage sampling procedure. A multi-stage sampling procedure involves several sampling techniques in choosing respondents in stages. The first step involved getting the number of tourists and distributing them in each of the star-rated lodges using proportionate stratified sampling. The lodging facilities were classified as one, two, three, four, and five lodge categories (Table 3.2). This ensured equal representation of lodges that had different star ratings and facilitated higher estimation of respondents in each category.

**Table 3. 1: Star-Rated Game Lodges in Maasai Mara Ecosystem, Narok Tourist Region**

| Star rating | No. of Lodges | % | No. of Rooms | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Five | 3 | 11 | 102 | 21 |
| Four | 15 | 50 | 622 | 56 |
| Three | 5 | 18 | 142 | 14 |
| Two | 5 | 18 | 83 | 8 |
| One | 1 | 4 | 10 | 1 |
| **Total** | **29** | **100** | **959** | **100** |

**Source**: (Tourism Regulatory Authority, 2020)

The following formula was used to proportionately distribute tourists to each category of game lodges (Slovin, 1960).

$$\mathrm{Ni} = \frac{\mathrm{Ni}}{\mathrm{N} * \mathrm{n}}$$

Where;

- ni is the desired sample size for tourists in each category of game lodge;
- Ni is the bed capacity in game lodges , N is the target population, and n is the sample size for this study.

**Table 3.3: Distribution of Respondents in Specific Lodging Facility**

| Lodge Identification Number | Star Rating | Bed Capacity | No. of Respondents |
|---|---|---|---|
| L1 | 5 | 148 | 28 |
| L2 | 5 | 40 | 8 |
| L3 | 5 | 17 | 3 |
| L4 | 4 | 198 | 37 |
| L5 | 4 | 225 | 42 |
| L6 | 4 | 93 | 18 |
| L7 | 4 | 118 | 22 |
| L8 | 4 | 150 | 28 |
| L9 | 4 | 102 | 19 |
| L10 | 4 | 40 | 8 |
| L11 | 4 | 40 | 8 |
| L12 | 4 | 34 | 6 |
| L13 | 4 | 30 | 6 |
| L14 | 4 | 10 | 2 |
| L15 | 4 | 20 | 4 |
| L16 | 4 | 10 | 2 |
| L17 | 4 | 22 | 4 |
| L18 | 4 | 18 | 3 |
| L19 | 3 | 168 | 32 |
| L20 | 3 | 34 | 6 |
| L21 | 3 | 30 | 5 |
| L22 | 3 | 28 | 5 |
| L23 | 3 | 24 | 5 |
| L24 | 2 | 74 | 14 |
| L25 | 2 | 46 | 9 |
| L26 | 2 | 35 | 7 |
| L27 | 2 | 12 | 2 |
| L28 | 2 | 18 | 3 |
| L29 | 1 | 20 | 4 |
| **Total** | | **1,804** | **337** |

***Note***: L1- L29 refers to the identification number of lodging facilities (*See Appendix 3*)

The second stage involved systematic random sampling (SRS), which was applied to select tourists staying in specific rooms in all-star-rated facilities. Every tourist occupying the $n^{th}$ room was involved and was assumed to be a study respondent. SRS began with selecting sampled respondents at random and then proceeded with the selection of every 3rd respondent from the total number of rooms in the lodging facility. This implied that the rooms in all 29 lodges were given numbers 1 to the last room. The following formula was applied to get the $K^{th}$ item (interval):

$$K = \frac{N}{n}$$

Where:

- K the interval in which to pick a respondent;
- N is the total number of rooms in a specific lodging facility, and
- n is the number of respondents sampled for a specific lodging facility.

Calculation of $K^{th}$ item (interval) from each hotel as shown in Table 3.4.

**Table 3.4: Selection Interval of Respondents in Specific Lodging Facility**

| Lodge Identification number | Star Rating | Number of Rooms (N) | Number of Respondents(n) | Selection Interval (K) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| L1 | 5 | 74 | 32 | 3 |
| L2 | 5 | 16 | 7 | 3 |
| L3 | 5 | 12 | 5 | 3 |
| L4 | 4 | 100 | 43 | 3 |
| L5 | 4 | 99 | 42 | 3 |
| L6 | 4 | 60 | 26 | 3 |
| L7 | 4 | 56 | 24 | 3 |
| L8 | 4 | 75 | 32 | 3 |
| L9 | 4 | 51 | 22 | 3 |
| L10 | 4 | 20 | 9 | 3 |
| L11 | 4 | 20 | 9 | 3 |
| L12 | 4 | 17 | 7 | 3 |
| L13 | 4 | 16 | 6 | 3 |
| L14 | 4 | 10 | 4 | 3 |
| L15 | 4 | 10 | 4 | 3 |
| L16 | 4 | 10 | 4 | 3 |
| L17 | 4 | 9 | 4 | 3 |
| L18 | 4 | 9 | 4 | 3 |
| L19 | 3 | 84 | 36 | 3 |
| L20 | 3 | 20 | 9 | 3 |
| L21 | 3 | 15 | 6 | 3 |
| L22 | 3 | 14 | 6 | 3 |
| L23 | 3 | 9 | 4 | 3 |
| L24 | 2 | 37 | 16 | 3 |
| L25 | 2 | 23 | 10 | 3 |
| L26 | 2 | 14 | 6 | 3 |
| L27 | 2 | 6 | 3 | 2 |
| L28 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 3 |
| L29 | 1 | 10 | 4 | 3 |
| **Total** | | **899** | **337** | |

***Note***: L1- L29 refers to the identification number of lodging facilities (See Appendix 3)

The qualitative research involved in-depth interviews with the lodges' managers, who were purposively selected. A purposive sampling technique was used to select game lodge managers based on the number of bed capacity. Game lodge managers whose lodging facility had a bed capacity of more than 40 were selected on the basis that customers from different nationalities patronized these lodges. The number of game lodge managers from each lodge category is shown in Table 3.5. One star-rated lodge was excluded as its bed capacity was below 40.

**Table 3.5: Sample Size for Game Lodge Managers**

| Game Lodge Category | Number of Game Lodge Managers |
|---|---|
| Five-star | 2 |
| Four-star | 8 |
| Three-star | 1 |
| Two-star | 1 |
| **Total** | **12** |

### 3.6 Data Collection Procedures

The data collection process was conducted in two phases. The first phase involved the collection of quantitative data, while the second focused on gathering qualitative data. The data collection procedure involved first getting approval for data collection from the directorate of postgraduate studies (Appendix 3), Murang'a University of Technology, and later a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) (Appendix 4). Quantitative data was collected using self-administered questionnaires from the tourists in selected game lodges. The researcher, with two trained research assistants, distributed the questionnaires to 24 lodges out of 29 lodges that responded to our invitation. Questionnaires were distributed to the tourists checking in by the receptionist. Respondents in all sampled hotel rooms were instructed to fill out the questionnaire at their convenience, and were collected during their departure. Data collection was conducted between November 2021 to August 2022. A total of 421 questionnaires were distributed based on Fincham's (2008) 1.25 rate, out of which 312 were returned, indicating a 74% response rate.

The qualitative data collection phase was done through the in-depth interviews of purposively selected lodge managers. 12 out of 29 lodge managers selected were interviewed. The interview guide (Appendix 2) was developed based on a review of existing service quality, emotional satisfaction, and behavioural intention literature (Subrahmanyam, 2017). The interviews were conducted face-to-face with the hotel managers at the lodge's lobby and managers' offices. Each interview took about 30 minutes to 40 minutes. With the respondents' verbal consent, the interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. Later, the transcripts and notes were read through to capture the general and overall meaning of the information.

### 3.7 Research Instruments

#### 3.7.1 Questionnaires

Both primary and secondary sources were used for data collection. Primary sources of quantitative data were questionnaires that were distributed to selected tourists in star-rated game lodges. The questionnaire was developed from the literature review on service quality, tourists' emotional satisfaction and behavioural intentions in star-rated lodges in the Maasai Mara ecosystem. This research followed Sekaran's (2016) guidelines for developing a questionnaire, which was based on the conceptualization of each construct and the operationalization of constructs.

The questionnaire consisted of four pages including a cover letter addressed to respondents. The main objective of the study was briefly explained to the respondents. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: part one and part two. The first part included the social-demographic characteristics of the respondents, while part two covered service quality, emotional satisfaction and behavioural intention. Conceptualizations and operationalization of the constructs were captured in the questionnaire and were measured as follows:

Part One: This part of the questionnaire provided data on the social-demographic characteristics of tourists patronizing Maasai Mara game lodges, such as nationality, gender, age, marital status, level of education, occupation, frequency of visits to game lodges, length of stay, mode of travel and the category of lodges tourists visited. These variables were comprised of 13 questions (Q1- Q13) and were all measured on a nominal scale.

Part two: This section provided data on the main research constructs. The independent variable service quality was operationalized using three primary dimensions, namely interaction quality, outcome quality, and physical environment quality. Interaction quality constructs were measured using a 15-item scale as proposed by Martínez Caro and Martínez García (2008) and consisted of elements of employees' attitudes and behaviour, employees' expertise and problem-solving. The Outcome quality construct was measured using the 25-item scale as proposed and consisted of elements of front-office quality, food and beverage quality, room quality, and waiting time. The physical environment quality concerning social contact, design, safety, security and décor was

used using 10 10-item scale as proposed by Brady and Cronin, 2001 with slight modifications. Emotional satisfaction as a mediating variable was measured using the 10-item scale as proposed by Mustaffa et al. (2016). Behavioural intention is the independent variable, which was indicated by the intention to revisit and word-of-mouth (WoM) recommendations. Behavioural intentions were measured on a 3-item Likert as proposed by Tarhini et al. (2013) with slight modifications.

A questionnaire was developed by incorporating both nominal and ordinal measurements of scale. Descriptive statistics applied a nominal measurement scale to determine tourists' profiles as well as the response rate of study constructs. The Likert scales were used to measure tourists' perceptions of service quality, emotional satisfaction and behavioural intention. This scale was proposed by Likert (1932) and gives an ordered point scale that varies from 1 to 10, separated by equal intervals. In this research, responses were anchored on 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3(I do not know), 4 (agree), and 5 (strongly agree). A 5-point scale was used to allow tourists to make choices by indicating their agreement or disagreement with certain statements by ticking in the box that best represented their opinion. Besides, the scale is widely used by several researchers and scholars in social science studies. The study constructs presented in the questionnaire are summarized and operationalized in Table 3.6.

**Table 3.6: Conceptualization and Operationalization of Study Variables**

| Study Variables | Nature of the Variable | Variable Indicators | Rating | Scale | Question |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Service quality | Independent variable | a) Interaction quality<br>b) Outcome quality<br>c) Physical environment quality | 5- point Likert Scale (1=SD; 2=D; 3= N; 4=A; 5=SA) | Interval | Q1-Q16 |
| Emotional satisfaction | Mediating Variable | a) Pleasure<br>b) Arousal | 5- point Likert Scale (1=SD; 2=D; 3= N; 4=A; 5=SA) | Interval | 54-63 |
| Behavioural intentions | Dependent variable | a) Intention to revisit<br>b) WOM recommendations | 5- point Likert Scale (1=SD; 2=D; 3= N; 4=A; and 5=SA) | Interval | 64-67 |
| Nationality | Moderating Variable | a) Domestic tourist<br>b) International tourist | 1= Domestic Tourist<br>2=International Tourist | Nominal | 1 |

***Notes***: SD- Strongly Disagree; D-Disagree; N-Neutral; A-Agree; SA-Strongly Agree

### 3.7.2 Interview Guide

Qualitative research was done through the in-depth interviews of purposely selected lodge managers. 12 out of 29 lodge managers selected managers were interviewed. The interview guide (Appendix 2) was developed based on a review of existing service quality, emotional satisfaction, and behavioural intention literature (Subrahmanyam, 2017). The first section of the interview schedule was the cover letter that focused on the introduction of the researcher to the interviewee, the purpose of the interview, and assuring the respondents of handling information given with confidentiality. The section of the interview schedule focused on interview questions. Seven questions concerning what constitutes service quality dimensions, differences in service quality perception among guests, and the influence of service quality on emotional satisfaction and behavioural intentions were asked. Face-to-face interviews were conducted to collect qualitative data.

## 3.8 Pre-test of Research Instruments

A pre-test study was conducted in purposively selected lodging facilities in Maasai Mara, which were not included in the sample. The main purpose of pretesting research instruments was to gauge their suitability, validity, and reliability. One of the key aspects of pre-testing questionnaires and interview guides was to identify the clarity of the questions, sentence structure, and respondents' interests. This also ensured that the data collected answered the research questions and provided face validity (Presser et al., 2004). From each lodging facility, five tourists were randomly selected. One hotel manager was interviewed. Data was then analysed to identify problems within questionnaire items so that decisions could be made regarding items to be removed, retained or even included.

### 3.8.1 Reliability Test

Reliability refers to the degree to which a measurement of a phenomenon provides consistent scores when repeated on different samples under constant conditions (Taherdoost, 2016). Testing reliability in this study was critical as it determined the consistency across the various parts of the research instrument. While there are several approaches used in testing the internal consistency of research instruments, such as split-half, item-to-total correlations, and the Kuder- Richardson coefficient, the

Cronbach alpha coefficient was considered the most appropriate test of reliability for this study. It was used for verifying the five-point Likert scale rating, pretesting the questionnaire and examining the measurement scale.

Different reliability values are considered acceptable by different authors (Ursachi et al., 2015). According to Taber (2018), a Cronbach alpha value of ≥ 0.7 is preferred, while 0.6 is considered satisfactory. Reliability tests dictate that the coefficient ranges from 0 to 1. A value closer to 1 demonstrates a greater level of internal consistency in the scale. All items that had a score between 0.6 and 0.7 were considered to be reliable with their corresponding factors.

Jamovi 2.3.18 software was used to analyse the reliability tests of the pilot study, and the reliability test results are presented in Table 3.7.

**Table 3.7: Reliability of Research Instrument**

| Construct | Number of Items | Cronbach Alpha | Remarks (A score above 0.7 is acceptable) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Entire Questionnaire | 66 | 0.917 | Acceptable |
| Interaction Service Quality | 15 | 0.893 | Acceptable |
| Outcome Quality | 22 | 0.860 | Acceptable |
| Physical Environment Quality | 15 | 0.880 | Acceptable |
| Emotional Satisfaction | 10 | 0.913 | Acceptable |
| Behavioural Intentions | 4 | 0.694 | Acceptable |

The results, as shown in Table 3.7, indicate that the alpha coefficient of the research instrument (questionnaire) was within the acceptable values of 0.6-0.99 (Kothari, 2012), with an overall measure of 0.917. Similarly, the individual constructs had adequate reliability, with a score ranging from 0.694 to 0.913. This indicated that the reliability alpha coefficient for the study items was above the threshold point of 0.70 and thus was considered reliable for further data analysis.

Within the qualitative research context, reliability refers to the degree similar studies would generate similar results (Creswell, 2009). To minimize the risk biases among participants interviewed, credibility and trustworthiness were demonstrated by the researcher. As a result, participants were selected based on managerial positions.

### 3.8.2 Test of Validity

Validity refers to the extent to which a research instrument measures what it is intended to measure (Asmelash & Kumar, 2019). In this study, face, content and construct validity were applied. Pre-testing of research instruments was done to ascertain they met the expectations in terms of the information that was collected. This was achieved by a pilot study that was done on a few respondents who represented the sample but were not included in the final sample. Respondents were requested to make remarks on the clarity of the questions and the amount of time it took them to fill out the questionnaires.

Content validity was guided by experts' opinions in the hospitality and tourism industry, doctoral supervisors and lecturers at the Murang'a University of Technology to confirm theoretical dimensions are conceptualized. This procedure was critical to avoid collecting data that were not useful in the study (Saunders et al., 2019).

Construct validity was used to measure and evaluate the philosophical and theoretical constructs the study anticipated to measure. Additionally, it allows the researcher to deduce relationships among study items and to define any clusters of items that have adequate variations. This was used through exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural model. Exploratory factor analysis was performed based on criteria of Kaiser-Meyer- Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. KMO measure of sampling adequacy was to be within the threshold of 0.6, and BTS was to be significant at .000 to ratify construct validity. For CFA and SEM, such as Comparative fit index (CFI) (>0.90), Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) (<0.06) measured goodness of fit and constructs within the threshold of fit indices ratified their construct validity.

## 3.9 Data Analysis Procedure

Data collected from the survey was analysed using Jamovi 2.3.18 statistical analysis software program and IBM AMOS software. Descriptive statistics were performed using Jamovi 2.3.18 statistical software, which is a new third-generation statistical spreadsheet that is easy and cheaper to use than other conventional programs such as SPSS. Inferential statistics, on the other hand, was done using IBM AMOS software. Data analysis was done in two different stages. In the first stage, data was analysed to

give descriptive statistics about the demographic characteristics of the respondents and the preliminary data analysis such as mean, standard deviation, multicollinearity, heteroscedasticity and test of normality. The second step involved developing and estimating SEM to test the hypotheses on the relationships among variables within the proposed conceptual model.

### 3.9.1 Diagnostic Tests

Diagnostic tests were among the preliminary data analyses done on collected data to determine the validity of the findings (Bryman & Bell, 2015). In this study, three diagnostic tests were conducted to test for the assumptions of the absence of multicollinearity, heteroscedasticity and test of normality

#### 3.9.1.1 Multicollinearity

Multicollinearity is a situation where two or more predictor variables in a multiple regression model are highly correlated (Martz, 2013). In this study, the variance inflation factor (VIF) and the Tolerance were used to test multicollinearity among the independent variables. Tolerance measures the impact of collinearity among the variables in a regression model. It is calculated from 1 - $R^{2,}$ with a tolerance value close to 1 showing little multicollinearity, while a value close to 0 indicates the presence of multicollinearity. The VIF gives an index that shows how much the variance of an estimated regression coefficient is increased because of collinearity (Cohen, 1992). If a VIF statistic is above 5 is an indicator of multicollinearity and should be removed from regression models.

#### 3.9.1.2 Heteroscedasticity

Heteroscedasticity is a situation where the variability of a variable is unequal across the range of values of a second variable that predicts it. In this study, Heteroscedasticity was tested by performing the Breuch-Pagan / Cook-Weisberg test. Breusch-Pagan / Cook-Weisberg test the null hypothesis that the error variances are all equal versus the alternative that the error variances are a multiplicative function of one or more variables (Vinod, 2008). Homoscedasticity will be evident when the value of “Prob > Chi-square” is greater than 0.05 (Jiang & Deng, 2021).

#### 3.9.1.3 Test for Normality

A normality test determines if the data set is well-modelled by a normal distribution (Paul & Zhang, 2010). Kurtosis and Skewness tested the normality. Kurtosis is an indicator of the flattening of a distribution, while skewness is a sign of asymmetry and deviation from a normal distribution. Skewness and kurtosis values that range from +/-3 (SE) are generally considered normal.

### 3.9.2 Exploratory Factor Analysis

EFA is defined as an interdependence technique whose primary purpose is to define the underlying structure among the variables in the analysis (Hair et al., 2010). More specifically, EFA provides a statistical tool that shows the structure of the interrelationship (correlation) among a large number of variables by defining a set of highly interrelated variables referred to as factors. EFA is generally used for data summation or data reduction. Data summation entails the formation of a structure where individual variables are grouped to generalize the expression of a concept. At the same time, data reduction creates a new set of variables much smaller to partially or fully rename the original variables. This is important to facilitate the subsequent multivariate analyses.

In this study, EFA was used to refine and reduce the number of related variables to a more relevant and manageable number before the structural equal model was performed. Factor extraction with maximum likelihood (ML) extraction, varimax rotation and Kaiser normalization was conducted. The aim was to reduce the number of items representing each category of service quality dimensions, emotional satisfaction and behavioural intention and in the end, create a new scale of measurement for study constructs. Through factor reduction, the large set of 66 items representing service quality dimensions, emotional satisfaction and behavioural intention was reduced, and a smaller set of principal components accounting for most of the variation in the original items was created. Selection of items was done if they loaded on only one factor with factor loadings being greater than 0.5.

To determine the adequacy of the extraction method in exploratory factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were used. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity tested the significance and the

assumption that the variables involved in the analysis are correlated with each other, and they could be summarized with a smaller set of factors. Sampling Adequacy was also checked using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy (MSA). Values of KMO between 0.5 and 0.7 were considered adequate, values between 0.7 and 0.9 were good, and values between 0.9 and 1.0 were excellent (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

Further, Exploratory factor analysis was performed to check for commonalities among the study constructs. Communalities measure the amount of original information contained in each variable that can be extracted from a common factor. The higher the communality (closer to 1), the larger the amount of information that will be extracted. By default, the initial value of communality for each variable is 1.00 or 100% because at the beginning of the factor analysis, none of this information has been extracted. Indicators with low values of commonalities of less than 0.5 were removed as these variables would struggle to load significantly to any factor.

### 3.9.3 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis is one of the main forms of factor analysis. It is used to test the measurement model that shows the relationship between observed and latent variables. Additionally, it ascertains the construct validity of a set of measured items. This is evaluated using several indices that reflect how fit the model is to analyse data. The commonly used Fit indices include the chi-square/df ratio, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) and comparative fit index (CFI) (Kline, 2005). A summary of Fit indices and their level of acceptance is shown in Table 3.8

**Table 3.8: Summary of Fitness Indices**

| Fit Index | Acceptable Level |
|---|---|
| RMSEA | <0.08 |
| CFI | ≥ 0.90 |
| SRMR | < 0.08 |
| Chi-square | p-value> 0.05 |

### 3.9.4 Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)

Structural equation model (SEM) is a popular multivariate technique found increasingly in research to test and evaluate hypothesized relationships among variables within a proposed conceptual model (Fan et al., 2016). SEM, also known as path analysis, simultaneous equal models or covariance structure analysis, is a relatively new analytical tool that differs greatly from earlier analytical tools such as factor analysis or regression. In contrast to ordinary regression analysis, SEM is a statistical technique that simultaneously tests and estimates a number of hypothesized relationships among multiple independent and dependent variables. Similarly, Hair et al. (2010) define SEM as a multivariate technique that considers both multiple regression and factor analysis to evaluate a set of relationships simultaneously.

The two common methods of structural equation modelling are covariance-based structural equation modelling (CB-SEM) and partial least squares-based structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM), which is based on variance. PLS-SEM is applied when the research objective is the prediction and testing of a theory. On the other hand, CB- SEM is appropriate when the research objective is theory testing and confirmation. In this research, CB- SEM was applied as the main objective was to test and confirm theories related to service quality, emotional satisfaction, behavioural intentions and the moderating role of nationality.

The research model is depicted in Figure 3.4. Thus, SEM allows a researcher to test a number of interrelated hypotheses in a single, simple and systematic manner (Gefen et al., 2000).

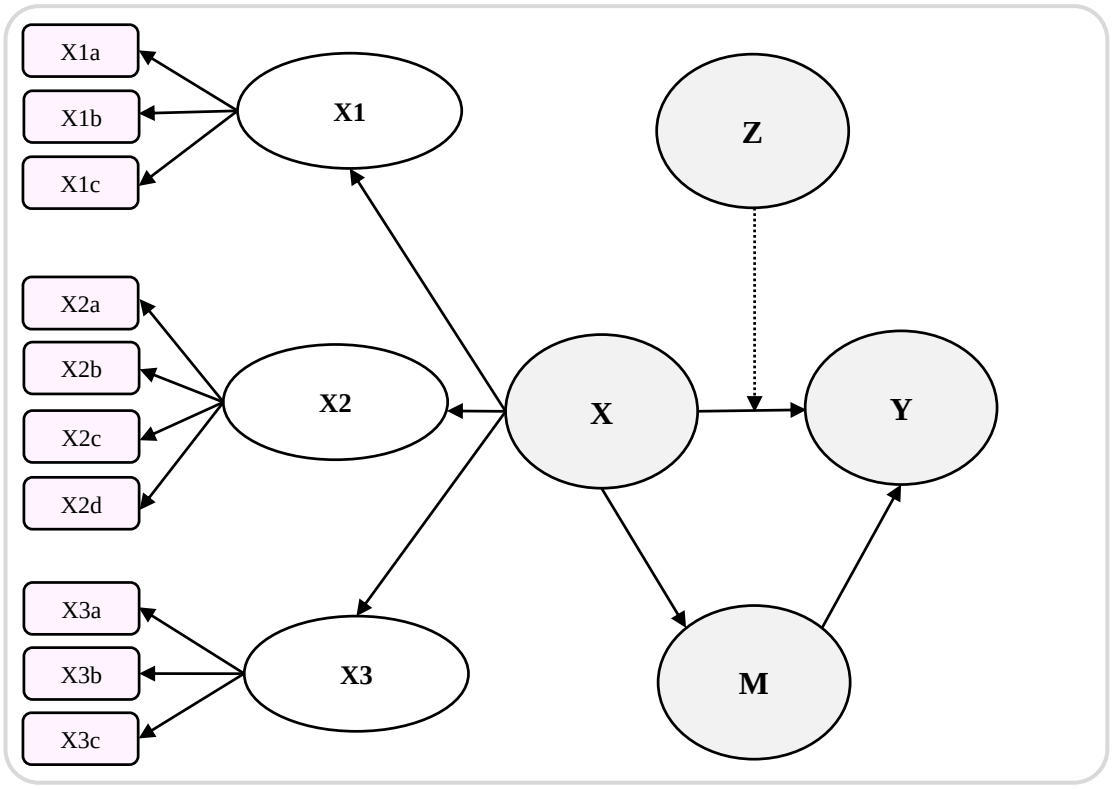


**Figure 3. 2: Research Model**

Where:

- *X* is the overall service quality perception (*independent variable*).
- *X1-X3* are the primary service quality dimensions (i.e., *X1* - interaction service quality, X2 - outcome quality, and X*3* - physical environment quality).
- X1a - X1c are sub-dimensions of X1 (i.e., employee interpersonal skills, employees' professional skills, and customer care).
- X2a - X2d are sub-dimensions of outcome quality (i.e., dining experience, room quality, front desk quality, and responsiveness).
- X3a - X3c are sub-dimensions of the physical environment (i.e., safety and security, accommodation, infrastructure).
- Y is the behavioural intention (*dependent variable*).
- M is customer emotional satisfaction (*mediating variable*).
- Z is tourists' nationality (*moderating variable*).

