

**INFLUENCE OF CUSTOMER CARE SERVICES ON  
ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE: THE CASE OF  
GRACIA GARDENS HOTEL, NAIROBI - KENYA.**

**BY**

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## DECLARATION

This Project Research is my original work and has never been presented for a Degree any other award in any other University.



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

**TQM** - Total Quality Management

**RM** - Relationship Marketing

**C.I.M** - Chartered Institute of Marketing

**SPSS** - Statistic Package for Social Sciences

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of the study was to establish the influence of customer service on organizational performance of Gracia Gardens hotel within Nairobi, Kenya. The objectives of the study were to determine how communication influences the organizational performance; to examine how time taken by customers before being served influences organizational performance; to determine how staff etiquette influences the organizational performance and to examine the extent to which customer care training influences organizational performance of Gracia Hotel. The study utilized a survey design. It employed face to face interviews and semi structured interviews as tools to collect data.

The study reveals that, for communication policies to be effectively implemented those affected who are largely the customers and employees should be involved by inviting them to a meeting. At the same time, the type of food and machines/manpower are the main determinants to the time taken before serving the customer. The researcher also recommends that organization should enhance customer service through maintaining the appropriate dressing code within their business environment. In addition, the management of different firms in hotel industry should consider frequent training of employees on customer services. Hotel companies should also employ effective employee etiquette as manifested by mutual respect among all stakeholders. The hotel businesses should also consider employing mechanisms of improving on efficiency through reduction of time spent to serve the customers. All the above will enhance performance in the hotel industry.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

The sole purpose of a business, as Peter Drucker once claimed was "to create a customer". However, keeping the customer has become regarded as equally, if not more important. Hawkins and Reichheld (1990) reported that a 5 per cent increase in customer retention generated an increase in customer net present value of between 25 per cent and 95 per cent across a wide range of business environments. This finding generated a huge amount of interest and activity in academic and business communities, as researchers and consultants attempted to examine and verify these claims. There was a growing recognition that customers, like products, have a life-cycle that companies can attempt to manage. Customers are acquired, retained and can be grown in value over time. They climb a value staircase Gordon, (1998) or value ladder Christopher et al., (1991) from suspect, prospect and first-time customer, to majority customer and ultimately to partner or advocate status.

In the UK despite the potential threats to trading, UK hotel general managers continue to remain confident and almost three quarters of the respondents interviewed were optimistic about their hotel's trading performance. In Europe, hotel profits in Hamburg and Madrid soared in May 2010 courtesy to the cities hosting two separate soccer cup finals. The measurement of service quality, however, is not easy due to the intangible and elusive

nature of service quality. In the Middle East, the demand for hotel accommodation showed continued growth as compared to 2009 recording one of the highest in the world only beaten by the FIFA World Cup hosts South Africa.

In Africa, within emerging markets Hotel Investment is being perceived as the possible savior for the ailing real estate investments and considered to be an abundant commodity in Africa. Lack of funding and slow development on the continent has made it the lucrative investor target for massive growth and potentially huge profit. The African region has a considerable untapped economic potential and is lacking internationally branded hotels in many capital cities. The Redisson Hotel group is one of the fastest growing hotel groups in the world with 370 hotels in operation in 58 countries. It has a pipeline of future openings in Africa in the following countries in Kenya, Ethiopia, Zambia, Mozambique, Angola, Egypt and Libya by 2012. ([www.wingsoverafrica-aviation.com](http://www.wingsoverafrica-aviation.com)).

In South Africa led the perk in the hotel business courtesy of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, there was a steady increase of rooms due to change in demand during the run up to the World Cup that was held there in June 2010. As has been experienced by other host Nations in the past, the long-term influence of the FIFA World Cup on the image and promotion of South Africa to the millions who watched on TV the tournament should provide a positive boost for future hotel demand. Northern and Southern Africa continues on the recovery path and the smooth running of the just concluded World Cup which brought with it additional interest.

The four Countries of the East Africa Community have initiated the idea of re-evaluating and rating of hotels & restaurants using new set of standards developed for the region. These efforts are aimed at streamlining the classification system in preparation for the launch of a common market protocol for the East African Community (EAC) this year 2010. This is aimed at establishing a common code of conduct for private and public tour and travel operators, standardize hotel classification and harmonize the professional standards of agents in the tourism and travel industry within the community. This will not only assure the visitors of high standards and good service but also be used as a marketing tool, as well as create uniformity of tourism products within the block. (www.wingsoverafrica-aviation.com)

Kenya has always been considered a safe haven in East Africa and is a great tourist spot for beach holidays and Africa Safaris. However the 2007/2008 post elections violence tore apart the economy with tourism and the hotel industry becoming the major casualties. A number of hotels had to be closed down and there were massive lay offs, with the remaining recording dismal 10-20 percent occupancy. It has taken time after the Grand Coalition government was formed for the hotel industry in Kenya to recover. However, there are great strides being made and in Kenya for the past one year, there are 4 new world class hotels which have been opened, namely Ole Sereni along Mombasa Road with a capacity of 134 rooms, the second one is Crowne Plaza, a five star hotel to be built in Nairobi by the Sarova Group of hotels, with a capacity of 163 rooms, the third one is the Red Court Motel situated of Mombasa Road with a capacity of 150 rooms and fourth is the Sankara Hotel situated in Westlands with a capacity of 156 rooms. All containing the

modern facilities for hotels, a sign that there is increased demand especially in terms of quality service within the country, ([www.wingsoverafrica-aviation.com](http://www.wingsoverafrica-aviation.com))

Today's average customer knows what they want and how they would like to be treated. This has led to increased research on customer service and its benefits to the profitability of an organization. Customer service is normally an integral part of a company's customer value proposition. With this in mind every organization will therefore do its best to meet the customer's needs and treat them well because they are the survival line for their existence. Without the customer purchasing the product or service there will not be any profit achieved thus diminishing returns to the organization. Zeithaml, et al, (2005).

Gracia Gardens was started in 2003 as a Christian Guest house under the umbrella of Grace House Resort Located next to Yaya Center, that is one of the main major shopping hubs in Nairobi. It boasts of a bed capacity of 100 guests and at has a flow of at least 70 guests per week. In 2004 Grace House Resort opened another branch, now Gracia Gardens, and got its customers from the overflow of its guests. Gracia Gardens stands amidst lush tropical gardens and well-manicured lawns overlooking the Kirichwa Kubwa Valley. Located just 4km from the hustle and bustle of Nairobi Central Business District. Gracia Gardens began its operations in 2005 and has expanded to have 17 rooms all ensuite with a bed capacity of 60 guests. It attracts an average of 40 guests per week.

Gracia Gardens offers hospitality services among them being food and beverage, accommodation, conference package, rest areas plus a pool. It continues to attract many



loyal customers who appreciate its hospitality through superior customer service and the comfortable small size of the hotel.

The hotels charge an average of Ksh 1500 per person for almost any service. They make a profit margin of 50 percent, they use 60 percent of their income on costs, expenses salaries and also invest in ensuring overall improvement of the organization performance etc. 40 percent is their profit which they reinvest to the guest house and save. In terms of the organizational structure the hotel has 7 departments namely: Restaurant services headed by the Head of Restaurant with 7 employees mainly waiters. Kitchen department headed by the Head Chef with 12 employees and this includes cooks. House Keeping department headed by the Executive House Keeper with 6 employee's in house keeping. Front office/Reception with 2 employees headed by the Head of Receptionist. Security Department with 4 watchmen, two working during the day and two during the night and is headed by the Chief Security Officer. The Maintenance Department has 2 employees namely the technical maintenance man and grounds man. Lastly, the Accounts department which is headed by the Chief Accountant with 3 staff members. All the above are headed by the Director/MD who is the owner of the hotel and he is assisted by the General Manager.( Management reports from Gracia Hotel).

In the past two years, Gracia Gardens has improved greatly because it embraces growth plus quality in its services. One of the ways Gracia Hotels and Resorts have invested in superior customer service is by ensuring that staff gets training on the latest customer service-trends. This acts as an incentive for the employees because they receive certificates of attendance and it is a way of motivating them to excel in service provision.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The importance of customer service is broad, however the ignorance of service industries treating its clients without dignity or respect, because of how they present themselves is detrimental. Several years back, customers never had many options to sample from and hence customers had very few choices, however with time, things have tremendously changed because of intense competition from other service providers in the hospitality industry. The capability to provide high-quality and superior customer service has improved immeasurably.

However, the consumers have had a\*general feeling that the quality of customer service has not improved, and if anything, it has worsened. The irony is that most of the technology implementations have been driven by cost savings component and not service quality, even though the technology is capable of doing both. Equally, the usage of technology to provide superior customer service is often no more expensive than what is done today, it just requires a focus on quality service as a real (and measurable) goal, not just lip service. (Leppick, P. 2005).not in reference ( you can only fague in the ref if you can't rem where you got it or delete it altogether apply to all)

Kenya, being one of the most popular holiday destinations for many tourists, has exposed the quality of service in the hospitality industry to improve immensely in the past years. Over time, customer service was not treated as a core component within the hospitality industry but has now become the leading component in ensuring customer retention thus increased business performance. This is attested by the policy statements and

charters of customer service that are now displayed in most of the hotels in Nairobi and other towns for there is keen interest in maintaining the existing customers.

This is because every human being wants to be treated well, with respect and dignity; they want to feel valued as a customer. With this knowledge every business needs to acknowledge that a customer knows other people and can influence their choice or product or service, thus this is a factor that can either increase or reduce their performance in business. Most profit making organizations depend on customer care services as a measure of performance within the organization, thus how the customer is treated from start to end is very key in having them purchase more from the organization and having a good image of the organization hence increased revenues.

It is in this regard that the researcher established what makes Gracia Hotels and Resorts tickle in customer care despite having to grapple with many challenges like intense competition.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to establish the influence of customer service on organizational performance, using the case of Gracia Hotels and Resorts hotel within Nairobi, Kenya. Equally, it evaluated the extent to which quality customer care in regards to how customers are valued and treated within their premises impacts on an organizations' profitability.

## **1.4 Research Objectives**

The study was be guided by the following research objectives

1. To determine how communication influences organizational performance of Gracia Motels in Nairobi
2. To examine how time taken by customers before being served influences performance of Gracia Hotel
3. To determine how staff etiquette influences the organizational performance of Gracia Hotel.
4. To examine how customer care training influence the organizational of Gracia Hotel

## **1.5 Research Questions**

The study was be guided by the following research questions

1. How does the communication strategy adopted by Gracia Gardens influence their organizational performance?
2. In which ways does time taken by customers before been served influence the organizational performance of Gracia Gardens?
3. How dot?s staff etiquette influence the organizational performance of Gracia Gardens?

4. To what extent does customer care training influence the organizational performance of Gracia Gardens?

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

It is hoped that the results of the study will help the hospitality industry realize the value clients bring to the businesses, not only in terms of improving the image of the hotel but more importantly the increased performance and hence growth of the hotel sector. This will consequently assist hotels to improve and/or have their Customer Care Strategies that ensure the profitability of the hotels thus winning them to new levels of growth.

