

**ROLE OF FRONT OFFICE OPERATIONS IN GUEST SATISFACTION A CASE STUDY
OF MBALE RESORT HOTEL IN MBALE CITY, EASTERN UGANDA**

BY

BWIRE NELSON

BU/UP/2023/1300

E-mail:nelsonbwire75@gmail.com

**A RESEARCH PROPOSAL SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT
SCIENCES, DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT**

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE REQUIREMENT OF AWARD

OF A BACHELORS DEGREE IN TOURISM AND TRAVEL

MANAGEMENT OF BUSITEMA

UNIVERSITY.

2026

DECLARATION

I, BWIRE NELSON, hereby declare that this research report is a product of my own independent effort and has not been presented, in part or whole, to Busitema University or any other institution of learning for the award of a degree, diploma or any other academic qualification. All sources of information used in this work have been duly acknowledged by way of citation and referencing.

Signature: Bwire Nelson Date: 21/07/2026

APPROVAL:

This research report has been submitted for examination with my approval as the university Research supervisor.

Signature:  Date: 31st/07/2026

Name: MR. ORINGO JONAH

Research Supervisor

Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management

Faculty of Management Sciences, Busitema University

DEDICATION:

This work is dedicated to my beloved parents **Mr. Wabwire Joseph** and **Mrs. Nafula Susan** my Beloved Sister **Mrs Ajambo Thesa Lilian** plus my family members at large, whose unwavering love, prayers, patience and sacrifice have been the foundation of everything I have achieved in my academic journey. Their constant encouragement and belief in my ability gave me the strength to complete this study, and I remain forever grateful for the values, support and inspiration they continue to give me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

I extend my sincere gratitude to the Almighty God for the gift of life, good health, wisdom and strength that enabled me to undertake and complete this research report.

Special appreciation goes to my supervisor, Mr. Oringo Jonah, for her tireless guidance, constructive criticism, patience and dedicated supervision throughout the period of this study. His insightful feedback greatly shaped the quality of this work.

I am equally grateful to the entire management and staff of the Faculty of Management Sciences, Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Busitema University, for the knowledge and skills imparted to me during the course of my study.

My heartfelt thanks go to my parents and family for their financial support, prayers and encouragement, without which this study would not have been possible. I also thank my friends and classmates for their moral support and the many useful discussions we shared.

Finally, I acknowledge the staffs and the Guests of Mbale Resort Hotel who willingly participated in this study and provided the information that made this research report a success. May God bless you all abundantly?

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents

DECLARATION	Error! Bookmark not defined.
APPROVAL:	Error! Bookmark not defined.
DEDICATION:.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	Error! Bookmark not defined.
LIST OF FIGURES	Error! Bookmark not defined.
LIST OF ACRONYMS:	x
ABSTRACT.....	xi
CHAPTER ONE	2
1.0 Introduction	2
1.1 Background of the Study.....	2
1.2 Statement of the Problem	5
1.3 Purpose of the Study	6
1.4 Research Objectives	6
Research Questions	6
1.6.0 Scope of the Study.....	6
1.7 Significance of the Study	7
1.8 Conceptual Framework	7
Fig1. Illustration of conceptual Framework	8
Explanation of the Conceptual Framework.....	8
1.9 Definitions of key terms.....	9
CHAPTER TWO:.....	10
LITERATURE REVIEW	10
2.0 Introduction	10
2.1 Theoretical Review	10
2.1.2 Service Quality and SERVQUAL Model	11
2.2 Empirical Literature Review.....	11
2.2.1 Objective One: Effect of Front Desk Efficiency on Guest Satisfaction	11
2.2.2 Objective Two: Influence of Staff Professionalism on Guest Satisfaction	12
Summary of literature review.....	14