The choice of SEM for this study was based on the following reasons: first, SEM is more flexible than other statistical tools as it considers several equations simultaneously, as depicted in Fig.3.3. A variable may represent an exogenous (dependent variable) in one equation and as an endogenous (independent variable) in

another equation (Hair et al., 2010). The overall service quality as perceived by tourists in Maasai Mara game lodges and emotional satisfaction acted as endogenous variables that subsequently influenced Behavioural Intention. At the same time service quality is influenced by primary service quality dimensions and their underlying sub-dimensions and thus becomes an exogenous variable. In this case, the model was tested simultaneously. Several multiple analyses would have been required if other statistical tools were used.

Secondly, this research has several hypothesized relationships, as depicted in the research conceptual model. Thus, SEM was most appropriate as it tests and validates relationships simultaneously as it employs a confirmatory modelling strategy (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Six logical stages in the SEM decision process (Figure 3.6) have been identified, namely: 1) defining individual constructs, 2) Developing the overall measurement model, 3) Designing a study to produce empirical results, 4) Assessing the measurement model validity, 5) Specifying the structural model, and 6) Assessing structural model validity (Hair et al., 2010). The first 4 stages entail the measurement model, while the last two stages cover the structural model.

The influence of the independent variable (service quality) in the presence of a mediator (tourists' emotional satisfaction) on the dependent variable (behavioural intentions) was determined through mediation analysis. To test the mediating effects of customer emotional satisfaction, three-step approaches, as proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986) were applied. The first step was to examine the direct relationship between the independent variable (service quality perception) and the dependent variable (behavioural intentions) by developing the initial path analysis model. The second step examined the direct relationship between the independent variable (service quality perception) and the mediating variable (emotional satisfaction) by developing the second path analysis. The third step involved developing the third path analysis model to assess the mediating role of customer emotional satisfaction on service quality perception and behavioural intentions relationship.

Conceptually, a mediation means that a change in X (independent variable) leads to a change in M (mediating variable) (path a) and that a change in M leads to a change in Y (dependent Variable) (path b). The indirect effect is shown as ab as it is a product of the two paths that connect the independent variable (X) to the mediator M (path a)

and the mediator M to the dependent variable (path b). If the indirect effect of ab is statistically significant, it can be claimed that some form of mediation took place (Zhao et al., 2010). Therefore, mediation enables one to make inferences on the underlying mechanism that connects an independent variable with a dependent variable. The path mediation is presented in Fig.3.3.

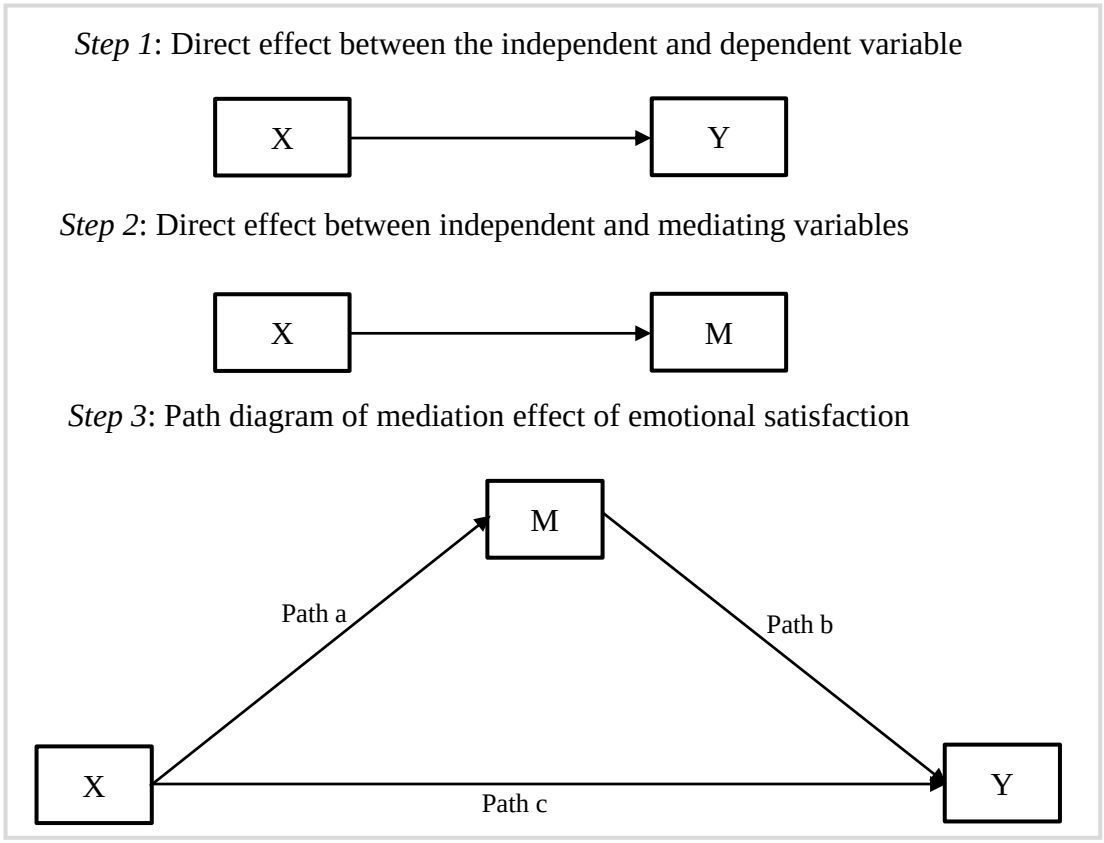


**Figure 3. 3: Study Mediation Model**

Where;

- X = Service quality (*independent variable*)
- M = Emotional satisfaction (*mediating variable*
- Y = Behavioural intention (*dependent variable*)
- a: Effect of X on M
- b: Effect of M on Y
- c: Total effect of X on y = ab + c

SEM was also involved in testing tourists' nationality moderation effect on the relationship between service quality and behavioural relationship. As Figure 3.4 shows, moderation tested whether nationality (Z) affects the direction or the strength

of the relationship between the independent variable (X) and dependent variable (Y).

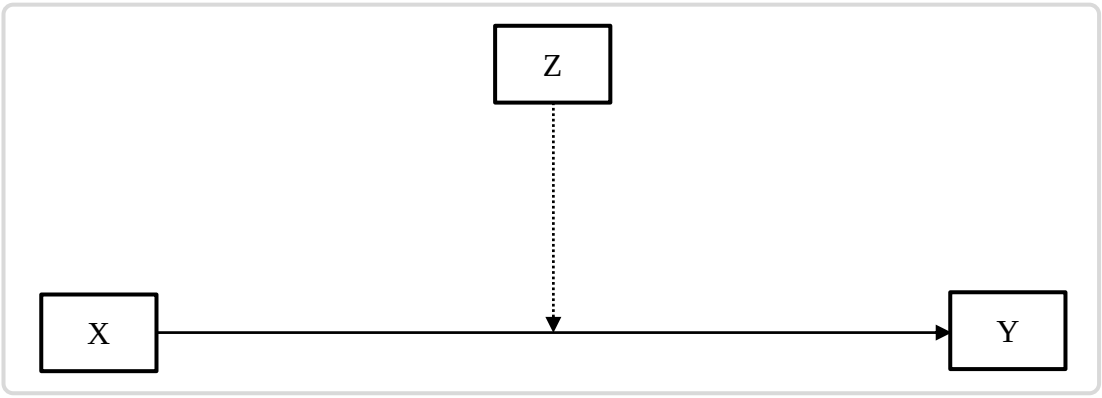


**Figure 3. 4: Study Moderation Model**

Where:

- X= Service quality (independent variable)
- Y== behavioural intention (Dependent variable)
- Z= Tourists' Nationality (moderating variable)

To test whether or not the nationality of the participants (Domestic and International tourists) influenced the study hypotheses, SEM with AMOS ver. 24 graphics and a multi-group analysis approach were conducted. Multi group structural equation model test separates structural models into two. In this study, data were separated into two nationalities: domestic tourists and international tourists. Domestic tourists were composed of Kenyan residents, while the cohort of international tourists was composed of nationals from America, Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia. Following Gaskin (2016) and Lutfi et al. (2020), two nested models were built for each group. One model was built with constraints imposed to be equal on the regression weight and the other was built without any constraints. Constraints were added to all regression weights to test for intervention effect for the entire model. The model paths of the two distinct groups were compared to identify any variations (i.e., Variants). A $\chi 2$ difference test provided useful information regarding the variance between the entire structural models of the two groups under consideration (Domestic vs. international).

### 3.10 Qualitative Data Analysis

The study applied an inductive analysis approach where transcripts were manually reviewed and coded independently. Thematic and narrative analyses were used in this study. Thematic analysis refers to a descriptive qualitative approach that focuses on identifying, analysing and reporting themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The recorded interviews were transcribed manually and coded independently. Codes ranging from Game Lodge Manager 1 to Game Lodge Manager 12 were used to identify the Game Lodge managers from whom quotes were obtained. The coding process entailed assigning keywords, highlighting quotes that supported the codes with different coloured markers and grouping the sentences and phrases into categories. Based on the results of the coding process, themes and detailed descriptions were generated. Thematic analysis was used to explore data from the game lodge managers' perspective on the key service quality dimensions that influenced visitors' overall service quality perception.

On the other hand, the narrative data analysis approach was applied in this study to present data that proved difficult to identify themes (Lacey and Luff, 2001). This was presented in the form of a written narrative. Narrative analysis was therefore used to present narratives on the visitor's behavioural intentions, emotional satisfaction, and the influence of visitors' nationality on the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions. Data was analysed as per objective and hypothesis, and as Table 3.9 indicates, descriptive analysis, exploratory factor analysis, theme analysis and structural equation model were used as the units of data analysis.

**Table 3.9: Summary of Data Analysis**

| Research Objectives | Research Hypotheses | Data Analysis Method |
|---|---|---|
| **1)** To establish key dimensions of service quality that influence the overall service quality perception of tourists in Maasai Mara game lodges | | • Descriptive data analysis<br>• Exploratory Factor<br>• Analysis (EFA)<br>• Thematic analysis<br>• Structural Equation Model (SEM) |
| **2)** To determine the relationship between service quality and emotional satisfaction among tourists patronizing Maasai Mara game lodges | **$H_{01}$**: There is no relationship between service quality and emotional satisfaction among tourists patronizing the Maasai Mara game lodges | • Structural Equation Model (SEM) |
| **3)** To determine the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions of tourists patronizing Maasai Mara game lodges | **$H_{02}$**: There is no relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions of tourists patronizing the Maasai Mara game lodges | • Descriptive data analysis<br>• Structural Equation Model (SEM)<br>• Narrative analysis |
| **4)** To assess the mediating role of emotional satisfaction on the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions of tourists in Maasai Mara game lodges | **$H_{03}$**: Emotional satisfaction has no mediating role in the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions of tourists in the Maasai Mara game lodges. | • Structural Equation Model (SEM) |
| **5)** To examine the moderating effect of tourists' nationality on service quality and behavioural intentions | **$H_{04}$**: Tourists' nationality has no moderating effect on the relationship between service quality and tourists' behavioural intentions in the Maasai Mara game lodges. | • SEM analysis<br>• Multi-group analysis |

## 3.11. Ethical Consideration

Ethical concerns in research refer to voluntary and informed participation, protection from harm to the respondents, and privacy and confidentiality of data collected (Symle and Murray, 2000). The researcher sought consent from the lodge managers of the 29-star-rated game lodges in the Maasai Mara National Reserve and its conservancies. Managers were given full information about the purpose of the study, privacy, and confidentiality of the information collected. The Researcher's contact was also made available to them should any of them wish to raise any questions or concerns regarding the research.

The respondents were briefed before filling in the questionnaires to ensure they understood the procedures and purpose of the study. A letter of consent from the respondents was attached to each questionnaire. None of the respondents were forced to participate in the study. To ensure confidentiality, guests were instructed not to indicate their names or the lodges they patronized. Also, the data collected was treated as confidential information and was used for this research work only.

### 3.12 Chapter Summary

This chapter presents the research methodology adopted in this study. It discusses the following important sections: research design, study area, target population, sampling techniques and the sample size, data collection procedures, data analysis techniques, and finally, ethical consideration. Research philosophy and mixed research approach guided the determination of the research design applied in this study. An embedded mixed research approach that embraces both quantitative and qualitative research methods was used. A mixed research approach guided the choice of research instruments; thus, questionnaires and interview schedules were used to obtain in-depth information from the respondents.

Descriptive statistics and structural equation modelling were used to analyse quantitative data while thematic and narrative data analysis were used in qualitative data. A summarized table showing the study objective, hypotheses and data analysis techniques was developed. Ethical consideration was adhered to protect the respondents from any harm and ensure confidentiality during the data collection. The next chapter deals with the findings and discussions.

# CHAPTER FOUR
# RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

## 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the research results are presented and discussed under various sub-sections about the study objectives that guided this study. The chapter first presents the preliminary data analysis and an overview of respondents' characteristics. Findings per objective are presented under various sub-headings. These include the determination of key service quality dimensions, establishing the relationship between service quality and emotional satisfaction, establishing the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions, the mediating role of emotional satisfaction in service quality – behavioural intention link, and finally, the moderating effect of tourists' nationality on service quality- behavioural relationship.

## 4.2 Preliminary Data Analysis

This process was critical as it prepared the collected data for final data analysis. Several computations were done to test whether the assumptions of the data were acceptable to give accurate results. This study evaluated the response rate and the assumptions by testing the normality, multicollinearity and heteroscedasticity.

### 4.2.1 Response Rate

The questionnaires were distributed to all 29 lodges within the Maasai Mara ecosystem. A total of 421 questionnaires were distributed out of which 312 questionnaires were correctly filled and returned. This represented a 74% response rate, which compares favourably to earlier studies on service quality, such as Chege (2020), whose response rate was 98%, Kangu (2017) 71%. and Mang'unyi (2016) 87%.

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2013), a response rate of 50% and above is sufficient and acceptable for analysis and publishing; 60% and above is good, while 70% and above is considered very good. Therefore, the response rate of 74% in this study was found to be very good for analysis and statistical generalization. Table 4.1 presents a summary of the response rate.

**Table 4.1: Response Rate**

| No. of questionnaires | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|
| Total number of questionnaires distributed | 421 | 100 |
| Total number of questionnaires returned | 352 | 83.6 |
| Number of questionnaires successful for analysis | 312 | 74.1 |
| Number of questionnaires not returned/unsuccessful for analysis | 40 | 9.5 |

For qualitative research, 10 out of 12 purposively selected game lodge managers participated in the interviews. This gave a response rate of 83.3%, which was considered sufficient for this study.

### 4.2.2 Testing the Normality Assumption

The value of skewness ranged from -0.125 to -1.933, while kurtosis ranged from -0.902 to 3.682, and these values were within the +/-3 range for all factors. This implies that most of the data was normally distributed. (Appendix 4).

### 4.2.3 Multicollinearity

VIF values ranged between 1.013 to 1.927, while tolerance values ranged from 0.519 to 0.987. The VIF values were within the range of below 5, and tolerance values were close to 1. The finding, therefore, shows that there was no evidence of multicollinearity in the data. (Appendix 5).

### 4.2.4 Heteroscedasticity

The constant variance (Chi-square = 2.001) was insignificant (p = 0.245). Thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected and concluded that the error variance is equal. Thus, heteroscedasticity is not a problem in the data (Appendix 6).

## 4.3 Profile of Respondents

The respondents were required to indicate their nationality, gender, age, marital status, occupation, highest level of education, frequency of visits to the Maasai Mara Lodges, average length of stay, preferred travel arrangement and category of lodges stayed in. A summary of the respondents is shown in Appendix 7.

### 4.3.1 Respondents by Nationality

The study findings indicate that tourists patronizing Maasai Mara game lodges originated from 29 different nationalities. The leading ten nationalities were USA (*n*=81, 26.0%), Kenyans (n=59; 18.9%), Spanish (*n*=24; 7.7%), Chinese (*n*=21; 6.7%), Indians (*n*=20; 6.4%), France (*n*=17; 5.4), Germans (*n*=15; 4.8%), Polish (*n*=15; 4.8%), Canadian (*n*=12; 3.8%), Japanese (*n*=7; 2.2%), in that order while the remaining 19 nationalities were 41 accounting for 13.1% of the total respondents (Figure 4.1).

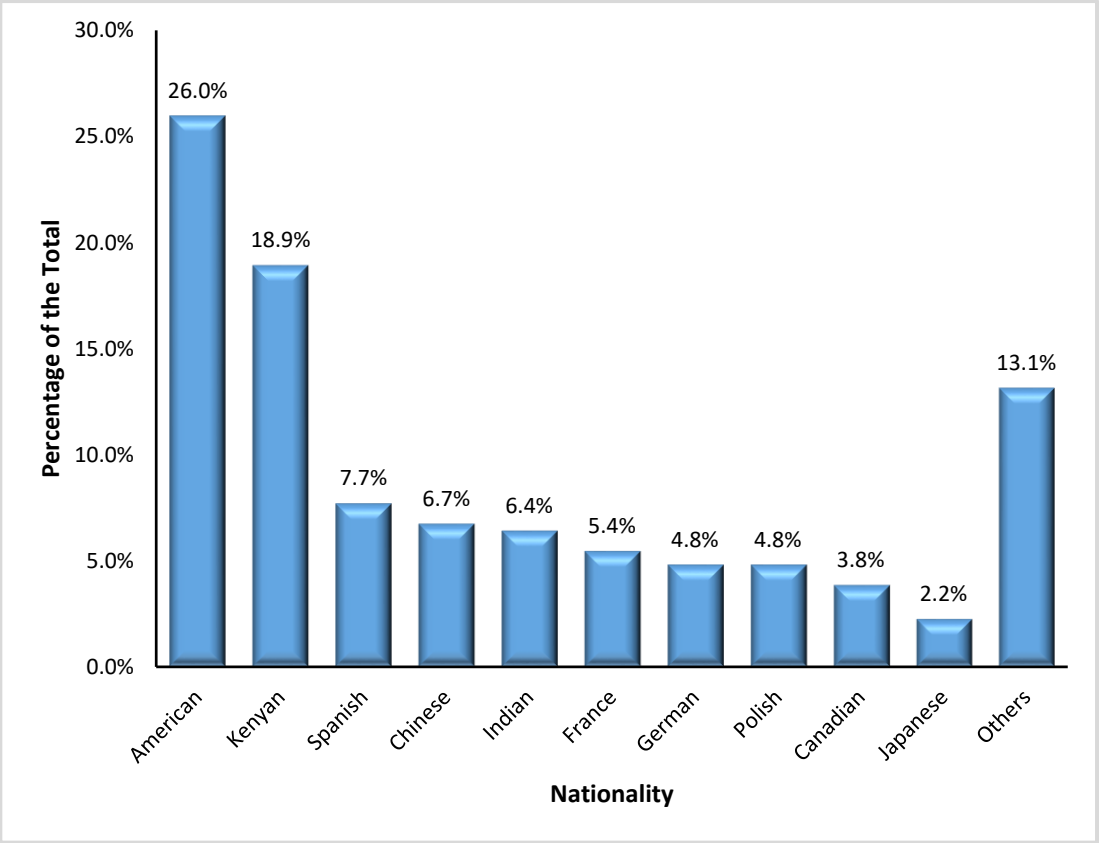


**Figure 4. 1: Top 10 Nationalities of Respondents**

Further, the findings reveal that tourists were drawn from international and domestic tourism markets (Fig. 4.2). Domestic tourism comprised Kenyan residents and constituted 18.9% of the total tourists visiting the Maasai Mara game lodges. On the other hand, the international tourism market comprised tourists coming from different regions of the world, such as Europe, America, Africa, Asia and Australia. More than 50% of tourists came from American and European regions and constituted 29.8% (93) and 28.2% (88) of the total number of tourists respectively. This was followed by tourists from the Asia region, comprising 16% (50) and a small proportion of tourists

from Africa (n=19, 6.1%) and Australia (n=3, 1.0%).

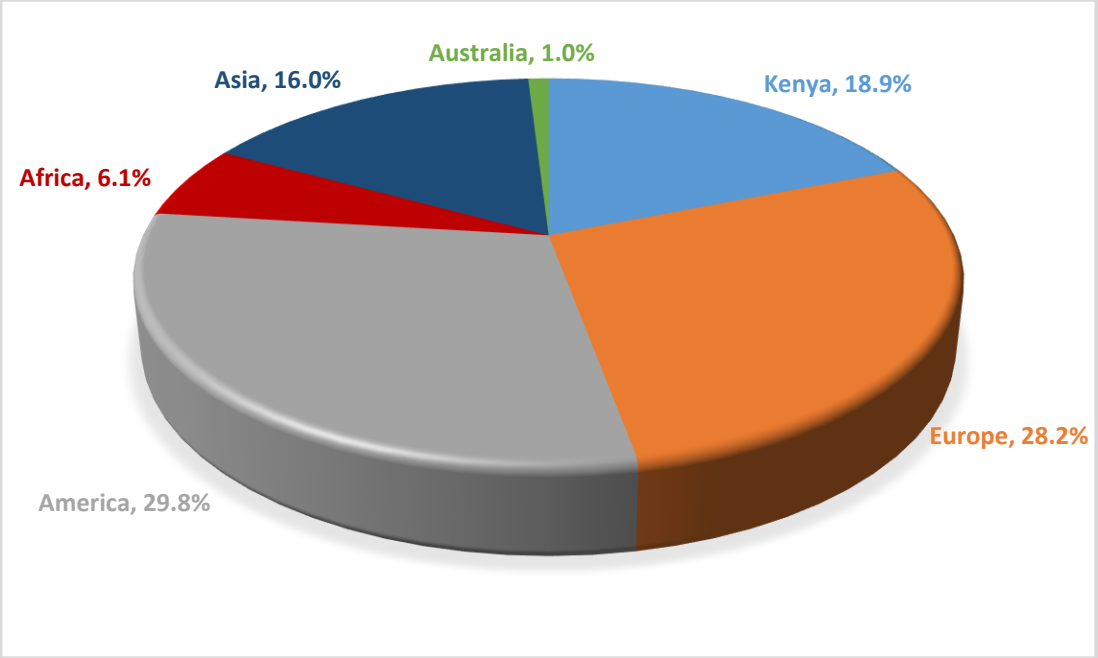


**Figure 4. 2: Respondents per Tourism Market**

Tourists from America and Europe region dominated patronage in Maasai Mara game lodges and this is a clear indication of international tourism recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. It is also worth noting domestic tourists were ranked second in terms of tourists' nationalities. This is a positive indication of the domestic tourism market as it plays a significant contribution to tourism development since it offers a reliable market throughout the year.

Whereas Kenya has relied on the international market and, more specifically, the USA market, UK, German, Italian and French markets, there is a positive indication of patronage of Maasai Mara game lodges by Kenyan residents as well emerging markets such as Indians, Chinese, Polish and Spanish nationals. This is a clear indication that Kenya has made efforts in tourism market diversification as envisaged in Vision 2030. This study sought to identify the tourists' nationalities patronizing game lodges in the Maasai Mara Ecosystem as it has an important implication in service delivery. Tourists from different nationalities present different divergences in service quality perception, emotional satisfaction and, ultimately, behavioural intentions. This poses challenges in service delivery in the lodging industry.

### 4.3.2 Respondents by Gender

The majority, 65.4%(n=204) of the respondents, were male and 34.6%(n=108) were female (Figure 4.3). This result was consistent with the findings of Hagan (2015) that more male (81%) tourists utilized hotel facilities than their female counterparts (19%).

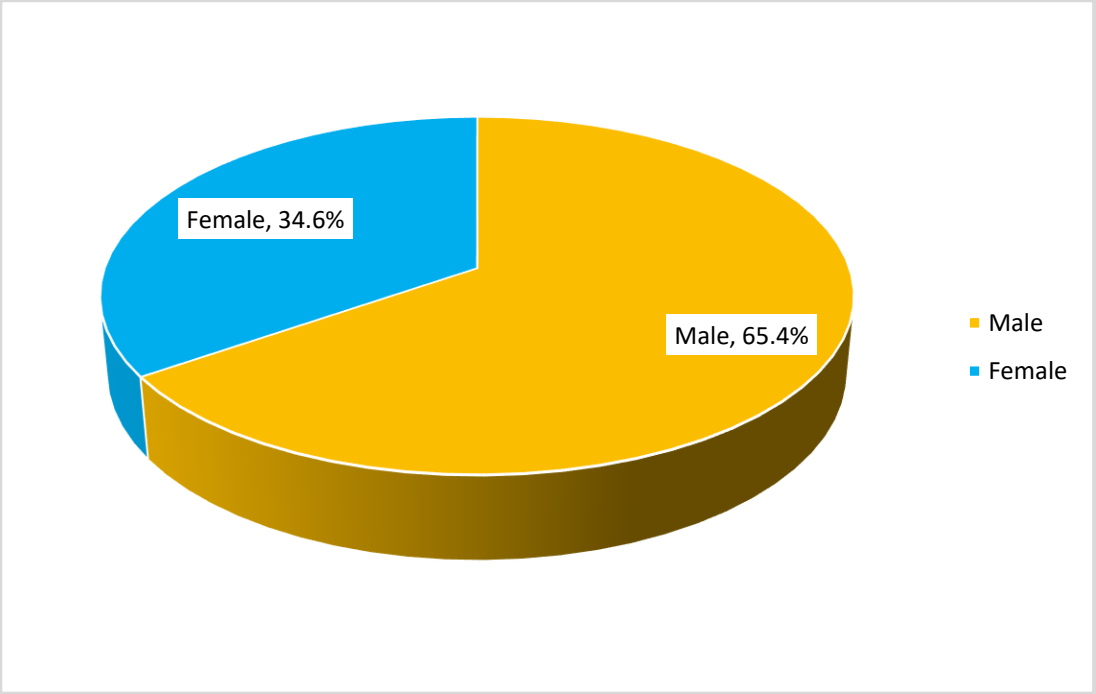


**Figure 4. 3: Gender of the Respondents**

This finding is an indication that male tourists have more preference for wildlife safaris than their female counterparts.