The findings of this study will benefit the management of Gracia Hotels to evaluate its customer service strategies to enable them retain and at the same time attract more customers. To other hotels, this study will provide a good ground as to why it is important to practice quality customer service to improve overall organizational performance.

The study will provide a basis for further research to people who are interested in customer service in the hospitality industry. The study will add to the already existing knowledge base on the concept of customer service.

The study will be beneficial to Gracia Group of Hotels as the findings may suggest approaches for adopting more effective customer service strategies to improve its overall performance and give higher service standards to its patrons. Other hotels in Kenya can draw parallels with their customer service strategies and use the information to

evaluate their own business performance processes. Since customer service is attracting increasing interest in the industry.

### **1.7 Limitations of the Study**

The study was limited to Gracia Gardens Kilimani area of Nairobi due to finance time constraints. It was thus not be possible to cover all the guest house branches in Nairobi and the study therefore targeted a representative sample size of one of the busiest hotels branch in Kilimani area. A further limitation of the study was that the researcher did not have enough resources in terms of time, money and manpower as a result of being an employee on a full time basis. The third limitation was that the interviewer had to ask permission to clients to interview them, as some were willing arid others totally upset by the whole exercise. By limiting the study to Gracia Gardens in Kilimani, the researcher was able to maximize on time to be taken for the study, use less manpower and hence use less money, while at the same time ensure that all the target respondents are reached with ease. Efficiency of service delivery been a sensitive issue to discuss with employees the researcher encountered unwillingness from some respondents to participate in the study but confidentiality was fully assured.

### **1.8 Delimitations of the Study**

This study was conducted at Gracia Hotels and Resorts in Kilimani and the sample group is to be selected within the organisation. Given the case study nature of this investigation, results of findings may be specific only to the Gracia Group of Hotels in

Kilimani and may not be generalised to other similar business units outside of the Gracia Group of Motels. However, the business unit could use the outcomes of the research study to revisit its current customer care strategy and in particular focus on addressing the needs of its current and potential customers. Due to the fact that a convenience sample was used, the findings were generalised and therefore would be low in external validity. The sample was selected from staff members selected from all departments of the Hotel thus limiting generalisability of the research findings.

### **1.9 Basic Assumptions of the Study**

For this research to be successful a small but carefully drawn sample representing the entire population was selected. The researcher also used valid data collection instruments. The main data collection method was the use of questionnaires and face to face interviews. Honesty and accuracy was maintained during the whole research process while filling out the questionnaires.

Gracia Gardens staff were interested and willing to participate in the research as customer service is a key issue affecting their business profitability and hence their job stability. The tone of voice, appearance and question wording was perceived positively by respondents during the face to face interview. Gracia Gardens management facilitated this process as they were interested in finding out ways of improving their business performance through quality customer care.

## **1.10 Definitions of Significant Terms used in the Study**

**Customer care** - refers to the series of activities designed to enhance the level of customer satisfaction of a product or service

**Customer driven** - refers to the actions that geared towards satisfying the customer

**Customer loyalty** - refers to repeat purchases/patronage by customers due to quality service offered

**Customer Relationship Management** - refers to a center approach whereby a firm seeks long-term business relations with prospective and existing customers

**Customer Service** - refers to an activity which has some elements of intangibility associated with it, which involves some interaction with customers.

**Customer Value ladder** - refers to product and service factors that might influence the target customers' perception value.

**Presentation** - refers to the mannerisms that are used in offering quality service to the customer.

**Feedback loops** - refers to the communication channels designed by the management to receive feedbacks from their clients on the services that they offer.

**Policy statements** - refers to the structures developed by a firm on how it is supposed to offer its services.



## **1.11 Organization of the Study**

The study is organized in five chapters.

The first chapter is the introduction which includes the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, limitations of the study, delimitations of the study, basic assumptions, definition of significant terms and organization of the study. The second chapter is the literature review that explores research findings of other similar studies. Chapter three encompasses the research methodology that was used for" this particular study. The description, analysis and interpretation of the data findings are presented in chapter four. The research summary, recommendation of the study and conclusion are presented in final chapter five.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The period of late 1960's and early 1970's witnessed increased adoption of strategic planning as the period was characterised by relatively stable and growth in business environment. In the 1970's (more so in 1973) the business situation radically changed. There was increased environment turbulence, the great stability and predictability that characterized the preceding period was gone with the emergence of the energy crisis. Continued economic growth prospects, slowed down or disappeared all together. It therefore became necessary that this process be modified or adapted in order to cope with the turbulent business environment. The character of business performance planning had to change from what it had been in the past to reflect current business circumstances. (Taylor, 1986).

Hall (1980) made similar observations in his study of how large manufacturing corporations in America were affected when their external environment became turbulent. He found out that many structures that were stable and highly profitable during the "go-go" decade of the 1960's were moving towards instability and marginal profitability. Thus when the changes in the external environment emerge, corporate managers have to direct a great\* deal of attention to redefining their business as a crucial step to formulation of survival strategies.

There is also need to look beyond the ranks of one's competitors today and those that may become competitors tomorrow and exploit new markets. Abel (1980), observes that a business should be defined focusing on three dimensions, the customer groups that will be served, the customer needs that will be met and the technology that will satisfy these needs. Strategy is about winning Grant, (1998). While there is no dispute regarding the importance of strategy in business management, there does not appear to be any agreement as to what exactly is strategy or how exactly the 'winning' is achieved. Indeed, there are as many approaches to strategy but none are universally accepted Stacey, (2003).

### **2.1.1 Organizational Performance**

In recent years, adding values for customers, employees, and owners have become a central theme in organizational performance for hospitality companies. To create values for these stakeholders, a firm should achieve a competitive advantage over competitors by adapting itself to the uncertain industry environment, understanding the changing needs of customers, and responding to new market entries. The success of organizational excellence and business performance can be affected by organizational resource such as customer care culture, decision-making process, and information sharing among employees (Dyer and Singh, 1998).

Accordingly, hotel firms should attempt to build close relationships with their customers and improved service quality that can enable hotel firms to effectively implement their strategies such as service differentiation or service culture.

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

Models and explanations of client-service provider interfaces in service encounters are now being framed with reference to the degree of relationship intensity and the links between relationship quality, trust building and customer retention. Implicit in these approaches is a strong behavioral perspective Reichheld, (1993). In service provider client relationships, a role theoretical approach can enhance these perspectives on interactive marketing exchanges. First, role theory draws on a behavioral perspective by focusing on explanations of social interaction as behaviors associated with specific social positions Riddle,(1979). It further fronts an argument that the social interaction which occurs between two people in an exchange is principally determined by the roles which each adopts Goffman,(1967), thus leading to a role script within the encounter. Second, by identifying the dramaturgical aspects within social encounters, it offers an opportunity to examine how role behaviors and choices within the role script can encourage positive service encounter experience.

Taking both of these perspectives, the behavioral and the dramaturgical, and applying them to the context of service encounters, a strong parallel arguably exists between a marketing approach which values the "relational" aspects of client-service provider interfaces and a role theoretical approach which interprets those aspects as mutually interdependent behaviors. This parallel link is particularly relevant in people-based services (i.e. professional services and many financial/insurance services)

Role theory sees the enactment of behaviors by individuals in a social encounter as a key determinant of both the boundaries of social exchange and its future possibilities. One of the assumptions made in the adoption of a role theoretical perspective for service encounters is that service provision success would be dependent on the mastery of such role behaviors. Actual mutual comprehension of role expectations at both the client interface and at the organizational level would be regarded as a prerequisite for good service experience.

According Solomon et al (1985), approaches to role theory and extending them in a services marketing context, some specific aspects of a role theoretical framework, as discussed above, from a research perspective, role theory contributes to relationship marketing frameworks through both its contribution to our understanding of marketing exchange; and the framework it offers for analysis of degrees of interactivity in service performance. It accommodates four key features of relational marketing approaches; the strong emphasis on interactivity; the "continuous" nature of client management; the mutuality of a relationship perspective and the recognition of the evolving and uncertain nature of client interactions. Furthermore, the cultivation of value added exchanges in increasingly customized and "managed" interactions, as advocated by contributors to relationship and network marketing literature Anderson and Narus, (1990); is dependent on an understanding of the role expectations and the potential role fulfillment of both service provider and client. In a role theoretical perspective, therefore, some of the links to the current evolution in understanding of marketing exchange are pertinent. Role development is, arguably, important in any medium- to long-term service relationship, either at an

individual client level (e.g. with a family solicitor's practice or a local health clinic) or at company level (e.g. with a small firm's accountants or bankers).

*(i) Evidence of behavioral change within relationship and changed role expectations*

Closer relationship between service provider and client

Increased respect, increased informality in service encounters

Development of greater trust, more openness between client and service provider

Reliance on and confidence in service provider grows

*(ii) Improved contact intensity/increase in interactive behaviors*

More individualized (and customized) interactions

Greater frequency on interaction in service encounter(s)

Increased contact intensity and potentially relationship intensity

Knowledge and anticipation of client need deepens

*(iii) Evidence of co-operative behavior/shifting exchanges of power*

Greater decision making on part of client

A higher level of autonomy on part of individual client

Growth in power sharing, joint decisions, co-operation

Further instances of reciprocity within exchange

Role theory can therefore be argued in this context, as potentially a useful framework in people-based services. Drawing as it does on a behavioral and dramaturgical perspective as fronted by Solomon *et al.*, 1985) on social encounters, it also enables a clearer identification of the social/interactive elements involved in marketing exchange and

enhances marketing exchange understanding by placing emphasis on the interactive and relational features within successful client encounters.

### **2.3 Communication as a Customer Service Component**

Good marketing skills will help service industries make the first sale; customer service skills help keep its customers coming back. Communication is the key to providing good customer service. Most organizations think of communication as the ability to speak clearly and to be understood. However, other elements of communication, including the ability to listen and the ability to empathize, are equally if not more important in customer service. Good communicators listen first before speaking. (Tucker-McLaughlin, 2000)

Communication is neither transmission of message nor message itself. It is the mutual exchange of understanding, originating with the receiver. Communication needs to be effective in business. Communication is essence of management. The basic functions of management (Planning, Organizing, Staffing, Directing and Controlling) cannot be performed well without effective communication. Business communication involves constant flow of information. Feedback is integral part of business communication. Organizations these days are very large. It involves number of people. There are various levels of hierarchy in an organization. Greater the number of levels, the more difficult is the job of managing the organization. Communication here plays a very important role in process of directing and controlling the people in the organization. Immediate feedback can be obtained and misunderstandings if any can be avoided. There should be effective communication between superiors and subordinated in an organization, between

organization and society at large (for example between management and trade unions). It is essential for success and growth of an organization. Communication gaps should not occur in any organization. (Gronroos, 1994)

In the market place Business Communication is goal oriented. The rules, regulations and policies of a company have to be communicated to people within and outside the organization. Business Communication is regulated by certain rules and norms. In early times, business communication was limited to paper-work, telephone calls etc. But now with advent of technology, we have cell phones, video conferencing, emails, satellite communication to support business communication. Effective business communication helps in building goodwill of an organization.