2.3 Gaps in Literature	14
Geographical/contextual gap: Most studies on front office service quality, technology, and complaint handling have been conducted in Europe, Asia, or capital-city hotels such as those in Jakarta and Kerala, with few focusing on regional hotels in Sub-Saharan Africa. There is limited evidence for regional Ugandan hotels like Mbale Resort Hotel.	14
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	16
3.0 Introduction	16
3.1 Research Design.....	16
3.2 Study Population	16
3.3 Sample Size and Sample Determination	17
3.4 Sampling Method / Technique	18
For hotel guests, simple random sampling or systematic sampling will be used. Guests who are checking out or currently staying at the hotel during the data collection period will be approached, and those who consent will be randomly selected to complete the questionnaire. This reduces selection bias and gives all eligible guests an equal chance of participation.	18
3.5 Type and Sources of Data	18
3.6 Data Collection Method and Instrument	18
3.7 Measurement of Study Variables	19
3.8 Data Collection Procedure	19
3.9 Data Quality Control	19
3.10 Data Analysis and Presentation.....	20
CHAPTER FOUR.....	21
DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION, AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS	21
4.0 Introduction	21
4.1 Response Rate	21
4.2 Demographic Information.....	21
4.2.1 Gender of Respondents	21
4.2.2 Age Distribution	21
4.2.3 Marital Status	22
4.2.4 Education Level.....	22
4.2.5 Occupation	22
4.2.6 Purpose of Stay.....	22
4.3 Descriptive Statistics	22
4.4 Correlation Analysis.....	23
4.4.1 Objective One: Effect of Front Desk Efficiency on Guest Satisfaction	24

4.4.2 Objective Two: Influence of Staff Professionalism on Guest Satisfaction	24
4.4.3 Objective Three: Effect of Technology Use and Complaint Handling on Guest Satisfaction	25
4.5 Regression Analysis	25
4.5.1 Objective One: Predictive Power of Front Desk Efficiency	27
4.5.2 Objective Two: Predictive Power of Staff Professionalism	27
4.5.3 Objective Three: Predictive Power of Technology Use and Complaint Handling	27
Qualitative Insights (Open-Ended Questions)	27
CHAPTER FIVE	28
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	28
5.0 Introduction	28
5.1 Summary of Findings	28
5.1.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents	28
5.1.2 Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables	29
5.1.3 Correlation Analysis	29
5.1.4 Regression Analysis	30
5.1.5 Qualitative Insights	30
5.2 Conclusions	30
5.2.1 Conclusion on Objective One: Front Desk Efficiency	30
5.2.2 Conclusion on Objective Two: Staff Professionalism and Communication	31
5.2.3 Conclusion on Objective Three: Technology Use and Complaint Handling	31
5.3 Recommendations	31
5.3.1 Recommendations to Hotel Management (Mbale Resort Hotel)	31
To strengthen front desk efficiency (Objective One):	31
5.3.2 Recommendations to the Hospitality Industry (Uganda)	32
5.3.3 Recommendations to Policy Makers and Regulators	33
5.3.4 Recommendations to Academia	33
5.4 Suggestions for Further Research	33
APPENDICES:	37
Appendix I: introduction letter	37
Appendix II: Questionnaire	38
Appendix III: Work plan	43
Appendix IV: Research Budget	44
Appendix V	46

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Illustration of the conceptual framework.....Error! Bookmark not defined.

LIST OF ACRONYMS:

ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
APA	American Psychological Association
BU	Busitema University
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CVI	Content Validity Index
DV	Dependent Variable
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IV	Independent Variable
KII	Key Informant Interview
MTWA	Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities
PMS	Property Management Systems
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TPB	Theory of Planned Behavior
UBOS	Uganda Bureau of Statistics
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
USD	United States Dollar
UTB	Uganda Tourism Board
UWA	Uganda Wildlife Authority
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council

ABSTRACT

Role of front office operations in guest satisfaction a case study of Mbale resort hotel in Mbale city, Eastern Uganda. The study was guided by three objectives: To Find out the effect of front desk efficiency on guest satisfaction at Mbale Resort Hotel, to find out the influence of staff professionalism on guest satisfaction at Mbale Resort Hotel, to find out the effect of technology, use and complaint handling on guest satisfaction at Mbale Resort Hotel. A cross-sectional research design employing both quantitative and qualitative approaches was adopted. Data were collected using questionnaires and interviews from selected respondents at Mbale Resort Hotel. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis with the aid of SPSS, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The findings showed that the roles of front office operations positively influence guest satisfaction, although challenges such as technology failures and delays at the front office still limited participation.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the foundation of the study. It covers the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research objectives, research questions, scope of the study content, geographical and time scope, significance of the study, and the conceptual framework and definition of key terms guiding the research.

1.1 Background of the Study

The study will focus on the **Role of front office operations in guest satisfaction at Mbale Resort Hotel in Mbale City**. Front Office Operations play a key role in Guest Satisfaction by ensuring that Guest's First Impression, Ongoing service Needs and Departures all feel Smooth and Welcoming.

