A Netnographic Analysis of Online Reviews of Restaurant Service in Botswana

Delly Chatibura
Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management, University of Botswana
Email: mahachid@ub.ac.bw

Montle Siya
Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management, University of Botswana
Email: siyamkc@ub.ac.bw

ABSTRACT

This paper re-visits the notion of restaurant service performance in Botswana. The primary point of departure from Manwa's work is that this paper employs Kozinets' netnographic procedure to achieve its main objective, of identifying online communities' displeasure with restaurant services in Botswana. A special emphasis is placed on an a priori coding exercise. The paper specifically analyses 290 TripAdvisor reviews of the restaurant services in Gaborone classified as 'poor' and 'terrible'. The sample comments used, indicate the prevalence of failures in the service delivery system. Gaining knowledge on the types of service failures is necessary when understanding service failure contexts and useful in developing systems for service recovery in Botswana. This paper is therefore valuable as it sets the basis for the recognition of service recovery models that could be appropriate for restaurant diners in Botswana.

Keywords: Netnography, customer online reviews, restaurant services, TripAdvisor, Botswana

INTRODUCTION

There are considerable reciprocal relationships between the socio-economic environment and tourism in Botswana. In 2012, travel and tourism's combined direct, indirect and induced impact in the country was US$ 6.6 trillion (World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC], 2013). In the same year, travel and tourism generated one in every 11 jobs, 5% of total economy investment and 5% of world exports (WTTC, 2013). The sector's contribution to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is set to grow by 4.4% on average per year to 2023 (WTTC, 2013). In a similar vein, the country made major strides in hotel and restaurant estate development, amongst other achievements. Between 2008 and 2012 alone, the hotel and restaurant sector's contribution to the country's GDP rose by 67% (Botswana Investment & Trade Centre, n.d). However, amidst these positive developments, service provision in these facilities has been noted as a cause for concern. A preliminary study by Manwa (2011) revealed that some of the restaurants in Botswana performed below customers' expectations with regards to the intangible aspects of service such as reliability, empathy and responsiveness. Several years after Manwa's study, no other notable study has been undertaken to review whether there have been any changes in the provision of quality service in the restaurant sector. This aspect is important given the positive outlook of tourism and restaurant development in the country. As the country also strives to maintain its competitiveness and outperform its closest competitors such as South Africa, Tanzania, Madagascar, Kenya or Namibia (WTTC, 2013), the provision of quality service is paramount.

The concept of service quality and its provision in the restaurant sector has been widely studied in extant literature. However, the topic of service failure in restaurant service quality

literature, is quite infant, emerging mainly in the last three decades (Räikkönen & Honkanen, 2016). The process of service failure begins with an unfavourable service and experience (Räikkönen & Honkanen, 2016). Failure is inevitable in the service sector given the inseparability of the production and consumption of the service product, especially in the restaurant setting (Dutta, Venkatesh & Parsa, 2007).

Typical studies have identified the types of service failures common in the restaurant sector (e.g. Chan, Hassan & Bho, 2014; Tsai & Su, 2009). Some authors have studied factors that affect service recovery efforts in the restaurant setting (e.g. Liu, Warden, Lee & Huang, 2001; Mattila, 1999; Mueller, Palmer & McMullan, 2003; Warden, Huang & Chen, 2008). Extensive literature also exists on managerial (e.g. Obonyo, Ayioko & Kambona, 2013), customer (e.g. Buruskunul, Binkley & Sukalakamala, 2011; Manwa, 2011; Nield, Kozak & LeGrys, 2000) or employee evaluations (Lundberg, 2011) of restaurant services. However, few empirical studies have examined the importance of studying the dissatisfaction of online communities on restaurant services (Fernandes & Fernandes, 2018).

This paper is therefore important as it extends existing literature in three ways: Firstly, the paper uses a modified version of Kozinets' (2002) netnographic approach to identify the causes of service failure as narrated by TripAdvisor customer reviews of restaurants in Botswana. Secondly, the paper advances Manwa's (2011) service quality study by using netnography and not the SERVQUAL model to understand service failure in the restaurant sector of Botswana. Thirdly, by studying an online community and their dissatisfaction of restaurant services in Botswana, this paper provides an African perspective that could be used as a point of reference for future comparative studies.

There is no research that exists, of a netnographic nature, on customer reviews of service failure in the context of Botswana. Considering the importance attached to tourism, as an economic mainstay and its role in diversifying the country's economy (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, 2016), it is prudent to invest in the development of tourism services such as the restaurant product. This is an important feat as most African countries face the dilemma of poor service delivery in the restaurant sector (Manwa, 2011). Gaining knowledge of the types of service failure is also important in understanding the context of service failure, service failure systems and recovery models (Dimitriou, 2017) that could be used to deliver exceptional restaurant service by service staff. This paper therefore aims to identify such failures so they can be addressed by restaurant managers in Botswana in future.

The paper has five sections. Apart from the introduction, there is a section on the literature review, the methodology, the discussion and implications of findings, a conclusion with areas for further study and limitations of the study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In a restaurant setting, the product is a service, consisting of both tangible and intangible elements (Ford, Sturman & Heaton, 2012). A service failure occurs when something goes wrong in the delivery of a service product and negative customer reviews are often the result of such service failure. Of the four categories of restaurant service failure identified by Ford et al. (2012), which are service product failures, failure to meet explicit or implicit customer requests, failures caused by employee actions or inactions and failures caused by other guests, random events or circumstances, Chan et al. (2014) identified product-related failures as the least studied in literature. Product-related failures are associated, in part, with the negative evaluation of a restaurant's food and drink core product attributes. The core product in a restaurant setting is the 'food on the plate' (Keirle, 2003 p. 12). Food quality for instance, is a product attribute important in meal experiences (Jang & Namkung, 2009). It is also a critical variable in restaurant selection or rejection (Kivela, 1997). Sulek and Hensley (2004) assessed

food quality using three variables; safety, appeal and dietary acceptability, whilst others like Kim, et al. (2009) assessed food quality using freshness, taste and presentation. When studying negative customer reviews from a food quality perspective, Chan et al. (2014) and Loo, Boo and Khoo-Lattimore (2013), categorised product-related failures. The most common of these failures were those relating to sensory quality and encompassed comments on the taste, texture, odour, freshness, appearance, temperature and degree of doneness of the food (Chan et al., 2014; Loo et al., 2013).

