



## The perceived role of employees incentives on service delivery in the tourism sector: Towards sustainable service delivery in 3-5 star rated hotels in Nakuru County

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### Abstract

Employees of any service industry form the service delivery team. This means that anything that affects them should be of great concern to the management of the firm. It is imperative for management to always ensure that the employees are well motivated to enhance the quality of their service delivery systems. The study sought to find the perceived role of employees' incentives on service delivery of employees in the hotel industry. The study was anchored on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory. The study employed descriptive research design. Purposive sampling was used to select seven hotels while simple random sampling was used to draw a sample of 196 respondents. Questionnaires were used to collect data. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented in form of tables. Correlation co-efficient was used to ascertain the correlation between incentives and service delivery. The major findings indicated that the major non-financial incentives on service delivery included: Recognition at work (36%), and training on the job (33.3%), while major financial incentives were pension schemes(33.3%) and uniforms(33.3%).The financial and non financial incentives influenced a positive working environment (63.3%, 50.7%), and motivated employees to work (44.7%, 50.7%) respectively. Correlation results revealed a significant positive relationship ( $r=0.675$ ;  $P=0.013$ ) between financial incentives and service delivery. Similarly, significant positive relationship ( $r=0.645$ ;  $P=0.013$ ) between non-financial incentives and service delivery. The study concluded that both financial and non-financial incentives contribute to service delivery significantly. The study recommends that both financial and non-financial incentives should be provided adequately in the hotels for maximum service delivery.

**Keywords:** employees incentives, service delivery, 3 – 5 star rated hotels

### 1. Introduction

A unique aspect of any service industry is its service delivery approach. Service delivery of any organization is very important for it determines the continuity or the collapse of the organization (Greenhalgh *et al.*, 2004) [18]. It covers those aspects of the operation which take place at the time that a client comes to the service point and requests for a specific service. The service delivery system is designed to provide the customer with the required variety of services with minimum delay and the highest standards possible. The employees of any service industry form the service delivery team. This means that anything that affects them should be of great concern to the management of the firm.

The way service is delivered to the customers by service providers is of great importance since it results to both satisfaction and retention of customers or dissatisfaction and loss of customers (Brown & Osborne, 2012) [7]. In addition, service delivery of any organization has a great impact on the image of the firm and its competitive advantage in the market. Tourism is one of the key service delivery industries in the world contributing at least 6% of the world's GDP and employing over 127 million people worldwide (Holloway, 2006) [20]. The industry makes a momentous contribution to the economic development of numerous countries with some countries such as Macau, British Virgin Islands, Bahamas and Seychelles totally reliant on tourism as a major catalyst for growth and development (Dodds & Graci, 2012; Pao, 2004) [14, 36].

In these countries, tourism industry has been hosting large numbers of tourists arriving for business or vacation purposes as well as transient passengers' en-route to other destinations (Smith, 2012) [45]. Tourism industry is also evidencing substantial growth in African countries despite political uncertainty in some parts of the region. Morocco, South Africa and Egypt top the list of most toured African countries in 2014 netting a total of 10, 9.5 and 9.2 million visitors respectively (Rogerson, 2015) [42]. In Kenya, the industry has been growing though the growth has decelerated due to the recent political instability and terrorist attacks in the country (Christie *et al.*, 2014) [10]. Tourism in Kenya is the second largest source of foreign exchange revenue following agriculture (Okello & Novelli, 2014) [35].

The rapid growth of the tourism industry calls for improvement in service delivery systems. In contrast with other industries, the tourism industry as a service industry is characteristics differently in that its services and service experiences are not physical, they cannot be possessed or stored and they depend more on people's experiences and expectations (Riley, 2014) [40]. Considering the complexity and vulnerability of the industry, it is crucial to keep watch out of any factor that affects the nature and quality service delivery (Dedeoglu & Demirer, 2015) [11]. One of the key aspects affecting the nature and the quality of service delivery is the employees who are the service providers (Chon & Weber, 2015) [9].