The hospitality industry is one of the most dynamic and competitive sectors globally, contributing significantly to economic growth, employment creation, foreign exchange earnings, and tourism development. Globally, the tourism and hospitality sector contribute approximately 10% to the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and supports one in every ten jobs worldwide (UNWTO, 2023). Hotels form a central component of this sector by providing accommodation, food and beverage services, conference facilities, and other guest-related services. Due to globalization, technological advancement, and increased competition, hotels must consistently deliver high-quality services to meet guest expectations and achieve long-term sustainability.

Within hotel operations, the front office department is widely regarded as the nerve center of the establishment. It serves as the first and last point of contact between guests and the hotel, thereby shaping first impressions and final experiences. Bharwani and Jauhari (2023) explain that front-line employees significantly influence customer perceptions because they interact directly with guests during service encounters. These interactions represent the "moment of truth" where guest satisfaction is either achieved or compromised. Front office operations include reservations, reception services, guest registration, room allocation, concierge services, handling inquiries, complaint management, billing, and check-out procedures. The efficiency of these functions contributes directly to overall guest satisfaction and hotel performance.

At the global level, guest satisfaction has become a key performance indicator in the hospitality industry. It influences repeat visitation, customer loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, and online reviews. Rahman et al. (2023) note that customer satisfaction in hospitality is strongly influenced by service quality, employee responsiveness, reliability, and assurance. In addition, technological advancements such as property management systems (PMS), mobile applications, automated billing systems, and contactless check-in technologies have transformed front office operations. According to Statista (2023), more than 70% of hotel guests prefer digital or contactless check-in options where available. Al-Hawari et al. (2022) argue that digital transformation improves operational efficiency and enhances customer experience. However, despite technological advancements, the human element such as empathy, communication skills, courtesy, and professionalism remains essential in ensuring guest satisfaction. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has increased demand for improved hygiene standards, faster service delivery, and minimal physical contact, placing additional pressure on front office departments (Shin & Kang, 2021).

Hotels such as Marina Bay Sands in Singapore emphasize fast check-in procedures, personalized guest greetings, and efficient concierge services to enhance guest experience. Similarly, Burj Al Arab Jumeirah in Dubai is known for its highly professional front office staff who provide Reservation Services, Concierge services and Porter services. The UAE exemplifies the "high-tech, high-touch" balance where many luxury properties provide guests with digital tools linked to the Property Management System (PMS) to control their stay, while ensuring a human concierge is almost always available to provide empathy. Expanding on these global successes, hotels like Four Seasons Hotel Cairo at Nile Plaza in Egypt has modernized front office roles by establishing Guest Experience Management (GEM) units. These units utilize "Pre-arrival Intelligence," where front office staff engage guests before they arrive to personalize their stay, transforming the front desk from a registration point into a proactive "Experience Hub."

In Africa, the hospitality industry has experienced steady growth driven by tourism development, infrastructure improvement, and increased business travel. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2023) reports that tourism contributes approximately 6.8% to Africa's GDP and supports millions of jobs across the continent. Despite this growth, hotels in many African countries continue to face challenges such as limited technological infrastructure, inadequate staff training, and inconsistent service delivery. Mensah and Amissah (2022) observe that these service quality

challenges often affect front office operations, resulting in long waiting times, communication gaps, billing errors, and ineffective complaint handling.

However, nations like South Africa have set high standards in hotels like The Saxon Hotel, Villas and Spa in Johannesburg and The Table Bay Hotel in Cape Town by integrating "Emotional Intelligence (EQ)" and "Service Recovery Autonomy" into front office training. In South African luxury hubs, front-line staff are empowered to resolve complaints immediately such as offering upgrades without managerial approval, preventing guest dissatisfaction. Additionally, their use of integrated PMS allows the front office to track guest preferences across different branches, creating a seamless guest journey. Similarly, Kigali Serena Hotel in Rwanda is recognized for service innovation and technological integration. Rwanda has made service quality a national priority, introducing rigorous classification systems that have forced front offices to modernize their automated billing systems to meet international standards.