Apart from food quality as a core product attribute, little research has been undertaken on which food attributes should be measured in a restaurant setting (Jang, Ha & Silkes, 2009) allowing several studies to interpret restaurant food attributes differently. Verbeke and Lopez (2005) for instance identified nine ethnic food attributes classified under three variables; search (price, colour, appeal), experience (taste, spiciness, convenience) and credence (leanness, safety and happiness) as important. Jang, Ha and Silkes (2009), in their analysis of Asian food also identified 20 attributes highlighted under four main attributes; appearance (fresh look, pleasing, clean, attractive and neat), health (digestible, healthy, nutritiously balanced and light), uniqueness (aromatic, unique, spicy and exotic) and other (quality, inexpensive); for which quality was just one of the attributes. Leitzmann (2012: 3) used a holistic approach of understanding food quality, defining it as the 'sum of all properties and assessable attributes of a food item'. Using this approach, Leitzmann (2012) classified all food attributes under four main groups (sensory, suitability, health and other values). The sensory value considers attributes such as appearance, smell, taste, consistency and temperature, amongst other features. The health value is in line with consumer assessments of value-adding or value-subtracting ingredients or features, such as the nutrient content, energy content, digestibility, micro-organism content or toxicity of food (Leitzmann, 2012). The sensory and the health values are usually considered most important by consumers (Chan, et al., 2014; Leitzmann, 2012; Loo, et al., 2013) and as such were considered for analysis in this paper. The suitability value is usually appraised by producers, food traders or processors when they consider food attributes such as yield, harvest or transport quality (Leitzmann, 2012). This value was therefore not considered for analysis in this paper. Leitzmann also suggests the existence of other food quality categories such as the psychological, political, social or cultural values. These were not considered in this paper as they are often difficult to define or include (Leitzmann, 2012) especially when evaluating the core service product.

The second category of product-related failures as highlighted by Chan, et al. (2014) relate to safety quality, used to classify comments on the presence of harmful substances, such as physical, biological or chemical contaminants on the core food product. This group is synonymous with Leitzmann's (2012) health value associated with food product attributes.

Chan et al. (2014) used a third category, referred to as 'other', to classify all the other quality related concerns such as missing ingredients or out of stock items. However Dimitriou (2017) classified such failures, like 'out of stock items', under service product failures relating specifically to the service delivery system. The service delivery system includes the human component, the physical production processes, organisational and information systems and techniques that help deliver the service to the customer (Ford et al., 2012). In addition, Dimitriou (2017) suggested the existence of service product failures on the service setting. The service setting also called the servicescape (Fisk, Grove & John, 2013) is the environment in which service takes place. It includes all aspects of the physical environment in which the service provider and customer interact (Fisk et al., 2013) such as the building exterior, background music, table and menu design, scenery, equipment or decor (Fisk et al. 2013; Ford et al., 2012; Jeong & Jang, 2011). It plays an important role as it helps form an impression of the organisation and its service offering (Fisk et al., 2013). In a restaurant setting, comments on 'how dirty a table is' can be included in failures relating to the service setting.

Both categories, 'service delivery system failures' and 'service setting failures' were associated with product-related failures in this paper. Another category of product-related failures considered here includes failures to meet implicit or explicit requests on menu items. For instance, requests for a specific level of doneness on steaks are considered special. Customers usually perceive such failures in the level of doneness using the combined senses of appearance, texture, colour or taste (Bogard et al., 2013). Failure to meet such needs could result in customer complaints, yet there is limited research on this aspect of the service product in the wider literature.

In summary, product-related failures considered in this paper, specific to the restaurant sector due to the nature of its product that is significantly service oriented, were classified (as suggested by Ford et al., 2012) into those relating to: (1) Core service product – sensory and health comments; (2) Failures on the service delivery system; and (3) Failures on the service setting. A template identifying sensory and health terms/comments describing the core service product was developed from extant literature for use in the methodology section.

METHODOLOGY

The data featured in this paper was analysed using netnography. Kozinets (2002) describes netnography as ethnography adapted to the study of online communities. Netnography uses information freely available in online forums in order to understand the needs and decision influences of relevant online groups (Kozinets, 2002). Several advantages are advanced by Mkono, Markwell and Wilson (2013) for the use of netnography in research, which include anonymity, candid self-representation of customer opinions and absence of researcher bias. Unlike other ethnographic surveys such as focus groups and interviews, netnography also has the advantages of being naturalistic and instructive (Kozinets, 2002).

The procedure for netnographic study devised by Kozinets (2002) was used. As with other ethnographic studies (Rageh, Melewar & Woodside, 2013), this procedure has five parts; the entrée, data collection and analysis, trustworthy in data interpretation, research ethics and member checks. However, the procedure as used in this paper, was modified in the last part. Member checks, which are a procedure by which some or all of a final research report's findings are presented to the community who have been studied in order to solicit their comments (Kozinets, 2002), were excluded. This was mainly because solicitation of the findings, from the online reviewers could not be attained due to several reasons such as, inaccurate identities (through the use of pseudonyms) and the ephemeral nature of some interactive online communications.

Entrée

The first part of a netnographic study entails the researchers identifying specific research questions and a particular online community appropriate for answering these questions (Kozinets, 2002). In this case, netnography was used to understand the main themes of negative concern raised in post-visit Gaborone restaurant reviews on TripAdvisor. The main questions raised in this study were, 'what aspects of the restaurant service product are pronounced in 'poor' and 'terrible' online reviews?'

The choice for selecting TripAdvisor as the online community on focus in this paper is based on the company's business model and success. TripAdvisor, founded in 2000 by Stephen Kaufer is the world's largest travel website and the world's largest online travel community (TripAdvisor, 2016a). The TripAdvisor brand is now an aggregation of travel websites such as holidaywatchdog.com and seatguru.com that cover 46 countries and is offered in 28 languages (TripAdvisor, 2016c). In 2014, TripAdvisor was found to be the most widely used travel

website by 60% of the 600 tourism members in a survey conducted by LJ Research (2014). The website was also recognised as the most trusted website by 59% of the members (LJ Research, 2014).TripAdvisor offers ten key features: Instant booking , 'just for you' personalisation, hotel price comparisons, traveller photos, forums, tours, TripAdvisor flights, vacation rentals, maps and trip watch (TripAdvisor, 2016b). The 'Just for You' feature, offers personalized hotel recommendations to TripAdvisor users, whilst the Trip Watch offers customised email alerts on travel services as requested by the customer. The feature that was used for this paper was a forum for review that enables members to ask for and share their opinions, advice and experiences in interactive discussion with the global travel community, including the business operators (TripAdvisor, 2016b). Apart from never returning, complaining or retaliating, a dissatisfied customer can bad-mouth the organisation about a service failure making every effort to share a negative experience on blogs or on TripAdvisor (Ford et al., 2012). Given all these reasons, TripAdvisor was deemed as an appropriate study community.

Data Collection and Analysis

The second part of Kozinets (2002) netnographic procedure involves data collection and analysis. In order to access the full reviews on TripAdvisor, the researchers signed in as members. Membership on TripAdvisor was restricted to data collection and there was no participation in the actual discussion, making it possible to study the emic perspectives of the reviewers themselves (Wayhuni, 2012).

During netnographic data collection, a researcher is presented with two elements; copying data directly from computer mediated communities and inscribing the data regarding their observations of the community; the choice of which depends on the research questions set (Kozinets, 2002). Since the main objective of this paper was to assess the main areas of concern in restaurant service provision, the second option of inscribing was selected. On TripAdvisor forums, reviews are classified as excellent, very good, average, poor or terrible. Reviews classified as 'poor' and 'terrible' were of importance in this paper. The interpretative nature of the researchers was important in identifying communication that was functional in nature and related specifically to product-related failure from these two categories.

