
Employee Empowerment On Customer Satisfaction Among Hotels In Uganda. A Case Study Of La-Grande Hotel Kampala

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Abstract

The study heavily focused on investigating the impact created by employee empowerment on customer satisfaction at hotel La Grande in Bwaise. The study was guided by the research objectives, questions and the appropriate methodologies that generated credible and reliable findings that was very significant to government and non-government actors as a guide in the advocacy and formulation of policies and programs geared towards achieving customer satisfaction in the hotel and hospitality sector. The study found out that there is a close correlation between employee empowerment and customer satisfaction in the hospitality sector. The study found out there are a number of factors that affect both employee empowerment and customer satisfaction such as poor funding, training among others. The study recommended that there is need for more funding, employee engagement to intensify the employee empowerment and customer satisfaction goals. The management should also ensure that orientation programs are tailored according to employee capabilities, needs/interests, priorities and areas of specialization. In this case, the methods of orientation given to top managers should not be the same as those of lower level staff like cook or cleaners especially due to the different educational levels and work requirements.

Keywords: Employee Empowerment, Customer Satisfaction and Hotels

Background of the study

According to (Christopher, Komunda, et al., 2022), organizations can increase the likelihood of better service quality and customer satisfaction levels by cultivating human resource principles that can actively promote employee satisfaction. So management should treat their employees well and at the same time empower them, then the employee will treat customers well. (Ntirandekura & Christopher, 2022a) defined employee empowerment (the independent variable) as the ways in which hotel facilities provide their employees with some autonomy and control over their day-to-day activities. A key principle of employee empowerment is to give employees the power to make important decisions and help ensure that those decisions are the right ones. When properly deployed, these decisions should lead to high productivity and better quality of employee work (Winny, Ariyo, et al., 2023). Employee empowerment allows employees to represent their interest in a responsible and self-determined manner and to act on the basis of their own authority. Empowerment as an action refers to the process of self-empowerment and professional support of people that enables them to overcome the feeling of powerlessness and lack of influence and recognized use of their resources (Ntirandekura et al., 2022). A disenfranchised employee will not be confident, creative and technically knowledgeable and will therefore not be able to provide better service as required. Continuous development of employee empowerment directly affects service quality and customer satisfaction level (N. Faridah et al., 2023). According to (Nelson, Christopher, Teddy, et al., 2022), customer satisfaction is creating value for

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customers, anticipating and managing their expectations, and demonstrating the ability and responsibility to meet their needs. However, (K. Faridah et al., 2023) defined customer satisfaction as the result of how customers perceive the value obtained in a relationship-based transaction, where value equals perceived service quality, compared to the value expected from the transaction, is critical. success factor of any business. Hotel La Grande is one of the luxury hotels in Bwaise along the Kampala Bombo Expressway (Nelson, Christopher, Teddy et al., 2022). However, the hotel has been in operation for 20 years. The hotel offers housekeeping, a restaurant, a bar, a gym and a swimming pool for local and international travel. Hotel staff both skilled and unskilled workers where most of them undergo training for a few days before starting their services (Ivan & Kazaara, 2023). Most of the employees are certificate holders who need to have more training on the services of the hospitality industry, therefore it is vital for the hotel to empower employees in the form of training, among other empowerment (www.hotellagrande.org). This limited education seems to affect the expertise of the hotel.

Problem statement

Hotel La-Grande as one of the 4-star hotels in Uganda, it seems that its customers are not satisfied with the services offered by the hotel, which has led to customer dissatisfaction, which is manifested in the form of poor service quality, unfriendly hotel environment, customer staff quarrel among others (Christopher, Komunda, et al., 2022). This dissatisfaction appears to be due to unskilled labor, disrespect, unprofessional, indifferent behavior of service providers, poor administration, pricing, booking and cancellation problems, as well as room type discrepancies. However, (Ntirandekura & Christopher, 2022b) highlighted that customer dissatisfaction in any hotelier could be reduced by applying HR practices such as employee empowerment (Winny, Kazaara et al., 2023) because employees are the backbone of the organization. because they are the only person in direct contact with customers at the time of service delivery. Customer satisfaction is used as a scale to measure the current state of customer loyalty, help identify specific customer requirements, track customer retention (Ntirandekura et al., 2022), provide comparisons with other organizations' products, and predict or measure company performance. Hotel La-Grande must adopt a policy that emphasizes the importance and measures that could be used to empower its employees (Winny, Kazaara, et al., 2023). Despite the existence of hotel rules and regulations with a well-defined customer management policy, the hotel continues to perform poorly with a high level of customer turnover. It appears to be attributed to less competent staff and if nothing is done, the hotel risks losing many clients, which may even lead to business closure (K. Faridah et al., 2023).