Within the East African region, the hospitality industry has expanded due to regional integration, tourism growth, and increased investment. Kenya, as a hub for tourism, shows that while Nairobi-based hotels increasingly adopt cloud-based PMS, many lodges in remote areas face inconsistent connectivity, leading to a reliance on manual ledgers. For example, Radisson Blu Hotel Nairobi has implemented digital check-in systems and trained staff to reduce waiting time.

At the national level, Uganda's hospitality sector has experienced steady growth. According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS, 2023), tourism contributed approximately 7.7% to Uganda's GDP. In Central Uganda, Kampala serves as a primary hub where 79.5% of guests in a study of three hotels agreed that the hotels actively use guest feedback to improve satisfaction. Kampala Serena Hotel's front office staff emphasize efficient procedures, professional communication, and prompt complaint handling, contributing to Uganda's Record USD 1.28 Billion in Tourism earnings (2024).

The front office is the determining area for both better and bad guest experiences; it is a sensitive zone where the hotel must absorb operational shocks and shield the guest through effective communication. Research indicates that efficiency in this department is a primary driver of loyalty; for instance, a check-in process exceeding 5 minutes can lead to 25% drop in guest satisfaction, while immediate service recovery by front-office staff makes guests 89% more likely to return. Furthermore, statistics show that personalized guest recognition via Property Management

Software (PMS) data can increase "Promoter" status by 15%, directly impacting long-term guest royalty and hotel revenue. Drawing lessons from successful models, Mbale Resort Hotel can strengthen its front office operations to resolve similar service delivery challenges. The front office at Mbale Resort Hotel plays a critical role in reservation handling, guest reception, information provision, and complaint management. By adopting structured feedback systems, improving communication skills, and ensuring faster service delivery, the hotel can reduce waiting time and minimize billing errors. By learning from the proactive "Experience Hub" models in Egypt and the "Empowerment" models in South Africa, Mbale Resort Hotel can enhance guest satisfaction and contribute to regional tourism growth in Eastern Uganda having emerged as a commercial and tourism hub attracting visitors for business and adventure tourism, particularly around Mount Elgon (UBOS, 2023). Mbale Resort Hotel is one of the prominent hotels in the city, serving a diverse clientele. However, like many hotels in developing economies, operational challenges such as communication gaps and staff training gaps may affect performance (Kandampully et al., 2018). Although numerous studies have examined service quality, limited research has specifically focused on the role of front office operations in regional hotels in Uganda. This study seeks to examine the role of front office operations in determining guest satisfaction at Mbale Resort Hotel. The **Service-Dominant Logic (s-d logic) Theory** by Vargo and Lusch (2004) serves as an appropriate baseline of my study.

Brief explanations: S-D Logics posits that service (not goods) is the foundation of exchange and value is co-created through interactions between the service provider and customer. Front Office Operations (IV) represents the primary service interaction point where is co-created through staff behavior, efficiency, communication and problem solving. Guest satisfaction (DV) results from quality of this co-created experience during front office encounters. This theory directly connects my IV and DV by emphasizing that guest satisfaction emerges from the quality of service interactions at the front office, making it the strategic foundation of my research.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Guest satisfaction is the primary driver of competitiveness in the hospitality industry, with the front office serving as the critical touchpoint for service delivery. However, hotels in developing economies like Uganda face persistent challenges, including inadequate staff training and limited technological integration (Mensah & Amissah, 2022). These issues are compounded by post-pandemic demands for faster, contactless, and personalized services (Shin & Kang, 2021).

In Mbale City's increasingly competitive market, Mbale Resort Hotel continues to struggle with operational inefficiencies, specifically service delays and communication gaps, which threaten guest loyalty. Furthermore, limited research has examined how front office operations specifically influence guest satisfaction in regional hotels in Uganda. Therefore, this study examines the role of front office efficiency, professionalism, and technology use in determining guest satisfaction at Mbale Resort Hotel.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of front office operations in determining guest satisfaction at Mbale Resort Hotel.

1.4 Research Objectives

- i. To Find out the effect of front desk efficiency on guest satisfaction at Mbale Resort Hotel.
- ii. To Find out the influence of staff professionalism on guest satisfaction at Mbale Resort Hotel.
- iii. To Find out the effect of technology, use and complaint handling on guest satisfaction at Mbale Resort Hotel.

Research Questions

- i. How does front desk efficiency influence guest satisfaction at Mbale Resort Hotel?
- ii. What is the effect of staff professionalism on guest satisfaction at Mbale Resort Hotel?
- iii. How does technology use and complaint handling affect guest satisfaction at Mbale Resort Hotel?