**Business Communication can be of two types:**

- a. Oral Communication - An oral communication can be formal or informal. Generally business communication is a formal means of communication, like : meetings, interviews, group discussion, speeches etc. An example of Informal business communication would be - Grapevine.
- b. Written Communication - Written means of business communication includes - agenda, reports, manuals etc.

According to Buttle, (1996), communication is a process of exchanging verbal and non verbal messages. It is a continuous process. Pre-requisite of communication is a message. This message must be conveyed through some medium to the recipient. It is essential that this message must be understood by the recipient in same terms as intended



by the sender. He must respond within a time frame. Thus, communication is a two way process and is incomplete without a feedback from the recipient to the sender on how well the message is understood by him.

### **2.3.1 Communication Process**

The main components of communication process are as follows:

**Context** - Communication is affected by the context in which it takes place. This context may be physical, social, chronological or cultural. Every communication proceeds with context. The sender chooses the message to communicate within a context.

**Encoder** is a person who sends the message. A sender makes use of symbols (words or graphic or visual aids) to convey the message and produce the required response. For instance - a training manager conducting training for new batch of employees. Sender may be an individual or a group or an organization. The views, background, approach, skills, competencies, and knowledge of the sender have a great impact on the message. The verbal and non verbal symbols chosen are essential in ascertaining interpretation of the message by the recipient in the same terms as intended by the sender.

**Message** is a key idea that the sender wants to communicate. It is a sign that elicits the response of recipient. Communication process begins with deciding about the message to be conveyed. It must be ensured that the main objective of the message is clear.

**Medium** is a means used to exchange / transmit the message. The sender must choose an appropriate medium for transmitting the message else the message might not be conveyed to the desired recipients. The choice of appropriate medium of communication is essential

for making the message effective and correctly interpreted by the recipient. This choice of communication medium varies depending upon the features of communication. For instance - Written medium is chosen when a message has to be conveyed to a small group of people, while an oral medium is chosen when spontaneous feedback is required from the recipient as misunderstandings are cleared then and there.

Decoder is a person for whom the message is intended / aimed / targeted. The degree to which the decoder understands the message is dependent upon various factors such as knowledge of recipient, their responsiveness to the message, and the reliance of encoder on decoder.

Feedback is the main component of communication process as it permits the sender to analyze the efficacy of the message. It helps the sender in confirming the correct interpretation of message by the decoder. Feedback may be verbal (through words) or non-verbal (in form of smiles, sighs, etc.). It may take written form also in form of memos, reports, etc.

### **2.3.2 Building Customer Relationships**

The most successful companies place great value on developing lifetime relationships with their customers. In today's competitive marketplace, they're aware that their customers are aggressively prospected and their loyalty cannot be taken for granted. Customer focused companies recognize that relationship building and follow up on service are critical components for promoting both customer retention and business performance.

Today we have access to innovative tools such as the Internet, cell phones, faxes and voice mail all designed to enhance our ability to communicate. Nevertheless, even with all of these technological tools at our disposal, the alarming number of dissatisfied customers, lost sales and failed relationships all reflect the fact that none of us are as effective at communicating as we would like to believe. Temperament understanding helps to foster effective communication. Research in the field of human psychology indicates people are born into one of four primary behavioral styles; aggressive, expressive, passive or analytical. Each of these four temperament styles requires a unique approach and communication strategy. For example, if you are working with the impatient, aggressive style, they want a quick fix and a bottom line solution. Under pressure they can be ill-tempered and quick to anger. Give them options so you don't threaten their need for control. Don't waste their time with chitchat, stick to business. While at the other extreme, the stress-prone analytical style requires more information and is interested in every detail. Their cautious and analytical nature makes them susceptible to buyer's remorse. Be sensitive to their need for reassurance and guarantees. Once you learn how to identify each of the four primary behavioral styles you will be able to work more effectively with all of your customers. (Expert Business Journal, May 28th, 2008)

### **2.3.3 Effective Communication**

Recognize the importance of nonverbal communication and learn to "listen with your eyes." It might surprise you to know that research indicates over 70 percent of our communication is perceived nonverbally. In fact, studies show that body language has a much greater impact and reliability than the spoken word. Create a favorable first

impression and build rapport quickly by using open body language. In addition to smiling and making good eye contact, you should show the palms of your hands, keep your arms unfolded and your legs uncrossed. You can develop harmony by "matching and mirroring" your customer's body language gestures. Matching and mirroring is unconscious mimicry. It's a way of subconsciously telling another that you like them and agree with them. Improve your active listening skills. To develop and encourage conversation, use open-ended questions to probe the meaning behind your prospect's statements. Occasionally repeat your prospect's words verbatim. By restating his or her key words or phrases you not only clarify communication, but also build rapport. Keep your attention focused on what your customer is saying and avoid the temptation to interrupt, argue or dominate the conversation. (Expert Business Journal, May 28th, 2008)

## **2.4 Time as a Customer Service Component**

For a long time organizations ignored this crucial factor of customer service and the customer being a core essential part in the survival of the organization. Being able to respond to clients on time and being able to listen and communicate to the client are some of the important clues that organizations have realized to be key. As a result, many companies are still grappling with the issue of customer care. Customer care covers many aspects and not only in the technological bit but in the attitude of people and the service they offer, time management, etiquette among many other aspects. Today's modern customers have adopted a common trait - they want what they want, when they want it. Amenities that provided added benefits to the guest experience in the past few years are now mandatory. Customer service is one of the top priorities in the list. Customers want

experiences that will make them feel valued thus come back again for such treatment. Many research findings have depicted sophisticated customers whose needs and preferences are constantly changing and thus the service providers have to be flexible and be quick to adapt to their customers demands and ever changing needs. (CIM, 2004).

Customer service is a set of activities an organization uses to win and retain customers' satisfaction. It can be provided before, during, or after the sale of the product or exist on its own.

Many times businesses forget that the amount of time spent by a customer affects the quality of their customer service input. Customers' perceptions are business realities. When customers come to a business and wait to be served, be it over the phone in a restaurant or any other place, they perceive that the organization does not care enough to serve them immediately. The customers end up feeling frustrated and may end up not being a customer after all. This is because customers do not know how long they will have to wait in order to be served. As time keeps ticking, the customers' emotions escalate from annoyed, to aggravated, to flat-out insulted. Eventually, they will reach a threshold of intolerance where they begin to question why they even coming to get a service from the organization. (Business monthly, March 2007).

It is therefore important for every organization to have a strategy on how to inform their customers of their waiting time perception for a given service. This will assist to enhance the relationship with the customer rather than further damaging it as every customer's breaking point is different. For this reason, providing positive customer experiences in time management is more important than ever before. Tangible experiences

with a company are all that the customers have when considering whether or not they are satisfied with the organization or business service offered (Business monthly, March 2007).

The most important asset of any organization is its customers. An organization's success depends on how many customers it has, how much they buy, and how often they buy. Customers that are satisfied will increase in number, buy more, and buy more frequently. Satisfied customers also pay their bills promptly, which greatly improves cash flow - the lifeblood of an organization.

Increasingly, manufacturing and service organizations are using customer satisfaction as the measure of quality. Similarly, customer satisfaction standards are woven throughout ISO 9000:2000. Customer satisfaction is one of the major purposes of a quality management system. (Business Monthly, March 2007).

Total Quality Management (TQM), implies an organizational obsession with meeting or exceeding customer expectations, so that customers are delighted. Understanding the customer's needs and expectations is essential to winning new business and keeping existing business. An organization must give its customers a quality product or service that meets their needs at a reasonable price, which includes on-time delivery and outstanding service. To attain this level, the organization needs to continually examine their quality system to see if it is responsive to ever changing customer requirements and expectations.

The most successful TQM programs begin by defining quality from the customer's perspective. Quality means meeting or exceeding the customer's expectations.

According to Dr. Deming, quality also means anticipating the future needs of the customer. Customer satisfaction, not increasing profits, must be the primary goal of the organization. It is the most important consideration though, because satisfied customers will lead to increased business performance (Business Monthly, March 2007).

## **2.5 Application of Etiquette in Customer Service**

In recent past, many organizations have implemented feedback loops that allow them to capture feedback at the point of experience of the customer. Customer service is a process which has to take into the account of the service to the customer before, during and after purchase of a service or good. Today's customer is looking for value of money to their purchase. Research shows that value takes into account a huge stake of how the customer is treated in regards to their value purchase of the good or service. Customers have memories which are usually the determinants of their repeat purchases. Chartered Institute of Marketers Journal,(CIM 2004).

Just as you often judge other people by the initial impact they have on you, so are you likely to be judged yourself in the first few moments of interacting with someone. Some of the tips for making a great first impression with colleagues and business associates does include:

1. When meeting another person, it is important to extend a confident handshake as you make eye contact.  
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2. Eliminate trendy words from your vocabulary. Modern colloquialisms may be fine on the home front, however, slang is considered inappropriate in a business

environment. Thus, one should avoid a phrase such as "Awesome!" when you mean to say "Great!"

3. When one is representing his/her organization, it is always important to carry materials (such as a computer bag, pens, and notepads) that broadcast a "quality" message. Believe it or not, supporting materials are a definite reflection of one's style and the organization's style. These materials will project an image—positive or negative of you and your organization.

It really does not matter how hard you try, in business you simply cannot please everyone. You could have highly squadron and an award -winning product, but you'd have some buyers who just weren't happy. The bad news is that unhappy customers are more eager to share their experiences than happy ones, and this could spell a disaster for your business.

There is good news, however, unhappy customers who receive satisfaction can become your biggest allies. The trick, of course is to discover how to satisfy their needs so efficiently that they will forget whatever caused their disappointment in the first place.

Some of the etiquette that can be used to make this happen includes;

**(i) Be a good listener**

When someone complains about a poor service, the first instinct is always to get defensive and to distribute blame. Most of the time we start doing that even before the other' person has'finished putting across their argument. When this happens the situation may be misjudged and inappropriate resolutions offered or appear to show insensitivity to



the customers' feelings. Instead, there is need to develop patience and be good listeners if there is hope to reach the depth of the problem and address it to the customers' satisfaction (Kiranjit, 2007).

According to Moss & Green (2001), there is also need to pay attention to what is being said, not how it is being said. Even to quarrelsome customer who is trying to express a concrete complaint but is not able to do so clearly or as calmly as someone else would. By listening patiently to the customers complaints, is the first step in making them feel worthwhile and helping them to open up more. The secret to dealing with all talk and no listen kind of customer's lies in using effective prompting and echoing techniques. This is how they work.

First, as the complaints are being lodged by the customer, instead of trying to interrupt or shorten the complainants script, use words and very brief phrases, which prompts the customer to get everything off the chest, (e.g. "really?" "Oh no," "Is that right?" "How terrible"). Then listen very carefully to what he/she has to say (Sriramesh *et al*, 1984). This gives the customer the satisfaction of getting through his/her script, as well as giving her the sense of that you do care and empathize with their concerns.