Specific objectives

1. To examine the different methods of employee empowerment at La-Grande hotel Kampala.
2. To investigate how employee empowerment, affect customer satisfaction at La grand hotel
3. To examine the challenges faced by managers in empowering employees at La-Grande hotel Kampala.
4. To determine the strategies employed by La-Grande hotel to improve employee empowerment

Methodology

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The study adopted a descriptive research design with inclusion of both qualitative and quantitative approaches where respondents' views and opinions were drawn and described according to the study research questions. The study focused on covering 80 respondents from La-Grande hotel including managers, waiters and waitresses, supervisors, chefs, bar attendants, house maids and customers including other hotel owners/competitors (Nafiu, 2012). A sample size of 80 respondents was obtained from the population size of 100 potential respondents including:

Category	Sample size	Sampling technique
Hotel administrator	5	Purposive sampling method
Waiters and waitresses	15	Simple random sampling
Supervisors	5	Simple random sampling
Bar attendants	10	Simple random sampling
House maids	10	Simple random sampling
Customers and competitors	35	Cluster sampling method
Total	80	

Questionnaires such as open ended and close ended questionnaires consisting of a series of questions drafted to collect information in relation to the research objectives or questions were used. The study used a 5-point Likert scale to measure the strength of the sub constructs of the variables as presented to respondents (Jallow et al., 2022). The scale ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree (Strongly agree, agree, not sure, disagree, and strongly disagree). Edited data was analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively as follows; Quantitative data was grouped and statistical description such as tables showing frequencies and percentages for better interpretation were used (Jallow et al., 2021). However, qualitative data was analyzed in a way of identifying responses from respondents that are relevant to the research problem. Mainly such data was analyzed by explaining the facts collected from the field under which the researcher was able to quote respondents' responses. Interpretation and discussion of the results was done by the researcher while explaining the strength of the study variables basing on the frequencies and percentages. Statistical conclusions were further be made during interpretation of the study results (Nafiu & Ph, 2012). Data was analyzed in form of tables, frequencies and percentages using SPSS & STATA (Nelson, Christopher, & Milton, 2022)

RESULTS

Table 2: Showing the response rate of the respondents on whether employee empowerment can lead to customer loyalty

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	45	56.25
Strongly agree	25	31.25

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Disagree	06	7.5
Strongly disagree	01	1.25
Not sure	03	3.75
Total response	80	100%

Source: primary source (2023).

The above figure depicts that 45 respondents agreed that employee empowerment can lead to customer loyalty which constituted 56.25%, and those who strongly agreed were 25 respondents constituting 31.25%, only 3 of the respondents were not sure constituting 3.75%. There were 6 respondents who disagreed constituting 7.5%. While 01 respondent strongly disagreed constituting 1.25% (Paul et al., 2023). This meant that the majority of the respondents agreed that customer loyalty is attributed to the nature of employee empowerment at the La Grande hotel.

Table 3: Showing the response rate of the respondents on whether employee empowerment can lead to customer delight at La Grande hotel

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	25	31.25
Strongly agree	45	56.25
Disagree	06	7.5
Strongly disagree	03	3.75
Not sure	01	1.25
Total response	80	100%

Source: primary source (2023).

The above figure depicts that 45 respondents strongly agreed that employee empowerment can lead to customer delight at La Grande hotel which constituted 56.25%, and those who agreed were 25 respondents constituting 31.25%, only 1 of the respondents was not sure constituting 1.25%. There were 6 respondents who disagreed constituting 7.5%. While 03 respondents strongly disagreed constituting 3.75%. This meant that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that employee empowerment can lead to customer delight at La Grande hotel.

Table 4: Showing the response rate of the respondents on whether training and skilling is a method of empowering employees

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	25	31.25
Strongly agree	55	68.75
Disagree	00	00
Strongly disagree	00	00
Not sure	00	00
Total response	80	100%

Source: primary source (2023).

The above figure depicts that 55 respondents strongly agreed that training and skilling is a method of empowering employees which constituted 68.75%, and those who agreed were 25 respondents constituting 31.25%, none of the respondents was not sure constituting 00%. There were 0 respondents who disagreed constituting 00%. While also 00 respondents strongly disagreed constituting 00%. This meant that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that training builds the capacity of employees to handle efficiently and effectively the hotel customers hence leading to customer satisfaction (Emmanuel et al., 2023).

Table 5: Showing the response rate of the respondents on whether delegating of responsibilities to employees is a method of empowering employees

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	26	32.5
Strongly agree	45	56.25
Disagree	04	05
Strongly disagree	05	6.25
Not sure	00	00
Total response	80	100%

Source: primary source (2023).