Employees, especially in the tourism industry are a crucial factor in attracting and retaining customers (Choi & Chu, 2001) <sup>[8]</sup>. It is thus crucial for the management especially in the tourism industry to always ensure that the employees are well motivated to enhance the quality of their service delivery systems. One of the well known techniques through which employees are easily motivated in service industries is by use of incentives.

Incentives are inducements which are given in addition to wages (Neckermann & Frey, 2007) <sup>[34]</sup>. It means additional remuneration or benefit to an employee in recognition of achievement or better work (Laffont & Martimort, 2009) <sup>[26]</sup>. Incentives provide a spur or zeal in the employees for better performance (Choi & Chu, 2001) <sup>[8]</sup>. According to Naomi (2011) <sup>[33]</sup>, an incentive is seen as an available means that is applied so as to influence the willingness of the employees to enhance their input while maintaining their effort towards attaining organizational goals.

Organizations offer varied incentive schemes for their employees (Nawab & Bhatti, 2011). Besides monetary incentive, there are some other stimuli which can drive an employee to perform better. This will include job security, job promotion, and recognition for accomplishment (Latham, 2011) <sup>[27]</sup>. Incentives really can sometimes work to accomplish the goals of a business firm. They even provide an avenue through which management can effectively link performance and competence of the employees (Kaplan & Norton, 2001) <sup>[23]</sup>. However, given the global nature of the existing socio-economic challenges, it has become quite difficult for most organizations to cope with the employee demands, among them being the provision of an appropriate incentive scheme (Wunder, 2000) <sup>[48]</sup>.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Service delivery plays a very vital role in achieving the mission of any firm which is offering quality and satisfactory services. Job satisfaction is one of the elements which affect the productivity and service delivery by employees. This is because employees always project on the outside what they feel on the inside. As much as an organization may try to ensure the satisfaction of its customers in the provision of quality services and facilities, the satisfaction of each individual employee affects how these services are delivered to the customers. There are several ways through which an organization can improve the satisfaction of their staff. Among these ways, the use of incentives has been found by many researchers to be the most important motivator in the service industries arena (Glazer, 2004; Besley & Ghatak, 2003; Delfgaauw & Dur, 2002; Neckermann & Frey, 2007; Francois, 2000) <sup>[16, 3, 12, 34, 15]</sup>. However most of those studies were mainly conducted in the international context where social, economic and cultural factors are different. Therefore, they might not be applicable in developing countries, particularly in the Kenyan context. Therefore, this research seeks to find the perceived role of employees' incentives on service delivery of employees in the hotel industry. The remainder of this article paper is organized as follows. Section 2 covers review of past studies. Section 3 covers materials and methods. Section 4 covers the results and discussion. Section 5 presents the conclusion and section 6 covers the

recommendations.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Concept of Service Delivery

Service is defined by Kotler *et al.* (2001) <sup>[24]</sup> as any activity or benefit that one party can offer to another which is essentially intangible and does not result into ownership of anything. According to Armstrong (2002) <sup>[1]</sup> service delivery is the mode by which an individual or a group of people are served to their satisfaction. Effective service delivery is very vital in any service offering organization, for it to have a competitive advantage in the market and to attract many clients. The organization should be able to understand the current and future needs of its clients for it to provide the services satisfactorily. Service delivery can also be defined as the manner in which a product or a service is rendered to the clients by the service employees of any given firm (Dessler, 2003) <sup>[13]</sup>. Some of the services offered in the hotel include; accommodation and lodging, food and beverage, gym and sauna, event planning as well as outside catering services.

#### 2.1.1 Components of Service Delivery

For any service delivery process there are various components which enhance its efficient delivery. Some of these service delivery components include:

##### The Customers

These are the people who consume the services provided. They are the clients whom the services are offered to. For any service delivery organization, the customers are very important in that they not only consume the services but also they market the organization (Reichel *et al.*, 2000) <sup>[39]</sup>. That's why; good quality services offered to the clients will always give the firm a competitive edge in the market. The customers in the hotel industry are the tourists (people who have travelled away from home for a certain period of time), who are either international or domestic tourists (Johnston & Clark, 2005) <sup>[22]</sup>.