Secondly, when the customer has made an important point, echo it back to him/her as close to word for word as possible. This sends the message that you actually understand the customers' concerns, and will help prevent him/her from feeling the need to repeat him/her (Grunig & Doh, 2005). For example, if the customer says, "it broke after just one day!" you might respond with "oh, no!!, it broke after just one day?" (Note: Hie tone of the voice used should reflect the concern).

And, the great thing about all talk and no listen is that, once you win them over, they often become your greatest ambassadors.

**(ii) Do not let an unhappy customer slip away without a fight**

Just because someone is unsatisfied with your service or product, does not mean that you throw your hands up in the air and lament' "that is another one gone." Take steps right away to resolve the situation. Most customers who have a complaint just want you to take the problem seriously and to handle them well so that they can come back again (Grunig & Doh, 2005).

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**(iii) Know when to dress up—or dress down.**

According to Sriramesh (2004), offices' vary when it comes to dress codes. Some businesses have very high standards for their employees and set strict guidelines for office attire, while others maintain a more relaxed attitude. However, it is always important to remember that no matter what your company's attitude is regarding what you wear, you are working in a business environment and you should dress accordingly. This applies not only to business casual wear but to more formal business attire, as well. Certain items may be more appropriate for evening wear than for a business meeting, just as shorts and a T-shirt are better suited for the beach than for an office environment. Your attire should reflect both your environment and your position. A senior vice president has a different image to maintain than that of a secretary or sales assistant. Like it or not, you can and will be judged by your personal appearance!

This is never more apparent than on "dress-down days," when what you wear can say more about you than any business suit ever could. In fact, people will pay more attention to what you wear on dress-down days than on "business professional" days! Thus, when dressing in "business casual" clothes, try to put some flair into your wardrobe choices; recognize that the "real" definition of business casual is to dress just one notch down from what you would normally wear on business-professional attire days. Avoid jeans, worn, wrinkled polo shirts, sneakers, scuffed shoes, halter-tops, and revealing blouses. For men, try wearing a neat pair of pants and a buttoned shirt with long or short sleeves that has more color or texture in the fabric. For women, wear skirts or tailored pants with blouses, blazers, and accessories that mean business yet convey a more casual look than your standard business attire (Grunig & Dob, 2005).

## **2.6 Customer Care Training**

Staff training is a significant part as well as the key function of Human Resource Management and Development; it is the crucial path of motivating employees and increasing productivity in the business (McClelland 2002, 2007).

With the development of the technologies and the whole business environment, employees are requested to be more skilled and qualified, even if you are a good employee today, you could be out of the line some other day if you do not keep studying. A company needs organized staff training if wants to be competitive among others (Yafang Wang 2008).

### **2.6.1 Importance of Customer Care Training**

Training employees in customer care is therefore a critical part of management at most businesses. Even the best qualified or most experienced new hires will need to become accustomed to the practices and expectations of a business. Training is also important for experienced employees to adapt to policy or product changes and improve employee motivation. Understanding some of the objectives of employee training is critical to help develop an effective training program.

Among the most important objectives of training employees is the opportunity for career development and personal employee growth. As employees acquire new skills and abilities, they develop the potential to move up within the company and replace employees that may leave or retire. To maximize career development, managers often have to take an active role in the process. According to the University of California, San Francisco's Guide to Managing Human Resources, "since career development is an ongoing, dynamic process, employees may need encouragement and support in reviewing and re-assessing their goals and activities." Training is important to ensure business productivity and growth. Highly skilled employees are more likely to have the abilities and experience to efficiently execute projects and deliver value for customers. In some cases, this objective underlies efforts to get employees up to speed with recently developed technology. In addition, training for productivity is often an effective way to prevent and address ongoing performance challenges, without losing the prior investment the business has made in the employee. (*E.hoyi business journal, September, 2011*)

Employee training involves teaching employees skills that can help them become more efficient and productive workers. Most careers include some type of on-the-job training, and a trained work force has benefits for employees and employers. Training is often conducted to familiarize new employees with the roles and responsibilities of their positions as well as company policies. Many companies offer continuing training opportunities for employees, focusing on skills that can improve efficiency. Continued training is usually topic-specific and may review skills that can improve employee performance and confidence outside the office. Training is often required when company goals shift or new systems are introduced. (Payne, A. 1993).

Many types of training programs exist, each intended to educate employees in different areas. Customer service training can teach employees new ways to work with customers to foster pleasant experiences and return business. Some companies also offer tuition reimbursement programs that allow company-paid employee training as part of a formal academic program.

Employees who are well-trained on customer care often have higher motivation and morale because they feel that the company has invested in their ability and development. This also results in lower turnover rates. Trained employees often work better as teams because everyone is aware of the expectations and can achieve them together smoothly. Trained employees are also more confident in their performance and decision-making skills. In addition, employees who receive regular training are more likely to accept change and come up with new ideas, thus improve the organization performance. Employees who learn new skills through training make good candidates for promotions because they have

shown their ability to learn, retain and use information. Reliable, skilled employees can also be empowered to train other employees, which can reduce pressure for the management team.

Payne, A, 1993, continues to state that *while* employee training has many benefits, it can cause financial strain for some companies. Outsourcing training or tuition reimbursement programs are generally the most expensive. Taking time for training also takes an employee away from job tasks, which can cause a short-term drop in productivity. Highly trained employees may also be recruited by competitor companies, who will benefit from your training efforts and costs should the\*ermployee choose to switch companies.

In modern hotel business, it is all about competence in people, and especially the employees" qualities. The level of service quality depends on the qualities of employees. The qualities are about knowledge, skills and thoughts which lead to a hotel"s survival and development. Therefore, customer care stafftraining is essential in many ways; it increases productivity while employees are armed with professional knowledge, experienced skills and valid thoughts; staff training also motivates and inspires workers by providing employees all needed information in work as well as help them to recognize how important their jobs are. (Yafang, Wang 2008.)

Training and development can be seen as a key instrument in the implementation of HRM practices and policies. (Nickson 2007, 154-155) Successful hotels always include customer care staff training as their important development

### **2.6.2 Benefits of Customer Care Staff Training**

Customer Care Staff training is the key task to help everyone in the company to be more united. An enterprise could hire experienced employees or train employees to be skilled. When the company trains their own staff, by providing and forming a harmonious atmosphere, accurate work specification and the passion of work, team spirit will be built between employees and management team within the process. (TrainOl 2009.)

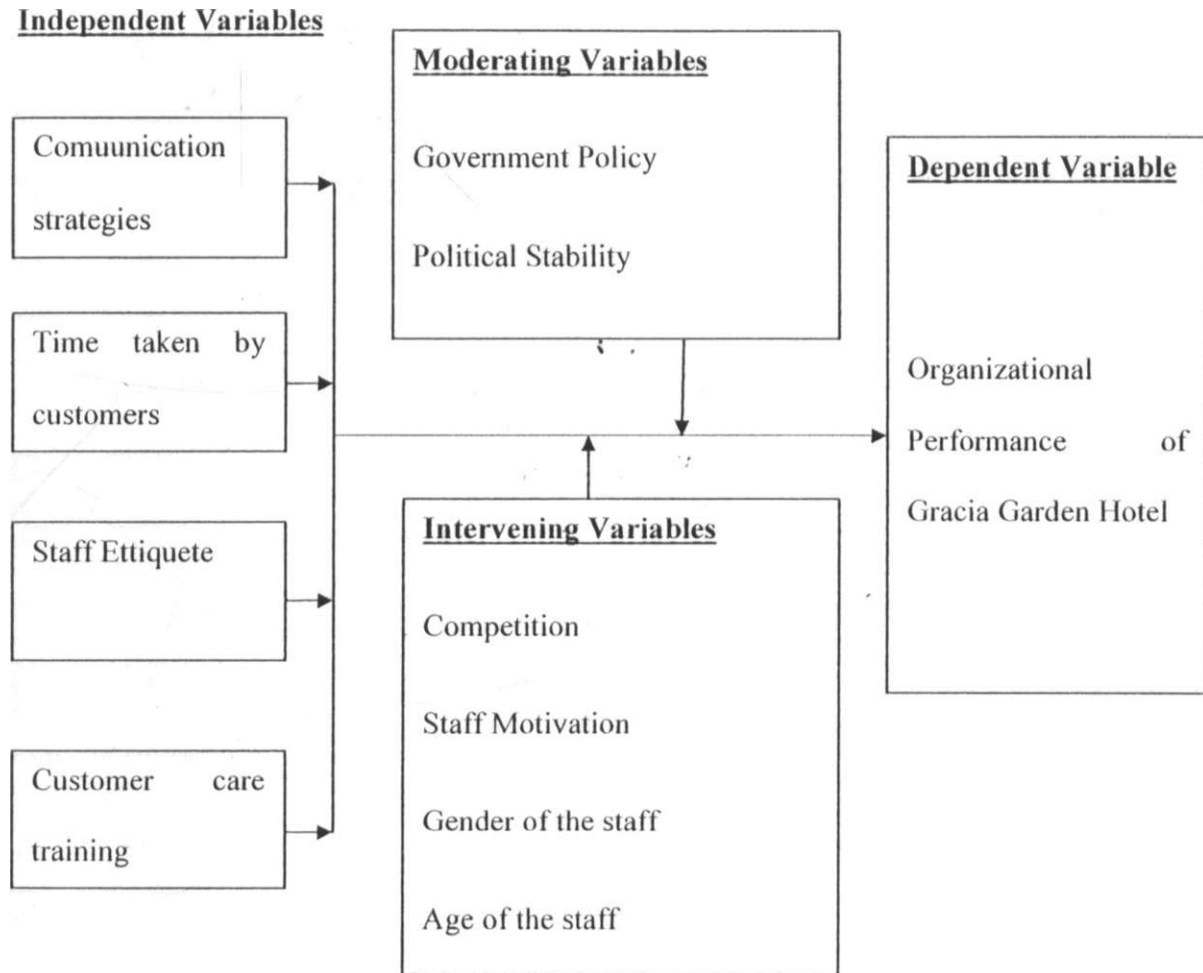
Training of work tasks is one of the main aspects of staff training, including principles at work, professional knowledge and skills, by offering employees these essentials, staff training helps personal abilities match with business requirements. (Train, 2009.)

Training could be enormously demanding and should be in-depth; lack of training or poor training brings out high employee turnover and the delivery of substandard products and services. (Sommerville 2007, 208)

Customer Care training enhances the capabilities of employees and strengthens their competitive advantage. Effective training will improve the personal characters and professional abilities. Not only employees, management and organization would benefit from staff training, customers and guests benefit as well, because of the received quality products and services. (Sommerville 2007, 2010)

## 2.7 Conceptual Framework of the Study

This study will be guided by the following conceptual framework which shows the relationship between various variables as witnessed in the figure shown below.



**Figure 1: Conceptual framework**

The conceptual framework above outlines how communication, time taken before customers are served, staff etiquette, and customer care training initiatives (independent variables) relate to influence of performance in Gracia Hotel. The moderating variables



include government policies, political stability and rates of economy. Intervening variables are market competition, staff motivation, staff gender and age.