### 4.3.3 Respondents Age

Guests visiting Maasai Mara game lodges comprised of all ages, from those aged less than 24 years to more than 64 years in almost equal proportion within the age brackets of 25-64 years (Figure 4.4). However, the age bracket of 45-54 years constituted a slightly higher proportion of tourists than other age groups, constituting 27.6%, followed by the age group 25-34 years and 55-64 years, accounting for 24.0% and 17.6%, respectively.

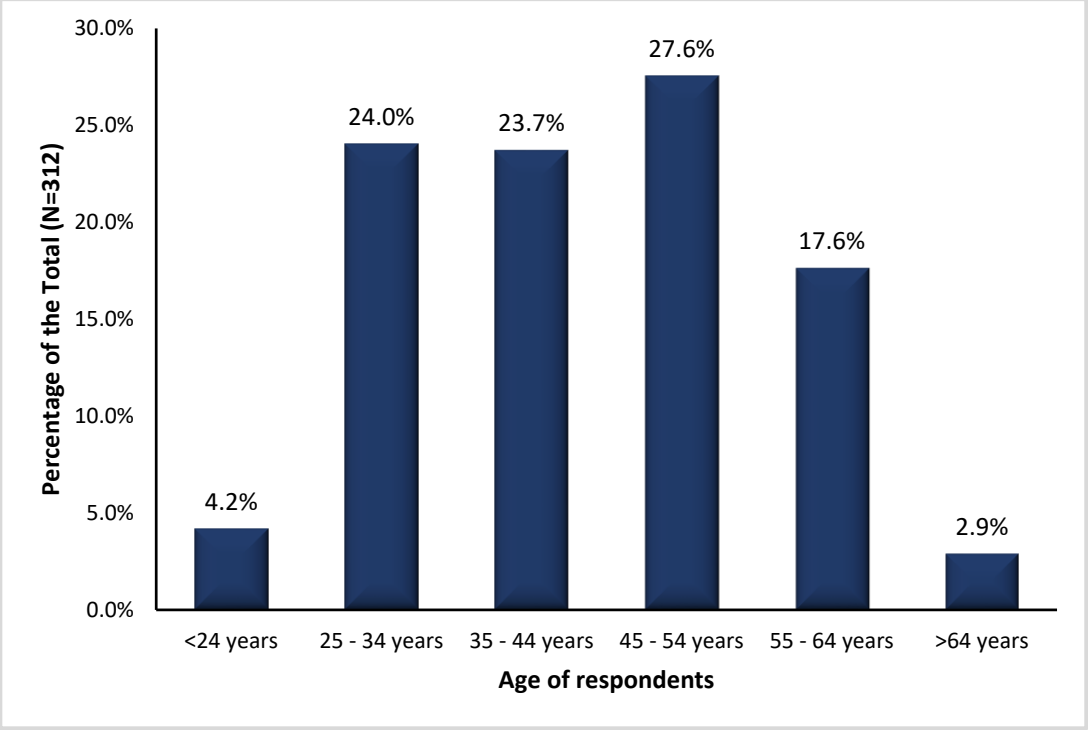


**Figure 4. 4: Respondents Age Groups**

Those aged less than 24 years constituted a small proportion of tourists and constituted 4.2%. Similarly, respondents within the age bracket of above 64 years were also few, constituting 2.9% of tourists visiting star-rated Maasai Mara game lodges.

The survey found that game lodges had a low level of patronage among two specific age groups: those under 24 years old (4.2%) and those over 64 years old (2.9%). This could have been due to the low-income levels in these two age groups. Star-rated lodgings are costly and often attract affluent travellers (Rauch et al., 2015).

### 4.3.4 Respondents' Marital Status

Figure 4.5 displays the marital status of the respondents. Over half (54.8%) of the respondents were married, while 32.1% reported being single.

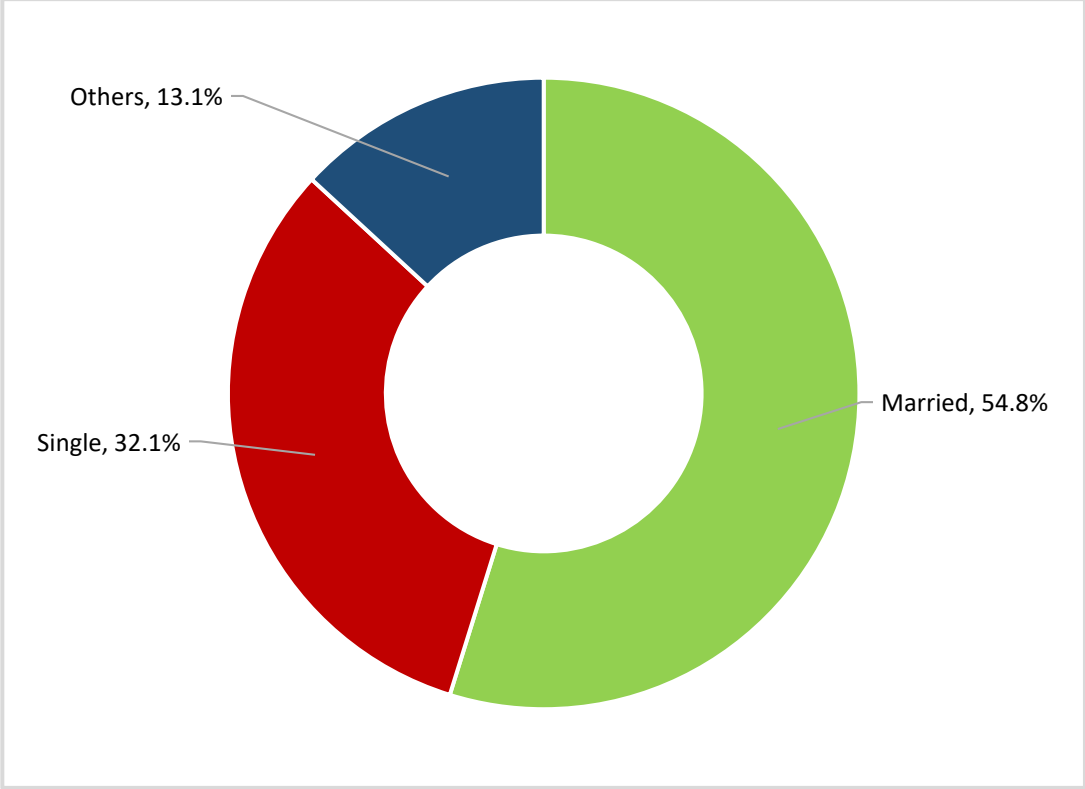


**Figure 4. 5: Respondents Marital Status**

13.1% of the remaining individuals were categorised as divorced or separated, indicating that they were neither married nor single. These findings suggest that visitors who go with their families have a higher preference for wildlife lodges.

### 4.3.5 Level of Education

Results on the educational level of respondents, as shown in Figure 4.6, indicate that the majority of the visitors patronizing Maasai Mara game lodges generally had a postgraduate level of education, constituting 67.3% of total tourists. Only a small proportion had other levels of education such as army training and professional courses consisting of only 0.6%.

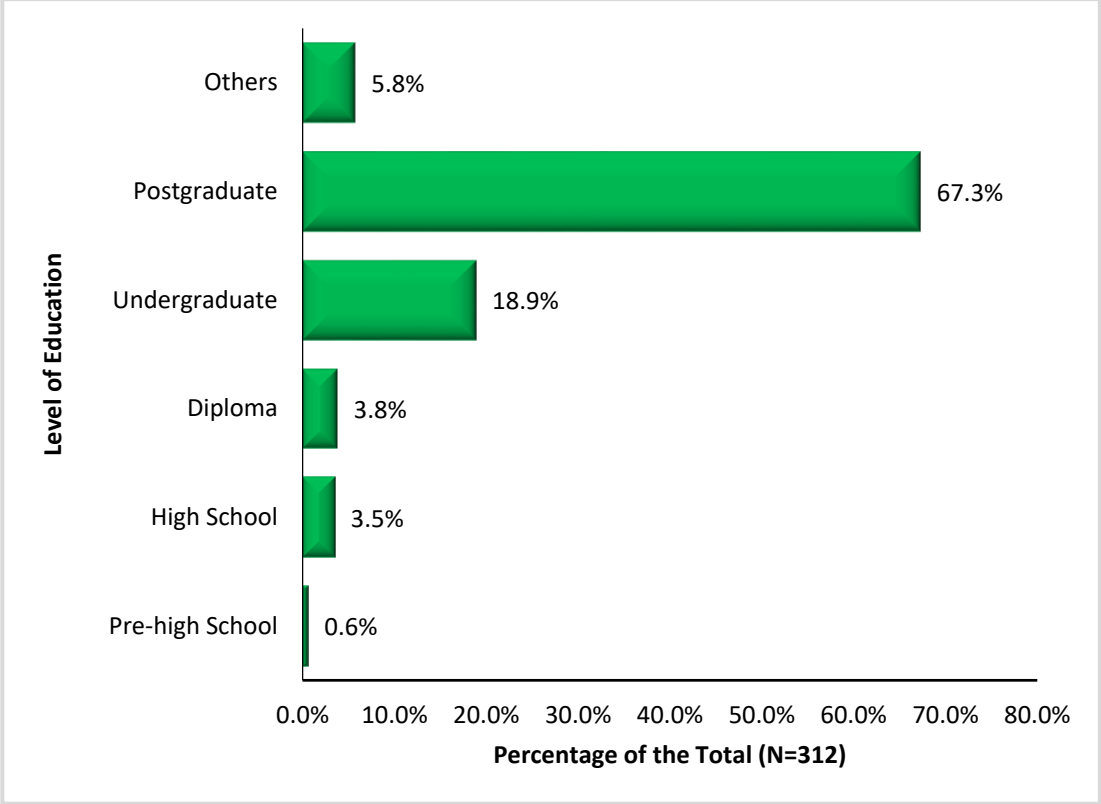


**Figure 4. 6: Respondents level of Education**

Tourists with an undergraduate level of education were also prevalent, comprising 18.9% of the tourists, and only a few of the tourists had their level of education below the undergraduate level consisting of less than 10% of the tourists. This result suggests that education plays a major role in travel decision-making.

### 4.3.6 Frequency of Visits to Game Lodges

The number of visits to Maasai Mara game lodges is shown in Figure 4.7. It is clear from the findings that the majority (61%) of the tourists visiting Maasai Mara Game Lodges were doing it for the first time. About 32% were on their second or third time visit with a smaller number consisting of 7.7% visiting more than four times. These results suggest that while the majority of respondents were visiting Maasai Mara Game Lodges for the first time (60.6%), repeat visits, constituting almost 40%, are an equally integral component of tourists visiting Maasai Mara Game Lodges.

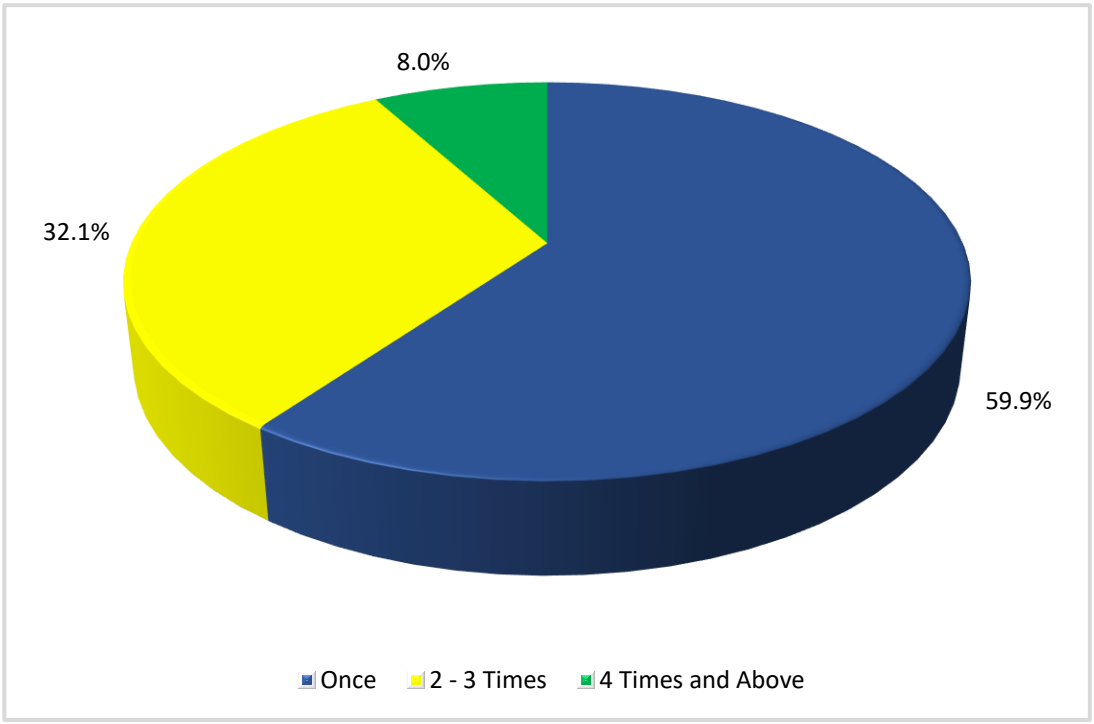


**Figure 4. 7: Frequency of Visits**

### 4.3.7 Average Length of Stay

Results of this study, as Figure 4.8 indicates, the majority (50%) of guests in Maasai Mara game lodges stayed for 1-2 days. Equally, about 44% preferred 3-5 nights, and only a small number of less than 10% stayed for more than 6 days.

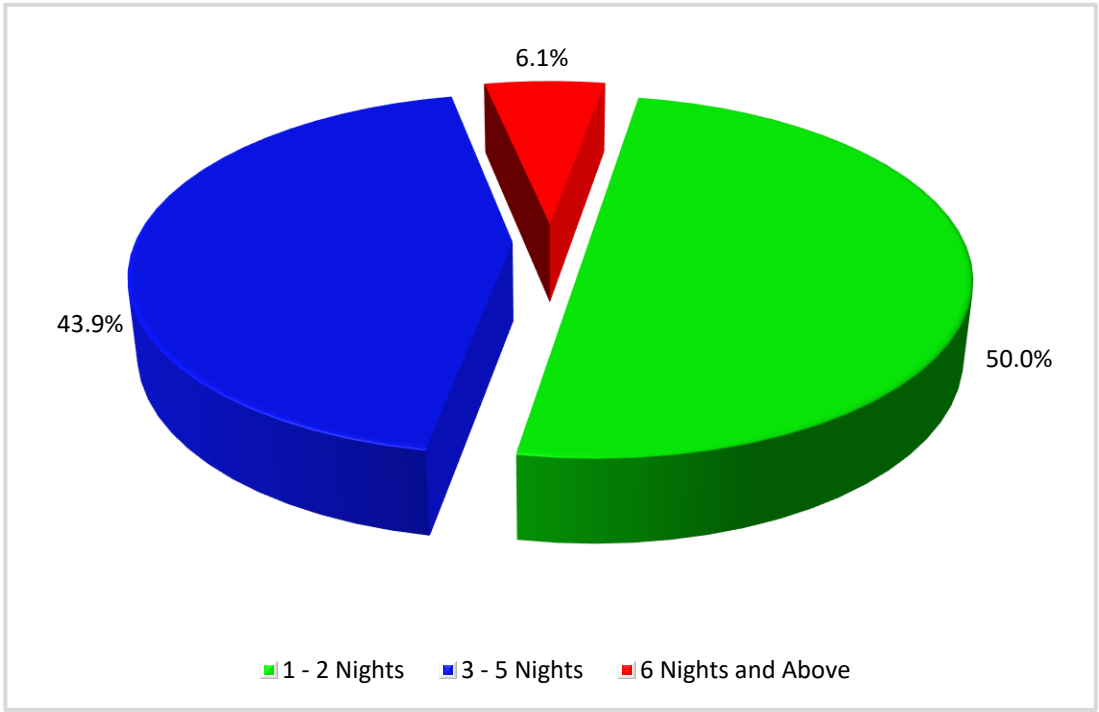


**Figure 4. 8: Respondents' Length of Stay**

### 4.3.8 Respondents Travel Arrangements

Most (76%) of the respondents visiting Maasai Mara Game Lodges, as illustrated in Figure 4.9, preferred an all-inclusive travel arrangement. A small proportion of about 22% of tourists made independent travel arrangements. However, another group consisting of less than 3% indicated that they travelled on other travel arrangements.

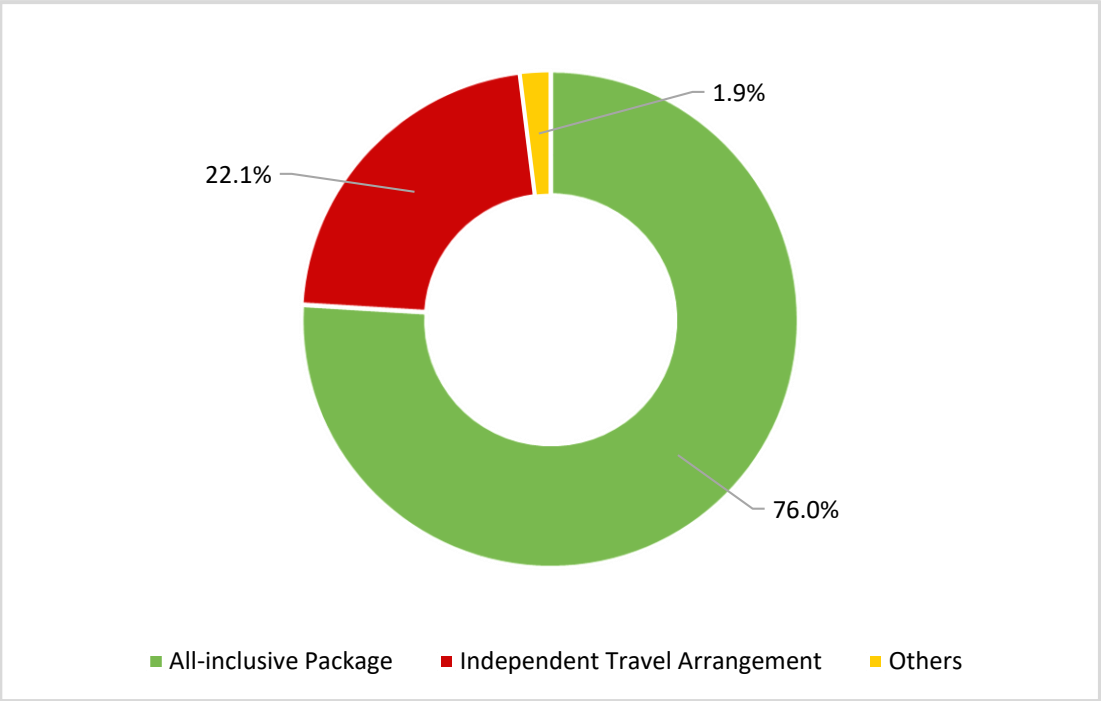


**Figure 4. 9: Respondents Travel Arrangements**

### 4.3.9 The Game Lodges Star Rating

The respondents' preference for game lodges based on their star rating is presented in Figure 4.10. On the lodges star rating category, it was evident that the majority of respondents preferred 5-star or luxury lodges (49.4%) and 4-star or upscale lodges (43.3%). Very few tourists visited medium-level or 3-star lodges (5.4%) and 1-2-star rated lodges (1.9%). Preference for 4 and 5-star rated lodges would have been attributed to the unique features that give them that position and rating. In addition, they ensure global standards are maintained to provide luxurious accommodation and personalized customer service. Therefore, there are higher tourist' service quality expectations in these lodges (Assaker, 2020).

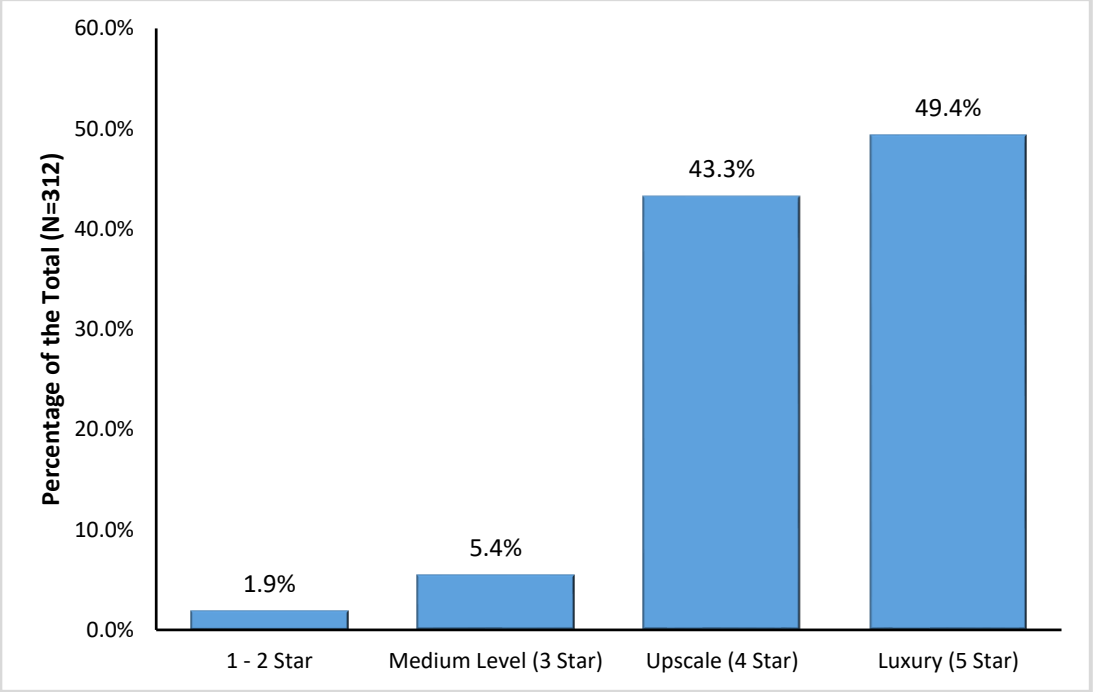


**Figure 4. 10: Game Lodges Star Rating Categories**

### 4.4 Exploratory Factor Analysis for Overall Model

Exploratory factor analysis was performed on the three model factors of this study, namely service quality, customer emotional satisfaction and behavioural intentions. Through factor reduction, the large set of 66 items representing service quality dimensions, customer emotional satisfaction and behavioural intentions was reduced to 51 items, accounting for 65.890 % of the variation in the original items created (Appendix 11). As Table 4.2 depicts, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant (Chi-square ($\chi 2$) =8008.467, df=1275, $p<0.000$), satisfying the assumption that the variables involved in the analysis are correlated with each other to the extent that they can potentially be summarized with a smaller set of factors (Fied et al., 2012).

Sampling Adequacy was checked using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy (MSA), and it was found to be 0.821, suggesting good sampling adequacy.

**Table 4. 1: KMO and Bartlett's Test**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy. | | .821 |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | Approx. Chi-Square | 8008.467 |
| | df | 1275 |
| | Sig. | .000 |

The extracted communalities for retained items measuring service quality, emotional satisfaction and behavioural intentions constructs, as presented in Appendix 16, were more than 0.5, signifying the variables fitted well with other variables in their factor loading. Twelve factors whose Eigenvalues exceeded one with a factor loading of more than 0.5 and loaded on only one factor were extracted (Table 4.3)

**Table 4.3: Principal Components of Overall Model**

| Component | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Emotional satisfaction | 8.389 | 16.449 | 16.449 | 8.389 | 16.449 | 16.449 |
| Social contact | 5.554 | 10.890 | 27.339 | 5.554 | 10.890 | 27.339 |
| Room quality | 3.783 | 7.418 | 34.757 | 3.783 | 7.418 | 34.757 |
| Employees interpersonal skills | 3.087 | 6.052 | 40.809 | 3.087 | 6.052 | 40.809 |
| Behavioural intentions | 2.093 | 4.104 | 44.912 | 2.093 | 4.104 | 44.912 |
| Employee professional skills | 1.994 | 3.909 | 48.822 | 1.994 | 3.909 | 48.822 |
| Dining experience | 1.787 | 3.504 | 52.325 | 1.787 | 3.504 | 52.325 |
| Customer Care | 1.605 | 3.147 | 55.473 | 1.605 | 3.147 | 55.473 |
| Accommodation infrastructure | 1.530 | 3.000 | 58.473 | 1.530 | 3.000 | 58.473 |
| Responsiveness | 1.361 | 2.668 | 61.140 | 1.361 | 2.668 | 61.140 |
| Front desk experience | 1,258 | 2.467 | 63.608 | 1.258 | 2.467 | 63.608 |
| Safety and Security | 1.164 | 2.282 | 65.890 | 1.164 | 2.282 | 65.890 |

All the extracted scales (Appendix 15) for service quality, emotional satisfaction and behavioural intentions were retained for further examination as they met the required threshold.

### 4.5 Analysis of Measurement Model

Analysis of the measurement model was examined using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) (Figure 4.11). CFA was then performed using the IBM AMOS software to assess the reliability and validity of the measures before using them in the research model (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988).