##### The equipment

These are the facilities which aid in effective provision of services. They support the entire service delivery process and enhance the services to be offered as they should (Parasuraman, 2002). For example, in banking industry, machines such as ATM'S enhance not only quick and effective services but also cheap consumption of services. In the hotel industry some of the equipment include; refrigerators, gas cookers, ovens, computers, weighing scales, deep freezers among others (Roth & Menor, 2003).

##### The service providers

These are the people who offer the services to the customers. They are the employees who are entrusted the responsibility of providing services to the clients of that given organization (Seth *et al.*, 2005). The service providers in addition to them offering the services to the customers, they also market the firm. These service providers are people who have a professional training in the field of hospitality industry. Employees are very important in the service delivery process (Johnston & Clark, 2005) <sup>[22]</sup>.

## 2.2 Employee Incentives and Employee Performance

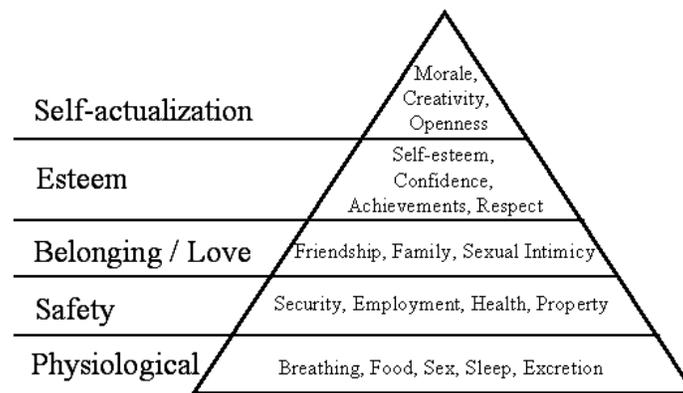
Both financial and non-financial incentives have numerous effects to the performance level of the firm's employees. Incentives can be used as an operative tool to attract the competent people into the organization. This is because people that value this form of remuneration will be drawn to work there rather than people that are only seeking steady benefit. The conventional belief that incentives are usable as a motivational tool for employees to work harder in order to achieve the organizational goal is a clear proof of the potency of incentives in any organization (Merchant & Van der Stede, 2007) [31].

Various studies on the effect of employee incentives on work performance and productivity have been a point of interest in the private sector. However, research within the public sector has been largely ignored. This may be due to the fact that the goal of the public sector differs from those in the private sector (Reilly, 2003) [40]. The findings of most of those studies show strong positive correlation between incentives and individual work performance (Bright, 2008; Steijn, 2008; Heneman & Judge, 2001; Prendergast, 1999; Lach & Schankerman, 2008) [6, 46, 19, 38, 25]. However, some controversies on the relationship between incentives and performance exist. Some argue that incentives cause satisfaction as time goes by and this has a negative effect on performance (Bonner & Sprinkle, 2002) [5].

According to this view, satisfaction is considered not as a cause but as an effect of performance. Differential employee performance determines different rewards as well as recognition under the context of incentives, which in turn produce different levels of satisfaction. Furthermore, rewards or recognition constitute a necessary intervening variable and thus satisfaction is considered to be a function of employee performance. From this perspective, good performance may lead to rewards and/or recognition which in turn lead to excess satisfaction which in turn can translate to reduced or poor job performance (Wirtz & Chew, 2002) [47].

## 2.3 Employees Incentives and Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory

The study will be guided by Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. This theory was proposed by Abraham Maslow in his 1943 paper "A Theory of Human Motivation" in *Psychological Review*" (Maslow, 1943) [30]. The theory describes human behavior toward their needs. According to Maslow (1943), people are motivated to satisfy their needs and those needs could be classified into five categories ranking from the lowest to the highest. The first three needs (physiological need, safety needs and social needs) are categorized as lower level needs while the last two (esteem needs and self-actualization needs) are characterized into higher level needs.