## **2.8 Summary of Literature**

The literature review comprises of the introduction, which defines Strategic Management and the Marketing Strategy. Then follows the theoretical Framework of this study as articulated by authorities in the field of customer service and service marketing. It then addresses the first research question which delves on Communication as a Customer Service Component;, the second research objective which delves on Time in Customer Satisfaction. The third research objective which delves on the application of Etiquette in Customer Service which addresses issues like being'a good listener, how not to let an unhappy customer slip away without a fight, and knowing when to dress up or dress down. The forth objective dwells on Customer Care Training Initiatives and investigates the importance and benefits of training staff on customer care. Lastly, it draws the Conceptual framework for this study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter highlights the effects of customer care to the performance of Gracia Gardens. The research process included the research design, the population and the sample size, the data collection methods, the research procedures, data analysis and presentation methods.

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#### **3.2 Research Design**

The study utilized a survey design. A survey is an attempt to gather data from members of a population in order to determine the current status of that population with respect to one or more variables (Mugenda 2003). The survey design utilized both questionnaire and interview method. This design will allow the researcher to use descriptive research. This design was chosen because it's easier to collect data from a sample rather than from every member of the population. This makes the research to consume less time and cost. It also utilizes self administered questionnaires and face-to-face interviews which will consist both open ended and closed ended questions.

##### **3.2.1 Quantitative Research**

"Quantitative research allows the researcher to familiarize him/herself with the problem or concept to be studied, and perhaps generate hypotheses to be tested."

(Golafshani 2003, 597) Quantitative research seeks to quantify the collected data for analyzing, and find a final course of the action. It is based on statistics, the objects are large number of respondents and it is structured. In this research quantitative method is used to gather the information from the employees of the seven departments about their attitudes towards the hotels Customer Care Services. With the help of quantitative research method, it is easy to have a clear and scientific view on the opinions by having them on questionnaires and analyze with SPSS, and to interview one or some of the employees about their thoughts does not present all employees' opinions; moreover, it is not possible to interview every employee individually.

### **3.2.2 Qualitative Research**

"Qualitative research forms a major role in supporting marketing decision-making, primarily as an exploratory design but also as a descriptive design." (Malhotra & 27 Rirks 2003, 131) Meaning that by using qualitative research, "why" instead of "how" will be found out. Qualitative Research focuses on developing an initial understanding out of the research, and it is not based on statistics. Qualitative can be used alone or to support quantitative research. For this research, in order to get a better understanding of the customer care services used, general information and their effects etc. the researcher used the depth interview (Figure 3) to support the quantitative research.

Figure 2: Qualitative Research Techniques (Malhotra & Birks 2003, 158)

### **3.3 Target Population**

The study targeted the staff and guests of Gracia Gardens in Nairobi so as to get accurate information. The study was also limited to the employees and guests of Gracia Gardens selected for the study and therefore strived to get the necessary information in regards to the quality of customer service that they accord to their customers. It is also through the interaction with the supervisors that the study was able to gather information on the customer service and also from the feedback forms the hotels usually gives its guests.

### **3.4 Sample Selection and Sample Size**

This section refers to a research plan that indicates how cases are to be selected for observation or as respondents. The total population for Gracia Gardens employees is 44, mainly 36 staff members, 6 supervisors, 1 general manager and 1 director. The research applied simple random sampling to choose the sample size for the staff. The research therefore targeted 12 staff respondents and 6 of the management respondent making the total Gracia Garden Staff sample size be 18. Simunic (1984) argued that stratified sampling provides one way of obtaining a representative sample: therefore it ensures different groups of a population are adequately represented in the sample so as to increase the level of accuracy. This method provided a more representative sample than strictly random sampling does. The individuals were selected from within the population of interest since they possess similar attributes in the population.

The research used a convenience sampling to select the Gracia Gardens guests for the interview. Porter (1998) argued that for qualitative research, it is the relevance to the research topic rather than their representativeness which determines the way in which people to be studied are selected. On average, Gracia Gardens receives forty guests per week, therefore, the sample targeted 20 guests using the face-to-face interview method. This method provided a quick and cheap as the researcher targeted walk in clients.

### **3.5 Research Instruments**

Both primary and secondary data was used. Personal interviews were used to pre-test the structured questionnaire that was developed to be administered in the survey. Secondary

data was collected from the administrative and personnel reports and any other relevant materials for the study. The main instruments in data collection for Gracia Gardens staff was through semi structured questionnaires consisting both open and closed ended questions, targeting at least 26 members of Gracia Hotel. Questionnaires were either delivered and picked later or emailed to the respondents. The questionnaires were designed as per the research question with Part A, having the background information, Part B: The communication strategy, Part C: Time taken to give service, Part I): staff etiquette and Part E: Customer Care Training.

The main instrument to gather data from the guests of Gracia Gardens was through face-to-face interviews. The interview questionnaire guide was designed to help the research assistant to focus on topics that are important to explore, maintain consistency across interviews with different respondents, and stay on track during the interview process.

The three basic parts of the interview guide are as follows:

- a) The *facesheet*, which is used to record the time, date, and place of the interview, special conditions or circumstances that may affect the interview, and demographic information about the respondent being interviewed
- b) The *interview questions*, which are placed on the left side of the page, along with a blank space on the right side of the page for written observations

- c) The *post-interview comment sheet*, which is a place to write notes after the interview; these notes included feelings, interpretations, and other comments that arose during the interview

The instrument was advantageous as the researcher was able to observe surroundings, use non verbal communication and use extensive probing to get answers for the more complex interview questions

For the secondary data documents, sources were employed whereby use of previous document or materials to support the data received from questionnaires and information from interviews that includes book and magazines available in the libraries which were visited as well as information from relevant websites. Gracia Hotels' financial reports, management circulars and minutes to their meetings were sources of our secondary data.

### **3.5.1 Validity of Research Instruments**

Validity measures whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are. (Joppe, 2000). The validity of the study was tested as per the pilot study discussed below. The pre-testing of the both self administered questionnaires and face-to-face interview questionnaires was conducted at two guest houses randomly selected within Kilimani area in Nairobi. Two staff from each guest house were administered the questionnaires and another two guests were interviewed. The pilot study was conducted to establish if there are weaknesses and ambiguities in any of the items in the questionnaires. The questionnaires also elicited the

type of data desired and anticipated. This was followed by amendments before the final data collection.

### 3.5.2 Reliability of research Instruments

Joppe (2000) defines reliability as the extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable.

The internal consistency of the items and reliability coefficients was calculated from the pilot study data. According to Roscoe (1969), the split-half method is used to establish the coefficient of internal consistency. Split-half test was done to obtain the correlation coefficient (r) using the Pearson Products Moment Correlation Coefficient -

Formula indicated below:

$r = \frac{\sum xy - (\sum X)(\sum Y) / N}{\sqrt{[\sum x^2 - (\sum X)^2 / N][\sum y^2 - (\sum Y)^2 / N]}}$ ; where;  $\sum xy$  = Sum of the cross product of the values for each variable

$(\sum X)(\sum Y)$  = product of the sum of X and sum of Y

N = Number of pairs of scores

To obtain the reliability coefficient (r) of the entire instrument, the Spearman Brown Prophecy Formula indicated below was applied



$Re = 2r / (1 + r)$ , where;  $Re$  = reliability of the original test,  $R$  = reliability coefficient resulting from correlating the scores of the odd statements with scores of the even statements.

### **3.6 Data Collection Procedures**

The researcher got an official introductory letter from the University of Nairobi to request for a permit to conduct research from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology department. This was then presented to the managing Director of Gracia Hotels and Resorts to collect information from their staff. The questionnaires was designed on the basis of the research questions and the questions were standardized, validated and reliable for testing purposes; the departments where the research was conducted were agreed upon and prior communication to the potential individual respondents was done through the phone so as to book appointment. After confirmation of date and time, the research assistant delivered the questionnaires to the individuals and picked them on an agreed time, two days after the delivery. The questionnaires were accompanied by a letter of introduction to the potential respondents, which stated the purpose of the research. Once the information was filled in the questionnaires were picked from the selected respondents to be taken for analysis.

The interview questions were designed before the interviews took place. Majority of the interview questions were open ended because it allowed the researcher to probe further so as to get meaningful information. The interviews were done face to face, individually with the front

office personnel introducing the researcher to the clients of Gracia Garens. The interviews were done on different dates so as to capture a wide spectrum of clients.

### **3.7 Data Analysis Techniques**

To assign meaningful numbers to responses variables were measured at interval scales. Numbers were assigned for responses which were closed ended. The open ended questions the researcher categorized responses given and assigned numbers to them.

Data collected from the field was analyzed by both descriptive and inferential statistics through statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). The software was chosen because it is the most widely used package for analyzing survey data. Besides being the most used package, the software has the advantage of being user friendly. It can also be easily used to analyze multi-response questions, cross section and time series analysis and cross tabulations. The data will be presented on tables preceded by explanations. Content analysis and thematic analysis was utilized for data obtained from interpersonal interviews.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter represents data analysis, findings, presentation and interpretation of findings. The purpose of the study was to establish the influence of customer service to performance of Gracia Gardens hotel within Nairobi, Kenya. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics where frequencies, percentages as well as standard deviation guided the researcher to interpret the data. The chapter is presented according to the research objectives including the questionnaire return rate; personal information; the influence of customer care communication responses, time taken by customers before being served, staff etiquette, as well as customer care training for the overall performance of Gracia Hotel.

#### **4.2 Questionnaire return rate**

Target respondents were the staff of Gracia Gardens Hotel in Nairobi. A return rate of 83.3 percent was realized as presented in Table 4.2.1.

**Table 4.2.1: Questionnaire return rate**

<b>Target respondents</b>	<b>Sample size</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>Return rate (%)</b>
Staff	18	15	83.3

This implies that return rate was good for since it was more than 80 percent. According to Edwards *et al* (2002), a questionnaire return rate of 80 percent and above is absolutely satisfactory, while 60 percent - 80 percent return rate is quite satisfactory. A return rate below 60 percent is 'barely acceptable'.

### **4.3 Demographic characteristics of respondents**

Personal information of the staff was based on name of the department, position of the respondent, working experience, gender, highest level of education and whether the respondent have any relevant professional qualification.

**Table 4.3.1: Distribution of respondents by departments**

<b>Name of the department</b>	<b>Frequency(n)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Restaurant	3	20.0
Kitchen	2	13.3
Public area	2	13.3
Frontal office	3	20.0
Food & beverage	3	20.0
Housekeeping	2	13.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Findings indicated that, Restaurant, Front Office and Food & Beverages departments at Gracia Gardens Hotel had each 20 percent of all employees. Other departments including Kitchen, Public Area and House Keeping had each 13.3 percent. This indicates that most of the employees at Gracia Gardens Hotel are based at the Restaurant, Front Office and Food & Beverages departments. The department of the respondents is important to determine since different departments requires a differentiated level of customer service.