In order to create a sampling frame, a rigorous screening process was employed. The researchers accessed restaurants in Gaborone for inclusion in the frame from a secure TripAdvisor site (TripAdvisor, 2018).

At the time of research, the website and its subsidiary sites had 91 restaurants in Gaborone. One of these restaurants, was excluded in the analysis, as it was located outside Gaborone. Gaborone was specifically selected as it has a thriving restaurant business due to its capital status and upcoming real estate developments. Non-experiential reviews such as promotional messages and insufficient complaint information was discarded. Resultantly, 53 restaurants with 290 'poor' and 'terrible' reviews were studied as highlighted in Figure 1. The reviews were posted between 2008 and February 2018.
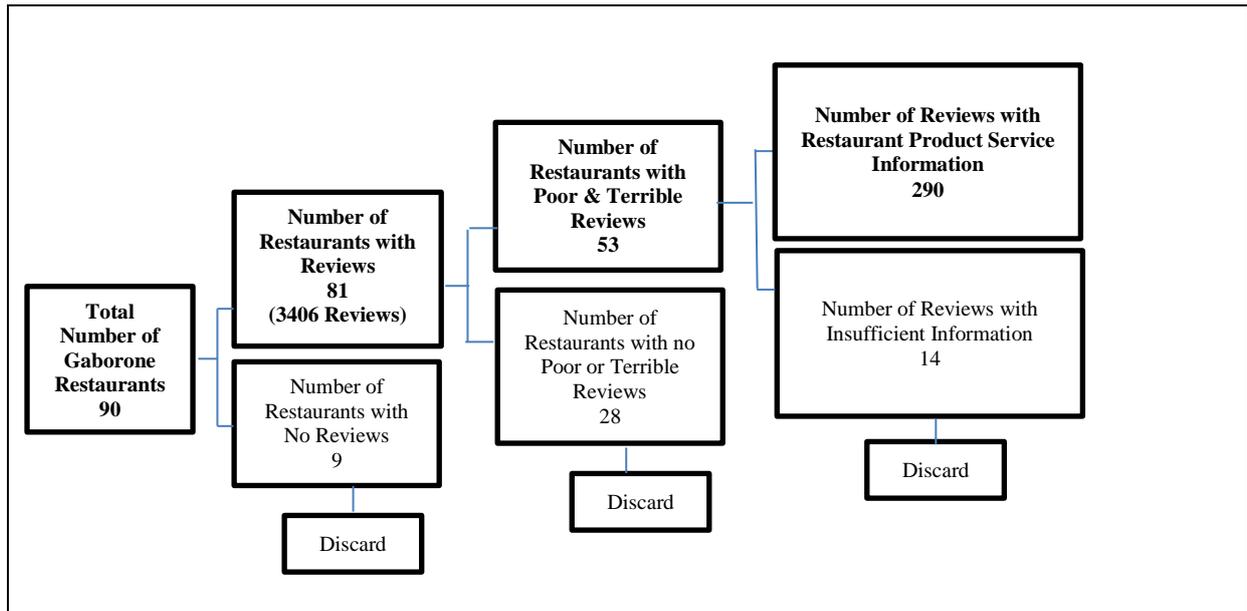
Figure 1. Categorisation of 'Poor' and 'Terrible' Online Restaurant Reviews

The paper analysed the reviewers' experiences by adopting the principles of qualitative content analysis. In order to identify aspects of the restaurant product that are pronounced in the 'poor' and 'terrible' online reviews, three steps of coding were followed. The first step of coding involved copying all the text from the two hundred and ninety 'poor' and 'terrible' customer reviews onto a word document. Each review was given a number from 1 - 290.

The second step was context and perspective based. Areas of the text describing discontent (perspective) with the quality of food or drink, the service setting and service delivery system (context) were highlighted using a marker pen. These codes would highlight the relevant areas of data for further scrutiny. A review containing several comments on different aspects of product – related failures was recorded more than once under each respective category. The coding of reviewer comments was done manually using highlighter pens; as this approach gives tangible quality to research since it allows the researcher to 'know exactly which sheet held which comment' (Blair, 2015 p. 22). Some reviews such as '*the food was bad*' with insufficient descriptive information of discontentment were recorded but excluded from further analysis. Other reviews with failures caused by other guests were excluded from this paper.

Dimitriou (2017), Ford et al. (2012), Leitzmann (2012) and Chan et al. (2014) were particularly useful in the final coding step that involved classifying perceptions of:

1. Discontent of the quality of food and drink (core service product), into codes developed *a priori*, from extant literature on food attributes and product related failures. In particular, the sensory terms used were extricated using vocabulary developed by the British Nutrition Foundation (2018), Meilgaard, Civille and Carr (2006) and Lawless and Heyman (2010).

2. Failures in the service delivery system, that relate to complaints in the interaction between service staff and guests, failures in the physical production processes, organisational and information systems and techniques that have been designed by the restaurant to assist deliver the service to the customer (Ford et al., 2012).

3. Failures in the service setting that are linked with the room or space reserved for service provision (Sporre, Jonsson & Ekström, 2013). This space has physical dimensions and tangible furnishings and fittings.

Trustworthy in Data Interpretation

The next step according to Kozinets (2002) is the consideration of trustworthy in data collection, synonymous to validity and reliability in other forms of surveys. Although there has been debate and controversy on the integrity of online reviews, TripAdvisor claims its reviews are subjected to a verification process which involves the use of fraud filters and the consideration of, *inter alia*, internet protocol (IP) addresses and the email addresses of reviewers (Stagg, 2011). A team (comprising 10% of the workforce) is also especially dedicated to scrutinising reviews for obscene or abusive language, suspicious and biased material (Stagg, 2011). Where reviewers suspect any malice the websites also offer an option for the reviewer to 'report this review' (TripAdvisor, 2016c). Using this background, this paper assumed that the reviews on TripAdvisor would be trustworthy.

To increase the validity of the results, each of the authors initially interpreted the results and categories of service failures independently. A series of consensual validation steps between the authors was then used to generate the final categories that were used to present the findings.

To be fully trustworthy, Kozinets (2002) also suggests that the conclusions of a netnography should reflect the limitations of the online medium and the technique. It should therefore be noted that the findings from this paper are limited to the interpretative abilities of the authors. The results of this paper are also reflective of only the online reviews conducted on restaurants in Gaborone reviewed by February 2018.

Research Ethics

Although Kozinets (2002) is cautious of ethical considerations such as disclosure, confidentiality and anonymity, Rageh et al. (2013) contend that ethical consideration in reporting online discussions is unnecessary as postings are free and open to public scrutiny. The reviewer is candidly aware of the consequences of their interactions on public forums such that consent for use of their communication in another public document (as this one) is also unnecessary. Taking this stance, consent for conducting the study was implied as unnecessary (by virtue of using a public domain) though anonymity of the reviewers was maintained.