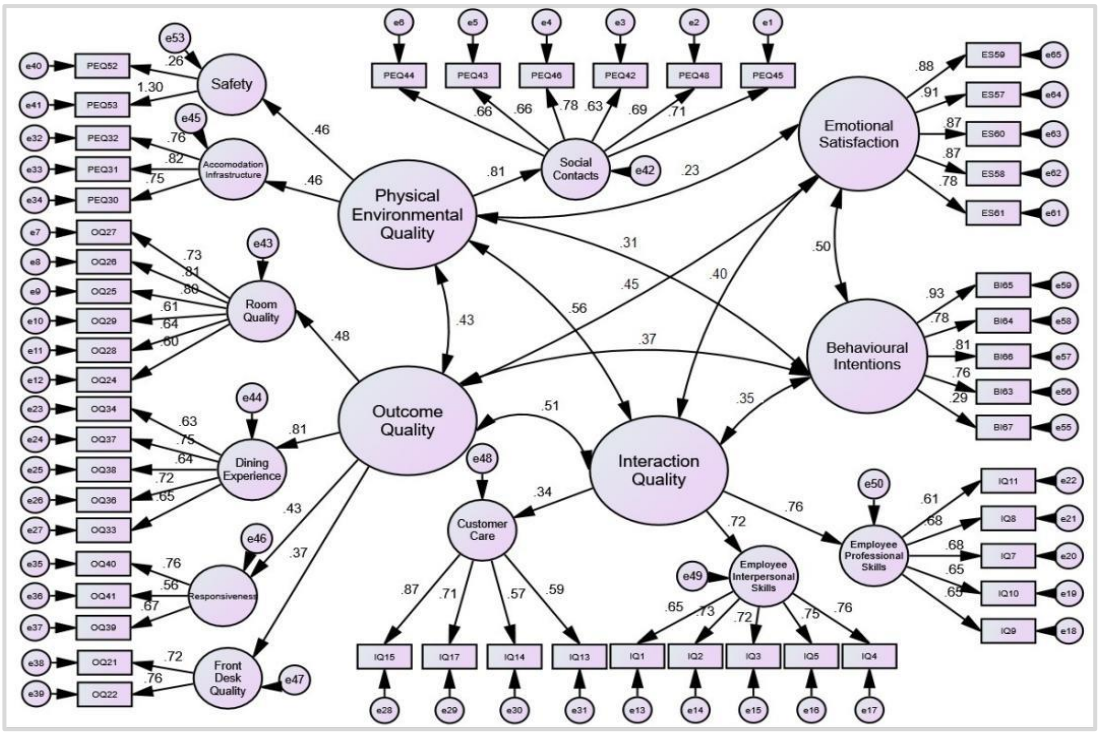


**Figure 4. 11: Third Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis for Study Variables**

### 4.5.1 Goodness of Fit Indices

Several model-fit measures were tested to assess the overall goodness of fit. In addition to chi-square and degree of freedom (DF), Normed chi-square (CMIN/df), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Standardized Root Mean Square Residue (SRMR), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and P of close fit (PClose). CFA for the three-factor model (service quality, emotional satisfaction, and behavioural intention fit the data adequately (Table 4.4) since the fit indices were within an acceptable range:(CMIN=2121.574, DF=1204, CMIN/df=1.7, CFI=0.913, SRMR=0.072, RMSEA=0.050 and PClose=0.589).

**Table 4.4: Summary of Model Measurement Fit**

| Fit Measure (Index) | Estimate | Threshold | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|
| CMIN | 2121.574 | -- | -- |
| DF | 1204 | N/A | -- |
| CMIN/DF | 1.762 | Between 1 and 3 | Excellent |
| CFI | 0.913 | >0.95 | Acceptable |
| SRMR | 0.072 | <0.08 | Excellent |
| RMSEA | 0.050 | <0.06 | Excellent |
| PClose | 0.589 | >0.05 | Excellent |

### 4.5.2 Construct Reliability

The reliability of the constructs was evaluated by calculating the composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha coefficients (Table 4.5).

**Table 4.5: Construct Reliability**

| Study Variables | Cronbach's Alpha > 0.6 | Composite Reliability > 0.7 |
|---|---|---|
| Outcome Quality | 0.725 | 0.808 |
| Interaction Quality | 0.719 | 0.747 |
| Physical Environmental Quality | 0.709 | 0.809 |
| Emotional Satisfaction | 0.941 | 0.936 |
| Behavioural Intentions | 0.920 | 0.853 |

The Cronbach alphas were all above the 0.6 thresholds (outcome quality= 0.725, interaction quality=0.719, physical environment quality=0.709, emotional satisfaction= 0.941 and behavioural intentions=0.920); thus, all the constructs were considered reliable for further data analysis (Hair et al., 2010). The composite reliability of reflective items was all above the acceptable 0.7 thresholds (outcome quality= 0.808, interaction quality=0.747, physical environment quality=0.809, emotional satisfaction=0.936 and behavioural intentions=0.853), demonstrating construct reliability.

### 4.5.3 Discriminant Validity

Fornell and Larcker's (1981) discriminant criterion was adopted in this study to measure the correlation matrix or cross-correlation between the constructs. According to the Fornell and Larcker criterion, discriminant validity is established when the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for a construct is greater than its correlation with other constructs. If the top number (square root of AVE) in any factor column is higher than the numbers (correlation) below it, there is discriminant validity.

In the correlation matrix, as shown in Table 4.6, the diagonal numerals in bold are the square root of AVE of all the latent constructs (i.e. outcome quality, Interaction quality, physical environment quality, emotional satisfaction and behavioural intentions).

**Table 4.6: Discriminant Validity**

| Construct | AVE | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.** Outcome Quality | 0.601 | **0.899** | | | | |
| **2.** Interaction Quality | 0.702 | 0.508** | **0.864** | | | |
| **3.** Physical Environmental Quality | 0.636 | 0.431** | 0.565** | **0.899** | | |
| **4.** Emotional Satisfaction | 0.746 | 0.453** | 0.402** | 0.225* | **0.967** | |
| **5.** Behavioural Intentions | 0.559 | 0.367** | 0.348** | 0.311** | 0.503*** | **0.924** |

***Notes***: * $p < 0.050$, ** $p < 0.010$, *** $p < 0.001$

The discriminant validity was accepted if the diagonal figures were greater than other off-diagonal figures in their rows and columns (Compeau et al., 1999). In this study, the square root of the AVE of all constructs was higher than the correlations below it. Hence, discriminant validity was established for the measurement model.

After assessing construct reliability and discriminate validity, the structural model was used to investigate the link between endogenous and exogenous latent variables. In the structural model stage, independent and dependent variables were separated. SEM presupposes covariance between independent variables and is symbolised by two-headed arrows. The one-headed arrow, on the other hand, illustrates the causal association between the independent and dependent variables. As a result, the transition determines the connection between the constructs.

### 4.6 Key Dimensions of Service Quality

The first objective was to establish the key primary and sub-dimensions of service quality that influence the overall perception of service quality by tourists in game lodges within the Maasai Mara ecosystem. The service quality dimensions for the study were categorized into three primary dimensions, namely, interaction quality, outcome quality, and physical environment quality.

#### 4.6.1 Interaction Quality

The study sought to establish the interaction quality dimension factors that determined the tourists' overall service quality perception. The interaction quality dimension was further categorized into employees' interaction skills, employees' professional skills, and problem-solving skills.

#### 4.6.1.1 Interpersonal Skills

The responses on interpersonal skills are shown in Table 4.7. The findings suggest that the majority of respondents (68.6%) agreed that the personnel are polite, while 8.7% disagreed and 22.8% were indifferent. Also obvious was that 70.2% of respondents thought that workers could communicate without difficulty, 11.2% disagreed, and 18.0% remained indifferent. When asked whether personnel were polite, 79.8% agreed, with just a handful (8.0%) opposing and 12.2% undecided. Moreover, the majority of respondents (70.5%) agreed that employees paid undivided attention to the visitors, with a minority opposing (8.0%) and 21.5% remaining indifferent. The interpersonal skill "employees are willing to help guests with their requests and complaints" had 69.6% of respondents agreeing, 11.2% objecting, and 18.9% staying neutral, respectively.

**Table 4.7: Responses on Interpersonal Skills**

| Statement | 1<br>n(%) | 2<br>n(%) | 3<br>n(%) | 4<br>n(%) | 5<br>n(%) | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Employees use appropriate non-verbal communication | 6<br>(1.9%) | 10<br>(3.2%) | 33<br>(10.6%) | 135<br>(43.3%) | 128<br>(41.0%) | 4.18 | 0.89 |
| Employees are courteous | 10<br>(3.2%) | 15<br>(4.8%) | 38<br>(12.2%) | 107<br>(34.3%) | 142<br>(45.5%) | 4.14 | 1.02 |
| Employees are smart and neat | 9<br>(2.9%) | 22<br>(7.1%) | 38<br>(12.2%) | 136<br>(43.7%) | 106<br>(34.1%) | 3.99 | 1.01 |
| Employees give prompt services | 13<br>(4.2%) | 13<br>(4.2%) | 54<br>(17.3%) | 136<br>(43.7%) | 106<br>(34.1%) | 3.93 | 1.01 |
| Employees give undivided attention to the guest | 10<br>(3.2%) | 15<br>(4.8%) | 67<br>(21.5%) | 119<br>(38.1%) | 101<br>(32.4%) | 3.92 | 1.01 |
| I was able to communicate with employees with no difficulties | 15<br>(4.8%) | 20<br>(6.4%) | 58<br>(18.0%) | 141<br>(45.2%) | 78<br>(25.0%) | 3.79 | 1.04 |
| Employees are willing to help guests with their requests and complaints | 12<br>(3.8%) | 24<br>(7.4%) | 59<br>(18.9%) | 120<br>(38.5%) | 97<br>(31.1%) | 3.85 | 1.07 |
| Employees are friendly and respectful | 14<br>(4.5%) | 13<br>(4.2%) | 71<br>(22.8%) | 131<br>(42.0%) | 83<br>(26.6%) | 3.82 | 1.02 |

***Notes***: Scale (*Range of Mean Interpretation*): Likert 5-point: 1= Strongly Disagree (*1.00 – 1.79*), 2= Disagree (*1.80 – 2.59*), 3=Neutral (*2.60 – 3.39*), 4=Agree (*3.40 – 4.19*), 5= Strongly Agree (*4.20 – 5.00*)

Moreover, "employees are smart and neat" had 77.8% of the respondents agreeing, 10.0% disagreeing, and 12.2% were neutral. On the other hand, the majority of the respondents (77.8%) agreed that the employees give prompt services, while 8.4% of the respondents disagreed and 17.3% remained neutral. Lastly, 84.3% of the respondents agreed that the employees use appropriate non-verbal communication

when they interact with them; 10.6% were neutral, and 5.1% disagreed.

The mean scores were above 3.39, suggesting that the respondents agreed with the statements. The "employees use appropriate non-verbal communication when we interact with them" had the highest mean of 4.18(SD=0.89). At the same time, "I was able to communicate with staff with no difficulties" had the lowest mean of 3.79(SD=1.04). These findings implied that the employees' interpersonal skills determined the overall service quality to a moderate extent. Game lodge managers also supported the importance of non-verbal communication between employees and customer interaction, as demonstrated by one participant who retorted:

> […] Non-verbal communication is critical for employee-customer interaction. It starts with the body language of what you do or what the guest anticipates within the hotel. (Lodge Manager 4).

This study's findings corroborate Boninsegni et al.'s (2020) study that claims that employees, especially frontline employees, should show warmth, cheerful attitude, and approachability while interacting with guests. This is usually expressed in terms of verbal and non-verbal communication, such as smiling, greeting, thanking, and making eye contact, thus making customers feel comfortable and welcome.

#### 4.6.1.2 Employees' Professional Skills

As presented in Table 4.8, the majority (61.9%) of respondents agreed that the employees are professional and well-trained, while 12.5% disagreed, with 25.6% of the respondents remaining neutral. The findings also show that 63.5% and 12.2% of the respondents agreed and disagreed, respectively, that the employees are knowledgeable enough to answer the questions quickly, while 24.4% were neutral. It is also clear that 63.2% of the respondents agreed that employees performed services correctly at first, with 14.1% disagreeing, while 24.4% of the respondents were neutral.

The mean score of all items was above the threshold value of 3.39, indicating that the study respondents agreed with the statements. "Employees are knowledgeable to answer the questions quickly" was reported with the highest mean score of 3.73(SD=1.04), while the "staff perform services correctly the first time" had the

lowest mean score of 3.67(SD=1.09). These results implied that employee professional skills influenced visitors' overall service quality moderately.

**Table 4.8: Responses on Professional Skills**

| Statement | 1 n(%) | 2 n(%) | 3 n(%) | 4 n(%) | 5 n(%) | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Employees are knowledgeable enough to answer the questions quickly | 11 (3.5%) | 27 (8.7%) | 76 (24.4%) | 120 (38.5%) | 78 (25.0%) | 3.73 | 1.04 |
| The staff performs services correctly at the first time | 17 (5.4%) | 27 (8.7%) | 71 (22.8%) | 125 (40.1%) | 72 (23.1%) | 3.67 | 1.09 |
| The employees are professional and well-trained | 14 (4.5%) | 25 (8.0%) | 80 (25.6%) | 122 (39.1%) | 71 (22.8%) | 3.68 | 1.05 |

***Notes***: Scale (*Range of Mean Interpretation*): Likert 5-point: 1= Strongly Disagree (*1.00 – 1.79*), 2= Disagree (*1.80 – 2.59*), 3=Neutral (*2.60 – 3.39*), 4=Agree (*3.40 – 4.19*), 5= Strongly Agree (*4.20 – 5.00*)

### 4.6.1.3 Problem-Solving Skills

The study findings on problem-solving skills are presented in Table 4.9. The majority (74.4%) of the respondents agreed that when they had a problem, employees showed a sincere concern in solving it; a few (7.4%) remained neutral, and another 18.3% disagreed. Also evident is that 67.7%, 17.3%, and 15.1% of the respondents agreed, disagreed, and remained neutral that employees understand the importance of resolving their complaints.

**Table 4.9: Responses on Problem-Solving Skills**

| Statement | 1 n(%) | 2 n(%) | 3 n(%) | 4 n(%) | 5 n(%) | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| When I have a problem, the employees show a sincere concern in solving it | 38 (12.2%) | 19 (6.1%) | 23 (7.4%) | 96 (30.8%) | 136 (43.6%) | 3.88 | 1.36 |
| Employees understand the importance of resolving complaint(s) | 35 (11.2%) | 19 (6.1%) | 47 (15.1%) | 76 (24.4%) | 135 (43.3%) | 3.82 | 1.35 |
| Employees are able to handle complaints directly and immediately | 30 (9.6%) | 24 (7.7%) | 53 (17.0%) | 70 (22.4%) | 135 (43.3%) | 3.82 | 1.32 |
| I experienced good interaction with the staff, and I'm satisfied with their services | 56 (17.9%) | 20 (6.4%) | 35 (11.2%) | 107 (34.3%) | 94 (30.1%) | 3.52 | 1.44 |

***Notes***: Scale (*Range of Mean Interpretation*): Likert 5-point: 1= Strongly Disagree (*1.00 – 1.79*), 2= Disagree (*1.80 – 2.59*), 3=Neutral (*2.60 – 3.39*), 4=Agree (*3.40 – 4.19*), 5= Strongly Agree (*4.20 – 5.00*)

From the results, 65.7% of the tourists agreed that employees could handle their complaints directly and immediately, 17.3% disagreed, and 17% were undecided. The statement "I experienced good interaction with the staff, and I'm satisfied with their services" had the majority of the respondents (64.4%) agreeing, 24.4% disagreed, and 11.2 % remaining undecided.

The mean scores of all items were above the cut-off value of 3.39, indicating respondents' agreement. The statement "when I have a problem, the employees show a sincere concern in solving it" had the highest mean score of 3.88(SD=1.36), while "I experienced good interaction with the staff and I'm satisfied with their services" had the lowest score of 3.52(SD=1.44). These results implied that employee problem-solving skills influenced overall service quality moderately.

### 4.6.2 Outcome Quality

The outcome quality dimension was measured using front office experience, room experience, dining experience and responsiveness aspects.

#### 4.6.2.1. Front Office Experiences in Game Lodges

Study results revealed that 64.3% agreed that there is good reception by the front office employees; 22.1% disagreed, and 13.5% remained neutral (Table 4.10). Furthermore, 68.9% of the respondents strongly agreed that employees are friendly, courteous and respectful; 20.6% disagreed, and 10.6% were neutral. The findings are also evident, with 83.7% of the respondents agreeing that they were able to communicate with the staff with no difficulties; 9.6% disagreed, while 6.7% remained undecided. The majority of the respondents (69.2%) agreed that the check-in and check-out are easy and quick; 11.9% were neutral, and 19.0% disagreed.

The front office employees in Maasai Mara game lodges can solve problems faced by the visitors based on the responses of 66.4% of the respondents who agreed; 10.9% were neutral, and another 22.8% disagreed. 66% of the respondents agreed that the lodging facilities provided services as promised.

**Table 4.10: Responses on Front Office Quality Experience**

| Statement | 1 n(%) | 2 n(%) | 3 n(%) | 4 n%) | 5 n(%) | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| There is good reception by the front office staff | 48 (15.4%) | 21 (6.7%) | 42 (13.5%) | 94 (30.1%) | 107 (61.2%) | 3.61 | 1.41 |
| The staff are friendly, courteous and respectful | 42 (13.5%) | 22 (7.1%) | 33 (10.6%) | 82 (26.3%) | 133 (42.6%) | 3.78 | 1.41 |
| I was able to communicate to staff with no difficulties | 18 (5.8%) | 12 (3.8%) | 21 (6.7%) | 53 (17.0%) | 208 (66.7%) | 4.35 | 1.14 |
| The check-in and check-out are easy and quick | 37 (11.9%) | 22 (7.1%) | 37 (11.9%) | 70 (22.4%) | 146 (46.8%) | 3.85 | 1.39 |
| Front office employees are able to solve my problems | 53 (17.0%) | 18 (5.8%) | 34 (10.9) | 47 (15.1%) | 160 (51.3%) | 3.78 | 1.53 |
| The lodging facility provides services as promised | 49 (15.7%) | 26 (8.3%) | 31 (9.9%) | 78 (25.0%) | 128 (41.0) | 3.67 | 1.47 |

***Notes***: Scale (*Range of Mean Interpretation*): Likert 5-point: 1= Strongly Disagree (*1.00 – 1.79*), 2= Disagree (*1.80 – 2.59*), 3=Neutral (*2.60 – 3.39*), 4=Agree (*3.40 – 4.19*), 5= Strongly Agree (*4.20 – 5.00*)

The mean scores of all items were above 3.39 showing that the respondents agreed that front office quality influences overall service quality. The item with the highest mean score of 4.35(SD=1.14) was "I was able to communicate to staff with no difficulties", while "there is good reception by front office staff" had the lowest mean score of 3.61(SD=1.41). These results implied that the front office quality moderately influenced the overall service quality. This finding indicates the importance of communication at the front office to the visitors, especially during reservation, reception and during their stay in the lodges, as one of the game lodge managers pointed out;

> ....] what sums it all up is communication that ushers the guest, the way the guest has been received, their booking to the time they arrive at the lodge, the briefing that is given, good information that puts everything in its hand. The guests' perception of the lodges' service provision is built when well received in terms of booking and if there was good communication. What the guests want to know is about their safety and where to put their valuables, so communication makes them settle very well. (Lodge manager 10)

The study findings echo Taylan Dortyol et al. (2014) study that found friendly, courteous and helpful employees' service quality dimension as an important predictor of service quality perception. This implies that the lodge managers should pay more attention to the employees to ensure that they are friendly, courteous and helpful. They

should also possess good non-verbal and verbal communication skills. The employees should also possess customer care skills to deal with complaints, show individualized attention to guests and have enough knowledge to answer customer questions. In selection and recruitment, the management should seek for these attributes to hire employees as well as in their training programs.

#### 4.6.2.2 Room Quality

From the findings, as shown in Table 4.11, the majority of respondents (76%) agreed that the size of the rooms was adequate, 16% disagreed, and 8% were neutral. From the results, it is also clear that a total of 70.1%, 16.6% and 13.1% of the respondents agreed, disagreed and remained neutral, respectively, that bathrooms have good toiletries and clean linen. Results further show that 87.5%, 7% and 12.5% of the respondents agreed, disagreed and were neutral, respectively, that the rooms had a reliable internet connection. The mean score of all statement items was above 3.39, signifying that the respondents agreed with all the items. The standard deviations of most of the items were above 1 except for the rooms having reliable internet connection (SD= 0.998).

**Table 4.11: Responses on Room Quality in Game Lodges**

| Statement | 1<br>n(%) | 2<br>n(%) | 3<br>n(%) | 4<br>n(%) | 5<br>n(%) | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The room size is adequate | 30<br>(9.6%) | 20<br>(6.4%) | 25<br>(8.0%) | 72<br>(23.1%) | 165<br>(52.9%) | 4.03 | 1.371 |
| The bed/ mattress/pillow is comfortable | 25<br>(8.0%) | 18<br>(5.8%) | 29<br>(9.3%) | 50<br>(16.0%) | 190<br>(60.9%) | 4.16 | 1.278 |
| The room is quiet and Peaceful | 46<br>(14.7%) | 19<br>(6.1%) | 35<br>(11.2%) | 87<br>(27.9%) | 125<br>(40.1%) | 3.72 | 1.419 |
| The rooms are clean and comfortable | 40<br>(12.8%) | 26<br>(8.3%) | 40<br>(12.8%) | 84<br>(26.9%) | 122<br>(39.1%) | 3.71 | 1.389 |
| There are efficient room amenities like phones, in-room bar service, safe boxes, etc. | 28<br>(9.0%) | 26<br>(8.3%) | 41<br>(13.1%) | 59<br>(18.9%) | 158<br>(50.6%) | 3.94 | 1.334 |
| The bathroom and toilets are clean | 25<br>(8.0%) | 34<br>(10.9%) | 50<br>(16.0%) | 72<br>(23.1%) | 131<br>(2.0%) | 3.80 | 1.305 |
| Bathroom has good toiletries and clean linen | 31<br>(9.9%) | 21<br>(6.7%) | 41<br>(13.1%) | 90<br>(28.8%) | 129<br>(41.3%) | 3.85 | 1.300 |
| The room has a reliable internet connection | 11<br>(3.5%) | 11<br>(3.5%) | 17<br>(12.5%) | 38<br>(12.2%) | 235<br>(75.3%) | 4.52 | 0.998 |

***Notes***: Scale (*Range of Mean Interpretation*): Likert 5-point: 1= Strongly Disagree (*1.00 – 1.79*), 2= Disagree (*1.80 – 2.59*), 3=Neutral (*2.60 – 3.39*), 4=Agree (*3.40 – 4.19*), 5= Strongly Agree (*4.20 – 5.00*)

#### 4.6.2.3 Food and Beverage Quality

In the study results, as depicted in Table 4.12, 85.3% of the participants agreed that the lodges' restaurants offer a variety of menus and varied food choices to meet customers' dietary needs and preferences; 5.4% were neutral, and 9.3% disagreed. The results also show that 75.9% of the respondents agreed that there is a wide selection of beverages complementing the food served, 12.5% were neutral, and 11.9% disagreed.

Table 4.12 also shows that the food served in the restaurants is fresh and properly cooked based on 75.6% of the respondents who agreed, 11.5% indicated that they were not aware, and 12.8% of respondents disagreed. According to 85.9% and 9.6% of the respondents who agreed and disagreed, respectively, the food served is attractive and tempting; 4.5% were neutral.

**Table 4.12: Responses to Food and Beverage Quality**

| Statement | 1<br>n(%) | 2<br>n(%) | 3<br>n(%) | 4<br>n(%) | 5<br>n(%) | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The restaurant offers a variety of menus and varied food choices to meet customers' dietary needs and preferences | 11<br>(3.5%) | 18<br>(5.8%) | 17<br>(5.4%) | 117<br>(37.5%) | 149<br>(47.8%) | 4.20 | 1.02 |
| There is a wide selection of beverages complementing the food served | 13<br>(4.2%) | 24<br>(7.7%) | 39<br>(12.5%) | 110<br>(35.3%) | 126<br>(40.6%) | 4.00 | 1.10 |
| Foods served is fresh and properly cooked | 15<br>(4.8%) | 25<br>(8.0%) | 36<br>(11.5%) | 83<br>(26.6%) | 153<br>(49.0%) | 4.07 | 1.17 |
| The food served is attractive and tempting | 16<br>(5.1%) | 14<br>(4.5%) | 14<br>(4.5%) | 67<br>(21.5%) | 201<br>(64.4%) | 4.36 | 1.10 |
| Employees serve customers at the time promised | 12<br>(3.8%) | 23<br>(7.4%) | 31<br>(9.9%) | 83<br>(26.6%) | 163<br>(52.2%) | 4.16 | 1.11 |
| The establishment knows the type of experience its customers want | 22<br>(7.1%) | 48<br>(15.4%) | 36<br>(11.5%) | 93<br>(29.8%) | 113<br>(36.2%) | 3.73 | 1.29 |

***Notes***: Scale (*Range of Mean Interpretation*): Likert 5-point: 1= Strongly Disagree (*1.00 – 1.79*), 2= Disagree (*1.80 – 2.59*), 3=Neutral (*2.60 – 3.39*), 4=Agree (*3.40 – 4.19*), 5= Strongly Agree (*4.20 – 5.00*)

Further, it is evident that 78.8% of the respondents strongly agreed that employees serve customers at the promised time; 11.2% disagreed, and 9.9% were neutral. The majority (66%) of the respondents agreed that establishments know the type of experience customers want; 22.4% disagreed, and another 11.5% remained neutral.

The mean scores of all items were above the 3.39 cut-off, demonstrating that the respondents agreed with the statements. The food served is attractive and tempting is the statement that revealed the highest mean score of 4.36(SD=1.10), while the lodging facility knows the type of experience its customers was reported with the lowest mean score of 3.73(SD=1.29). These results implied that, whilst the food may be attractive and tempting, the lodging facilities should comprehend their customers' expectations to meet their needs and preferences. These results resonated well with a study conducted by Clemens et al. (2018). In their study, the visitors of upscale restaurants perceived food quality as the most significant indicator of service quality. Thus, the game lodge management should improve the quality of food served in their restaurants.

#### 4.6.2.4 Responsiveness of Service Quality

Some statements were presented to the respondents to generate their opinions on responsiveness. The results are represented in Table 4.13.