**Table 4.3.2: Position of the respondent**

<b>Position of the respondent</b>	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Waiter/waitress	6	40.0
Chef	2	13.3
Food& beverages manager	2	13.3
Receptionist	3	20.0
Housekeeper	2	13.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Regarding to the position of the respondent, 40 percent were waiters/waitresses, 20 percent were receptionists while food and beverages managers, chefs and housekeepers were 13.3 percent each. Findings therefore indicate that most of the staff members at Gracia Gardens Hotel were front officers, a fact that put them at the centre of the customer service since the nature of their tasks gives them direct contact with the customers.

**Table 4.3.3: Working experience in the restaurant**

<b>Working experience in the restaurant</b>	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
0 -12 months	7	46.7
1 - 3 years	3	20.0
3 -5 years	1	6.7
5 -10 years	4	26.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Findings on the working experience of the respondents indicated that 46.7 percent of them had 0 -12 months working experience while 26.7 percent had 5 - 10 years. Some other 20 percent of the respondents have been working with the restaurant for I - 3 years. This is an indication that, majority of employees at Gracia Gardens Hotel have working experience with the restaurant for at most 3 years. The level of experience with an organization ultimately important since this would indicate the level of organizational socialization of an employee, a factor that in turn reflects the customer service offered.

**Table 4.3.4: Gender of the respondent**

<b>Gender of the respondent</b>	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	8	- 53.3
Female	7	46.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>

According to the findings on the gender of the respondents, majority (53.3 percent) were male while the remaining 46.7 percent of the respondent were female. Gender of the

employees is important since it may be associated with the matching of customer service required, for instant, females have always being associated with better customer service in the front office.

**Table 4.3.5: Highest level of education**

<b>Highest level of education</b>	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Diploma	5	33.3
Certificate	10	66.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Concerning the highest level of education, majority (66.7 percent) of the respondents had a certificate while 33.3 percent had diploma.

**Table 4.3.6: Whether the respondents have relevant professional qualification**

	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	13	86.7
No	2	13.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100.0</b>

On whether the respondents have relevant professional qualification, majority (86.7 percent) of the respondent reported yes while 13.3 percent had no relevant professional qualification. This indicates that, majority of employees at Gracia Gardens Hotels have relevant professional qualifications which is an imporetative component for competence in provision for goocf customer service.

#### 4.4 Influence of communication channels on performance

The section was based on ways to which adopted strategies influence performance of the hotel, extent to which customer service strategies have enabled the success of the hotel, frequent challenge that faced by Gracia Hotel, rate of the implementation of customer service, whether the hotel has ways to oppose implementation the challenges and ways to oppose implementation the challenges.

**Table 4.4.1: If Gracia Gardens have a communication policy for staff**

	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	11	73.3
No	4	26.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100.0</b>

On whether Gracia Gardens have a communication policy for staff, majority (73.3%) revealed there is communication policy while 26.7% agreed there are no such policies. This implies that there is communication policy in Gracian Gardens. Policies are important for good performance of any organization since these policies stipulates an effective way of interaction between the clients and the service providers.



**Table 4.4.2: When the policy is implemented**

	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Weekly	7	46.7
Monthly	5	33.3
Quarterly	1	6.7
Yearly	1	6.7
Not applicable	1	6.7
-----	—	100.0

On when the policies were implemented., 46.7% said weekly while 33.3% agreed monthly. This indicates that communication policies at Gracia Hotel are reviewed every month. For policies to be tested on their effectiveness, they should be implemented on reviewed at intervals of time.

**Table 4.4.3: Existing methods of communication**

	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Emails	5	33.3
SMS texts	1	6.7
Meetings	9	60.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The study also sought to know the existing methods of communication within Gracia Hotel. From the findings, 60% of the respondents reported meetings while 33.3% said emails. This implies that communication within hotels is mostly through emails. For

the effectiveness communication to be realized, the channel must reach the intended recipient in the most efficient and effective way.

**Table 4.4.4: How often the management communicates to staff**

	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Weekly	7	46.7
Monthly	7	46.7
Quarterly	1	6.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The study also revealed that 46% of the respondents receive communication from the management on weekly bases while another 46.7% receive communications on monthly bases. This implies that, management of Gracia Hotel makes communication to the staff at least once in a month.

#### **4.5 Influence of time taken by customers before being served on performance**

This section presents time taken by the customers to be served. It was based on factors determining the time taken before serving the customer, ways to which time influence satisfaction and ways used by the management to improve the time taken in service.

**Table 4.5.1: Duration it takes to serve a customer once they place orders**

	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
10-20 minutes	10	66.7
21-30 minutes	4	26.7
31-40 minutes	1	6.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Regarding the duration it takes to serve a customer once they place orders, majority (66.7%) reported 10-20 minutes while 26.7% revealed between 21-30 minutes. This implies that it averagely takes between 10 and 20 minutes to serve a customer at Oracia Hotel. This is a reasonable time though the duration largely depends on the nature of order.

**Table 4.5.2: Factors determining the time taken before serving the customer**

	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Type of food	14	93.3
Number of customers	3	20.0
Type of machines/manpower used	9	60.0
Co-ordination of the departments	4	26.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>200.0</b>

On whether time taken influence customers satisfaction all the hotel respondents said the time is an influence to the satisfaction of its customers.

Regarding the factors determining the time taken before serving the customer, majority (93.3 percent and 60 percent) agreed type of food and type of machines/

manpower used respectively. 26.7 percent of the respondent felt that co-ordination of the departments was another factor that determined the time taken before a customer was served while 20 percent was number of customers. This is an indication that the type of food and machines/manpower are the main determinants to the time taken before serving the customer. The reason for this is because some food require more time for preparation to be served to the customers while advanced machine/manpower would increase the efficiency and thus reduce the duration taken before serving the customers.

**Table 4.5.3: Ways to which time influence customer satisfaction**

<b>Ways to which time influence satisfaction</b>	<b>* . Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
No response	2	13.3
Poor supervisory	5	33.3
Order delay	8	53.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100.0</b>

On ways to which time influence satisfaction, majority (53.3 percent) of the respondents had the opinion that the order is delayed while 33.3 percent said that time caused poor supervisory which influenced customer satisfaction. 13.3 percent of the respondents did not respond. This indicates that order delay is a major challenge in customer satisfaction at Gracia Gardens Hotel. This could be partly be explained by the staff size in an organization, the machine/manpower size as well as the level of supervisory.

**Table 4.5.4: If time taken influence customer satisfaction**

	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	14	93.3
No	1	6.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The study also sought to establish the level of customer satisfaction given the duration taken to serve a customer. An overwhelming majority (93.3%) had the opinion that the customers are satisfied. This implies; that, customer at Gracia Hotel are satisfied with the time taken to serve them. This also implies that, time taken to serve a customer is a major determinant of the organizational performance.

**Table 4.5.5: Ways used by the management to improve the time taken in service /serving its customers**

	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Employing more staffs	13	86.7
Team working	7	46.7
Improving the system	13	86.7
Staff training	9	60.0
Good supervision	3	20.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>300.0</b>

The researcher also sought to analyze ways used by the management of Gracia Gardens Hotel to improve the time taken in service /serving its customers. Employing

more staffs, improving the system and staff training were mentioned as the most effective ways the management should take to improve the time taken in service /serving its customers with majority of (86.7 percent, 86.7 percent and 60.0 percent respectively).

Other ways were teamworking (46.7 percent) and good supervision (20 percent). From the findings it can be deduced that, employing more staff would reduce the workload since each employee will have less number of customers to serve. At the same time improving the system of operations would be a measure to eliminate inefficiency within the organization's operation by collapsing steps that may not add value to the both the internal controls and the customer service. \* .

#### **4.6 Influence of staff etiquette on performance**

Staff etiquette was based on whether the respondents' staffs have a dressing code, ways on which dress code influence customers' satisfaction, whether the management offers staff training on presentation, courses/workshops the respondents have been trained on, ways on how the respondents handle difficult or dissatisfied customers, respondents' response on the how management ensure staff handles clients with presentation and ways which staff etiquette influences the performance.

**Table 4.6.1: Whether the respondents' staffs have a dressing code**

<b>Whether the respondents' staff have a dressing code</b>	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes		60.0
No		40.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100.0</b>

According to the findings, majority (60 percent) of the employees at Gracia Gardens Hotel felt that the organization has staff dressing code while others (40 percent) refuted the existence of such codes. This indicates the existence of dressing code at Gracia Gardens Hotel. Organizations may see it important to enhance customer service through maintaining the appropriate dressing code within their business environment.

**Table 4.6.2: How dress code influence performance**

	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Neatness		40.0
Image of the hotel		53.3
Unique and attractive to customers		6.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The ways to which dress code affect customers' satisfaction were also analyzed. From the findings, neatness (40 percent), image of the hotel (53.3 percent) and unique and attractive to customers (6.7 percent) were the most prevalent ways in which dress code would affect customer's satisfaction as mentioned by staff at Gracia Garden Hotel.

**Table 4.6.3: Whether the management offers staff trainings on presentation**

	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	8	53.3
No	7	46.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100.0</b>

On whether the management offers staff trainings on presentation, majority (53.3 percent) agreed while 46.7 percent of the respondents disagreed. This is an indication that management at Gracia Gardens Hotel management offers staff trainings on presentation.

i .

Training on presentation for employees would be important to update them on the requirements on customer service.

**Table 4.6.4: Ways on how the respondents handle difficult or dissatisfied customers**

	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Listening to their ideas	12	92.3
Calling the supervisors	7	53.8
Being polite to the clients	7	53.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>200.0</b>

Findings on how the respondents handle difficult or dissatisfied customers indicated that, majority (92.2 percent) listen to the customers' ideas while 53.8 calls the supervisors to handle the case. Others (53.8 percent) ensure that they are polite to the customers.



**Table 4.6.5: Staff response 011 how management ensure staff handles clients with proper presentation**

	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Good management	7	53.8
Constant training	8	61.5
Introducing suggestion box	6	46.2
Proper supervision	5	38.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>200.0</b>

Findings on how management ensure staff handles clients with presentation indicated that constant training (61.5 percent), good management (53.8 percent) and introduction of suggestion boxes (46.2 percent) are the main steps taken by Gracia Garden Hotel to handle clients with presentation. ,,

Findings from this study clearly indicate that, one of the ways Gracia Gardens have invested in superior customer service is by ensuring that staff gets training on the latest customer service etiquette trends. This acts as an incentive for the employees because they receive certificates of attendance and it is a way of motivating them to excel in service provision.

**Table 4.6.6: Ways which staff etiquette influence the performance**

<b>Ways which staff etiquette influence the performance</b>	<b>Frequency (II)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Customers are satisfied	7	100.0
Attracts more clients	7	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>200.0</b>

Ways which staff etiquette influence the performance were also analyzed where it was found that when customers are satisfied and more of them attracted to an organization, performance of that organization goes up.

#### **4.7 Influence of customer care training on performance**

This section presents customer training influence on performance. It was based on major training strategies in ensuring customer care training of employees. It looks at training strategies that have been laid down by the management to increase service performance and its influence on performance in the hotel.