The methodology presented allowed for data to be gathered using the specified procedure. The findings derived are presented in the next section.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Restaurant Demographics

The findings in this paper are based on 'poor' and 'terrible' TripAdvisor customer reviews of 90 restaurants in Gaborone. The research period was between January and February 2018, however reviews spanned from as far as 2008. Nine of the restaurants had no reviews at the time of research and were immediately excluded. Twenty eight restaurants had no poor or terrible reviews and as such were also excluded, leaving a total of 53 restaurants for review (Figure 1). Nine of these restaurants offered limited service where the customer pays before eating (Mensah & Mensah, 2013). The rest were full service independent or franchise restaurants.

Two hundred and ninety reviews were classified as 'poor' and 'terrible'. Of these, 276 were relevant to the study, as they had information on failures on the core service product, the

service delivery system and the service setting. In total 302 excerpts were used from the 276 reviews.

Restaurant Service Product-Related Failures

Amongst the reviews that were analyzed, failures relating to the service delivery system were the highest in number. One hundred and thirty five excerpts were used in this category. These were followed by core product failures (110 excerpts) and failures in the service setting (57 excerpts).

Service Delivery System Failures

The majority of online 'poor' and 'terrible' reviews of the restaurant product were on the service delivery system, particularly those associated with the guests' interaction with service staff and management (76 excerpts), failures in menu and product offering control (70) and delays in the service process (54 excerpts).

Guests' Interaction with Service Staff and Management

Seventy six excerpts that highlighted unfavourable interaction between the guests and the service staff or management were retrieved from the analysis. Sixty four of these complaints were mainly targeted at the service staff (See Figure 2) whilst the rest were targeted at management and/or the owners.

Some guests cited that the service staff failed to appropriately communicate organisational policies concerning tipping, payment methods, working hours or service times (e.g. Review 77 - *Had a drinks order cancelled by the establishment after we ordered (after a 30 minute wait) due to their alcohol license closing very early*; Review 87 -*Upon paying the bill we picked up the change was not correct. When we asked the waiter told us the price for coffee had gone up*).
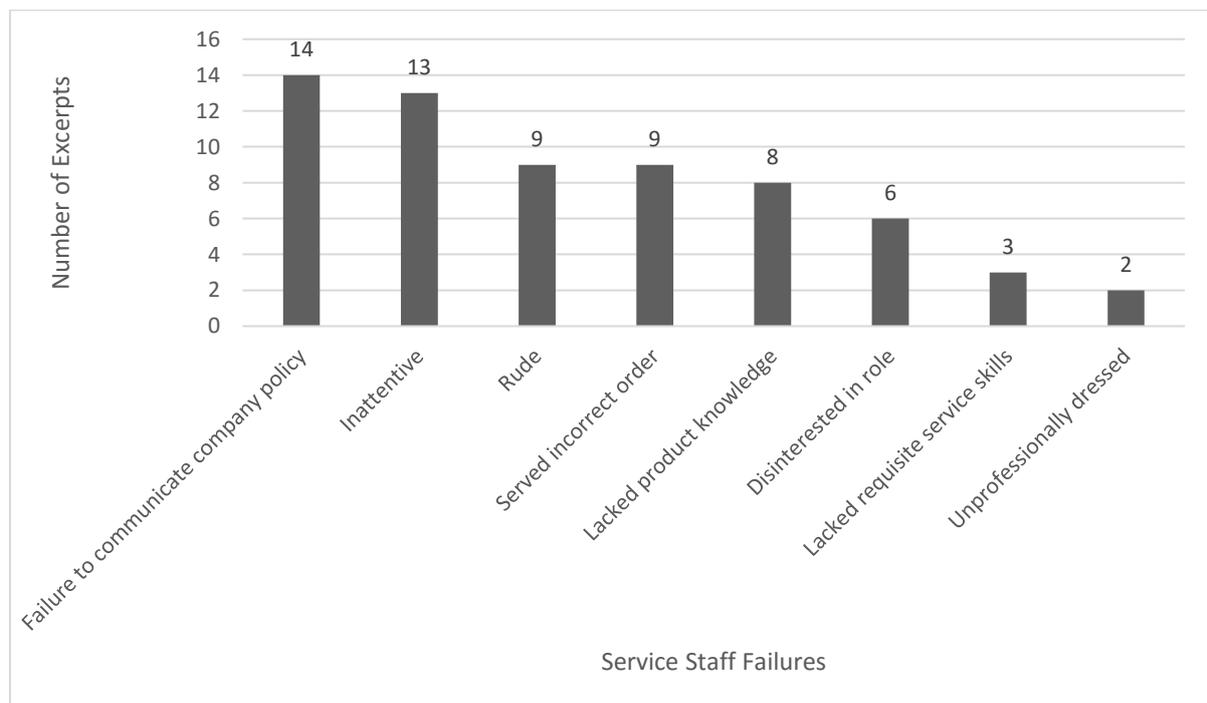

Figure 2. Interaction with Service Staff

The guests also cited that some staff were inattentive (e.g. Review 43 - *They forgot some people's foods entirely*; Review 238 - *Think they forgot one of our orders*) as in some cases they served incorrect orders (e.g. Review 202 - *Ordered a lentil and mushroom pie ended up with lentil and mushroom soup*; Review 224 - *...got the drinks order wrong*; Review 257 - *…took the order of chicken wings for myself and a baked potato with a chilli con carne topping for my wife. The chicken wings were fine but my wife's order appeared as a pizza with baked beans topping*) even after several order confirmations (e.g. Review 109 - *We were quickly seated, but the waiter had three takes at taking our order – we could hardly understand a word he said, and he kept getting out order wrong*). It was also noted that some of the service staff lacked product knowledge (e.g. Review 139 - *I was very surprised that a coffee shop could not make a simple espresso. Basically handed me a full cup of black coffee*) and were rude (e.g. Review 163- *…the staff are rude*). The staff also showed signs of disinterest in their roles (e.g. Review 163 - *and they never take interest in the customer*; Review 199 - *Service was careless*), lacked the requisite service skills (e.g. Review 129 - *More than half of the waiters are in training*) and were not professionally dressed (e.g. Review 213 - *The idea of waitrons not wearing name tags was a turn off*).

Guests also complained about the manager or owners' attitude to them and to junior staff. In particular, guests perceived the managers/owners lacked the necessary social and managerial skills to run their operation (e.g. Review 231 - *Current floor manager has no people skills and definitely no customer training*), were absent during service time (e.g. Review 14 - *There was no management available to speak to*) and also showed signs of disinterest in their duties (e.g. Review 160 - *The owner was present but he didn't bother to pay any attention to what was going on in his restaurant*). Other guests perceived the managers/owners were rude and used offensive language (e.g. Review 166 - *The owner is very rude and is a known drunk*)). Even amongst each other, the service staff displayed unprofessional behaviour as some reprimanded each other in front of the guest (e.g. Review 257 - *…the serving waitress was roundly castigated by the waitress who took the original order*).