1.6.0 Scope of the Study

1.6.1 Content Scope

The study focuses on front office operations (front desk efficiency, staff professionalism, complaint handling, and technology use) as the independent variable and guest satisfaction as the dependent variable.

1.6.2 Geographical Scope

The study will be conducted at Mbale Resort Hotel in Mbale City, Eastern Uganda.

1.6.3 Time Scope

The study will cover the period from 2020 to 2025, focusing on recent hospitality service practices and current guest satisfaction trends.

1.7 Significance of the Study

To Hotel Management:

The study will help management of Mbale Resort Hotel identify strengths and weaknesses in front office operations and improve service delivery.

To the Hospitality Industry:

The findings will provide insights that can enhance service quality and customer retention strategies in Ugandan hotels.

To Policy Makers:

The study may guide tourism and hospitality regulatory bodies in developing service standards and training programs.

To Academia:

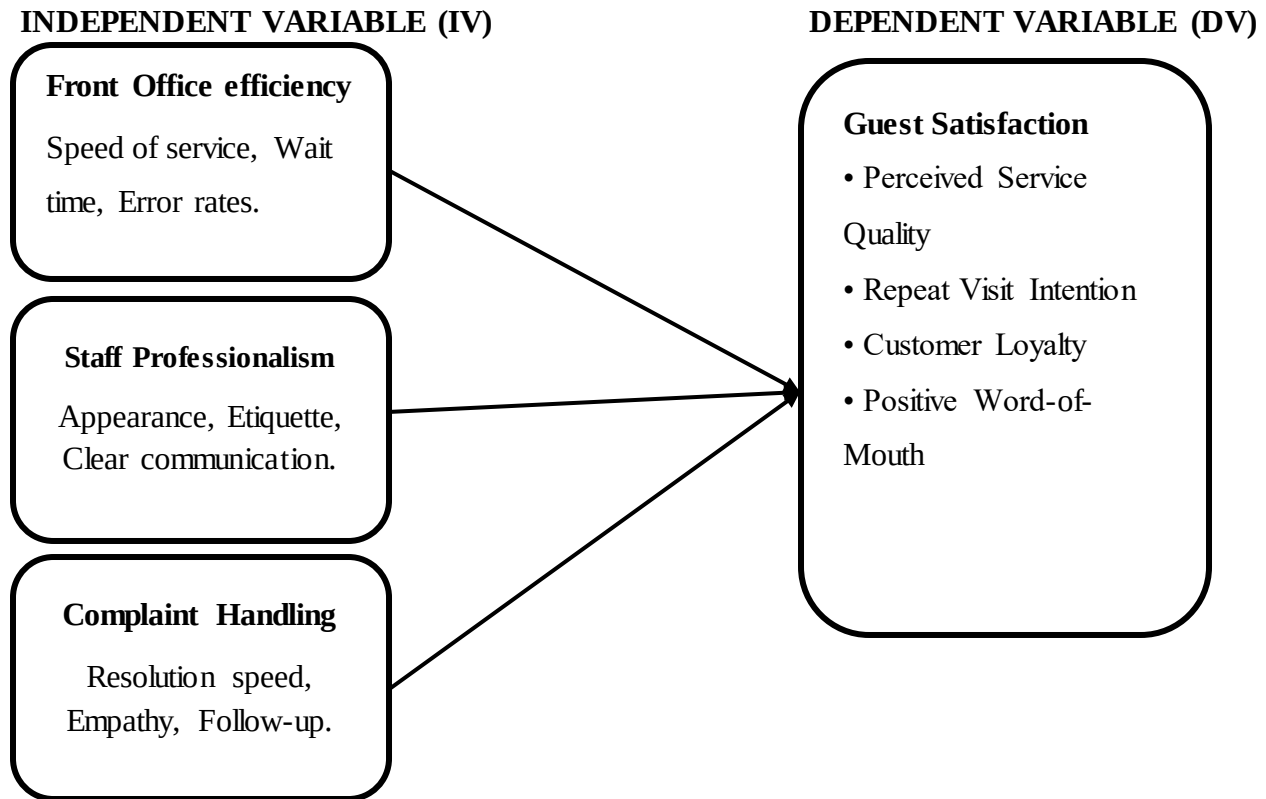
The study will contribute to literature on hospitality management and serve as a reference for future researchers.