The above figure depicts that 45 respondents strongly agreed that delegating of responsibilities to employees is a method of empowering employees which constituted 56.25%, and those who agreed were 26 respondents constituting 32.5%, none of the respondents was not sure constituting 00% (Christopher, Moses, et al., 2022). There were 04 respondents who disagreed constituting 05%. While 05 respondents strongly disagreed

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constituting 6.255%. This meant that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed and confessed to have ever been empowered and satisfied by delegation.

Table 6: Showing the response rate of the respondents on whether mentoring and inspiring of employees is a method of empowering employees

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	36	45
Strongly agree	25	31.25
Disagree	05	6.25
Strongly disagree	04	05
Not sure	00	00
Total response	80	100%

Source: primary source (2023).

The above figure depicts that 25 respondents strongly agreed that mentoring and inspiring of employees is a method of empowering employees which constituted 31.25%, and those who agreed were 36 respondents constituting 45%, none of the respondents was not sure constituting 00%. There were 05 respondents who disagreed constituting 6.25%. While 04 respondents strongly disagreed constituting 05% (Winny, Kazaara, et al., 2023). This meant that the majority of the respondents agreed and confessed to be empowered through mentoring and inspiring by the senior supervisors at the hotel.

Table 7: Showing the response rate of the respondents on whether setting goals and targets for employees is a method of empowering employees

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	35	43.75
Agree	25	31.25
Disagree	06	7.5
Strongly disagree	03	3.75
Not sure	01	1.25
Total response	80	100%

Source: primary source (2023).

The above figure depicts that 35 respondents strongly agreed that setting goals and targets for employees is a

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method of empowering employees which constituted 43.75%, and those who agreed were 25 respondents constituting 31.25%, only 1 of the respondents was not sure constituting 1.25%. There were 6 respondents who disagreed constituting 7.5%. While 03 respondents strongly disagreed constituting 3.75%. This meant that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed and confessed to be working towards achieving certain goals and targets.

Table 8: Showing the response rate of respondents on whether insufficient funding is a challenge to management in the process of empowering employees

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	25	31.25
Strongly agree	55	68.75
Disagree	00	00
Strongly disagree	00	00
Not sure	00	00
Total response	80	100%

Source: primary source (2023).

The above figure depicts that 55 respondents strongly agreed that insufficient funding is a challenge to management in the process of empowering employees which constituted 68.75%, and those who agreed were 25 respondents constituting 31.25%, none of the respondents was not sure constituting 00%. There were 0 respondents who disagreed constituting 00%. While also 00 respondents strongly disagreed constituting 00%. This meant that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that management is not well funded to facilitate fully the various empowerment programs for employees.

Table 9: Showing the response rate on whether high employee turnover is a challenge to management in the process of empowering employees.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	35	43.75
Agree	25	31.25
Disagree	06	7.5
Strongly disagree	03	3.75
Not sure	01	1.25
Total response	80	100%

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Source: primary source (2023).

The above figure depicts that 35 respondents strongly agreed that employee turnover is a challenge to management in the process of empowering employees which constituted 43.75%, and those who agreed were 25 respondents constituting 31.25%, only 1 of the respondents was not sure constituting 1.25%. There were 6 respondents who disagreed constituting 7.5%. While

03 respondents strongly disagreed constituting 3.75%. This meant that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that sustainable employee empowerment requires permanence of employees.

Table 10: Showing the response rate on whether employee bad attitude towards empowerment initiatives is a challenge to management in the process of empowering employees.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	55	68.75
Agree	25	31.25
Disagree	00	00
Strongly disagree	00	00
Not sure	00	00
Total response	80	100%

Source: primary source (2023).

The above figure depicts that 55 respondents strongly agreed that employee bad attitude towards empowerment initiatives is a challenge to management in the process of empowering employees which constituted 68.75%, and those who agreed were 25 respondents constituting 31.25%, and none of the respondents was not sure constituting 00%. There were no respondents who disagreed constituting 00%. While 00 respondents strongly disagreed constituting 00%. This meant that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed some employees have negative attitude towards empowerment initiatives as they tend to resist change.

Table 11: Showing the response rate on whether there is lack of clarity on the major motive for employee empowerment which breeds resistance hence a challenge to management in the process of empowering employees.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	35	43.75
Agree	25	31.25
Disagree	06	7.5

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Strongly disagree	03	3.75
Not sure	01	1.25
Total response	80	100%

Source: primary source (2023).