Menu and Product Offering Control

Another category of service delivery system failures was related to the control of the menu. Prices of certain menu items were perceived to be too high given the level of service and the quality of the products served (e.g. Review 78 - *The drinks are really good but expensive. The food is VERY expensive for the crap they offer*; Review 186 - *This place's prices are insane. I still can't explain what justifies those prices*; Review 287 - *I find the food expensive*). Other guests complained that the menu was outdated and lacked appeal (e.g. Review 27 - *Menu is boring and needs a makeover desperately*) and had limited variety (6 excerpts). In other cases, some menu items or services were not available as they were out of stock or were no longer provided but still appeared on the menu (e.g. Review 244 - *many menu items not available*). In other instances, the meals presented had missing components such as sauces (e.g. Review 100 - *We had a most disappointing prawn and avocado salad. There were no avocados*) and lacked standardisation (e.g. Review 125 - *So since here we tried the rib eye & salmon which both weren't up to standard*).

Delays in the Service Process

Delays in the service process (54 excerpts), especially with the wait time for service were also noted in the analysis (Figure 3).
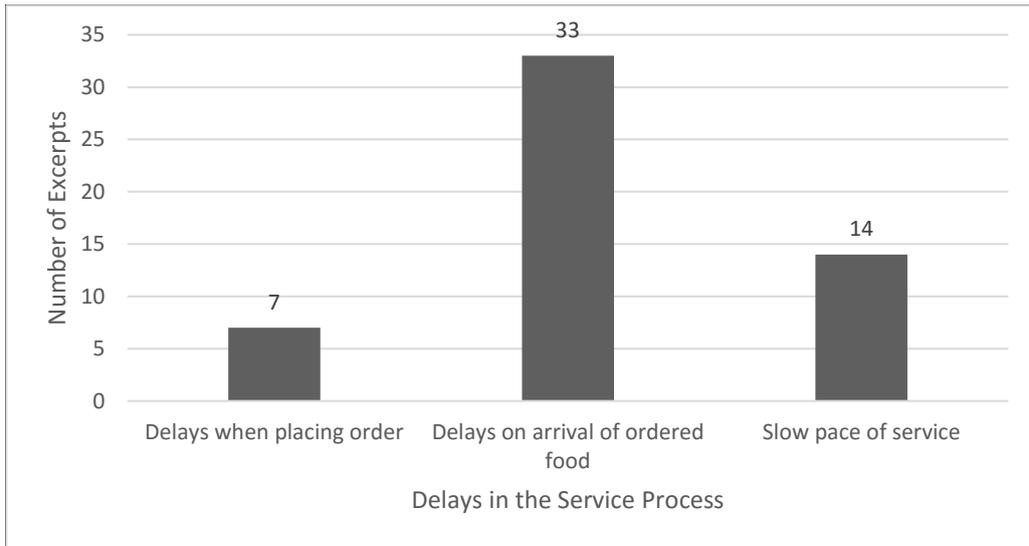
Figure 3. Delays in the Service Process

Delays where noticed by reviewers when placing orders and mostly when waiting for the arrival of the ordered food (e.g. Review 135 - *Even on lousy nights you wait hours to get a drink*; Review 221 - *Service was poor from the beginning. Ordered and some dishes came out after 30 mins, while the last two came to the table 50 minutes after ordering*). Generally the pace of service was also perceived as slow (13 excerpts).

Core Service Product Failures

An analysis of the service product failures also entailed reading through the reviewers' comments and identifying areas of discontentment with the core or 'tangible' food. The sensory attributes of taste, flavour, appearance, texture and odour, including health concerns were excerpted. A total of 110 excerpts were used in this section. The majority of excerpts, regarded the taste and flavour of the ordered food (55 excerpts) (Figure 4).
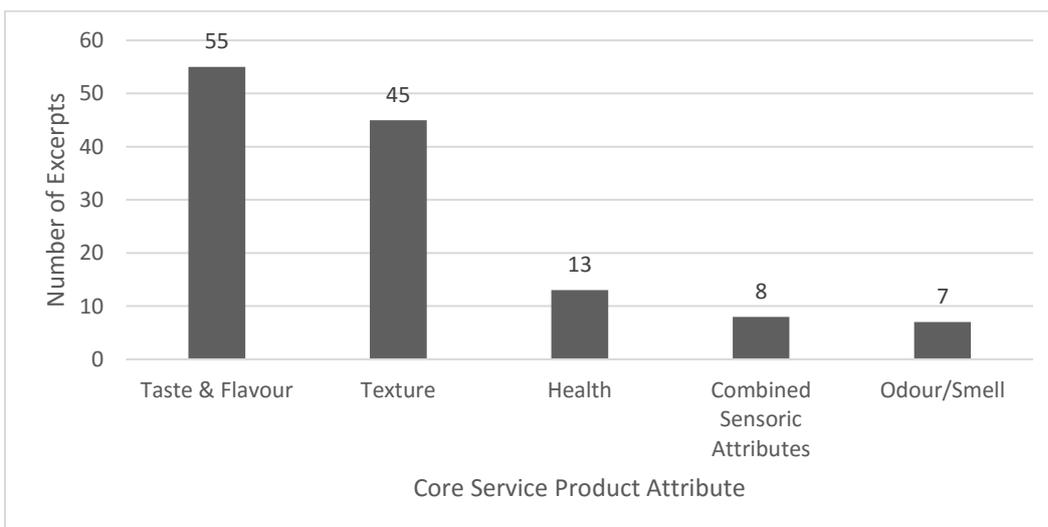

Figure 4. Core Service Product Failures

Sensory Attributes of Taste and Flavour

With reference to the sensory attributes of taste and flavour, the widest concern was the service temperature of the menu items, which was not ideal. For example, most items such as chips, coffee, pizza or ribs were served cold when they are intended to be served hot (e.g. Review 29 - *When our chicken sandwiches came they were ice cold*; Review 113 - *the chips were cold…*). And even after suggesting the food be reheated, some of it was brought back to the customer cold (e.g. Review 114 - *We complained about cold food, it was taken back to the kitchen and brought back COLD!*).

Some of the comments concerned the amount and types of seasoning used to flavour the food; either the food was over seasoned with salt, and spices or under seasoned (e.g. Review 101 - *the fish was extremely salty*; Review 133 - *chicken is never well seasoned*). In other cases the food had a burnt taste, whilst some sauces and pizza were sour tasting (2 excerpts). Other reviewers commented that the food was tasteless as it was bland and had no flavour. The flavour of some foods had been overpowered by some ingredients such as coconut in one of the chicken curries, bacon or onion chutney. Reviewer 28 specifically indicated that '*I actually threw away my burger*'; clearly showing the extent of disappointment in the flavour of the core product.