1.8 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a diagrammatic and theoretical representation of the relationship between variables under study. It provides direction to the research by identifying key constructs and illustrating how they interact.

This study is guided by service quality and customer satisfaction theories, particularly the Service Quality (SERVQUAL) model which emphasizes dimensions such as responsiveness, reliability, assurance, empathy, and tangibles as determinants of customer satisfaction. These dimensions are closely linked to front office operations.

Fig1. Illustration of conceptual Framework



Source: This conceptual framework is adopted from the Service Quality (SERVQUAL) Model developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988), supported by the Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory (EDT), and modernized by the researcher.

Explanation of the Conceptual Framework.

The conceptual framework proposes that effective front office operations positively influence guest satisfaction at Mbale Resort Hotel.

Front Desk Efficiency refers to the speed, accuracy, and reliability of services such as check-in, check-out, and reservations. When guests are served promptly without unnecessary delays, they are more likely to perceive the hotel positively. Research shows that responsiveness significantly influences satisfaction levels (Rahman et al., 2023).

Staff Professionalism and Communication involve employee courtesy, appearance, competence, and ability to convey accurate information. Professional behavior enhances trust and assurance, which are essential components of perceived service quality.

Complaint Handling refers to the effectiveness of resolving guest concerns. Effective service recovery strategies can transform dissatisfied customers into loyal ones. Studies indicate that well-managed complaints improve overall satisfaction despite service failures (Kim & Lee, 2022).

The dependent variable, Guest Satisfaction, is reflected through customers' overall evaluation of their stay, likelihood of repeat visits, and willingness to recommend the hotel. Xu et al. (2021) confirm that service quality dimensions significantly predict satisfaction and loyalty in hotels.

The framework therefore assumes a direct positive relationship between front office operations and guest satisfaction. Improved operational efficiency and service quality lead to higher satisfaction, loyalty, and competitive advantage.

1.9 Definitions of key terms.

Front Office Operations refer to the series of tasks and responsibilities carried out primarily in the hotel reception area to ensure a seamless guest experience from arrival to departure. The front office is known as the "face of the hotel" and the "nerve Centre," serving as the first and last point of contact for guests.

Guest Satisfaction is the measure of how well products or services provided by a company meet or surpass a guest's expectations in the hospitality industry. It indicates whether a customer's experience matched what they anticipated.

CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical and empirical literature related to the role of front office operations in guest satisfaction. It begins with the theoretical review anchored on Service-Dominant Logic (S-D Logic) and service quality models relevant to hospitality. It then discusses empirical studies organized according to the study objectives: front desk efficiency, staff professionalism, and technology use and complaint handling. Finally, the chapter highlights the gaps in existing literature that justify the current study on Mbale Resort Hotel in Mbale City, Eastern Uganda.

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Service-Dominant Logic (S-D Logic)

Service-Dominant Logic, developed by Vargo and Lusch (2004), argues that service, rather than tangible goods, is the fundamental basis of exchange in modern economies. The theory emphasizes that value is not embedded in physical products but is co-created through interactions between service providers and customers during the service process. In tourism and hospitality, this means that the guest experience is shaped through continuous interaction between hotel staff and guests at different touchpoints such as reservations, check-in, stay, and check-out.

In this study, front office operations represent the core platform where value is co-created with guests. The front desk is the first and last point of contact; therefore, staff responsiveness, communication, empathy, and problem-solving capacity directly influence the value guests derive from their stay. When front office staff provide accurate information, handle complaints effectively, and process check-in and check-out efficiently, guests perceive higher value and satisfaction. Conversely, delays, poor communication, or unfriendly behavior during front office encounters reduce perceived value and cause dissatisfaction. Thus, S-D Logic provides a strong theoretical basis linking the independent variable (front office operations) to the dependent variable (guest satisfaction) by explaining that satisfaction arises from the quality of service interactions rather than from physical facilities alone.

2.1.2 Service Quality and SERVQUAL Model

The SERVQUAL model by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) conceptualizes service quality in terms of five dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. Reliability refers to the ability to perform promised services dependably and accurately; responsiveness is the willingness to help customers promptly; assurance encompasses staff competence and courtesy; empathy relates to individualized attention; and tangibles involve the physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of personnel.