**Table 4.13: Responses on Waiting Time**

| Statement | 1<br>n(%) | 2<br>n(%) | 3<br>n(%) | 4<br>n(%) | 5<br>n(%) | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The waiting time for service is reasonable | 39<br>(12.5%) | 73<br>(23.4%) | 30<br>(9.6%) | 90<br>(28.8%) | 80<br>(25.6%) | 3.32 | 1.40 |
| The employees try to minimize my waiting time | 36<br>(11.5%) | 63<br>(20.2%) | 25<br>(8.0%) | 102<br>(32.7%) | 86<br>(27.6%) | 3.45 | 1.38 |
| Employees understand that waiting time is important to me | 37<br>(11.9%) | 57<br>(18.3%) | 37<br>(11.9%) | 104<br>(33.3%) | 77<br>(24.7%) | 3.41 | 1.35 |

***Notes***: Scale (*Range of Mean Interpretation*): Likert 5-point: 1= Strongly Disagree (*1.00 – 1.79*), 2= Disagree (*1.80 – 2.59*), 3=Neutral (*2.60 – 3.39*), 4=Agree (*3.40 – 4.19*), 5= Strongly Agree (*4.20 – 5.00*)

The findings on waiting time revealed that the majority (54.4%) of the respondents agreed that the waiting time for service is reasonable, 9.6% remained neutral, and 35.9% disagreed with the statement. 60.3% agreed that employees try to minimize the tourists' waiting time; 31.7% disagreed, and 8% remained neutral. A total of 58% of the respondents agreed that employees understand that waiting time is important to them, 11.9% were neutral, and another 30.2% disagreed.

The mean scores of all items, except for 'the waiting time for service is unreasonable', were above 3.39, depicting respondents' agreement with the items. "Employee try to minimize waiting time" had the highest mean score of 3.45(SD=1.38), while the "waiting time for service is reasonable" had the lowest score of 3.32(SD=1.40). The standard deviations of all items were above 1, implying that the waiting time factor had a moderate influence on overall service quality.

Responsiveness denotes the employees' willingness to assist the guests and provide prompt services. Game lodge staff must be willing to assist visitors by providing prompt services to exceed and meet their expectations.

### 4.6.3 Physical Environment Quality

Another quality dimension considered for the study was the physical environment. The responses to the statements regarding physical environment quality are indicated in Table 4.14. Social contacts, safety and security, and accommodation infrastructure were used as indicators for the physical environment.

#### 4.6.3.1 Social Contacts

Responses on social contacts are presented in Table 4.14.

**Table 4.14: Responses on Social Contacts**

| Statement | 1 n(%) | 2 n(%) | 3 n(%) | 4 n(%) | 5 n(%) | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The lodging facility offered an opportunity for social interaction | 3 (1.0%) | 3 (1.0%) | 6 (1.9%) | 155 (49.7%) | 145 (46.5%) | 3.81 | 1.29 |
| I felt a sense of belonging with other customers | 0 (0.0%) | 7 (2.2%) | 5 (1.6%) | 159 (51.0%) | 141 (45.2%) | 3.65 | 1.31 |
| I have made social contacts | 3 (1.0%) | 10 (3.2%) | 6 (1.9%) | 155 (49.7%) | 138 (44.2%) | 4.02 | 1.21 |

***Notes***: Scale (*Range of Mean Interpretation*): Likert 5-point: 1= Strongly Disagree (*1.00 – 1.79*), 2= Disagree (*1.80 – 2.59*), 3=Neutral (*2.60 – 3.39*), 4=Agree (*3.40 – 4.19*), 5= Strongly Agree (*4.20 – 5.00*)

Results indicated that lodging facilities in Maasai Mara offered an opportunity for social interaction since 96.2% of the respondents agreed, 2.0% disagreed, and another 1.9% remained neutral. On being asked if they felt a sense of belonging with other customers, the majority (96.2%) of the respondents agreed, 2.2% disagreed and 1.6% were neutral. The findings also showed that 93.9%, 4.2%, and 1.9% of the respondents agreed, disagreed, and were neutral, respectively, that they had made social contacts

by the time of the study.

The results further show that the items had mean scores ranging from 3.65 to 4.02, which were above the cut-off of 3.39, depicting respondents' agreement with all the items. The standard deviation ranged from 1.21 to 1.31. The statement with the lowest mean was "I felt a sense of belonging with other customers", with a mean score of 3.65(SD=1.31). "I have made social contacts" was reported with the highest mean score of 4.02(SD=1.21). This indicates a moderate to high level of respondents' agreement on social contacts as a factor influencing service quality perception.

#### 4.6.3.2 Safety and Security

Safety was measured using four items, as presented in Table 4.15. The majority (65.1%) of the respondents agreed that there were accessible fire exits, 15.8% disagreed, and 19.2% remained neutral.

**Table 4.15: Responses on Safety and Security**

| Statement | 1<br>n(%) | 2<br>n(%) | 3<br>n(%) | 4<br>n(%) | 5<br>n(%) | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| There are accessible fire exits | 22<br>(7.1%) | 27<br>(8.7%) | 60<br>(19.2) | 121<br>(38.8%) | 82<br>(26.3%) | 3.69 | 1.16 |
| The lodging facility is generally clean | 30<br>(9.6%) | 41<br>(13.1%) | 43<br>(13.8%) | 113<br>(36.2%) | 85<br>(27.2%) | 3.58 | 1.28 |
| The precautionary measures against COVID-19 are practised | 35<br>(11.2%) | 32<br>(10.3%) | 55<br>(17.6%) | 159<br>(51.0%) | 31<br>(9.9%) | 3.38 | 1.15 |
| The room has adequate security features | 15<br>(4.8%) | 20<br>(6.4%) | 58<br>(18.6%) | 151<br>(48.4%) | 68<br>(21.8%) | 3.76 | 1.02 |

***Notes***: Scale (*Range of Mean Interpretation*): Likert 5-point: 1= Strongly Disagree (*1.00 – 1.79*), 2= Disagree (*1.80 – 2.59*), 3=Neutral (*2.60 – 3.39*), 4=Agree (*3.40 – 4.19*), 5= Strongly Agree (*4.20 – 5.00*)

On whether the lodging facilities were generally clean, 63.4% agreed, 21.5% disagreed, and 17.6% were neutral. When respondents were asked if the precautionary measures against COVID-19 are practised, 60.9% and 21.5% agreed and disagreed, respectively. Another 17.6% remained undecided. According to the results, 70.2% of the respondents, agreed the rooms had adequate security features, while 18.6% were neutral and 11.2 % disagreed.

The mean scores were above the cut-off average of 3.39 showing that the respondents agreed with all statements. "The room has adequate security features" was the item that had the highest mean score of 3.76(SD=1.02), while the "precautionary measures

against COVID-19 are practised" had the lowest mean of 3.38(SD=1.15).

#### 4.6.3.3 Accommodation Infrastructure

Responses on accommodation infrastructure are presented in Table 4.16. The responses show that 56.7% of the respondents agreed that the style and décor of accommodation are to their liking, while 25.3% disagreed. Another 17.9% remained neutral. Also clear from the findings is that 60.6% of the respondents agreed that the design of the accommodation was generally attractive; 22.1% were neutral, and 17.3% disagreed. The majority (62.2%) of the respondents agreed that the physical environment is what they expected, with 14.4% remaining neutral and another 23.4% disagreeing.

**Table 4.16: Response on Accommodation Infrastructure**

| Statement | 1<br>n(%) | 2<br>n(%) | 3<br>n(%) | 4<br>n(%) | 5<br>n(%) | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The style and décor of the accommodation is to my Liking | 46<br>(14.7%) | 33<br>(10.6%) | 56<br>(17.9%) | 107<br>(34.3%) | 70<br>(22.4%) | 3.39 | 1.34 |
| The design of the accommodation is generally attractive | 23<br>(7.4%) | 31<br>(9.9%) | 69<br>(22.1%) | 130<br>(41.7%) | 59<br>(18.9%) | 3.55 | 1.13 |
| The physical environment is what I expected | 26<br>(8.3%) | 47<br>(15.1%) | 45<br>(14.4%) | 130<br>(41.7%) | 64<br>(20.5%) | 3.51 | 1.21 |

***Notes***: Scale (*Range of Mean Interpretation*): Likert 5-point: 1= Strongly Disagree (*1.00 – 1.79*), 2= Disagree (*1.80 – 2.59*), 3=Neutral (*2.60 – 3.39*), 4=Agree (*3.40 – 4.19*), 5= Strongly Agree (*4.20 – 5.00*)

Three items were used to measure accommodation infrastructure, and as Table 4.16 shows, the items had mean scores ranging from 3.39 and 3.55, with standard deviations ranging from 1.13 to 1.34. 'The design of the accommodation is generally attractive' was the item that had the highest rating with a score of 3.55 (SD=1.13), and the item with the lowest mean score was 'The style and décor of the accommodation is to my liking' with a score of 3.39(SD=1.34). Further, these results showed respondents exhibited moderate ratings of accommodation infrastructure.

### 4.7 Exploratory Factor Analysis for Service Quality

An exploratory factor analysis was used to determine the underlying sub-dimensions of service quality in Maasai Mara game lodges. Service quality construct was measured using three sub-scales namely, interaction quality, physical environment quality and outcome quality. Factor analysis with principal component analysis in combination with Promax rotation and Kaiser normalization was conducted. The aim was to allow the factors to have some correlation (Hair et al., 2010), hence reducing the number of items representing each category of service quality dimensions and, in the end, creating a new scale of measurement for service quality dimensions (Effendi et al., 2019). Through factor reduction, the large set of 52 items representing service quality dimensions was reduced to 41 items, accounting for 63.739 % of the variation in the original items created (appendix 8). As shown in Table 4.17, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant (Chi-square ($\chi 2$) =5388, df=820, $p<0.000$), satisfying the assumption that the variables involved in the analysis are correlated with each other to the extent that they can potentially be summarized with a smaller set of factors (Fied et al., 2012).

**Table 4.17: KMO and Bartlett's Test**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy. | | .838 |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | Approx. Chi-Square | 5388.349 |
| | df | 820 |
| | Sig. | .000 |

Sampling Adequacy was checked using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy (MSA), and it was found to be 0.838, suggesting good sampling adequacy. Ten factors whose Eigenvalues exceeded one (Table 4.18) with a factor loading of more than 0.5 and loaded on only one factor were extracted (Appendix 12). This explained 63.739 % of the total variance of service quality. The extracted communalities for retained items measuring service quality constructs, as shown in Appendix 8, were greater than 0.5 indicating the larger the amount of information will be extracted (Appendix 13).

**Table 4.18 Principal Components of Service Quality**

| Initial Eigenvalues | | | | Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Component | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % |
| Social contacts | 8.328 | 20.312 | 20.312 | 8.328 | 20.312 | 20.312 |
| Room Experience | 3.770 | 9.195 | 29.507 | 3.770 | 9.195 | 29.507 |
| Employees interpersonal Skills | 3.183 | 7.763 | 37.270 | 3.183 | 7.763 | 37.270 |
| Employees professional skills | 2.017 | 4.920 | 42.190 | 2.017 | 4.920 | 42.190 |
| Dining experience | 1.846 | 4.503 | 46.693 | 1.846 | 4.503 | 46.693 |
| Customer care | 1.641 | 4.002 | 50.694 | 1.641 | 4.002 | 0.694 |
| Accommodation infrastructure | 1.537 | 3.748 | 54.443 | 1.537 | 3.748 | 54.443 |
| Responsiveness | 1.385 | 3.379 | 57.822 | 1.385 | 3.379 | 57.822 |
| Front desk experience | 1.283 | 3.130 | 60.951 | 1.283 | 3.130 | 60.951 |
| Safety and Security | 1.143 | 2.788 | 63.739 | 1.143 | 2.788 | 63.739 |

Factor 1 contained 6 items explaining 20.312 of the total variation in service quality dimensions and was renamed social contact (Table 4.19).

**Table 4.19: Factor Loading for Social Contacts**

| Factor 1 Items | Loadings |
|---|---|
| The lodging facility offered an opportunity for social interaction | .806 |
| I felt a sense of belonging with other customers | .766 |
| I have made social contacts | .757 |
| I have had a good experience | .723 |
| When I leave, I feel that I have got what I wanted | .713 |
| The lodging facility is generally clean | .662 |

Factor 2 explained 9.2% of service quality dimensions, and as shown in Table 4.20, it contained 6 items. This factor was renamed room experience.

**Table 4.20: Factor Loadings for Room Experience**

| Factor 2 Items | Loadings |
|---|---|
| The bed/ mattress/pillow is comfortable | .567 |
| The room is quiet and peaceful | .839 |
| The rooms are clean and comfortable | .775 |
| There are efficient room amenities like phones, in-room bar service, safe boxes, etc. | .683 |
| The bathroom and toilets are clean | .622 |
| The bathroom has good toiletries and clean linen | .624 |

Factor 3 contained 5 items (Table 4.21), explaining 7.8 % of the total variation in service quality dimension. This factor was retained as employees' interpersonal skills.

**Table 4.21: Factor Loading for Employee Interpersonal Skills**

| Factor 3 Items | Loadings |
|---|---|
| The employees are friendly and respectful | .641 |
| I was able to communicate with staff with no difficulties | .685 |
| The employees are courteous | .649 |
| The staff give undivided attention to the guest | .688 |
| The employees are willing to help guests with their requests and complaints | .767 |
| The employees are smart and neat | .634 |

Factor 4 contained 5 items (Table 4.22), explaining 4.920 % of the variation in the service quality dimension. This factor was retained as employees' professional skills.

**Table 4.22: Factor Loading for Employees' Professional Skills**

| Factor 4 Items | Loadings |
|---|---|
| The employees give prompt services | .840 |
| The employees use appropriate non-verbal communication when we interact with them | .814 |
| The employees are professional and well-trained | .753 |
| The employees are knowledgeable enough to answer the questions quickly | .752 |
| The staff performs services correctly the first time | .739 |

Factors 5 explained 4.503% of the variation in service quality dimensions and comprised 5 items (Table 4.23). This factor was renamed the dining experience.

**Table 4.23: Factor Loadings for Dining Experience**

| Factor 5 Items | Loadings |
|---|---|
| The lodge's restaurant offers a variety of menus and varied food choices to meet customers' dietary needs and preferences | .843 |
| There is a wide selection of beverages complementing the food served | .767 |
| The food served is attractive and tempting | .714 |
| Employees serve customers at the time promised | .681 |
| The lodging facility provides the type of experience its customers want | .591 |

Factor 6, as shown in Table 4.24, contained 4 items explaining 4.002% of the variation in the overall service quality dimension: The factor comprised four measurement indicators and was renamed as customer care.

**Table 4.24: Factor Loading for Customer Care**

| Factor 6 Items | Loadings |
|---|---|
| When I have a problem, the employees show a sincere concern in solving it | .903 |
| Employees understand the importance of resolving my complaints | .887 |
| Employees are able to handle my complaints directly and immediately | .648 |
| There is good reception by the front office staff, which creates a welcoming atmosphere | .558 |

Factor 7 entailed three measurement indicators, as Table 4.25 indicates, explaining

3.748% of the variation of the overall service quality dimension. This factor was renamed accommodation infrastructure.

**Table 4.25: Factor Loadings for Accommodation Infrastructure**

| Factor 7 Items | Loading |
|---|---|
| The room has a reliable internet connection | .879 |
| The rooms have good décor and ambience | .839 |
| I am quite satisfied with the rooms' physical environment in terms of facilities, décor and ambience | .756 |

Factor 8 contained 3 items and explained 3.378% of the variation of the service quality dimension data (Table 4.26). This factor was renamed responsiveness.

**Table 4.26: Factor Loadings for Responsiveness**

| Factor 8 Items | Loading |
|---|---|
| The waiting time for service is reasonable | .836 |
| The employees try to minimize my waiting time | .779 |
| Employees understand that waiting time is important to me | .743 |

Factor 9 explained 3.130% of the variance in service quality and contained 2 items, as shown in Table 4.27. This factor was renamed as front desk experience.

**Table 4.27: Factor Loadings for Front Desk Experience**

| Factor 9 Items | Loadings |
|---|---|
| The check-in and check-out are easy and quick | .850 |
| Front office employees are able to solve my problems | .804 |

Factor 10 also contained 2 items (Table 4.28), explaining 2.788% of the variance in overall service quality. This factor was renamed safety and security.

**Table 4.28: Factor Loading for Safety and Security**

| Factor 10 Items | Loadings |
|---|---|
| The room has adequate security features | .874 |
| The precautionary measures against COVID-19 are practised | .518 |

From the findings herein, it is evident that primary service quality dimensions are made up of 10 sub-dimensions that ultimately influence the perception of the overall service quality among tourists patronizing Maasai Mara game lodges. The ten sub-dimensions are employees' interpersonal skills, employees' professional skills, customer care, room experience, dining experience, front desk experience, responsiveness, safety and security, social contacts and accommodation infrastructure.

As Table 4.29 shows, interaction quality was made up of three sub-dimensions, namely, employee interpersonal quality, employee professional skills and customer

care. Outcome quality, on the other hand, was explained by four sub-dimensions and comprised of room experience, dining experience, responsiveness and front office experience. On physical environment quality, 3 sub-dimensions were found to explain this dimension and included social contacts, accommodation infrastructure and safety and security.

**Table 4.29: Summary of Service Quality Exploratory Analysis**

| Primary Dimension | Scale | No. of Items | Factor loading Range |
|---|---|---|---|
| Interaction | Employees' interpersonal skills | 5 | 0.840 - 0.739 |
| | Employees' professional skills | 5 | 0.798 - 0.640 |
| | Customer care | 4 | 0.903 - 0.558 |
| Outcome quality | Room experience | 6 | 0.826 - 0.561 |
| | Dining experience responsiveness | 5 | 0.798 - 0.640 |
| | Front office experience | 3 | 0.836 - 0.743 |
| | | 2 | 0.850 - 0.804 |
| Physical environment quality | Social contacts | 6 | 0.806 - 0.662 |
| | Accommodation Infrastructure | 3 | 0.836 - 0.743 |
| | Safety and Security | 2 | 0.518 - 0.518 |

## 4.8 Testing Structural Model

The structural equation model for the service quality dimensions is depicted in Figure 4.12.

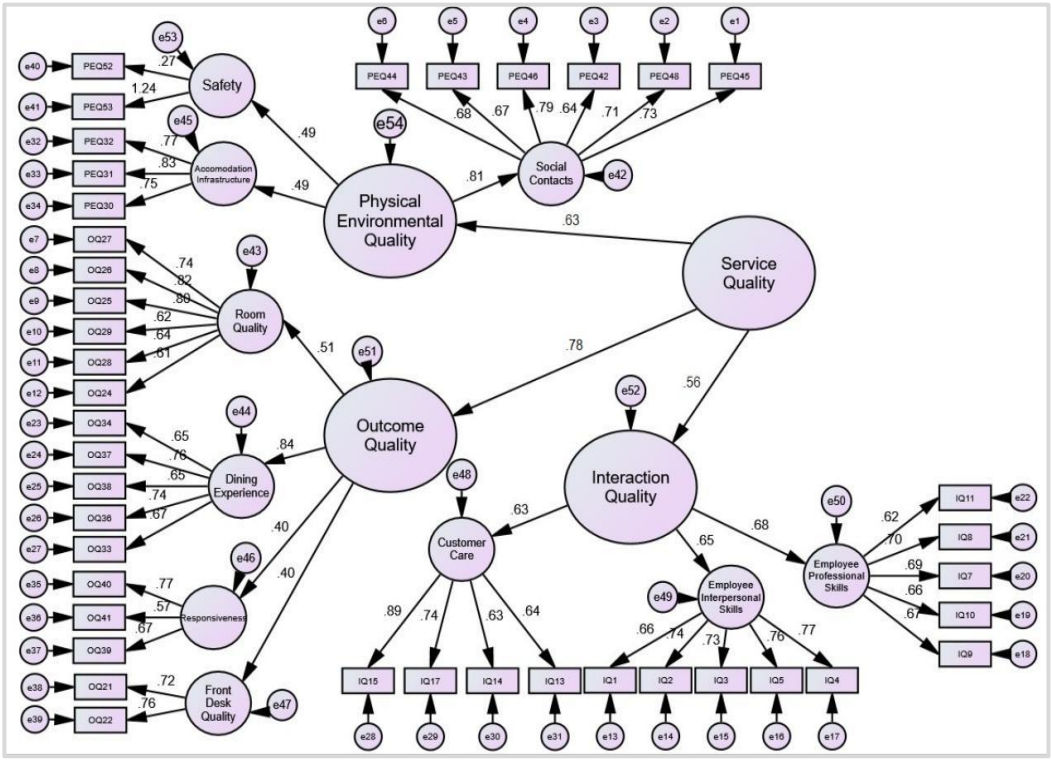


**Figure 4. 12: 3rd Order SEM Model for Service Quality**

As Table 4.30 depicts, the structural model fit the data adequately since the fit indices were within an acceptable range (Gold et al., 2001).

**Table 4.30: Structural Model Fit Measures for Service Quality**

| Measure of Fit Index | Estimate | Threshold | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Chi-square ($\chi 2$) | 1430.680 | -- | -- |
| Degrees of freedom (df) | 767 | -- | -- |
| Normed chi square ( $\chi 2$) /df) | 1.865 | Between 1 and 3 | Excellent |
| Comparative Fit Index (CFI) | 0.943 | >0.95 | Acceptable |
| Standardized Root Mean Square Residue (SRMR) | 0.079 | <0.08 | Excellent |
| Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) | 0.053 | <0.06 | Excellent |
| P of close fit (PClose) | 0.142 | >0.05 | Excellent |

Service quality in this study was based on a multi-dimensional and hierarchical structure comprising three order factors. The first-order factor was made up of service quality sub-dimensions, the second-order factor was the primary service quality dimensions, and the overall service quality was regarded as the third-order factor.

The findings confirmed that there were three 2nd order components of service quality, namely outcome quality, interaction quality, and physical environmental quality. These were regarded as the primary service quality dimensions. As Table 4.31 indicates, outcome quality had a significant and positive influence on the overall service quality (β=0.781, p<0.05) compared to physical environmental quality (β=0.634, p<0.05) and Interaction Quality (β=0.563, p<0.05). This implied that guests in game lodges are concerned with what they receive from service delivery.

**Table 4.31: Third Order Regression Weights**

| Path | | | Unstandardized Estimate | Standardized Estimate (β) | S.E. | C.R. | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Outcome Quality | ← | SQ | 0.609 | .781 | 0.102 | 5.968 | *** |
| Interaction Quality | ← | SQ | 0.933 | .563 | 0.215 | 4.34 | *** |
| Physical Environmental Quality | ← | SQ | 0.87 | .634 | 0.240 | 3.63 | *** |

***Notes***: SQ – Service Quality. *** p<0.05

The ten sub-dimensions of service quality were regarded as 1st order factor components. The factor loadings shown in Table 4.32 represent the importance rankings for the sub-dimensions.

**Table 4.32: Second Order Regression Weights**

| Path | | | Unstandardized Estimate | | β | S.E. | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Room Quality | ← | OQ | 0.988 | 0.482 | 0.109 | 9.045 | *** |
| Dining Experience | ← | OQ | 1.207 | 0.841 | 0.214 | 5.648 | *** |
| Responsiveness | ← | OQ | 0.607 | 0.424 | 0.065 | 9.409 | *** |
| Front Desk Quality | ← | OQ | 0.87 | 0.373 | 0.24 | 3.63 | *** |
| Customer Care | ← | IQ | 0.893 | 0.341 | 0.095 | 9.441 | *** |
| Employee Interpersonal Skills | ← | IQ | 1.116 | 0.720 | 0.282 | 3.963 | *** |
| Employee Professional Skills | ← | IQ | 1.216 | 0.761 | 0.308 | 3.952 | *** |
| Safety | ← | PEQ | 1.158 | 0.463 | 0.087 | 13.284 | *** |
| Accommodation Infrastructure | ← | PEQ | 0.721 | 0.450 | 0.098 | 7.388 | *** |
| Social Contacts | ← | PEQ | 1.025 | 0.821 | 0.086 | 11.987 | *** |

***Notes***: OQ – Outcome Quality. IQ – Interaction Quality. PEQ – Physical Environment Quality.

For outcome quality sub-dimensions, study findings show that dining experience was the most important indicator of outcome quality (β=0.841, p<0.05), followed by room quality (β=0.482, p<0.05). Responsiveness dimension (β=0.424, p<0.05) and the least dimension was front desk quality (β=0.373, p<0.05). On physical environmental service quality sub-dimensions, 'social contacts' was the most important element of physical environmental service quality (β=0.821, p<0.05), followed by safety

(β=0.463, p<0.05), and the least dimension was accommodation infrastructure (β=0.450, p<0.05).

Based on these findings, the dimension ‘employee professional skills’ is the most important element of interaction quality (β=0.761, p<0.05), followed by employee interpersonal skills (β=0.720, p<0.05), and the least dimension is customer care (β=0.341, p<0.05). These findings indicated a significant and positive relationship between employee professionalism and interaction quality. This finding supports the results of a previous study by Wu et al. (2015) that investigated relationships among revisit intentions, emotions, and service quality in the hot spring industry. Using multidimensional and hierarchical models, their results found employees’ professional skills as a sub-dimension that had a significant influence on interaction quality.

Additionally, the findings further confirm that the service quality provided by game lodges in Maasai Mara can be assessed in a multidimensional and hierarchical framework which is similar to the findings of previous studies in the service industry, such as the banking industry (Bakar et al., 2017; A. Hossain et al., 2021), the airline industry (Hong et al., 2020), mobile communications (Clemes et al., 2014), health care services (Dandis et al., 2021) as well as in the tourism and hospitality industry studies (Clemes & Dean, 2020; Clemes et al., 2018; Nunkoo et al., 2017). A. Hossian et al. (2021) and Bakar et al. (2017) studies in the banking service industry confirm the use of the multidimensional and hierarchical model in service quality evaluation. A. Hossain et al. (2021) study identified nine sub-dimensions, namely valence, waiting time, reliability, attitude, expertise, problem-solving, ambient conditions equipment, and physical appeal. Bakar et al. identified 14 dimensions that comprised attitude, behaviour, expertise, problem solving, information, ambient and equipment, physical appeal, social factors, waiting time, convenience, valence, security, privacy, speed of decision, and speed. These findings further indicate that guests in game lodges evaluate service quality on ten dimensions, which reflect the specific primary dimensions, but also view the overall service quality as a higher-order factor that reflects the common meaning of all dimensions.

The ten sub-dimensions confirmed in this study also vary in number and content from those identified from other service industries. This finding is in line with existing literature that has confirmed different dimensional structures and that the service quality dimensions depend on the service industry under the study (Bakar et al., 2017; Clemes et al., 2018; A. Hossain et al., 2021). A. Hossain et al. (2021) used multidimensional and hierarchical models to evaluate service quality in banking services and identified 9 sub-dimensions. Bakar et al. (2017) also investigated service quality dimensions using multidimensional and hierarchical models and identified 14 sub-dimensions. Additionally, the ten service quality dimensions vary in content and number from the sets established in previous studies in the tourism and hospitality industry (Assaker, 2020; Dortyol et al., 2014; Rauch et al., 2015; Wu et al., 2015; Wu & Li, 2015).