Sensory Attribute of Texture

Some of the guests' comments suggest inconsistencies in the texture of the food served. With the majority of comments, in the case of vegetables, pastry, beef steaks, chicken, fish or sea food, the food was either overcooked (e.g. Review 57 - *Steak was over cooked*) or undercooked (e.g. Review 219 - *…but mine which was also a very thick rump steak was essentially raw*). Some of the food was too greasy, fatty or oily (e.g. Review 215 - *Soggy batter on the scampi*). In other cases, the steaks served were too tough (e.g. Review 218 - *My rump steak was overcooked and tough*).

Sensory Attributes of Odour/Smell

Another category of sensory failures were reviews on foul smelling food (e.g. Review 141 - *the avocado …it had a bad smell*) where in some cases the food was even rotten or stale (e.g. Review 279 - *We got smelly rotten mango juice*).

Combined Sensory Attributes

In a number of cases, the restaurants' failed to serve guests' explicit and implicit requests on the cooking techniques required for achieving certain levels of doneness on steaks. For instance, guests would have requested their steaks to be done medium or medium rare; only to be served well done steaks (e.g. Review 207 - *ordered the steak, asked for medium rare, got medium well*). Some requested rare steak but were served completely overcooked steaks (e.g. Review 180 - *rare steak was served well done*).

Health Attributes

With regards to the health related aspects customers complained about the presence of potentially harmful chemical and biological contaminants in the food such as monosodium glutamate, flies, cockroaches and fungi (e.g. Review 134 - They served a slice of cake that had a clearly visible green layer of fungi growing on it to my 4-year old daughter). For some, they

even presented cases of food poisoning associated with eating contaminated food (e.g. Review 82 - *…and then I got sick for 3 days*).

Service Setting Failures

Negative concerns were expressed by reviewers in relation to the service setting (57 excerpts). In particular, reviewers noted that the table cloth used was dirty and torn (e.g. Review 164 - *still some holes in the table cloth*; Review 171 - *the table cloths were dirty*). For others, the table furniture was dirty, untidy or unsteady (e.g. Review 186 - *we sat down and the table was filthy; there was food on the placemats*; Review 190 - *….wobbly tables*). In addition the crockery and cutlery used was dirty (e.g. Review 186 - *…and the silverware was dirty*). Some of the crockery used was inappropriate. Reviewer 165 specifically commented, '*the food is served on steel plates like a prison camp. Who does that?*' For two other reviewers, the setting had un-useful accessories such as wine glasses and sauce bottles which the guests did not need (Review 13 - *they gave us a salad dressing; none of our dishes had a salad*; Review 35 - *the table is full of wine glasses and big bottles of sauces which we didn't want*).

The servicescape was also tainted by worn out interior decor and design features, leaky pipes and broken windows (e.g. Review 188 - *…sad and worn out decor*; Review 287 - *The setting is like an old rundown café*; Review 105 - *… with leaky pipes and dirty walls in the bar area*; Review 12 - *Broken windows*). Some of the restaurants had insufficient air-conditioning, were overcrowded, were dark and dingy, dirty, dusty and untidy (e.g. Review 122 - *Dark dull ….could do with decorating and cleaning*; Review 269 - *It was overcrowded and just a sweaty pit*). Some of the reviewers also stated that the atmosphere smelt of tobacco smoke and urine, was too loud and noisy (e.g. Review 104 - *We were sitting inside and the door was open and a lot of cigarette smoke kept coming in. Five times we requested staff to keep the door closed as the smoke was irritating us*; Review 165 - *First of all, the place smells like rat or bat urine?*; Review 255 - *Way too loud!*). One reviewer was dissatisfied with the positioning of their table which was very close to the service counters. Two other reviewers also felt the restaurant they reviewed was located in an inappropriate location with too much traffic and too close to a petrol station (Review 39 - *Their location is not in the best neighborhood, has horrible traffic*; Review 42 - *Counter to the restaurant opens up directly in front of the petrol pumps. Not impressed*).

Having presented the main findings, in accordance with the main aim of service failure identification, it is important that this paper discusses the implications of such to industry practice.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

From a practical perspective, this paper identified three main types of service failures, namely, service delivery system failures, core product failures and failures in the service setting. The majority of the failures however relate to the service delivery system and in particular the interaction between the guests and service staff. It was apparent from the study that failure resulted from the lack of professionalism displayed by service staff at several restaurants. Most of the service staff displayed negative attitude which led to the poor or terrible evaluation of the service product at respective restaurants. Guests expect to be treated with respect and expect their interests to come first; rewarding such behaviour when they receive it (Sulek & Hensley, 2004) or complaining if they do not get what they expect (Ford, et al. 2012). Gupta, McLaughlin and Gomez (2007) also note that cheerful greeting and attentive service are amongst some of the core factors with the greatest influence on whether a guest would return. Managers should therefore assist employees' to appreciate the importance of meeting

guests' expectations, which are integral to guest service and return patronage. However, some of the reviewers even complained of the managers' or owners' disrespect or negative behaviour to them and to fellow employees. It is imperative that managers' be exemplary in their interaction with staff and employees.

The service delivery system was also flawed with comments on the control of the menu and the product, specifically with the prices of some menu items which were perceived to be too high, given the quality and level of service. Customers usually rely on price to make judgments about the quality of menu items (McCall & Lynn, 2008). If this expectation is not met, an anomaly occurs which could lead to the negative evaluation of a service. Gupta et al., (2007 p. 297) also suggests that serving food at an appropriate cost, has 'the almost certain effect' of encouraging return patronage. This paper therefore poses an important consideration for some of the restaurant managers: are they pricing their products right? Managers might need to revisit their menu engineering principles so as to derive appropriate pricing levels, at the required profit levels and sales volumes expected. Probably, restaurant managers lack the skills in pricing techniques and need training in such. An analysis of whether there is such a need in this regard could be pursued as an area for further study.

Another area of concern in the restaurants' service delivery system was delays associated with ordered food and beverages, which as some reviewers perceived, could take more than an hour, unnecessarily. The perceived wait time for certain restaurant products varies given the level of complexity and variability in production requirements and service. However, restaurants should set standard production and service times for certain if not all menu items based on specifications from standard recipes. These wait times once standardized should be acceptable within the customers' tolerable limits. Psychological approaches such as providing information about the wait length or explaining the wait could be used (Groth & Gilliland, 2006). In cases, where delays are anticipated these should be communicated; because the longer the delay the lower the evaluation of service (Taylor, 1994). However, it is evident that most restaurants (at least of those sampled) are not compliant with such communication procedures. It is therefore imperative for restauranteurs in Gaborone to review their service delay communication systems in order to make them more effective and efficient.

Apart from the service delivery system, most product – related failures were linked to the sensory attributes of taste and flavour, texture, appearance or odour and health attributes. Complaints were mostly noted with regards to taste and flavour of the ordered food. In a number of cases, complaints were aired on the inability of the restaurant to observe the required service temperatures, cooking temperatures and seasoning levels. The observation of correct cooking temperatures in order to achieve the required levels of doneness and the observance of adequate seasoning levels during cooking, are functions of the production team. The production team should where possible use the established cooking temperatures and seasoning levels as stipulated in standard recipes. These temperature standards should be maintained (Duram, 2010). Where standards are not available, the production teams in consultation with management should customise and standardise recipes to achieve the recommended cooking temperatures for certain menu items.