Abraham Maslow also argued that each level of need must be fully satisfied before they reach the next higher level need. **Physiological needs:** the primary need at the bottom of the triangle. Physiological needs are generally known as the most basic needs of human beings for supporting and sustaining their lives, for instance: food, air, water, medicine, sleep and education (Latham & Ernst, 2006) [28]. Based on the physiological needs, organizations or businesses must provide and support their workers with sufficient benefits that enable them to afford living conditions. The point is that without adequate support especially financial support people will not be able to devote much time and effort to his/her organization. **Safety needs:** These needs occur when the physiological needs are met. These needs are required for protection from or against any physical and emotional threat and harm, to be freed from any dangerous situations, free of the fear of losing a property, a job, food and shelter. The main purpose of these needs is to have a safe place, secure income, medical insurance, sufficient paid, and other benefits (McLeod, 2007)

[32]. In short, organizations can ensure a safe working environment by providing some safety mechanisms such as health insurance, safety guideline and work instructions. **Belonging or social needs:** These needs are activated after the safety needs are fulfilled. People need to belong, to be accepted and loved by other people because they are living in society. They like to have friends, family and communities. Also, they try to satisfy their needs for relationship, friendship, affection and acceptance. Moreover, cooperation and interaction between people and people in the society are needed since they are social beings. In an attempt to meet these needs, businesses or organizations have to encourage their employees to participate, to be a part in the various social activities such as party, group discussion, team building activities and so on (Benson & Dundis, 2003) [2]. **Esteem needs:** These needs occupy the third level of needs and emerge after social needs are met. These types of needs are to be held in esteem by the person itself as well as by others. Also, these needs initiate great satisfaction as self-

confidence, prestige status and power. They usually combine both external esteem factors like states, attention and safe recognition and internal factors such as self-respect, self-achievement and autonomy (Huitt, 2004) <sup>[21]</sup>. In order to fulfill these needs, organizations can initiate any rules or activities that fit their internal culture such as employees of the month, letter of recognition or best achievement party and so on.

**Self-actualization:** Among other needs in Maslow's hierarchy, self-actualization occupies the highest need which can develop, fulfill and maximize one's potential, self-fulfillment and accomplishment. Those who reach this level try to maximize their outcome, skills and knowledge in order to achieve their desired goal and also can be a valuable asset to the human resources of an organization (Greene & Burke, 2007) <sup>[17]</sup>.

The above needs theory has been supported by Latham & Pinder (2005) <sup>[29]</sup>. The authors suggest that in order to achieve long-term sustainability, motivation should be implemented based on Maslow's hierarchy need. If people's basic needs are lacking, personal safety, belonging, self-esteem and self-actualization cannot develop. This could result in lack of interest to develop and progress in both short and long-term goals (Latham & Ernst, 2006) <sup>[28]</sup>. Therefore, in order to motivate people effectively and productively, organizations or businesses need to know where people are placed on the hierarchical pyramid and then to focus on meeting people's needs at that level. From this point of view, various organizational programs including corporate sustainability programs, remuneration, benefits, job satisfaction and a better working environment must be in place and guaranteed before identification with sustainability values can be expected.

From the above discussion, Maslow's hierarchical needs are crucial for recognizing the needs of people. At the same time, it is important for both businesses and organizations in the context of rewards and recognition, where financial and nonfinancial incentives are generally used and have become the most potential factor to satisfy and motivate people to work harder, to improve their performance and finally to successfully achieve their goals.

### 3. Materials and methods

The study was done in Nakuru County. A descriptive research

design was used. The target population was 196 employees in management and non-management levels in 3 to 5 star rated hotels in Nakuru County. This study sampled 3 – 5 star rated hotels in four towns in Kenya namely: Nairobi, Mombasa, Nakuru and Kisumu. The researcher conducted simple random sampling where she blindfoldedly picked on Nakuru County. Purposive sampling technique was used to choose seven 3-5 star rated hotels in the study area. The researcher sampled utmost four employees per department in each hotel thus an average of 28 employees per hotel. The study used questionnaires as the tools for data collection. To ensure that the questionnaire is valid enough for data collection, the researcher gave it to the supervisors to access its quality. The researcher then amended all the errors and inconsistencies highlighted by the supervisors. Cronbach's alpha was used to test the reliability of the questionnaire. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Findings were presented using tables. Correlation analysis was used to determine the relationship between incentives (financial and non-financial) and service delivery.