Assaker's (2020) study on the effects of hotel green business in upscale European hotels established three service quality dimensions, namely, service product, staff quality and food and beverage service quality. Wu et al., 2015 identified the five dimensions as interaction quality, physical environment, outcome quality, access quality and administration quality. Wu and Li's (2015) study investigated the key service quality dimensions among the tourists visiting museums in Macau. The study established four primary dimensions (interaction quality, outcome quality, physical environment quality and access quality) and twelve service quality sub-dimensions that comprised staff reliability, display, tangibles, food and beverage, program, valence, waiting time, information, and convenience.

The results support the proposition of a prior study by Clemens et al. (2018), who conducted a study in a moderately upscale restaurant in Malaysia. This study concluded that outcome quality (β= 0.929) had the most significant and positive relationship with the overall service quality, followed by the physical environment (β= 0.905) and interaction quality (0.812). This finding reveals that guests in star-rated lodges focus on the actual service outcome as they are the ultimate service product. Whereas physical environment quality (β=.634) was considered the second indicator of the overall service quality in this study, a previous study (Agyeiwaah et al., 2020) contradicts these results. It postulates that the physical environment is an insignificant element of service quality. However, in Wu and Ko (2013) and A. Hossain et al.

(2021) studies, the physical environment was found to be the most important service quality dimension.

The majority of the game lodges managers believed that the physical environment was equally an important indicator of service quality perception.

> […] When they come to the lodges, most of the guests coming to the lodges come to this place to experience nature. Property is very important to us; we have tried as much as possible to blend nature. If you look at accommodation style, we are trying to create this 'safari' experience. If you look at the wall outside, we have used those 'mazeras' stones, locally sourced from the park, just to blend with nature. We don't want the guests to come in and wonder if they are on in safari, then come to this side only to find a town set up (Lodge Manager 7).

> You see, the concept here is Maasai land, and that is why you see our rooms are Maasai manyatta. So, the physical environment is also very important, and when we talk of the physical environment is the building itself, the facilities in the room and even the design (Lodge Manager 3).

The low importance of interaction quality is supported in several studies (Clemes et al., 2018; A. Hossain et al., 2021) claimed that the customers know what they are looking for and have shifted focus to tangible service. These findings reveal that the guests in star-rated game lodges focus on the actual service outcome as they are the ultimate. This further suggests that the game lodges management should first focus on outcome quality, followed by the physical environment and lastly, the interaction between staff and customers.

However, from the lodge managers' perspective, interaction quality was considered the most important element of service quality, as lodge manager 3 stated:

> [...], so actually, the very one important element of service quality is human resources. This is the first thing you must have: the right people to deliver that quality of service to your client. Employee-customer interaction leaves a good impression on the guests. The human touch is very critical. Everything else

comes later (Lodge Manager 3).

Each primary dimension of service quality (interaction service quality, outcome quality, and physical environment quality) proved to be an antecedent of several sub-dimensions. As shown in Table 4.32, dining experience (β= 0.84) was the main driver of outcome quality. The dining experience relates to the food and beverage quality and reliability. This sub-dimension reflects the importance of having meals of a high quality, hygienic and wide variety of food items to meet customers' varied needs and preferences. Reliability means that the lodge employees should reflect the quality service image through their professional skills and should provide services as promised (Dortyol et al., 2014). From the managers' point of view, the dining experience is an important aspect of service quality evaluation, and a thorough understanding of guests' preferences is paramount, as pointed out by one of the managers:

> The Dining experience is the most important in a guest's stay because the moment you are not confident with the food, then the guest's experience is 50 %, or 50% of guests' experience is ruined. […] I think dining is the unique aspect because different cultures have different dining preferences […] like the Asian market, most of them are vegetarian, so we have to cater for that preference at the buffet, or more precisely an Indian corner, so they like their food spicy with more onions, with tubers or with no tubers. For the European and American markets, they have a healthy lifestyle and are more to from salads to light meals. […] The others to be taken care of are our domestic market. They want to have a bit of food they have at home, you then go to local cuisine and some extent, barbecue because they like "nyama choma" (roasted meat) (Game Lodge manager 7).

This is consistent with previous studies (Clemes et al., 2018) and this implies that the game lodge managers should strive to continually improve the guests' dining experience by taking care of different needs and preferences.

Social contacts (β= .821) were the prime consideration for the physical environment. This implies that game lodges should provide a social and interactive environment to emphasize social factors. Additionally, social factors have more influence on customer

responses, and other customers are often considered as part of the social servicescape since service delivery is performed in the presence of other customers. This finding supports prior literature (Jang et al., 2015; Liu et al., 2022; Lin et al., 2019) that the social environment influences the evaluation of the physical environment. This finding was also supported by lodge managers who claimed that social contact was an important dimension in service quality perception, though this varied across tourists' nationalities.

> […] If you look keenly outside, you see some guests engaging in the activities. Some are playing golf; some are in the swimming pool and it is our staff that are moderating those activities (Lodge manager 7).

> There is a difference in terms of how international tourists and domestic tourists relate to other tourists. Whites don't mind having social contact with other guests, but generally, Kenyans don't like interacting with others, whereby they question (Lodge manager 2).

Finally, the employees' professional skills (β= .761) were prioritized in interaction service quality, followed by employee interpersonal skills ((β= .720) and customer care (.341). The Sub-dimensions exert a significant and positive influence on interaction service quality. These results echo Wu and Li's (2015) findings that staff expertise plays a significant part in visitors' assessment of interaction quality in Game Lodges.

### 4.9 Influence of Service Quality on Emotional Satisfaction

The second specific objective of this study was to determine the influence of service quality on the behavioural intentions of tourists patronizing Maasai Mara game lodges.

#### 4.9.1 Responses on Emotional Satisfaction

The indicators of emotional satisfaction were excited, happy, pleasant, joyful, enjoyable and appreciative. As Table 4.33 indicates, the majority (98.7%) of the respondents agreed that the provision of service quality made them excited about the choice of the lodge, 0.6% disagreed, and 0.6% were neutral.

**Table 4.33: Responses on Emotional Satisfaction**

| Statement | 1 n(%) | 2 n(%) | 3 n(%) | 4 n(%) | 5 n(%) | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I am excited about the choice of this lodge | 1 (0.3%) | 1 (0.3%) | 2 (0.6%) | 150 (48.1%) | 158 (50.6%) | 4.48 | 0.567 |
| I was happy with the services offered | 0 (0%) | 2 (0.6%) | 0 (0%) | 144 (46.2%) | 166 (53.2%) | 4.52 | 0.538 |
| It was pleasant staying in this lodging facility | 1 (0.3%) | 2 (0.6%) | 0 (0%) | 155 (49.7%) | 154 (49.4%) | 4.47 | 0.572 |
| It was joyful with my stay in this lodging facility | 0 (0%) | 1 (0.3%) | 0 (0%) | 125 (40.1%) | 186 (59.6%) | 4.59 | 0.512 |
| I enjoyed my stay at this lodge | 1 (0.3%) | 1 (0.3%) | 0 (0.0%) | 128 (410%) | 182 (58.3%) | 4.57 | 0.551 |
| I appreciate the overall service quality of the lodging facility | 0 (0.0%) | 1 (0.3 %) | 1 (0.3 %) | 163 (52.2 %) | 147 (47.1%) | 4.46 | 0.524 |

***Notes***: Scale (*Range of Mean Interpretation*): Likert 5-point: 1= Strongly Disagree (*1.00 – 1.79*), 2= Disagree (*1.80 – 2.59*), 3=Neutral (*2.60 – 3.39*), 4=Agree (*3.40 – 4.19*), 5= Strongly Agree (*4.20 – 5.00*)

The mean score of all items was above the cut-off average value of 3.39, indicating the respondents agreed with the statements. My stay in this lodging facility was joyful and was found to have the highest mean score of 4.57(SD=0.55), while I appreciate the overall service quality of the lodging facility had the lowest mean score of 4.46(SD=0.52).

### 4.9.2 Structural Equation Modelling and Hypothesis Testing

The hypothesis to examine the second specific objective was:

*$H_{01}$: There is no relationship between service quality and the emotional satisfaction of tourists patronizing the Maasai Mara game lodges.*

The structural model showing the relationship between service quality and customer emotional satisfaction is indicated in Figure 4.13. The SEM fit statistics of the overall measurement model for study variables were then extracted, as shown in Figure 4.13.

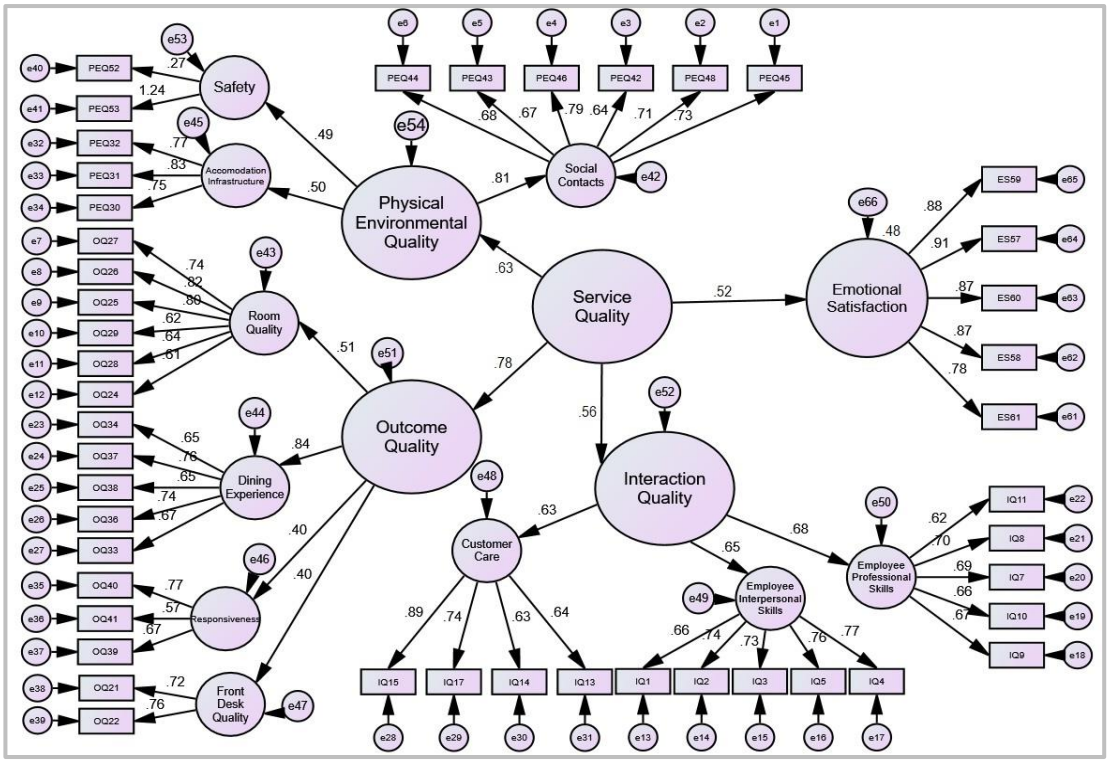


**Figure 4. 13: SEM Model for Service Quality and Emotional Satisfaction Relationship**

The fit indices were within an acceptable range, and thus, the structural model fit the data adequately as they were within the acceptable threshold (Table 4.34)

**Table 4.34: Model Fit Measures (Service Quality → Emotional Satisfaction)**

| Measure | Estimate | Threshold | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|
| CMIN | 1809.135 | -- | -- |
| DF | 976 | -- | -- |
| CMIN/DF | 1.854 | Between 1 and 3 | Excellent |
| CFI | 0.947 | >0.95 | Acceptable |
| SRMR | 0.079 | <0.08 | Excellent |
| RMSEA | 0.052 | <0.06 | Excellent |
| PClose | 0.147 | >0.05 | Excellent |

This study finding shows that there was a positive path coefficient (β= 0.519) between service quality and emotional satisfaction, as shown in Table 4.35.

**Table 4.35: Analysis of the Relationship between Service Quality and Emotional Satisfaction**

| Path | | | Unstandardized Estimate | Standardized Estimate (β) | S.E. | C.R. | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Service Quality | → | Emotional satisfaction | 0.681 | .519 | 0.099 | 6.886 | *** |

***Note***: *** P<0.05

In this regard, the relationship between service quality and emotional satisfaction was significant since the T value was 6.886 ($p<0.05$), as indicated in Table 4.35. The study rejects the null hypothesis, supports the alternative hypothesis and concludes that there is a positive and significant relationship between service quality and emotional satisfaction among tourists patronizing Maasai Mara game lodges.

Service quality explained 48% ($R^2=0.48$) of the variance in customer emotional satisfaction among tourists patronizing Maasai Mara game lodges. The visitors' perceived service quality has a positive relationship with their emotional satisfaction. This finding is in line with past studies done by Mustaffa et al. (2016), Ladhari et al. (2017), Batra and Taneja (2021), and Rahman et al. (2019), where service quality is found to be a predictor of customer emotional satisfaction. In the lodging industry context, Han et al. (2016) have reported a strong and significant relationship between service quality and customer emotional satisfaction. Thus, the perceived service quality is identified as the greatest predictor for customer emotional satisfaction in the hospitality and tourism context. The present study offers empirical evidence that emotional satisfaction plays a crucial role in service experiences.

## 4.10 Influence of Service Quality on Behavioural Intentions

The third specific objective of this study was to determine the influence of service quality on the behavioural intentions of tourists patronizing Maasai Mara game lodges. Behavioural intentions were measured by revisiting intentions, recommendations to significant others, and positive word of mouth.

### 4.10.1 Responses on Behavioural Intentions

In the study results, as depicted in Table 4.36, the majority (95.8%) of the respondents agreed they would use the lodging services on their next visit to Maasai Mara; 0.6% disagreed, and 3.5% remained neutral.

**Table 4.36: Responses on Behavioural Intentions**

| Statement | 1 n(%) | 2 n(%) | 3 n(%) | 4 n(%) | 5 n(%) | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I will use this lodge's services in my next visit to Maasai Mara | 0 (0.0%) | 2 (0.6%) | 11 (3.5%) | 172 (55.1%) | 127 (40.7%) | 4.36 | 0.58 |
| At the end of my stay will recommend the lodge's services to others | 0 (0.0%) | 2 (0.6%) | 2 (0.6%) | 166 (53.2%) | 142 (45.5%) | 4.44 | 0.55 |
| I will pass positive word of mouth to my significant others | 0 (0%) | 3 (1.0%) | 4 (1.3%) | 155 (49.7%) | 150 (48.1%) | 4.45 | 0.58 |

***Notes***: Scale (*Range of Mean Interpretation*): Likert 5-point: 1= Strongly Disagree (*1.00 – 1.79*), 2= Disagree (*1.80 – 2.59*), 3=Neutral (*2.60 – 3.39*), 4=Agree (*3.40 – 4.19*), 5= Strongly Agree (*4.20 – 5.00*)

When respondents were asked if they would recommend the lodge services to others at the end of their stay, 98.7% agreed, while 1% disagreed. The majority (97.8%) of the respondents agreed they would pass positive word of mouth to significant others, while 1.3% disagreed.

The mean scores of all items were above 3.39, indicating that the respondents strongly agreed that service quality perceptions influenced their behavioural intentions. I will pass positive word of mouth to significant others was reported with the highest mean score of 4.45(SD=0.58), while I will use this lodge services on my next visit to Maasai Mara had the lowest mean score of 4.36(SD=0.58). These results implied that service quality perceptions largely influence favourable behavioural intentions.

From the lodge managers' perspective, there was a strong relationship between service quality and tourists' behavioural relationship, and it was evident that referral or WOM recommendations contributed more to behavioural intentions than revisit intentions.

> […] there is a strong relationship in that and for us, especially with the international market. It is not about them coming back. You find most of these international clients will tell you this is a trip of a lifetime; we have planned for 5-10 years to come to Kenya. […]. If you say that we are offering good services for them to come back, it might be a very wrong shot. But the culture is we are doing it for them to refer us to their family and people back home (Lodge manager 7).

> Many guests spend five years or more planning to go to Kenya, and many will say it is an expensive trip. […] but every year a guest will tell you that my friends came here last year and told us it was very good and were happy with our service provision (Lodge manager 3)

> Referral is stronger than return stay, but for domestic guests stay and referral go hand in hand (Lodge manager 5).

### 4.10.2 Structural Equation Modelling and Hypothesis Testing

The hypothesis to examine the third specific objective was:

*$H_{02}$: There is no relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions of tourists patronizing Maasai Mara game lodges*

The SEM fit statistics of the overall measurement model for service quality dimensions and behavioural intentions study variables were extracted, as shown in Figure 4.14.

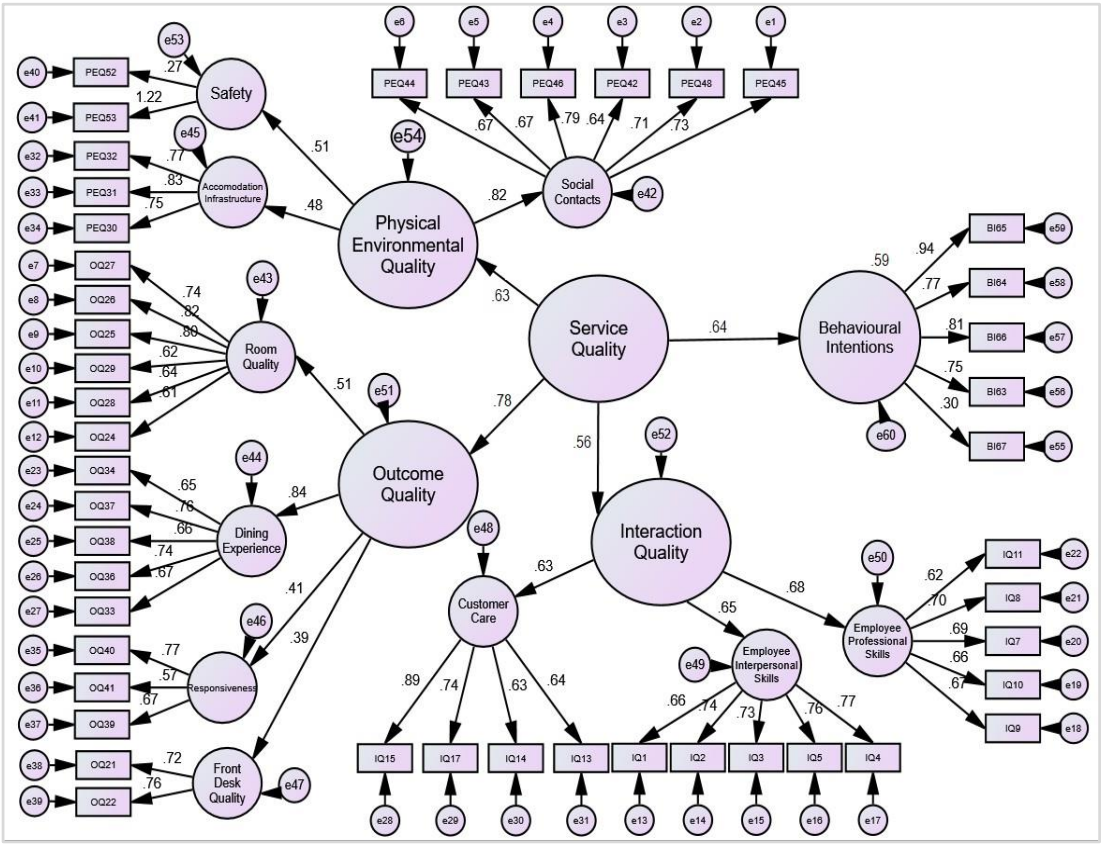


**Figure 4. 14: SEM model for the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions**

The CFA model fit the data adequately since the fit indices were within an acceptable range (Table 4.37) (Gold et al., 2001).

**Table 4.37: Model Fit Measures (Service Quality → Behavioural Intentions)**

| Measure | Estimate | Threshold | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|
| CMIN | 1671.857 | -- | -- |
| DF | 976 | -- | -- |
| CMIN/DF | 1.713 | Between 1 and 3 | Excellent |
| CFI | 0.911 | >0.95 | Acceptable |
| SRMR | 0.078 | <0.08 | Excellent |
| RMSEA | 0.048 | <0.06 | Excellent |
| PClose | 0.813 | >0.05 | Excellent |

This study found that there was a positive path coefficient (β= 0.643) between service quality and behavioural intentions, as shown in Table 4.38.

**Table 4.38: Analysis of the Nexus Between Service Quality and Behavioural Intentions**

| Path | | | Unstandardized Estimate | Standardized Estimate (β) | S.E. | C.R. | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Service Quality | → | Behavioural Intentions | 0.864 | .643 | 0.074 | 11.705 | *** |

***Note***: *** p<0.05

In this regard, the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions was significant since the T value was 11.705 (p<0.05), as shown in Table 4.38. Thus, the study rejects the null hypothesis, accepts the alternative hypothesis, and concludes that there is a significant relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions among tourists patronizing Maasai Mara game lodges. Service quality explained 59.1% ($R^2$=0.591) of the variance in behavioural intentions among tourists patronizing Maasai Mara game lodges.

This finding is in line with past studies directed by Mustaffa et al. (2016), Ladhari et al., 2017, Batra and Taneja (2021), and Rahman et al. (2019) in-service industries where service quality was found to be a predictor of behavioural intentions. The findings are also consistent with previous studies in the hospitality and tourism industry (Clemes & Dean, 2020; Kuman, 2020; Jeong et al., 2019; Wantara & Irawati (2021).

### 4.11 Mediating Role of Emotional Satisfaction on the Relationship between Service Quality and Behavioural Intentions

The fourth specific objective of this study was to assess the mediating role of emotional satisfaction on the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions of tourists in Maasai Mara game lodges. The hypothesis to examine this specific objective was:

*$H_{03}$: Emotional satisfaction has no mediating role in the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions of tourists in lodges within Maasai Mara National Reserve.*

The SEM fit statistics of the overall measurement model for study variables were then extracted, as shown in Figure 4.15.

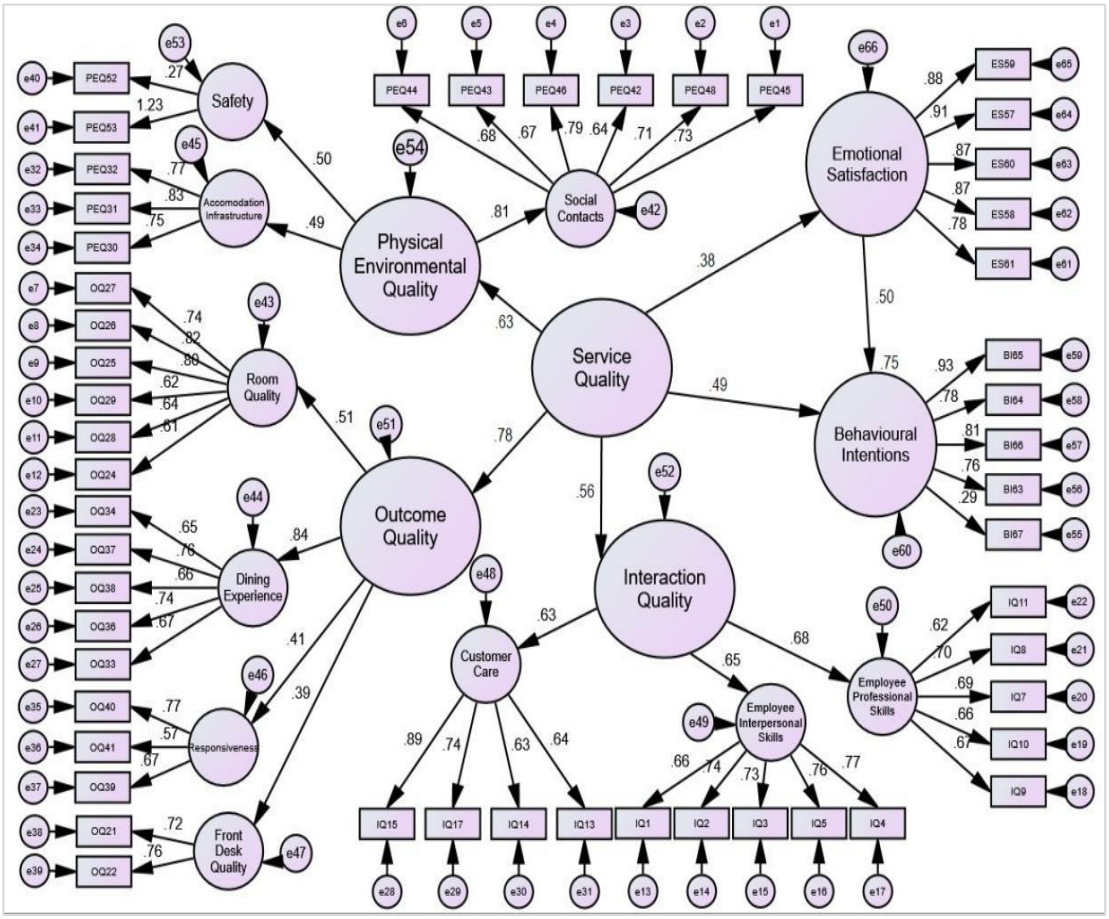


**Figure 4. 15: SEM Model for the Mediating Role of Emotional Satisfaction on the Nexus between Service Quality and Behavioural Intentions**

The CFA model fit the data adequately since the fit indices were within an acceptable range (Table 4.39) (Gold et al., 2001).