Although failures associated with the service temperature could be attributed to the production team, if a delay occurs after the food has been served in the kitchen, then, this also becomes the responsibility of the service staff. Serving food at the right temperature is therefore the result of the combined efforts of both the production and service team. Monitoring procedures should be used for checking the internal temperatures of menu items on hold for service (Duram, 2010). It is important for control at both levels to be introduced in order to ensure that the holding time is minimised. These procedures are essential in reducing possibilities of food contamination, another cause for concern with some of the reviewers. At least six reviewers posted comments detailing cases of suspected food poisoning after eating

contaminated food at the restaurant they were reviewing. Although specific restaurants were implicated as the likely source of food poisoning, without scientific evidence to back the claims, such claims are difficult to assess and even so, there was no mention of such steps being taken by the restaurant to investigate these cases. However, because the customers were affected, they are most likely to attribute such cases to the place they last visited, eventually sending negative 'word-of-mouse' about that respective facility. Managers of food service facilities in Gaborone should as well pay attention to food safety and hygiene procedures to reduce any chances of contamination. In the event that such a case happens, managers should use the appropriate methods of analysis and control to avoid the occurrence of such cases in future.

Hygienic practices are quite significant in this study as they help create a clean service setting. In a survey carried by Gupta et al. (2007), the provision of 'a clean, comfortable and inviting restaurant' received the highest customer satisfaction ratings. However, about thirteen reviewers in this paper, were concerned about the dirt, untidiness and lack of proper hygienic practices at the restaurants they reviewed. For other reviewers, the interior was not welcoming as it had worn out furnishings and fittings, some which needed total replacement. Guests' perceptions and expectations of the service setting became even more significant as some of the customers spent a substantial amount of time in the service environment (Fisk et al., 2013) in part due to the delays in the service process as previously noted. This meant the customer had a higher chance of being upset by the service setting's shortcomings. Managers of full service restaurants (which compromised the majority of restaurants in this paper) unlike those that offer limited service, should pay more attention to aspects of the physical environment as the customers' contact within their service environment is prolonged (Fisk et al., 2013). Scheduled preventative maintenance procedures should be strictly adhered. Strict hygienic practices should be followed and monitored regularly by responsible authorities, such as the City Council.

From a theoretical point of view, apart from documenting the types of service failures prevalent in Gaborone, this paper is also noteworthy as it adds emphasis to the use of netnography for scientific research on service failure. Very few studies have used netnography and in particular TripAdvisor to study discontent with restaurant services (Fernandes & Fernandes, 2018). This paper is important in this respect, but most importantly, because it studies service failure using the case of an African country, where service ethics and professionalism is still developing.

Despite the methodology used, it was apparent that the soft skills required of service staff, in line with Manwa's (2011) 'intangibles' dimension (based on the SERVQUAL) still play a key role in dictating the quality of service in Botswana. This only implies that there is a lot that still needs to be done to improve the 'intangibles' dimension. Service recovery models should concentrate more on the service delivery system. Training and education in customer care and etiquette, for instance, should be strongly advocated. Such programmes should be designed for both the service staff and the restaurant manager or owners.

CONCLUSION AND AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDY

At a practical level, the paper acts as a foundation for the recognition of service failure contexts in Botswana, a developing country in Africa, as it yearns to enhance excellence in restaurant service provision. It has been highlighted through this paper, that the service delivery system and most importantly the guests' interaction with staff and management requires special attention. Although Manwa (2011) carried out research using a SERVQUAL instrument on selected restaurants in Gaborone, the results of this paper do not deviate much from the findings in her study. Even through the use of a different methodology such as an online study, as in

this paper, the service sector in Gaborone still falls short of guests' expectations in the intangibles aspect. For instance, aspects of delays in service were also noted by Manwa in as much as were issues of lack of professionalism amongst service staff.

In future, research could also interrogate the cultural contexts of service failure considering that TripAdvisor accommodates reviews from various cultural divides. Future research could also address empirical differences amongst reviewers' comments based on gender and the type of visitation. It can be assumed that perspectives of service failure expressed through TripAdvisor are more negative with females and first time visitors. Empirical evidence is required to ascertain such.

Future research could also how management responded to the 'poor' and 'terrible' complaints raised online and whether the strategies used were appropriate and adequate, given the type of service failure.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This paper is limited to restaurants that were reviewed as 'poor' and 'terrible' on TripAdvisor and in one city in the country. Though using reviews posted between 2008 and 2018, the paper used a cross-sectional approach as it considered reviews that were retrieved between January and February 2018. The paper was also limited by the authors' interpretive abilities.

REFERENCES

Blair. E. (2015). A reflexive exploration of two qualitative data coding techniques. *Journal of Methods and Measurement in the Social Sciences, 6(1), 14-29.*

Bogard, A. K., Fuller, C.C., Radke, V., Selman, C. A & Smith, K. E. (2013). Ground beef handling and cooking practices in restaurants in eight states. *Journal of Food Protection, 76*(12), 2132–2140.

Botswana Investment and Trade Centre (BITC). (n.d). *Botswana Investors Handbook.* https://www.sadc.int/files/1214/2358/3705/Botswana_Investors_Handbook.pdf Retrieved 15 February 2018.

British Nutrition Foundation (2018). *Sensory Vocabulary.* http://www.foodafactoflife.org.uk/attachments/ee816658-1eed-4b1756de6e61.pdf Retrieved 10 February 2018.

Buruskunul, P., Binkley, M. & Sukalakamala, P. (2011). Understanding tourists' patronage of Thailand foodservice establishments-An exploratory decisional attribute approach. *British Food Journal, 113*(8), 965-981.

Chan, W. L., Hassan, W. M. W & Boo, H. C. (2014). The product-related failures in restaurants. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 144*, 223 – 228.

Dimitriou, C. K. 2017. Understanding and dealing with service failures in tourism and hospitality. In Koc, E (Eds.). *Service failures and recovery in tourism and hospitality*: A practical Manual (pp. 9-26). Oxfordshire, UK: CABI

Duram, L. A. (2010). *Encyclopedia of organic, sustainable and local food.* California: ABC-CLIO.

Dutta, K., Venkatesh, U., & Parsa, H.G. (2007). Service failure and recovery strategies in the restaurant sector: An Indo-US comparative study. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 19(5), 351-363. https://doi.org/10.1108/09596110710757526

Fernandes, T & Fernandes, F. (2018). Sharing Dissatisfaction Online: Analyzing the Nature and Predictors of Hotel Guests Negative Reviews. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management, 27*(2), 127-150

Ford, R. C., Sturman, M. C & Heaton, C. P. (2012). *Managing quality service in hospitality*. Clifton Park, N.Y.: Delmar, Cengage Learning.

Fisk, R. P., Grove, S.J & John, J. (2013). *Services marketing interactive approach*. Mason, Ohio: Cengage Learning.