**Table 4.7.1: How often customer care training is held in the hotel**

	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Just once in the beginning when work started	6	40.0
Once a year	1	6.7
Twice a year	1	6.7
Daily basis	7	46.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Regarding how often customer care training is held in the hotel, 46.7 percent of the respondents believed that training is there on daily bases while 40% said the training is there just once in the beginning when work started. Others (6.7%) disclosed that the training is there at least twice in an year, this confirms that, training on customer care at Gracia Hotel is done more occasionally than often.

**Table 4.7.2: Courses/workshops the respondents have been trained on**

	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
No response	2	13.3
Customer care service	11	73.3
Hotel management	2	13.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Findings indicated that majority (73.3 percent) of the respondent were trained on customer care service while 13.3 percent revealed they were trained on hotel management. The remaining 13.3 percent of the respondents did not respond. This shows that members of staff at Gracia Garden 1 hotel have been trained on customer care service.

## 4.8 Challenges facing performance of Gracia Hotel

**Table 4.8.1: Respondents' opinion on the challenges facing the hotel in improve its performance**

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Lack of enough staff	1.3	0.6
Poor supervisory services	3.3	1.0
Poor listening skills of some staff	2.7	0.8
Lack of time management skills	3.7	1.1
High demand by the customers	3.9	1.5

On the respondents' opinion on the challenges facing the hotel in improve its performance, mean and standard deviation for the various challenges was established where the most challenging issue was the high demand by the customer with mean of 3.9 and standard deviation of 1.5. Other prevalent challenges were lack of time management skills (mean of 3.7 and standard deviation of 1.1) and poor supervisory services (mean of 3.3 and standard deviation of 1.0). this implies that, high demand by the customers, lack of time management skills and poor supervisory services are the most prevalent challenges facing hotels.

**Table 4.8.2: Ways to which the respondents feel Gracia Hotel can adopt to curb the challenges stated**

	<b>Frequency (11)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Improving service and accommodation	9	60.0
Employing qualified staff	6	40.0
Good payment	8	53.3
Proper management	5	33.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>186.7</b>

Ways to which the respondents feel Gracia Hotel can adopt to curb the challenges stated included improving service and accommodation (60 percent), good payment (53.3 percent), employing qualified staff (40 percent) and proper management (33.3 percent).

Buttle, (1996) argues that, a strong, healthy relationship between customers and services providers engenders the trust that is necessary for customers to commit to the service. Similarly, because it is often not possible to remove defective services before they reach customers, a strong relationship often helps to recover from inevitable mishaps. This can be reached at through improving service and accommodation, good payment, employing qualified staff and proper management. At the same time, customers trust service providers to take whatever corrective actions are necessary to ensure quality service and preserve the relationships. Next, the production of many services requires that customers and services providers interact with one another. Professional service, in particular, requires a high degree of interaction and the resulting service can suffer. Finally, many services are somewhat discretionary in the sense that customers can perform them themselves.

**Table 4.8.3: The most frequent challenges faced by Gracia hotel**

	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Lack of enough facilities	7	46.7
Inadequate staffs	9	60.0
Poor salary	7	46.7
Long working hours	7	46.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>200.0</b>

According to the findings, majority (60 percent) of the respondents felt that inadequate staff was one challenge faced by Gracia hotel. Other challenges lack of enough facilities, poor salary and long working hours with 46.7 percent each. The number of employees in a firm is important in analyzing customer service since when employees are overloaded with tasks; they afford each customer only a little time and vice versa. This would also indicate long hours of working. Poor salary would also imply that the staff do not adequately get compensated and thus will lack motivation the aftermath of which is reflected on poor customer service.

#### 4.9 Suggestions for performance improvement

**Table 4.9.1: Rating the implementation of customer service strategies in determining the success of their hotel**

	Frequency (n)	Percentage
High	6	40.0
Moderate	9	60.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Majority (60 percent) of the respondents rated the implementation of the customer service strategies within Gracia Gardens Hotel as moderate while the remaining 40 percent felt that implementation of customer services strategies in determining the success of the hotel was very high. This clearly indicates that, implementation of customer service strategies is paramount importance in determining the success of any organization.

**Table 4.9.2: Whether the hotel has ways to oppose challenges on implementation of strategies**

	Frequency (n)	Percentage
Yes	3	20.0
No	12	80.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Findings on whether the hotel has ways to oppose challenges on implementation of customer service response strategies indicated that, majority (80 percent) of the respondents felt there were no ways while only 20 percent said ways were there at Gracia

Garden Hotel to oppose to oppose challenges on implementation of customer service response strategies.

**Table 4.9.3: Ways to oppose implementation challenges**

<b>Ways to oppose implementation challenges</b>	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
No response	11	73.3
Good salary to the staffs	2	13.3
Employing professional staffs	2	13.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The researcher also wanted to know the ways used to oppose the implementation where, 13.3 percent mentioned that, good salary to the staff was a way what while another 13.3 percent revealed felt that employeing professional staff was the only out to oppose implementation challenges. Majority (73.3) of the selected respondents nonetheless did not indicate any single way that their company could use to oppose implementation challenges.

This study therefor points professionalism and motivation of staff as the best way in which organizations would curb challenges inherent with implementation of customer service.

#### **4.10 Qualitative findings**

This section presents an analysis of issues emerged during the interview with the interviewees. The interviewees were the guests at Gracia Hotel. The section is organized into the headings guided by the research variables including communication; time taken by customers to be served; ettiquette as well as customer care training.



#### **4.11 Communication**

Communication was indicated as one very important aspect in customer services at Gracia Motel. Most interviewees observed that communication was effective at the hotel. However few interviewees were of the opinion that there was still more room for improvement as some of the employees still did not practice it to their best. One interviewee argued that, some employees did not express themselves precisely and concisely particularly when they were getting orders. It is recognized that as these skills become part of employees everyday communication process, they will be amazed at how those around them seem to have developed, better skills in understanding. In addition, interviewees were of the opinion that, for Gracia to improve on its performance, employees need to improve on their method and style of communication, put their message in a concise and exact way, time when to deliver their message and at what intervals as well as perfect on the communication skills.

From this findings we learn that, without effective communication at workplace, nothing would be accomplished. Instructions could not be given; equipment and supplies could not be ordered; progress could not be measured; and services could not be delivered to customers. The Five functions of management planning, organizing, staffing, leading and controlling are all dependent on communication. In fact, in surveys of highly successful managers across the nation, the ability to communicate effectively was identified as the most important skill a manager needs for success.

Expert Business Journal, May 28th (2008) contends that keep your attention focused on what your customer is saying and avoid the temptation to interrupt, argue or dominate the conversation.

#### **4.12 Time taken by customers to be served**

The essence of time taken for customers to be served is to indicate how well teamworking, specialization of tasks and division of labour can lead to better business performance. Findings from the interviews done with Gracia Hotel guests indicated that, customers take between 10 and 20 minutes to be served. In addition, the efficiency in serving the guests was reported to be highly depending on how well the supervision was done particularly at the food court and allocating duties to different employees based on their capability. It was observed that, employees understanding their role very well and were able to prioritize on tasks based on urgency. However, a certain interviewee advised that, some employees do not fully understand what they are ought to do at what time and thus end up wasting a lot of time for the guest. It was also observed that too much specialization of tasks at Gracia hotel has some times lead to customer dissatisfaction since other employees would normally perform what they are not used to in an inefficient way, in case the designated employees was absent during a particular day.

As asserted by CIM, (2004), customers want experiences that will make them feel valued thus come back again for such treatment. Many research findings have depicted sophisticated customers whose needs and preferences are constantly changing and thus the service providers have to be flexible and be quick to adapt to their customers demands and ever changing needs..

#### **4.13 Etiquette**

Most interviewees registered their satisfaction on employees' mannerism at Gracia hotel particular on the way they handled the volume of their conversations by not using their cell phones while with customers, code of dress as well as the walking and standing posture. The hotel was also applauded by being clean and employees been neat at all times, courtesy and respect and promptly attended to the customers call. Complaints were however heard that, some customers were dissatisfied with cologne and perfume used by few employees.

The customers end up feeling frustrated and may end up not being a customer after all. This is because customers do not know how long they will have to wait in order to be served. As time keeps ticking, the customers' emotions escalate from annoyed, to aggravated, to flat-out insulted. Eventually, they will reach a threshold of intolerance where they begin to question why they even coming to get a service from the organization. (Business monthly, March 2007).

Today's customer is looking for value of money to their purchase. Research shows that value takes into account a huge stake of how the customer is treated in regards to their value purchase of the good or service. Customers have memories which are usually the determinants of their repeat purchases. Chartered Institute of Marketers Journal, (CIM 2004).

#### **4.14 Customer care training**

A customer care training program designed for Gracia Hotel maintain and enhance customer service standards where employees are trained on the best mannerism and presentation, efficiency and good customer care. From the interviews, the guests were aware that there were occasional trainings for the employees that aimed in improving performance of employees for better service delivery. The trainings were observed to be inspiring and motivating. There was nonetheless observation that there was little or no post-training follow up as disclosed by some of the guests who had some insider information. There was recommendation that, there should also be continued in-house traing designed on measuring skills, reinforcing positive behaviors, sharing best practices, all of these elements are necessary to elevate your customer's .experience every time (Chartered Institute of Marketers Journal, CIM 2004).

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the summary of the study, research findings, conclusions and recommendations, the chapter also gives suggestions for further studies

#### **5.2 Summary of the study**

The purpose of the study was to establish the influence of customer service to performance of Gracia Gardens hotel within Nairobi, Kenya. Equally, it evaluated the extent to which quality customer care in regards to how customers are valued and treated within their premises impacts on an organizations' performance. The objectives of the study were to determine how communication influences performance; to examine how time taken by customers before being served influences performance; to determine how staff etiquette influences the performance; and to examine how customer care training influences the performance of Gracia Hotel.

The study utilized a survey design and targeted the staff of Gracia Gardens Hotel in Nairobi so as to get accurate information. A list of the staff that was interviewed was retracted from the Managing Director's office containing the names of staff. Six of the

respondents were selected from the Supervisory team of Gracia Hotel, while another twelve respondents from all the departments who were not in management positions. All of the above respondents were selected using a systematic random approach. Both primary and secondary data was used. Personal interviews were used to pre-test the structured questionnaire that was developed to be administered in the survey. Secondary data was collected from the administrative and personnel reports and any other relevant materials for the study. The pre-testing of the questionnaires was conducted at two guest houses randomly selected within Kilimani area in Nairobi. To determine the reliability of the instruments, the split-half method was used which established the coefficient of internal consistency.

For ethical purpose, an official introductory letter was got from the University of Nairobi to request for a permit to conduct research from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology department. To assign meaningful numbers to responses variables were measured at interval scales. Numbers were assigned for responses which were closed ended. The open ended questions the researcher categorized responses given and assign numbers to them. Measures of central tendency and variability were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The median, mean and mode were also used.

### **5.3 Findings of the study**

This section presents the findings from the study. The section is organized into subsections based on demographic information, influence of communication on performance, influence

of time taken by customers before being served on performance, influence of staff etiquette on performance and the influence of customer care training on performance.