**Table 4.39: Model Fit Measures (Service Quality → Behavioural Intentions)**

| Measure | Estimate | Threshold | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|
| CMIN | 2154.041 | -- | -- |
| DF | 1209 | -- | -- |
| CMIN/DF | 1.782 | Between 1 and 3 | Excellent |
| CFI | 0.939 | >0.95 | Acceptable |
| SRMR | 0.076 | <0.08 | Excellent |
| RMSEA | 0.050 | <0.06 | Excellent |
| PClose | 0.470 | >0.05 | Excellent |

Results, as shown in Table 4.40, indicated that service quality was an important predictor of behavioural intentions (β= .489, T=7.547, p<.05) and that customer emotional satisfaction was a significant predictor of behavioural intentions (β= .501, T=12.914, p<.05.). Additionally, service quality had a significant and direct effect on behavioural intentions (β=0.64, T=11.705, p<0.05 (Table 4.40). The regression weight value is reduced to 0.49 but is still significant when emotional satisfaction is included in the model. These results support the mediational hypothesis.

**Table 4.40: SEM Regression Weights for Mediation**

| Path | | | Unstandardized Estimate | Standardized Estimate (β) | S.E. | C.R. | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SQ | → | BI | 0.491 | .489 | 0.065 | 7.547 | *** |
| SQ | → | ES | 0.604 | .378 | 0.053 | 11.364 | *** |
| ES | → | BI | 1.009 | .501 | 0.078 | 12.914 | *** |

***Notes***: BI – Behavioural Intentions. ES – Emotional Satisfaction. SQ – Service Quality. *** p<0.05, Sobel Test: Z=5.249, p=0.000<0.05

Service Quality was a significant predictor of emotional satisfaction after controlling for the mediator (β=.378, T=11.364, p<.05). Approximately 75% of the variance in service quality was accounted for by the predictors ($R^2$=.75).

A Sobel test was further conducted and found partial mediation in the model (z = 5.249, p<.05). This result rejected the null hypothesis and concluded that emotional satisfaction partially mediated the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions of tourists at Maasai Mara game lodges. These results also indicate that the Sobel z value is moderate and significant. Therefore, this study considers emotional satisfaction to have a moderate and significant effect on the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions.

The visitors' perception of service quality has a positive relationship with their emotional satisfaction. This finding is in line with past studies conducted by Mustaffa et al. (2016), Ladhari et al. (2017), Batra and Taneja (2021), and Rahman et al. (2019), where service quality is found to be a predictor of customer emotional satisfaction and that emotional satisfaction mediates the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions. In the lodging industry context, Han et al. (2021) have reported a strong and significant relationship between service quality and customer emotional satisfaction. Thus, the perceived service quality is identified as the greatest predictor for customer emotional satisfaction in the hospitality and tourism context. The present study offers empirical evidence that emotional satisfaction plays a crucial role in predicting tourists' repeat patronage and positive word-of-mouth recommendations.

Further, the results have demonstrated a positive relationship between customer emotional satisfaction and tourists' behavioural intentions. This finding echoes the prior findings of Clemes and Dean (2018), who have claimed the significant role of customer emotional satisfaction and that it significantly influences behavioural intentions. Thus, satisfied tourists are likely to demonstrate positive behavioural intentions. When tourists are happy, excited, pleased, and joyful with the service offered in game lodges, such as dining experience, room quality, front desk experience and physical environment quality, they tend to develop favourable behavioural intentions such as positive word-of-mouth (WOM) recommendations as well as revisit intentions.

### 4.12 Moderating Effect of Tourists' Nationality on the Relationship between Service Quality and Behavioural Intentions

The fifth specific objective of this study was to examine the moderating effect of tourists' nationality on the relationship between service quality and tourists' behavioural intentions in Maasai Mara game lodges. To examine the moderating role of tourists' nationality, the following hypothesis was tested:

*$H_{04}$: Tourists' nationality has no significant moderating effect on the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions of tourists in Maasai Mara game lodges*

To test whether or not the nationality of the participants (whether domestic or international) influenced the study hypothesis, SEM and a multi-group analysis approach were conducted. Data was separated into domestic tourists (59) and international tourists (253). Domestic tourists were composed of Kenyan residents, while the international tourists group was composed of nationals from America, Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia. The research models (both international tourists and domestic tourists) show that the international tourist variable explained 33.1% of the variance in the behavioural intention (Fig. 4.16). In comparison, the domestic tourists explained 24.2% of the variance in the behavioural intentions among guests in Maasai Mara game lodges (Figure 4.17).




**Figure 4. 16: Model 1 for International Tourists**

The model fit measures for international tourists as shown in Table 4.41. As shown, the model fits the data.

**Table 4.41: Model Fit Measures for International Tourists Model**

| Measure | Estimate | Threshold | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|
| CMIN | 3.838 | -- | -- |
| DF | 2 | -- | -- |
| CMIN/DF | 1.919 | Between 1 and 3 | Excellent |
| CFI | 0.925 | >0.95 | Acceptable |
| SRMR | 0.062 | <0.08 | Excellent |
| RMSEA | 0.051 | <0.06 | Excellent |
| PClose | 0.427 | >0.05 | Excellent |

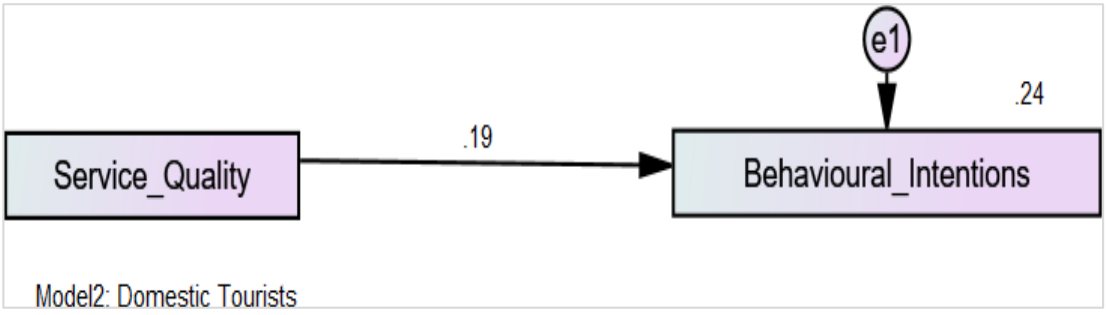


**Figure 4. 17: Model 2 for Domestic Tourists**

Results of the fit indices for domestic tourists are reported in Table 4.42. The results indicated that the model fitted the data well.

**Table 4.42: Model Fit Measures for Domestic Tourists Model**

| Measure | Estimate | Threshold | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|
| CMIN | 3.919 | -- | -- |
| DF | 2 | -- | -- |
| CMIN/DF | 1.960 | Between 1 and 3 | Excellent |
| CFI | 0.921 | >0.95 | Acceptable |
| SRMR | 0.037 | <0.08 | Excellent |
| RMSEA | 0.045 | <0.06 | Excellent |
| PClose | 0.345 | >0.05 | Excellent |

Further, the results of the structural equation modelling, as presented in Table 4.43, indicated that service quality had a positive and significant influence on behavioural intention (International tourist, $\beta = 0.284$. t-value = 6.605, $p < 0.05$; domestic tourist, $\beta = 0.192$. t-value = 3.536, $p < 0.05$).

**Table 4.43: Results for moderating Effect of International and Domestic Tourism Markets**

| Hypothesis | International | | | Domestic | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | β | CR (t-Value) | $R^2$ | β | CR (t- Value) | $R^2$ |
| Service Quality → Behavioural Intention | 0.284*** | 6.605 | 0.331 | 0.192*** | 3.536 | 0.242 |

***Note***: The level of significance is 0.05. ***p<.001

The model paths of the two distinct groups were compared to identify any variations (i.e., Variants). A $\chi 2$ difference test provided useful information regarding the variance between the entire structural models of the two groups under consideration (Domestic vs. international). Comparing the $\chi 2$ score of the baseline (unconstrained) and configured model to the $\chi 2$ score of the constrained structural weights model reveals that there are statistically significant differences ($p > 0.05$) between the international tourists and the domestic tourists under examination (Table 4.44). In this regard, $H_{05}$ is rejected.

**Table 4.44: Results Comparing the International and Domestic Tourism Markets**

| Hypothesis | *Model 1* International Model Path Coefficient (β, p, t-value) | *Model 2* Domestic Model Path Coefficient (β, p, t-value) | (Domestic - International) Significance Difference (p-value) | Hypothesis Results |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Service Quality → Behavioural Intention | β = 0.284, ***p=.000, t- value = 6.605 | β = 0.192, ***p=.000, t-value = 3.536 | p = 0.022 | Not Supported |

***Notes***: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

The results of this study confirm the moderation of nationality on the positive link between service quality and behavioural intentions. These findings collaborate findings of (Dedeoğlu et al. 2018; Šerić, 2018; Martinez et al., 2017; Zgolli & Zaiem, 2017). Seric (2018) conducted a cross-cultural study on perceived quality in upscale hotels in Italy and Croatia to examine the moderating effects of national culture among guests in each country. The findings of this study found significant differences in service quality perceptions among hotel guests of different nationalities. Similarly, Dedeoğlu et al. (2018) examined the influence of tourists' nationalities on their service quality perception and revisit intentions. The study revealed that the influence of service quality perception on revisit intention largely differed across tourists of different countries of origin. Zgolli and Zaiem's (2017) study confirmed the moderating role of nationality among guests residing in hotels in Tunisia and concluded that customer cultural values influence behavioural responses such as loyalty.

The results of this study are also in line with Martinez et al. (2017) assert that the cultural orientation of a specific country explains different behaviour patterns. Significant cultural differences were demonstrated between Spanish and British nationalities. The moderating role of cultural differences was greater for Spanish tourists, whose cultural orientation is collectivist, than the British tourists, who have an individualistic cultural orientation. The study findings further converge with Hofstede's notion that cultural differences influence differing attitudes and differing expectations. However, this study contradicts a similar study that examined the moderation of domestic and international tourists by Cheng et al. (2019), who found no moderation effect.

### 4.13 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the results and discussion of the current study as per the study objectives. The findings were measured against the previous studies' propositions to ascertain whether they supported or contradicted them. All the null hypotheses were rejected. The SEM analyses concluded that service quality significantly influences behavioural intentions, and this relationship is moderated by tourists' nationality and partially mediated by tourists' emotional satisfaction.

# CHAPTER FIVE
# SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 5.1 Summary of the Major Findings of the Study

*Objective 1: To establish key dimensions of service quality that influence the tourists' overall service quality perception in game lodges at the Maasai Mara ecosystem*

The findings confirmed that there were three 2nd order components of service quality, namely outcome quality, interaction quality, and physical environmental quality. These were considered as the primary service quality dimensions. From the visitors' perspective, outcome quality had a significant association with the overall service quality perception ($\beta=0.781$, $p<0.05$), compared to physical environment quality ($\beta=0.634$, $p<0.05$) and interaction quality ($\beta=0.563$, $p<0.05$). This finding revealed that guests in star-rated lodges focus on the actual service outcome as they are the ultimate service product. From the game lodges managers' perspective, the interaction service quality dimension was considered to be more important in influencing the overall service quality perception by visitors in Maasai Mara game lodges, followed by the outcome service quality dimension and physical environment service quality.

Primary service quality dimensions were made up of 10 sub-dimensions that ultimately influenced the perception of the overall service quality among tourists patronizing Maasai Mara game lodges. The ten sub-dimensions were regarded as 1st order factor components. They included employees' interpersonal skills, employees' professional skills, customer care, room experience, dining experience, front desk experience, responsiveness, safety and security, social contacts and accommodation infrastructure. The ten sub-dimensions confirmed in this study also varied in number and content from those identified from other service industries.

For outcome quality sub-dimensions, study findings show that dining experience was the most important indicator of outcome quality ($\beta=0.841$, $p<0.05$), followed by room quality ($\beta=0.482$, $p<0.05$), responsiveness dimension ($\beta=0.424$, $p<0.05$), and the least dimension was front desk quality ($\beta=0.373$, $p<0.05$). From the findings, the factors that influenced visitors' perception of the dining experience were serving attractive and tempting food (85.9%), offering a variety of menu and food choices to meet customers' dietary needs and preferences (85.3%), food served fresh and properly

cooked (75.6%) and wide selection of beverages to complement food served (75.9%). It is also clear from the study findings that the dining experience differed across various tourists' nationalities. Asian tourism market was found to be more demanding and had a preference for spicy foods. European and American tourism markets preferred fine dining, while the domestic tourism market preferred local cuisine. For the room quality dimension, the factors that the visitors considered most important were the availability of reliable internet connectivity (87.5%), Comfortable bed, mattress and pillows (76.9%), room size that was adequate (76%) and availability of amenities such as phones, in-room bar services and safe boxes. The visitors' opinion on responsiveness indicated that a majority agreed that employees tried to minimize their waiting time (69.5%) and that employees understood that waiting time was important to them (58%). The most important factor that influenced visitors' front desk experience was the communication with front office staff with no difficulties (83.7%). This was also supported by game lodge managers who affirmed the importance of good communication with visitors during their reservation, reception and their stay in game lodges.

On physical environmental service quality sub-dimensions, 'social contacts' was the most important element of physical environmental service quality ($\beta=0.821$, $p<0.05$), followed by safety ($\beta=0.463$, $p<0.05$), and the least dimension was accommodation Infrastructure ($\beta=0.450$, $p<0.05$). From the study findings, the majority of the visitors to game lodges were of the opinion that the lodging facility offered an opportunity/environment for social interaction (96.2%) and that they felt a sense of belonging with other customers (96.2%). From the game lodges managers' perspective, there were differences in social interactions between international and domestic tourists. On the safety and security sub-dimension, visitors agreed that the room had adequate security features (70.2%), fire exits were accessible and the lodging facilities were generally clean (63.4%). The physical environment (62.2%) and the design of the accommodation (60.6%) were perceived as the most important attributes of accommodation infrastructure.

From the study findings, the dimension 'Employee Professional Skills' is the most important element of interaction quality ($\beta=0.761$, $p<0.05$), followed by employee interpersonal skills ($\beta=0.720$, $p<0.05$), and the least dimension is customer care

(β=0.341, p<0.05). The Use of non-verbal communication was found to be an important interpersonal skill (84.3%), "The employees are knowledgeable to answer the questions'' was a statement that strongly supported professional skills (63.5%). In contrast, when I have a problem, the employees show sincere concern solving then supported customer care (74.4%).

There were also significant differences in service quality perceptions among tourists of different nationalities and ages. Asian tourists were found to be the most difficult customers to handle and were more demanding during service delivery.

*Objective 2: To determine the influence of service quality on emotional satisfaction among tourists patronizing game lodges at the Maasai Mara ecosystem*

The model summary indicates $R^2$=0.48, meaning that service quality explained 48% of the variance in emotional satisfaction among tourists patronizing Maasai Mara game lodges. The SEM shows that there was a positive path coefficient (β= 0.519) between service quality and emotional satisfaction. In this regard, the relationship between service quality and emotional satisfaction was significant since the T value was 6.886 (p<0.05).

The null hypothesis was tested, $H_{01}$: There is no relationship between service quality and emotional satisfaction among tourists patronizing Maasai Mara Game Lodges in Kenya.

The P value was less than 0.05; thus, the study rejected the null hypothesis and accepted the alternative hypothesis that service quality significantly influences emotional satisfaction among tourists patronizing Maasai Mara game lodges.

*Objective 3: To determine the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions of tourists patronizing game lodges at the Maasai Mara ecosystem*

The model summary indicates that the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions was significant since the T value was 11.705 (p<0.05). Thus, the study rejected the null hypothesis; $H_{03}$: There is no relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions of tourists patronizing Maasai Mara game lodges and accepts the alternative and concludes that there is a significant relationship

between service quality and behavioural intentions among tourists patronizing Maasai Mara game lodges in Kenya. Service quality explained 59.1% ($R^2$=0.591) of the variance in behavioural intentions among tourists patronizing Maasai Mara game lodges.

This indicates the importance of quality service delivery in influencing behavioural intentions, such as revisiting intentions and positive word-of-mouth recommendations. From the game lodge managers' perspective, there was a strong relationship between service quality and tourists' behavioural intentions and referral or WOM recommendations influenced behavioural intentions rather than revisit intentions.

*Objective 4: To assess the mediating role of emotional satisfaction on the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions of tourists in game lodges at the Maasai Mara ecosystem*

The study revealed partial mediation of tourists' emotional satisfaction on service quality and behavioural intention relationship where $z = 5.249$, $p < .05$. SQ was a significant predictor of behavioural intentions after controlling the mediator tourists' emotional satisfaction. Customer's emotional satisfaction had a statistically significant influence on behavioural intentions as a mediating variable where the significance level was $\beta = .501$, $T = 12.914$, $p < .05$. Coefficient of determination was $R^2 = .75$, meaning that the predictors accounted for 75% of the variance in service quality.

A Sobel test was conducted and found partial mediation in the model ($z = 5.249$, $p<.05$). This result rejected the null hypothesis; Ho3: Tourists' nationality has no moderating effect on the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions among tourists patronizing Maasai Mara game lodges in Kenya and concluded that emotional satisfaction partially mediated the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions of tourists at Maasai Mara game lodges.

These results suggest that positive customer emotions such as happy, joyful, pleasant, and enjoyable would enhance the relationship between service quality and behavioural relationship. Emotional satisfaction plays an important role in creating positive service quality evaluations which ultimately shape future behaviours such as revisiting

intentions as well as positive Word of mouth recommendations.

*Objective 5: To examine the moderating effect of tourists' nationality on the relationship between service quality, emotional satisfaction and behavioural intentions in Maasai Mara game lodges*

The study observed that the tourists' nationality (both international and domestic tourists) perception of service quality varies significantly and influences behavioural intentions. The moderating effect of nationality on the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions was statistically significant where international tourists, $\beta = 0.284$. t-value = 6.605, $p < 0.05$; domestic tourist, $\beta = 0.192$. t-value = 3.536, $p < 0.05$). Comparing the $\chi 2$ score of the baseline (unconstrained) and configured model to the $\chi 2$ score of the constrained structural weights model, there were statistically significant differences ($p > 0.05$) between the international tourists and the domestic tourists. These results rejected the null hypothesis; Ho4: Tourists' nationality has no significant moderating effect on the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions of tourists in Maasai Mara game lodges and concluded that tourists' nationality has a significant moderating effect on the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions. Therefore, the game lodge managers should recognize the cross-cultural differences among the tourists and pay more attention to guests' expectations to provide high services.

## 5.2 Conclusion

The current study provides an improved approach to service quality by addressing service quality in a more comprehensive approach. It provides a structured hierarchical model which enables the managers of game lodges to improve each dimension of service quality. Results further indicate a significant difference in service quality expectations by customers' age and nationality. The hospitality and tourism practitioners and game lodge managers should, therefore consider segmenting the market and modifying service quality strategy to satisfy customers' demand within the different age groups and nationalities. Additionally, the modelling framework identifies the most important to the least important primary dimensions that influence customer service quality perception that may assist in resource allocation. Results of the study indicate that the outcome quality and physical environment were perceived

as the most important indicators of the overall service quality. Therefore, managers should allocate more resources to the two primary dimensions as they are more important to their customers while putting more effort into improving interaction quality and, more specifically, customer care quality.

The study results established that service quality has a direct and statistical relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions. Positive service quality increases levels of Behavioural intentions in terms of revisiting intentions and positive word-of-mouth recommendations.

The empirical result of testing the mediation revealed that the relationship between service quality and favourable behavioural intentions was explained through emotional satisfaction. Emotional satisfaction is an important indicator that predicts the visitors' repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth recommendations to significant others. This would greatly assist the game lodges to build a long-term relationship with its existing markets as well as the emerging markets.

Additionally, the moderation effect of tourists' nationality (both international and domestic tourists) on the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions was statistically significant.

The hypotheses tests concluded that the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions was direct, moderated by tourists' nationality, and partially mediated by customer emotional satisfaction. The three effects are positive and statistically significant ($p < 0.05$)

The current study does not support a direct relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions. However, there was a significant relationship between service quality and customer emotional satisfaction, and the emotional satisfaction of customers had a mediating effect on the coefficient path between service quality dimensions and behavioural intentions relationship. Thus, delivering high levels of service quality should be supported by other drivers of behavioural intentions, including positive customer emotional satisfaction.

The four research hypotheses were not supported, indicating that the key service dimensions influence the overall service quality and that service quality, customer emotional satisfaction, and tourists' nationality had a significant influence on behavioural intentions

## 5.3 Recommendations

The study provides recommendations for the lodging industry in terms of theoretical, managerial, and policy.

### 5.3.1 Recommendations for Policy and Practice

The findings of this research provide a strong foundation for policy support in governance to the tourism stakeholders such as the Ministry of Tourism, wildlife and heritage for the growth of the tourism market in Kenya. Further, the study findings inform the stakeholders such as investors, customer associations and employees of the nature of service quality needed to maximize the potential from the existing and emerging tourism markets such as Spanish, Indian and Chinese markets.

Additionally, in terms of practice, he hospitality industry practitioners and managers should use this study results for strategic service quality planning to shape customer behavioural intentions in terms of customer loyalty and positive word-of-mouth recommendation. Managers should focus on primary and sub-dimensions of service quality to provide superior service quality, which acts as a link between customer perception and the company's performance. The game lodge managers may assess service quality at three levels or an overall level, depending on available time and budget. However, monitoring the performance of the sub-dimensions should be a frequent process as it provides insights for management.

The results of this study reveal outcome quality was the most important indicator of overall service quality, followed by physical environment and interaction quality. These study findings suggest that the game lodges managers should focus on improving the outcome quality, followed by the physical environment and interaction quality. On outcome quality, the management should focus on the sub-dimensions such as dining experience, room quality, front office quality, and responsiveness. The Dining experience was considered the most important indicator of outcome quality.

The dining experience varies across visitors of different nationalities; thus, particular attention should be paid to customers' preferences to meet their demands.

Employees' professional skills were considered an important indicator of interaction service quality. Thus, more attention is required during the selection, recruitment, and training of employees to improve skills and competence. Conversely, improving interaction skills and customer care amongst the employees in terms of handling customers' complaints and requests is important in the service delivery process as this has a positive influence on customer emotional satisfaction and behavioural intentions.

The emotional satisfaction of visitors in game lodges is also influenced by service environments such as social contacts, safety and security, and accommodation infrastructure. Social contacts were considered the most important element of the service environment. Therefore, the game lodges should provide amenities and health clubs that will encourage visitors to interact. Accommodation infrastructure also needs to be improved in terms of ambience style and décor that reflect wilderness and cultural background.

Evaluation of service quality in Game lodges should include both cognitive and affective or emotional components of service experience. Managers should consider the inclusion of emotional measures when receiving feedback from their guests. This will enhance their ability to predict favourable behavioural intentions among the customers. Further, the managers should identify and improve on the service quality dimensions that make the most significant contribution to emotional satisfaction. In making such an assessment, the managers should examine the emotional responses based on the key service quality dimensions identified in this study.

The study findings show that the visitor's nationality influences the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions. This is attributed to the visitors' espoused culture which makes a difference in their preferences and service quality perceptions. Therefore, game lodge managers should segment their customers based on cultural differences during service delivery to meet their needs and preferences. Comprehending visitors' cultural values may be used as a marketing tool.

### 5.3.2 Recommendations for Future Research

The present study used the multi-dimensional and hierarchical model to evaluate service quality in star-rated lodges in the Maasai Mara ecosystem, Narok County. A similar study can be done in star-rated lodges in other tourist regions. Similarly, the multi-dimensional and hierarchical model can be applied to evaluate service quality in budget hotels or other unclassified hotels in Maasai Mara or other tourist regions.

The current study focused on the overall service quality but did not evaluate customers' perceptions of each service quality dimension. Further research may explore customers' perceptions of each service quality dimension.

Tourists' nationality was used as the moderating variable in the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions. Other demographic factors, such as age, may be used as moderating variables. Additionally, a more comprehensive moderating influence of cross-cultural may be conducted on the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions.

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# APPENDICES

**Appendix 1: Questionnaire**

Date of filling out the questionnaire:_____

Questionnaire Identification No:_____

Dear respondent,

I am Caroline Kihara, pursuing PhD in Hospitality and Tourism Management at Murang'a University of Technology, Kenya. The main objective of the study is to evaluate the service quality, tourist emotional satisfaction and behavioural intentions in lodges in Kenya. Information collected will be highly confidential and will be used for research purposes only. In addition, the findings will be disseminated to various stakeholders in the hospitality and tourism industry for action.

I request that you show your response by ticking (✓) where appropriate.

Thank you for participating in this research.