Groth, M., & Gilliland, S. W. 2006. Having to Wait for Service: Customer Reactions to Delays in Service Delivery. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, *55*(1), 107–129.

Gupta, S., McLaughlin, E &Gomez, M. (2007). Guest Satisfaction and Restaurant Performance. *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly, 48*(3), 284-298.

Jang, S & Namkung, Y. (2009). Perceived quality, emotions, and behavioral intentions: Application of an extended Mehrabian–Russell model to restaurants. *Journal of Business Research, 62*(4), 451–460.

Jang, S., Ha, A & Silkes, C. A. (2009). Perceived attributes of Asian foods: From the perspective of the American Customers. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 28*(1), 63–70.

Jeong, E & Jang, S. (2011). Restaurant experiences triggering positive electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) motivations. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *30*(2), 356-366.

Kerle, I. (2003). *Countryside Recreation Site Management: A Marketing Approach*. New York: Routledge.

Kim, W.G., Ng, C.Y.N. & Kim, Y-S. (2009). Influence of institutional DINESERV on customer satisfaction, return intention, and word-of-mouth. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 28*(1), 10-17.

Kivela, J. J (1997). Restaurant marketing: selection and segmentation in Hong Kong. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 9*(3), 116-123.

Kozinets, R. V. (2002). The field behind the screen: using netnography for marketing research in online communities. *Journal of Marketing Research, 39*(1), 61-72.

Lawless, H.T. & Heymann, H. (2010). *Sensory evaluation of food: principles and practices*. Springer Science and Business Media.

Leitzmann, C. (2012). Food quality definition and a holistic view. In Sommer, H., Petersen, B & Wittke, P.V. (Eds.), *Safeguarding food quality* (pp 3 -13). Berlin: Springer-Verlag.

LJ Research. (2014). *TripAdvisor tops Travel Brand Awareness Index*. http://www.ljresearch.co.uk/TripAdvisor-tops-travel-brand-awareness-index/ Retrieved 22 May 2018.

Liu, T.C., Warden, C.A., Lee, C.H., & Huang, C.T. (2001). Fatal service failure across cultures. *Journal of Hospitality and Leisure Marketing*, 8(1/2), 93-111.

Loo, P. T., Boo, H. C & Khoo-Lattimore, C. (2013). Profiling Service Failure and Customer Online Complaint Motives in the Case of Single Failure and Double Deviation. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 22(7), 728-751.

Lundberg, C. (2011): Critical Service Encounters in Hotel Restaurants: The Personnel's Perspective. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism, 11*(1), 1-19.

Manwa, H. (2011) Do Botswana's restaurants meet customers' expectations. *African Journal of Marketing Management, 3*(1), 14-21.

Mattila. A. S. (1999). An examination of factors affecting service recovery in a restaurant setting. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 23(3), 284-298.

McCall, M & Lynn, A. (2008). The effects of restaurant menu item descriptions on perceptions of quality, price, and purchase intention. *Journal of Foodservice Business Research, 11*(4), 439-445.

Meilgaard, M. C., Civille, G. V & Carr, T. (2006). *Sensory evaluation techniques.* Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.

Mensah, R D & Mensah, I. (2013). *Management of tourism and hospitality services.* Xlibris Corporation.

Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (2016). National Development Plan 11. http://www.ncongo.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/NDP-11.pdf Retrieved 16 May 2018.

Mkono, M., Markwell, K. & Wilson, E. (2013). Applying Quan and Wang's structural model of the tourist experience: A Zimbabwean netnography of food tourism. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 5, 68-74.

Mueller, R.D., Palmer, A., & McMullan, R. (2003). Service in the restaurant industry: An American and Irish comparison of service failures and recovery strategies. International Journal of Hospitality Management, 22(4), 395-418.

Nield, K., Kozak, M. & LeGrys, G. 2000. The role of food service in tourist satisfaction. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 19*(4), 375-384.

Obonyo, G.O., Ayieko, M.A. & Kambona, O.O. 2013. An importance-performance analysis of food service attributes in gastro-tourism development in Western Tourist Circuit, Kenya. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, *12*(4), 188-200.

Taylor, S. (1994). Waiting for Service: The Relationship between Delays and Evaluations of Service. *Journal of Marketing, 58*(2), 56-69.

TripAdvisor. (2016a). *Investor relations.* http://ir.TripAdvisor.com/ Retrieved 16 March 2018

TripAdvisor. (2016b). *Fact sheet.* https://www.TripAdvisor.com/PressCenter-c4-Fact_Sheet.html Retrieved 16 March 2018

TripAdvisor. (2016c). *Annual Report.* http://www.annualreports.com/HostedData/AnnualReportArchive/t/NASDAQ_TRIP_2015.pdf. Retrieved 20 March 2018

TripAdvisor, 2018. *Restaurants in Gaborone.* https://www.TripAdvisor.com/Restaurants-g293767-Gaborone_South_East_District.html. Retrieved 10 May 2018

Tsai, C., & Su, C. (2009). Service failures and recovery strategies of chain restaurants in Taiwan. *The Service Industries Journal*, 29:12, 1779-1796, DOI: 10.1080/02642060902793599

Rageh A. T.C. & Woodside, M. A. (2013). Using netnography research method to reveal the underlying dimensions of the customer/tourist experience. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal, 16*(2), 126 – 149.

Sporre, C. M., Jonsson, I. M & Ekström, M. P. (2013, June). The Five Aspects Meal Model, FAMM. From Michelin Guide to public meal sector. In Rodrigues, S., Margues, H. A., Franchini, B & Dias, D. (Eds.). *Culinary Arts and Sciences. Global, local and national perspectives.* International Conference on Culinary Arts and Sciences, (pp.188-197). Porto, Portugal: ICCAS

Stagg, J. (2011). *The Caterer and Hotelkeeper Interview-Christine Petersen, TripAdvisor.* The Caterer. https://www.thecaterer.com/articles/341016/caterer-and-hotelkeeper-interview-christine-petersen-TripAdvisor

Sulek, J. M & Hensley, R. L. (2004). The Relative Importance of Food, Atmosphere, and Fairness of Wait. The Case of a Full-service Restaurant. *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly, 45*(3), 235-247.

Verbeke, W. & Lopez, G.P. (2005). Ethnic food attitudes and behaviour among Belgians and Hispanics living in Belgium. *British food journal*, *107*(11), 823-840.

Warden, C. A., Huang, S. C., & Chen, J. F. (2008). Restaurant Service Failure Recoveries: Role Expectations in a Chinese Cultural Setting. *Journal of Hospitality & Leisure Marketing*, *16*(1-2), 159-180, DOI: 10.1080/10507050802097057

Wayhuni, D. (2012). The research design maze: understanding paradigms, cases, methods and methodologies. *Journal of Applied Management Accounting Research, 10*(1), 69-80.

World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC). 2013. *Economic impact of travel and tourism 2013 Annual Update 2013*. London: WTTC. http://www.wttc.org/site_media/uploads/downloads/botswana2013.pdf. Retrieved 25 March 2014.