The above figure depicts that 35 respondents strongly agreed that there is lack of clarity on the major motive for employee empowerment which constituted 43.75%, and those who agreed were 25 respondents constituting 31.25%, only 1 of the respondents was not sure constituting 1.25%. There were 6 respondents who disagreed constituting 7.5%. While 03 respondents strongly disagreed constituting 3.75%. This meant that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that there is lack of clarity on the major motive for employee empowerment which breeds resistance hence a challenge to management in the process of empowering employees.

Table 12: Showing response rate of respondents on whether there is training and skilling of employees at hotel La Grande as a mechanism of enhancing employees' competences through capacity building.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	65	81.25
Agree	15	18.75
Disagree	00	00
Strongly disagree	00	00
Not sure	00	00
Total response	80	100%

Source: primary source (2023)

The above figure depicts that 65 respondents strongly agreed that training is a mechanism of enhancing employees' competences used at La Grande hotel which constituted 81.25% response rate, and those who agreed were 15 respondents constituting 18.75%, and none of the respondents was not sure constituting 00%. There were no respondents who disagreed constituting 00%. This meant that the majority of the respondents agreed that training is a major cornerstone for capacity building which yields high productivity at the hotel.

Table 13: Showing response rate of respondents on whether there is financial motivation for employees at hotel La Grande as a mechanism of empowering them.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	75	93.75

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Agree	05	6.25
Disagree	00	00
Strongly disagree	00	00
Not sure	00	00
Total response	80	100%

Source: primary source (2023).

The above figure depicts that 75 respondents strongly agreed that there is financial motivation for employees at hotel La Grande as a mechanism of empowering them which constituted 93.75%, and those who agreed were 05 respondents constituting 6.25%, and none of the respondents was not sure constituting 00%. There were no respondents who disagreed constituting 00%. While 00 respondents strongly disagreed constituting 00%. This meant that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that financial rewards are given to appreciate best performing employees at the hotel.

Table 14: Showing response rate on of respondents on whether there are performance appraisal systems for employees at hotel La Grande as a mechanism of empowering them.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	75	93.75
Strongly agree	05	6.25
Disagree	00	00
Strongly disagree	00	00
Not sure	00	00
Total response	80	100%

Source: primary source (2023).

The above figure depicts that 75 respondents strongly agreed that there are performance appraisal systems for employees at hotel La Grande as a mechanism of empowering them which constituted 93.75% response rate, and those who agreed were 05 respondents constituting 6.25%, and none of the respondents was not sure constituting 00%. There were no respondents who disagreed constituting 00%. While 00 respondents strongly disagreed constituting 00%. This meant that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that there are performance appraisal systems for employees at hotel La Grande as a mechanism of empowering them.

Table 15: Showing response rate of respondents on whether there is an employee empowerment policy for employees at hotel La Grande as a mechanism of empowering them.

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Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	75	93.75
Agree	05	6.25
Disagree	00	00
Strongly disagree	00	00
Not sure	00	00
Total response	80	100%

Source: primary source (2023).

The above figure depicts that 75 respondents strongly agreed that there is a policy on employee empowerment for employees at hotel La Grande as a mechanism of empowering them which constituted 93.75%, and those who agreed were 05 respondents constituting 6.25%, and none of the respondents was not sure constituting 00%. There were no respondents who disagreed constituting 00%. While 00 respondents strongly disagreed constituting 00%. This meant that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that employee empowerment policy exist at the hotel.

Conclusions

There are various factors that affect employees' empowerment ranging from organizational to individual factors that need to be addressed.

Besides financial motivation, there are several none-monetary mechanisms that can be effective for employee motivation and empowerment.

There is a close relationship between employee empowerment and customer satisfaction in the hospitality sector.

Employees and customers are the building blocks of the hotel industry that without a good relationship between them puts the hospitality industry at stake.

Recommendations

The study also recommended that there should a greater balance between employees' needs and organizational needs. It is the duty of all stake holders to ensure that this is achieved as this will reduce employees' selfishness at their places of work with its adverse effects on customers' satisfaction.

The organization should consider further trainings of its staff on a continuous basis to equip them with more

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skills in order to improve and maintain their efficiency. The study also recommends that trainees be motivated by some allowances after every training session.

The management should also ensure that orientation programs are tailored according to employee capabilities, needs/interests, priorities and areas of specialization. In this case, the methods of orientation given to top managers should not be the same as those of lower level staff like cook or cleaners especially due to the different educational levels and work requirements.

The management needs to develop a policy regarding job rotation at the station. This should spell out all the terms, conditions and the criteria to be used in the rotation of all employees. This policy should also be known and accessible by all staffs.

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