### 4. Empirical results

Results in table 1 indicates that the majority of the respondents were male (65%, n=98) and (35%, n=52) were female. This result shows that the dominant gender in the hotels is males with females constituting a minority in the staff establishment. This could likely be implied to the culture and nature of the hospitality industry with long working hours and shifts, whereby the female employees are at times needed to divide their time between work and family commitments. When faced with such decisions between family and career, female employees will mostly choose family, whereas men, naturally, are more devoted to working full time.

Further, majority of the respondents were aged between 26 to 35 years (44.7%, n=67), followed by those aged 36-45 years (37.3%, n=56), then those between 18 and 25 (14.0%, n=21) and lastly those between 46 and 60 years (4.0%, n=6) as shown in table 1. These results reveal that the selected hotels employ mainly a young workforce. This could be attributed to the aspect that most workers of this age bracket are flexible and have no attachment to families and can easily cope with shifts and working hours of the hotels

**Table 1:** Demographics

Attribute	Category	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	98	65.0
	Female	52	35.0
Age in years	18 – 25	21	14.0
	26 -35	66	44.7
	36 – 45	56	37.3
	46 – 60	6	4.0
Education Level	Diploma	104	69.3
	Bachelor's Degree	34	22.7
	Master's Degree	12	8.0
Years of experience	0 -5	73	48.7
	6 – 11	55	36.7
	12 – 17	22	14.6
Marital Status	Single	76	51.3
	Married	74	48.7

*Source:* Researcher, 2018

With regards to the education level as shown in table 1, majority had attained diploma education (69.3%, n=104), followed by bachelor degree (22.7%, n=34), then masters level (8.0%, n=12). Workers with diploma qualification are well and highly trained to provide hands on technical services which are very paramount in the hotel industry. Majority of the respondents had worked for five years and below (48.7%, n=73), followed by 6-11 years (36.7%. n=55) and lastly 12-17 years (14.6%, n=22) as shown in table 1 above. The findings imply that, hotel employers would ideally prefer young employees' fresh from colleges. This could be attributed to aspect that, this group of employees is eager and ready to work as they build up their career. 51.3% of the respondents were single (unmarried), while (48.7%) were married (Table 1). For marital status, the findings of the study indicated that there is no much difference in the number of employees who are married and those who are not. They are of almost in equal proportion. However, the majority of the employees in the selected hotels are single (unmarried) people. Single (unmarried) workers, having less attachment to families, can offer services even at odd hours of the hotel shifts while the married employees would prefer to be with their families. In summary, the demographic information reveals that the majority of the respondents were young, unmarried male employees having diploma qualification with five years and below of work experience.

**4.1 Types of Incentives used in 3 – 5 star-rated hotels**

The respondents were asked a series of questions concerning the types of incentives offered in the organizations where they were working. The incentives were categorized into financial and non-financial. Results on financial incentives are summarized in Table 2 below.

**Table 2:** Types of Financial incentives offered in the hotels

Financial incentives	Frequency	Percent
Bonus Schemes	22	14.7
Medical benefits	28	18.7
Uniform (appropriate work attire)	50	33.3
Pension schemes	50	33.3
Total	150	100.0

Source: Researcher, 2018

Majority of the respondents (33.3%, n=50) received uniforms and pension schemes. On the other hand, (18.7%, n=28) said they received medical benefits while only (14.7%, n=22) received bonus schemes. The findings indicate that most hotel employers offer pension schemes to the employees as way of keeping them longer since it brings a sense of job security and permanence to the employees. The uniforms offered by the hotels bring a sense of belonging to the employees and also boost the image of the hotel to the customers.