### **5.3.1 Demographic findings**

From the study, Restaurant, Front Office and Food & Beverages departments at Gracia Gardens Hotel has each 20 percent as proportion of all employees where 40 percent are waiters/waitresses, 20 percent receptionists while food and beverages managers, chefs and housekeepers 13.3 percent, from the findings, majority of employees at Gracia Gardens Hotel have working experience with the restaurant for at most 3 years. Concerning the highest level of education, majority (66.7 percent) of the respondents had a certificate while 33.3 percent had diploma. Majority have the relevant professional qualification.

### **5.3.2 Influence of communication on performance**

According to the findings, majority (80 percent) said that good communication was a strategy that was adopted while good services and quality food were equally strategic to performance with 73.3 percent each. Concerning the extent to which customer service strategies have enabled the success of the hotel, most of the respondent that customer service strategy have a very great extent on the hotel success while 33.3 percent reported that the influence was in great extent. Findings on whether the hotel has ways to oppose challenges on implementation of customer service response strategies indicated that, majority (80 percent) of the respondents felt there were no ways

### **5.3.3 Influence of time taken by customers before being served on performance**

All the respondents (100 percent) agreed that they take between 10-20 minutes to serve each of their customers in their respective hotel. Regarding the factors determining the time taken before serving the customer, majority (93.3 percent and 60 percent) said type of food and type of machines/ manpower used respectively. 26.7 percent of the respondent felt that co-ordination of the departments was another factor that determined the time taken before a customer was served. On whether the management offers staff trainings on presentation, majority (53.3 percent) agreed. Findings also indicated that majority (73.3 percent) of the respondent were trained on customer care service.

Findings on how management ensure staff handles clients with presentation indicated that constant training (61.5 percent), good management (53.8 percent) and introduction of suggestion boxes (46.2 percent) are the main steps taken by Gracia Garden Hotel to handle clients with presentation.

### **5.3.4 Influence of staff etiquette on performance**

On ways to which time influence satisfaction, majority (53.3 percent) of the respondents agreed that the order is delayed while 33.3 percent reported that time caused poor supervisory which influenced customer satisfaction. Employing more staffs, improving the system and staff training were mentioned as the most effective ways the management should take to improve the time taken in service /serving its customers with majority of (86.£ percent, 86.7 percent and 60.0 percent respectively). From the findings, neatness (40 percent), image of the hotel (53.3 percent) and unique and attractive to



customers and employees should be involved by inviting them to a meeting. This would enable the organization to make policies that are thought and determined by all relevant stakeholders.

#### **5.4.2 Influence of time taken by customers before being served on performance**

The type of food and machines/manpower are the main determinants to the time taken before serving the customer. The reason for this is because some food require more time for preparation to be served to the customers while advanced machine/manpower would increase the efficiency and thus reduce the duration taken before serving the customers, employing more staff would reduce the workload since each employee will have less number of customers to serve. At the same time improving the system of operations would be a measure to eliminate inefficiency within the organization's operation by collapsing steps that may not add value to the both the internal controls and the customer service.

#### **5.4.3 Influence of staff etiquette on performance**

Organizations endeavour to enhance customer service through maintaining the appropriate dressing code within their business environment. One of the ways Gracia Gardens have invested in superior customer service is by ensuring that staff gets training on the latest customer etiquette service trends through presentation. This acts as an incentive for the employees because they receive certificates of attendance and it is a way of motivating them to excel in service provision. When customers are satisfied and more of them attracted to an organization, performance of that organization goes up.

#### **5.4.4 Influence of customer care training on performance**

The study established that there are occasional training programmes at Gracia Garden Hotel at regular intervals that are on customer care service. Both in-house and external trainings are beneficial for staff upholding the hotel standards at Gracia Gardens. Other trainings are on hotel management implying that the performance of hotel industry is largely pegged on good customer care.

#### **5.5 Recommendations**

The researcher makes the following recommendations

- i. Communication as a major driver to performance of any organization should be enhanced in hotels given. Customers should be kept informed on any changes made or proposed through an effective communication channel which in turn calls for effective communication policies.
- ii. The management of different firms in hotel industry should consider frequent training of employees on customer services especially through creating strong customer relationship and improvements on presentations.
- iii. Hotel companies should also employ effective employee etiquette as manifested by mutual respect among all stakeholders, courtesy and proper dressing code
- iv. Hotel businesses should also consider employing mechanisms of improving on efficiency through reduction of time spent to serve the customers.

## **5.6 Suggestions for further studies**

Given the scope and limitations of this study, the researcher suggests the following areas for further studies.

- i. The study should be undertaken under a cross-sectional descriptive design which would ensure elimination of any bias experienced in this study
- ii. A replica of the study should also be carried out within the context of a sector other than the hotel industry for comparative purpose
- iii. Other factors pertinent to customer service and influencing performance should also be carried out for further recommendations.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix I: Letter of Transmittal

June 2012

Tamining Jepchirchir Kerretts

School of Continuing and Distance Education

University of Nairobi

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a student in the School of Continuing and Distance Education, Department of Extramural Studies of University of Nairobi carrying out a study on the influence of Customer Care to the organizational performance of Gracia Gardens Guest House. To help me conduct this study, I request that you fill in this questionnaire. This will help me to get more information in regard to this study and as well as synthesize possible recommendations thereafter. If you so wish, I shall provide you with summary results of the study.

I understand that your schedule is demanding, but I will greatly appreciate it if you will complete the questionnaire, and believe that your contribution will enable future guest houses to be even more effective. Your responses will be kept confidentially and strictly used for this study.

Thanking you in advance for your cooperation.

**Tamining J. Kerretts**

## Appendix II: Questionnaire for Gracia Gardens Hotels and Resorts Staff in Nairobi

Please tick (/) the box that matches your answer to the questions and give the answers in the spaces provided as appropriate. The information you provide will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

### PART A: Personal Information

1. Name of the respondent (optional)
2. Name of your department\_
3. What position do you hold\_\_\_\_\_:
4. For how long have you worked for Gracia Hotel

a. 1-2 years

b. 2-5 years

c. 5-7 years

d. 7-9 years

e. Over 9 years

5. What is your gender?

Male

6. What is your highest level of education?

Masters

Bachelors

Diploma

Certificate



7. Do you have any relevant professional qualifications?

YES

No

**PART B: COMMUNICATION**

8. Does Gracia Gardens have a communication policy for staff?

Yes

No

8b) If yes to the above, how often is it revised or when is it implemented?

a. Weekly



b. Monthly

c. Quarterly



d. Yearly



e. Never



9. Which methods of communication exist between service providers and Motel Management as well as management and employees?



- a. Emails
- b. Sms Texts
- c. Meetings
- d. Media
- e. Rumor

10. How often does management communicate to staff in regards to the performance of the hotel?

- a. Weekly
- b. Monthly
- c. Quarterly
- d. Yearly
- e. Never

11. What barriers to communication do you think exist at Gracia Gardens?

- a)
- b)
- c)

12. In your opinion, what are some of the ways that can be used to improve communication at Gracia Gardens, both internally and externally so as to improve its overall performance?

**PART C: TIME TAKEN BY CUSTOMERS TO BE SERVED**

14. How long does it take to serve customers in your hotel once they place their orders?

- a. 10-20 minutes
- b. 21-30 minutes
- c. 31-40 minutes
- d. 41-50 minutes
- e. 1 hour and above

15. State 3 factors that determine the time taken before a customer is served

- a).
- b).
- c).
- d).

16. Does the time taken influence customers satisfaction hence retention of customers?

YES • NO •

16h> If YRS to afcpve state 3 ways in which time influences satisfaction

- a)

b)

c)

17. Please rank by indicating the rank number in the space provided on the right hand side of each issue. Rank (1) indicates the most prominent reason that makes customers wait for long (5) the least prominent reason among all the issues provided. Note: The same number cannot be applied to more than one item.

Lack of enough staff	
Poor supervisory services	
Poor listening skills of some staff	
Lack of time management skills	
High demand by the customers	

18. What are some of the main ways does the management use to improve the time taken in service delivery or serving its customers

a)

b)

c)

**PART D: ETIQUETTE**

19. Does your staff have a dress code?      YES       NO

19b) If YES to above state 3 ways on how your dress code would affect customer's

satisfaction hence increase Gracia Gardens performance

a)

b)

c)

20. Does the Management offer stafftrainings on etiquette? YES  NO

20b) If YES to above what courses/ workshops have you ever been trained on?

21. State 3 ways on how you handle difficult or dissatisfied customers

a)

b)

c)

22. How does the management ensure that all staff handles clients with etiquette?

a)

b)

23. In which ways does etiquette influence Gracia Gardens performance?

a)

• b) . . . . .v.

c)



**PART E: CUSTOMER CARE TRAINING**

24. How often is Customer Care training held in the hotel?

a) Just once in the beginning when work started

b) Once a year

c) Twice a year

d) Once a month

e) Daily basis

0 Other, .

i .

25. The Customer Care trainings in the hotel are:

- Mandatory
- Optional

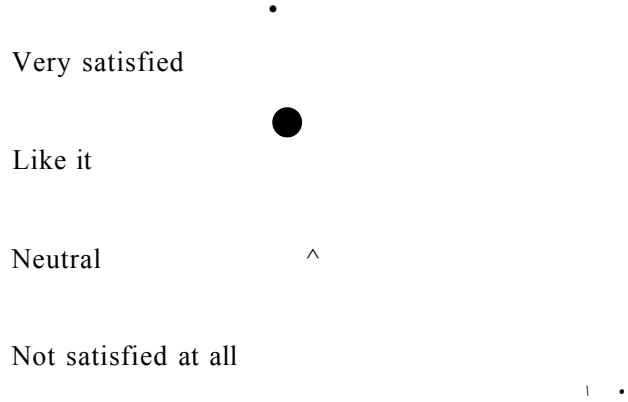
26. Has the Customer Care training impacted your performance at Gracia Gardens?

- Yes
- No

28. If yes, which areas of performance has it impacted

27. To what extent does management support you in personal development?

28. How satisfied are you with the customer care trainings in the hotel?



29.1 How can the customer care training be improved?

**Thank you for your cooperation**

INFLUENCE OF CUSTOMER CARE SERVICES ON ORGANIZATIONAL  
PERFORMANCE , THE CASE OF GRACIA GARDENS.

1. In your own opinion, do you think there are proper communication channels at Gracia?
  - a. Do you think these channels affect the performance of the hotel
2. In your own perception, do you think that the staffs are professionally trained on customer care?
  - a. If yes, does this influence the performance and choice of this hotel?
3. When interacting with the hotel services, do you think that the duration of waiting time for the service you requested for was adequate?
  - a. If yes/no, why do you think so?
4. Did you think that there is proper presentation in regards to looks and mannerisms within the staff of gracia gardens?
  - a. Does this influence the choice of your hotel

**Guiding Key Components for the oral interview**

Thank you, • Your name, • Purpose, • Confidentiality, • Duration, • How interview will be conducted • Opportunity for question, • Signature of Consent Use probes as needed.

These include and is not limited to:

- i. Would you give me an example?
- ii. Can you elaborate on that idea?
- iii. Would you explain that further?
- iv. I'm not sure I understand what you're saying.
- v. Is there anything else?