## PART ONE: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

1. Gender: ☐Male ☐Female
2. Age (*Years*):

   ☐<24 ☐25-34 ☐35-44 ☐45-54 ☐55-64

   ☐Above 64
3. Marital status: ☐Single ☐Married Others (*please specify*)_____
4. Occupation:

   ☐Employed ☐Self- employed ☐Student

   Others (*please specify*)_____
5. Highest level of Education:

   ☐Pre- high school ☐High school Diploma

   ☐Undergraduate ☐Postgraduate

   Other (*please specify*):_____
6. Nationality:_____
7. Frequency of visit to Kenya:

   ☐First time ☐2- 3 times ☐4 times and above

8. The average length of stay in the lodge:

☐Less than one night ☐1-2 nights

☐3-5 nights ☐Six nights or over

9. Are you currently travelling in a group:

☐Yes ☐No

If yes, please indicate the number:_____

10. Indicate your preferred mode of travel arrangement:

☐On an all-inclusive package tour_____

☐Independent travel arrangement_____

☐Others (*please specify*) _____

11. Indicate the category of the hotel you stayed in:

☐1–2-star hotel ☐Medium-level hotel (3-star hotel)

☐Upscale hotel (4-star) ☐Luxury hotel (5-star)

## PART II: SERVICE QUALITY, TOURIST EMOTIONAL SATISFACTION AND BEHAVIOURAL INTENTIONS

Please indicate on a scale of 1-5 your opinion on the lodges' service experience. Where (1): Strongly Disagree (2): Disagree (3): Neutral (4): Agree (5): Strongly Agree. Indicate your response by ticking (✓) in the box that best represents your opinion.

| S/N | Item | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | The employees are friendly and respectful. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 2. | I was able to communicate with staff with no difficulties. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 3. | The employees are courteous. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 4. | The staff give undivided attention to the guest. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 5. | The employees are willing to help guests with their requests and complaints. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 6. | The employees are smart and neat. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 7. | The employees give undivided attention. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 8. | The employees give prompt services. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 9. | The employees use appropriate non-verbal communication when we interact with them. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 10. | The employees are professional and well-trained. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 11. | The employees are knowledgeable enough to answer the questions quickly. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 12. | The staff performs services correctly the first time. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 13. | When I have a problem, the employees show sincere concern in solving it. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 14.. | Employees understand the importance of resolving my complaints. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15. | Employees are able to handle my complaints directly and immediately. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 16. | I experienced good interaction with the staff, and I'm satisfied with their services. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 17. | There is good reception by the front office staff, which creates a welcoming atmosphere. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 18. | The staff are friendly, courteous and respectful. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 19. | I was able to communicate with staff with no difficulties. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 20. | The check-in and check-out are easy and quick. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 21. | Front office employees are able to solve my problems. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 22. | The lodging facility provides services as promised. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 23. | The room size is adequate. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 24. | The bed/ mattress/pillow is comfortable. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 25. | The room is quiet and peaceful. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 26. | The rooms are clean and comfortable. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 27. | There are efficient room amenities like phones, in-room bar service, safe boxes, etc. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 28. | The bathroom and toilets are clean. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 29. | The bathroom has good toiletries and clean linen. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 30. | The room has a reliable internet connection. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 31. | The rooms have good décor and ambience. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 32. | I am quite satisfied with the physical environment of rooms in terms of facilities, décor and ambience. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 33. | The lodge's restaurant offers a variety of menus and varied food choices to meet customers' dietary needs and preferences. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 34. | There is a wide selection of beverages complementing the food served. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 35. | Foods served in the restaurant are fresh and properly cooked. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 36. | The food served is attractive and tempting. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 37. | Employees serve customers at the time promised. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 38. | The lodging facility knows the type of experience its customers want. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 39. | The waiting time for service is reasonable. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 40. | The employees try to minimize my waiting time. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 41. | Employees understand that waiting time is important to me. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 42. | The lodging facility offered an opportunity for social interaction. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 43. | I felt a sense of belonging with other customers. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 44. | I have made social contacts. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 45. | At the end of my stay, I feel that I have had a good experience. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 46. | When I leave, I feel that I have got what I want. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 47. | The style and décor of the accommodation is to my liking. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 48. | The lodging facility is generally clean. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 49. | The design of the accommodation is generally attractive. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 50. | There are accessible fire exits. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 51 | The room has adequate security features. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 52. | The precautionary measures against COVID-19 are practised. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 53. | The physical environment is what I expected in this hotel. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 54 | I am excited about the choice of this lodge. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 55 | I was happy with the services offered. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 56 | It was pleasant staying in this lodging facility. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 57 | It was joyful with my stay in this lodging facility. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 58 | I made the right decision choosing this hotel. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 59 | I enjoyed my stay at this lodge. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 60 | I am satisfied with the lodge. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 61 | This lodge met my needs. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 62 | I appreciate the overall service quality of the lodging facility. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 63 | Overall service provision of the lodges was excellent, and our expectations were met. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 64 | I will use this lodge's services in my next visit to Maasai Mara. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 65 | At the end of my stay will recommend the lodge's services to others. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 66 | I will pass positive word of mouth to significant others. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |

**Appendix 2: Interview Guide**

Dear Respondent

I am Caroline Kihara, pursuing PhD in Hospitality and Tourism Management at Murang'a University of Technology, Kenya. I'm conducting research entitled **"Mediating role of tourists' emotional satisfaction on the relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions in Maasai Mara game lodges, Kenya"**. The study will assess service quality perception among tourists, the influence of service quality on emotional satisfaction and behavioural intentions. Information collected will be highly confidential and will be used for research purposes only.

1. Kindly mention the star rating of this lodge:_____
2. In your opinion, what constitutes quality service delivery in hotels/ lodges?___
   _____
3. If you have to put in order of priority, which service quality dimensions are important to guests?_____
   _____
4. Please explain the differences in service expectations in each of the following areas among different tourist markets:
   a) Food
   b) Beverages
   c) Accommodation
   d) Front Office
5. In what ways is service quality related to behavioural intention?_____
   _____
6. How is service quality related to emotional satisfaction?_____
   _____
7. In your opinion, do customers come back or pass positive word of mouth because they were happy with your service delivery?_____
   _____
8. Are customers from different nationalities differ in their service expectations and behavioural intentions such as revisit and positive word of mouth?_____
   _____

**Appendix 3: List of Star-Rated Lodging Facilities in the Maasai Mara National Reserve, Narok Tourist Region**

| S/ No. | Identification Index | Name of the lodging establishment | Number of rooms | Star rating |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | L1 | Mara Serena Safari lodge | 74 | 5 |
| 2. | L2 | Cottar Nineteen Twenties Safari Camp | 16 | 5 |
| 3. | L3 | Olare Mara Kempinski | 12 | 5 |
| 4. | L4 | Maasai Mara Sopa Lodge | 100 | 4 |
| 5. | L5 | Keekorok Lodge | 99 | 4 |
| 6. | L6 | Mara Interpids Camp | 60 | 4 |
| 7. | L7 | Ashnil Mara Camp | 56 | 4 |
| 8. | L8 | Sarova Mara Game camp | 75 | 4 |
| 9. | L9 | Fairmont Mara Safari | 51 | 4 |
| 10. | L10 | Neptune Mara Rianta Luxury Tented Camp | 20 | 4 |
| 11. | L11 | Mara Engai Wilderness Lodge | 20 | 4 |
| 12. | L12 | Little Governors Camp | 17 | 4 |
| 13. | L13 | DBA Mara West Tented Camp | 16 | 4 |
| 14. | L14 | Governors Illmoran Camp | 10 | 4 |
| 15. | L15 | Mara Explorer Camp | 10 | 4 |
| 16. | L16 | Encounter Mara Camp | 10 | 4 |
| 17. | L17 | Naboisho Camp | 9 | 4 |
| 18. | L18 | Ollaro Logde | 9 | 4 |
| 19. | L19 | Mara Simba Lodge | 84 | 3 |
| 20. | L20 | Tipilikwani Mara | 20 | 3 |
| 21. | L21 | Sekenani Camp | 15 | 3 |
| 22. | L22 | Santuary Olonana camp | 14 | 3 |
| 23. | L23 | Rekero Camp | 9 | 3 |
| 24. | L24 | Governors Camp | 37 | 2 |
| 25. | L25 | Mpata Safari Club | 23 | 2 |
| 26. | L26 | Mara Siria Luxury Tented Bush Camp | 14 | 2 |
| 27. | L27 | Porini Mara Camp | 6 | 2 |
| 28. | L28 | Mara Bush Houses | 3 | 2 |
| 29. | L29 | Porini Lion Camp | 10 | 1 |

**Appendix 4: Test of Univariate Normality**

| **Skewness** | | | | **Kurtosis** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2nd order constructs** | **First order constructs** | **Statistic** | **Std. Error** | **Statistic** | **Std. Error** |
| | Behavioural intentions | -0.125 | 0.138 | 0.049 | 0.275 |
| | Emotional Satisfaction | -0.774 | 0.138 | 1.027 | 0.275 |
| **Interaction Quality** | | -1.278 | 0.138 | 1.632 | 0.275 |
| | Employee professional Skills | -1.106 | 0.138 | 1.131 | 0.275 |
| | Employee Interpersonal Skills | -1.310 | 0.138 | 1.308 | 0.275 |
| | Customer care | -0.700 | 0.138 | -0.487 | 0.275 |
| **Outcome Quality** | | -0.660 | 0.138 | 0.113 | 0.275 |
| | Room quality | -0.804 | 0.138 | -0.271 | 0.275 |
| | Dining Experience | -1.303 | 0.138 | 1.298 | 0.275 |
| | Responsiveness | -0.223 | 0.138 | -0.902 | 0.275 |
| | Front Desk Quality | -0.826 | 0.138 | -0.258 | 0.275 |
| **Physical Environment Quality** | | -0.845 | 0.138 | 0.696 | 0.275 |
| | Social contacts | -0.561 | 0.138 | -0.604 | 0.275 |
| | Accommodation Infrastructure | -1.933 | 0.138 | 3.682 | 0.275 |
| | Safety | -0.587 | 0.138 | 0.070 | 0.275 |

**Appendix 5: Collinearity test**

| 2nd order constructs | First order constructs | VIF | Tolerance |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Behavioural intentions | 1.129 | 0.886 |
| | Emotional Satisfaction | 1.013 | 0.987 |
| **Interaction Quality** | | 1.239 | 0.807 |
| | Employee professional Skills | 1.343 | 0.745 |
| | Employee Interpersonal Skills | 1.421 | 0.704 |
| | Customer care | 1.927 | 0.519 |
| **Outcome Quality** | | 1.888 | 0.530 |
| | Room quality | 1.329 | 0.752 |
| | Dining Experience | 1.599 | 0.625 |
| | Responsiveness | 1.432 | 0.698 |
| | Front Desk Quality | 1.602 | 0.624 |
| **Physical Environment Quality** | | 1.876 | 0.533 |
| | Social contacts | 1.725 | 0.580 |
| | Accommodation Infrastructure | 1.447 | 0.691 |
| | Safety | 1.959 | 0.510 |

**Appendix 6: Heteroscedasticity Test**

| Ho | Variables | Chi2(4) | Prob > Chi2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Constant Variance | Physical Environment Quality<br>Outcome Quality<br>Interaction Quality<br>Emotional Satisfaction | 2.001 | 0.245 |

Dependent: Behavioural intentions

**Appendix 7: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

| Characteristic | Categories | Frequency | Per cent |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender of the respondent | Male | 204 | 65.4% |
| | Female | 108 | 34.6% |
| Age of the respondent | <24 years | 13 | 4.2% |
| | 25-34 years | 75 | 24.0% |
| | 35-44 years | 74 | 23.7% |
| | 45-54 years | 86 | 27.6% |
| | 55-64 years | 55 | 17.6% |
| | >64 years | 9 | 2.9% |
| Marital Status | Single | 100 | 32.1% |
| | Married | 171 | 54.8% |
| | Other | 41 | 13.1% |
| Highest level of education | Pre-High School | 2 | 0.6% |
| | High School | 11 | 3.5% |
| | Diploma | 12 | 3.8% |
| | Undergraduate | 59 | 18.9% |
| | Postgraduate | 210 | 67.3% |
| | Other | 18 | 5.8% |
| Profession/Occupation | Employed | 193 | 61.9% |
| | Self-Employed | 95 | 30.4% |
| | Student | 14 | 4.5% |
| | Other | 10 | 3.2% |
| Frequency of visit to Maasai Mara Lodges | First Time | 189 | 60.6% |
| | Two-Three times | 99 | 31.7% |
| | Four Times and above | 24 | 7.7% |
| The average length of stay | 1-2 nights | 157 | 50.3% |
| | 3-5 nights | 137 | 43.9% |
| | 6 nights and above | 18 | 5.8% |
| Indicate your preferred mode of travel | All-inclusive package | 237 | 76.0% |
| | Independent travel arrangement | 69 | 22.1% |
| | Other | 6 | 1.9% |
| Indicate the category of the lodge you stayed in | 1-2 star | 6 | 1.9% |
| | Medium Level (3star) | 17 | 5.4% |
| | Upscale (4 star) | 135 | 43.3% |
| | Luxury (5 star) | 154 | 49.4% |

**Appendix 8: Respondents' Nationality**

| Nationality | Counts | % of Total |
|---|---|---|
| USA | 81 | 26.0 % |
| Kenya | 59 | 18.9 % |
| Spain | 24 | 7.7 % |
| China | 21 | 6.7 % |
| India | 20 | 6.4 % |
| France | 17 | 5.4 % |
| Germany | 15 | 4.8 % |
| Poland | 15 | 4.8 % |
| Canada | 12 | 3.8 % |
| Japan | 7 | 2.2 % |
| Britain | 6 | 1.9 % |
| Tanzania | 5 | 1.6 % |
| Uganda | 5 | 1.6 % |
| Zambia | 5 | 1.6 % |
| Australia | 4 | 1.3 % |
| Holland | 2 | 0.6 % |
| Ireland | 2 | 0.6 % |
| Ethiopia | 1 | 0.3 % |
| Hungary | 1 | 0.3 % |
| Israel | 1 | 0.3 % |
| Italy | 1 | 0.3 % |
| Nigeria | 1 | 0.3 % |
| Norway | 1 | 0.3 % |
| Portugal | 1 | 0.3 % |
| South Africa | 1 | 0.3 % |
| Sri Lanka | 1 | 0.3 % |
| Sweden | 1 | 0.3 % |
| Switzerland | 1 | 0.3 % |
| Ukraine | 1 | 0.3 % |
| Total | 312 | 100% |

**Appendix 9: Tourists Nationality per Tourists Region**

| **Nationality/ Region** | **Counts** |
|---|---|
| **Domestic Tourism**: Kenya residents | 59 |
| **International Tourism** | |
| USA | 81 |
| Canada | 12 |
| America | 93 |
| Spain | 24 |
| France | 17 |
| Germany | 15 |
| Poland | 15 |
| Britain | 6 |
| Hungary | 1 |
| Holland | 2 |
| Ireland | 2 |
| Italy | 1 |
| Norway | 1 |
| Sweden | 1 |
| Switzerland | 1 |
| Ukraine | 1 |
| Europe | 88 |
| China | 21 |
| Japan | 7 |
| India | 20 |
| South Africa | 1 |
| Sri Lanka | 1 |
| Israel | 1 |
| Asia | 50 |
| Ethiopia | 1 |
| Nigeria | 1 |
| Tanzania | 5 |
| Uganda | 5 |
| Zambia | 5 |
| South Africa | 1 |
| Africa | 18 |
| Australia | 4 |

**Appendix 10: Service Quality Total Variance**

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 8.389 | 16.449 | 16.449 | 8.389 | 16.449 | 16.449 | 4.932 |
| 2 | 5.554 | 10.890 | 27.339 | 5.554 | 10.890 | 27.339 | 5.627 |
| 3 | 3.783 | 7.418 | 34.757 | 3.783 | 7.418 | 34.757 | 4.982 |
| 4 | 3.087 | 6.052 | 40.809 | 3.087 | 6.052 | 40.809 | 4.430 |
| 5 | 2.093 | 4.104 | 44.912 | 2.093 | 4.104 | 44.912 | 3.976 |
| 6 | 1.994 | 3.909 | 48.822 | 1.994 | 3.909 | 48.822 | 4.280 |
| 7 | 1.787 | 3.504 | 52.325 | 1.787 | 3.504 | 52.325 | 5.215 |
| 8 | 1.605 | 3.147 | 55.473 | 1.605 | 3.147 | 55.473 | 3.651 |
| 9 | 1.530 | 3.000 | 58.473 | 1.530 | 3.000 | 58.473 | 4.036 |
| 10 | 1.361 | 2.668 | 61.140 | 1.361 | 2.668 | 61.140 | 2.777 |
| 11 | 1.258 | 2.467 | 63.608 | 1.258 | 2.467 | 63.608 | 2.232 |
| 12 | 1.164 | 2.282 | 65.890 | 1.164 | 2.282 | 65.890 | 1.989 |
| 13 | .916 | 1.797 | 67.687 | | | | |
| 14 | .886 | 1.737 | 69.424 | | | | |
| 15 | .875 | 1.716 | 71.139 | | | | |
| 16 | .798 | 1.565 | 72.705 | | | | |
| 17 | .758 | 1.487 | 74.192 | | | | |
| 18 | .746 | 1.462 | 75.654 | | | | |
| 19 | .713 | 1.398 | 77.052 | | | | |
| 20 | .640 | 1.255 | 78.307 | | | | |
| 21 | .631 | 1.237 | 79.545 | | | | |
| 22 | .605 | 1.186 | 80.730 | | | | |
| 23 | .587 | 1.151 | 81.881 | | | | |
| 24 | .578 | 1.133 | 83.014 | | | | |
| 25 | .548 | 1.074 | 84.089 | | | | |
| 26 | .538 | 1.055 | 85.144 | | | | |
| 27 | .513 | 1.005 | 86.149 | | | | |
| 28 | .486 | .954 | 87.103 | | | | |
| 29 | .468 | .918 | 88.021 | | | | |
| 30 | .434 | .851 | 88.872 | | | | |
| 31 | .430 | .844 | 89.716 | | | | |
| 32 | .398 | .781 | 90.497 | | | | |
| 33 | .391 | .768 | 91.264 | | | | |
| 34 | .370 | .725 | 91.989 | | | | |
| 35 | .356 | .698 | 92.687 | | | | |
| 36 | .352 | .690 | 93.377 | | | | |
| 37 | .343 | .672 | 94.049 | | | | |
| 38 | .308 | .604 | 94.653 | | | | |
| 39 | .297 | .583 | 95.236 | | | | |
| 40 | .289 | .567 | 95.803 | | | | |
| 41 | .266 | .521 | 96.324 | | | | |
| 42 | .264 | .517 | 96.841 | | | | |
| 43 | .237 | .464 | 97.305 | | | | |
| 44 | .227 | .445 | 97.750 | | | | |
| 45 | .220 | .432 | 98.182 | | | | |
| 46 | .213 | .418 | 98.600 | | | | |
| 47 | .185 | .362 | 98.962 | | | | |
| 48 | .181 | .356 | 99.317 | | | | |
| 49 | .144 | .283 | 99.600 | | | | |
| 50 | .118 | .232 | 99.832 | | | | |
| 51 | .086 | .168 | 100.000 | | | | |

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

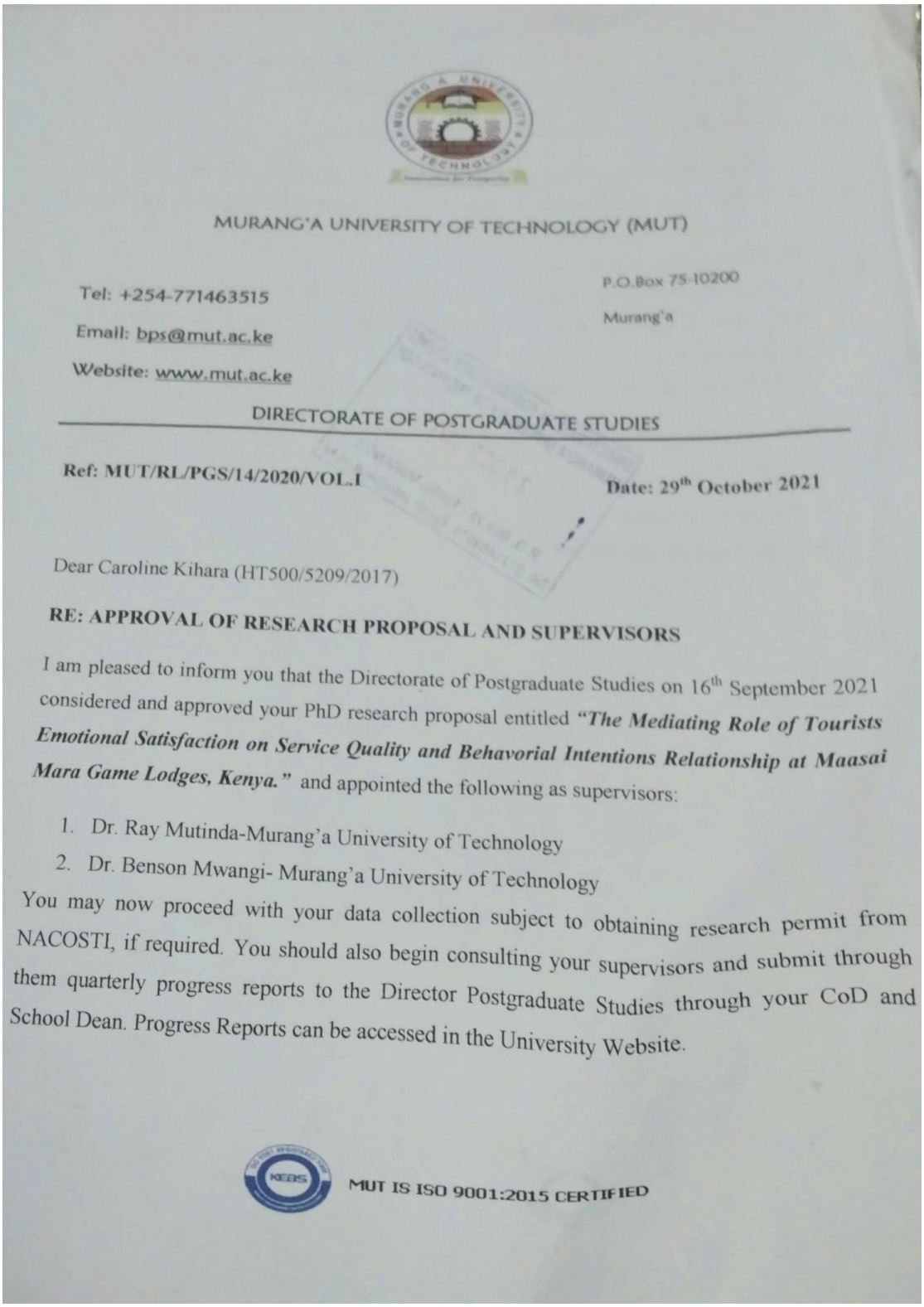
a. When components are correlated, sums of squared loadings cannot be added to obtain a total variance.

**Appendix 11: Service Quality Pattern Matrix**

| | Component | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| OQ45 | .806 | | | | | | | | | |
| PEQ48 | .766 | | | | | | | | | |
| OQ42 | .757 | | | | | | | | | |
| OQ46 | .723 | | | | | | | | | |
| OQ43 | .713 | | | | | | | | | |
| OQ44 | .662 | | | | | | | | | |
| OQ27 | | .826 | | | | | | | | |
| OQ26 | | .813 | | | | | | | | |
| OQ25 | | .802 | | | | | | | | |
| OQ29 | | .716 | | | | | | | | |
| OQ28 | | .700 | | | | | | | | |
| OQ24 | | .561 | | | | | | | | |
| IQ1 | | | .840 | | | | | | | |
| IQ2 | | | .814 | | | | | | | |
| IQ3 | | | .753 | | | | | | | |
| IQ5 | | | .752 | | | | | | | |
| IQ4 | | | .739 | | | | | | | |
| IQ9 | | | | .798 | | | | | | |
| IQ10 | | | | .755 | | | | | | |
| IQ7 | | | | .726 | | | | | | |
| IQ8 | | | | .716 | | | | | | |
| IQ11 | | | | .640 | | | | | | |
| OQ34 | | | | | .843 | | | | | |
| OQ37 | | | | | .767 | | | | | |
| OQ38 | | | | | .714 | | | | | |
| OQ36 | | | | | .681 | | | | | |
| OQ33 | | | | | .591 | | | | | |
| IQ15 | | | | | | .903 | | | | |
| OQ17 | | | | | | .887 | | | | |
| IQ14 | | | | | | .648 | | | | |
| IQ13 | | | | | | .558 | | | | |
| OQ32 | | | | | | | .879 | | | |
| OQ31 | | | | | | | .839 | | | |
| OQ30 | | | | | | | .756 | | | |
| OQ40 | | | | | | | | .836 | | |
| OQ41 | | | | | | | | .779 | | |
| OQ39 | | | | | | | | .743 | | |
| OQ21 | | | | | | | | | .850 | |
| OQ22 | | | | | | | | | .804 | |
| PEQ52 | | | | | | | | | | .874 |
| PEQ53 | | | | | | | | | | .518 |

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.
Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

**Appendix 12: Approval of Research Proposal and Supervisors**



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DIRECTORATE OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

**Ref: MUT/RL/PGS/14/2020/VOL.I** **Date: 29th October 2021**

Dear Caroline Kihara (HT500/5209/2017)

**RE: APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL AND SUPERVISORS**

I am pleased to inform you that the Directorate of Postgraduate Studies on 16th September 2021 considered and approved your PhD research proposal entitled ***"The Mediating Role of Tourists Emotional Satisfaction on Service Quality and Behavorial Intentions Relationship at Maasai Mara Game Lodges, Kenya."*** and appointed the following as supervisors:

1. Dr. Ray Mutinda-Murang'a University of Technology
2. Dr. Benson Mwangi- Murang'a University of Technology

You may now proceed with your data collection subject to obtaining research permit from NACOSTI, if required. You should also begin consulting your supervisors and submit through them quarterly progress reports to the Director Postgraduate Studies through your CoD and School Dean. Progress Reports can be accessed in the University Website.

MUT IS ISO 9001:2015 CERTIFIED

It is the policy and regulations of the University that you observe deadlines. The Guidelines on Postgraduate supervision can be accessed in the post graduate Handbook.

Your responsibilities as a student will include, among others;

I. Maintain regular consultation with your supervisor(s), at least once a month
II. Submit quarterly reports on time, through your supervisors, COD, Dean and to the Director of Postgraduate studies;
III. Ensure quality work all through;
IV. Present your research findings at 2- 3 seminars/conferences prior to thesis examination.
V. Publish two articles from your research findings in a refereed journal prior to thesis examination

For any further clarification, please contact the undersigned.

Yours Sincerely,

**Prof. Geoffrey Muchiri**
**Director, Postgraduate Studies**

DIRECTORATE OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES
MURANG'A UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
29 OCT 2021
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Cc
Registrar (ASA)
Dean (SHTM)

## Appendix 13: Research Permit

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: **229810**

Date of Issue: **15/November/2021**

**RESEARCH LICENSE**



**This is to Certify that Ms.. Caroline Wangari Kihara of Murang'a University of Technology, has been licensed to conduct research in Narok on the topic: Mediating role of tourists emotional satisfaction on service quality and behavioural intentions relationship at Masai Mara game lodges, Kenya for the period ending : 15/November/2022.**

License No: **NACOSTI/P/21/14304**

**229810**

Applicant Identification Number

Director General
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR
SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY &
INNOVATION

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**Appendix 14: Research Publications**

This thesis has produced the following publications:

1. Njagi, C. K., Mutinda, R. and Mwangi, B. (2023). Influence of Service Quality on Emotional Satisfaction in Game Lodges. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 3(2), 20-35.

2. Njagi, C. K., Mutinda, R. and Mwangi, B. (2023). The Moderating Role of Visitors' Nationality on the Relationship between Service Quality and Behavioural Intentions in Star-rated Game Lodges. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 3(2), 36-50.