**Table 3:** Types of Non-financial incentives offered in selected hotels

Incentive	Frequency	Percent
Empowerment	46	30.7
On-Job training	50	33.3
Recognition in work place	54	36.0
Total	150	100.0

Source: Researcher, 2018

Results on the type of non-financial incentives offered in the hotels are summarized in table 3 above. Based on the findings, majority (36%, n=54) of the respondents confirmed that they received recognition at workplace and (33.3%, n=50) received on job training. On the other hand, (30.7%, n=46) of the respondents received empowerment by being involved in decision making. The findings indicate that the greatest non-financial incentive at the place of work is recognition. This could be implied to the aspect that employees respond positively to recognition at workplace especially when it is expressed through appreciation of their efforts since it confirms that their work is valued. Further, it is revealed that on job training is also offered by the hotels as an incentive. This could be attributed to the aspect that on job training helps the business to run better since the trained employees will be better equipped to handle the customer enquiries and needs. Further, it also develops the employees towards long term career development and growth for both the employer and employees.

The results of this study concurs with the findings of Bodvarson (2005) who reported that success or failure is determined by the absence or presence of incentives offered especially the restaurant industry. In addition, Radzi & Othman (2011) recorded that employees appreciate the reward received and it acts as their main motivation to serve better next time around. Another study by Khan *et al.* (2013) showed that both monetary and non-monetary rewards play a significant role in the perception of the employee regarding the reward climate in the workplace. Despite the positive perceptions of the respondents towards financial and non-financial incentives, majority of them >60% strongly disagreed that both financial and non-financial incentives offered in the hotel are adequate. Therefore, when these incentives are not made adequate with the employees' expectations, they tend to express displeasure to the management and if it is not properly manage it can lead to poor performance, absenteeism, late coming and high employee turnover in the 3 – 5 star-rated hotels in Nakuru County. Similar findings were reported by Mkono (2011) revealed that as much as tipping alternatives enhances service delivery among employees, rewarding employees is still uncommon in most hotels in Zimbabwe.

**4.2 Effect of Employee's Perceptions towards financial and Non-financial incentives on Service Delivery**

**Table 4:** Correlation on incentives (financial and non-financial) and service delivery

Correlation on incentive and service delivery		Service Delivery	Financial incentive	Non-financial incentives
Service Delivery	Spearman Correlation Sig.(2-tailed)	1	0.675** 0.013	0.645** 0.013

\*\* denotes significance P<0.05

Source: Researcher, 2018

A correlation was carried out to establish the degree of relationship between incentives (financial and Non-financial) and service delivery. Results obtained in Table 4 above indicates a significant positive relationship (r=0.675; P=0.013)

between financial incentives and service delivery. Similarly, the relationship between non-financial incentives and service delivery was found to be significantly positive ( $r=0.645$ ;  $P=0.013$ ) as shown in Table 4. Findings on correlation suggest that both financial and non-financial incentives affect service delivery of employees significantly. This implies that increase in incentives could lead to increase in service delivery of employees.

## 5. Conclusion

The study concluded that both financial and non-financial incentives contribute to service delivery significantly. Majority of employees in the selected hotels have a positive perception of incentives and most of them believe that both financial and non-financial incentives create a good working environment. Despite this, the employees reported that they did not receive adequate incentives in their work place. Findings further showed that employees in 3-5 star rated hotels within the study area perceived that service delivery is an important attribute of the hotel industry. Employees revealed that communication is the key ingredient of service delivery. Furthermore, complain and resolutions were reported as the main tools in the department of customer service for enhanced service delivery. Correlation analysis also showed a positive significant relationship between incentives (financial and non-financial) and service delivery. It can therefore be deduced that increase in incentives could lead to increase in service delivery among staff in 3-5 star hotels in the study area.

## 6. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommends are made:

1. Both financial and non-financial incentives should be provided adequately in the hotels for maximum service delivery.
2. Hotels should strive to introduce a satisfactory incentive package to the employees. This is important because employees' satisfaction can motivate significant service delivery.
3. Hotels should provide uniforms to their employees to boost the image of the hotel and confidence of the staff.
4. Hotels should strive to maintain complain resolution department as it was found to be one of the most important in handling customers.
5. Hotels should maintain pension schemes to reduce job turnover.

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