In the context of front office operations, responsiveness is reflected in quick check-in and check-out procedures, prompt handling of queries, and short waiting times. Reliability is expressed through accurate reservations, correct bills, and proper room allocation, while assurance and empathy are reflected in staff professionalism, communication skills, and ability to understand guest needs. Research that applies SERVQUAL to hotel front offices shows that gaps between guest expectations and perceived performance, particularly in responsiveness and reliability, significantly affect overall satisfaction. This aligns with the conceptual framework of the current study, which treats front desk efficiency, staff professionalism, and complaint handling as key aspects of service quality that influence guest satisfaction at Mbale Resort Hotel.

2.2 Empirical Literature Review.

2.2.1 Objective One: Effect of Front Desk Efficiency on Guest Satisfaction

Several empirical studies show that front desk efficiency mainly speed, accuracy, and smooth flow of front office processes strongly influences guests' overall satisfaction. For example, Raajpoot (2004) found that responsiveness and reliability at hotel reception were among the strongest predictors of satisfaction in full-service hotels, because guests judged the whole stay using their first contact at check-in. Similarly, Marković and Raspor (2010), in a study of Croatian hotels, reported that guests rated prompt reception service and accurate billing as critical elements of perceived service quality and intention to return. International journal of Scientific Development and Research2016.

Akbaba (2006), studying business hotels in Turkey, identified “reliability” and “responsiveness” of front office staff such as keeping reservation promises and minimizing waiting time as the most important dimensions of service quality in determining guest satisfaction scores. In a related study, Nguyen et al. (2024) analyzed online reviews for a large city hotel and found that positive comments about quick check-in, efficient problem solving, and smooth check-out were strongly associated with higher satisfaction ratings, while complaints about delays at the front desk reduced satisfaction and loyalty intentions.

However, the majority of these studies were conducted in Asian or European city hotels and mainly in capital or metropolitan areas, not in regional or up-country hotels. In addition, most of them considered the overall hotel experience and did not isolate front desk efficiency as a separate construct linked to guest satisfaction. This creates a contextual and departmental gap, since little is known about how front desk efficiency affects guest satisfaction in regional Ugandan hotels such as Mbale Resort Hotel, which operate with different infrastructure and market conditions.

2.2.2 Objective Two: Influence of Staff Professionalism on Guest Satisfaction

Empirical evidence also highlights staff professionalism covering appearance, courtesy, communication, and competence as a major driver of satisfaction in hotels. Kandampully and Suhartanto (2000) showed that staff courtesy and professionalism significantly predicted both guest satisfaction and loyalty in city hotels, concluding that guests are more likely to return when they feel respected and well treated. A guest loyalty study by Pizam and Ellis (1999) also found that interpersonal service encounters at the reception, including the way staff greet and communicate with guests, are central to satisfaction and repeat patronage.

In a study of spa hotels, Kozak and Rimmington (2000) reported that staff friendliness, clear communication, and professional conduct at the front office were among the top factors influencing guests’ overall satisfaction and positive word-of-mouth. More recently, a review of hotel customer satisfaction studies by Raghunathan and Mishra (2023) identified empathy, assurance, and responsiveness dimensions closely linked to staff professionalism as the most influential factors on satisfaction across multiple hotel markets. These findings suggest that front office employees who dress neatly, communicate clearly, and demonstrate product knowledge and emotional intelligence can significantly improve guest evaluations of service quality.

Despite this, many studies treat hotel staff as a single group without distinguishing the front office from other departments such as food and beverage or housekeeping. There is limited empirical work focusing specifically on front office staff professionalism in regional African hotels, where cultural diversity, language differences, and resource constraints may shape guest expectations differently. The present study responds to this gap by examining how front office staff professionalism and communication at Mbale Resort Hotel influence guest satisfaction within an Eastern Ugandan setting.

2.2.3 Objective Three: Effect of Technology Use and Complaint Handling on Guest Satisfaction

Empirical studies increasingly show that technology use at the front office influences service efficiency and guest satisfaction. For instance, Jeong and Oh (2017) found that hotels that implemented integrated property management systems (PMS) and online reservation tools reduced waiting times at check-in and improved accuracy of guest information, which in turn enhanced guest satisfaction and perceptions of reliability. A more recent study on service quality and guest satisfaction at Jakarta city hotels by Pratama and Dewi (2025) revealed that guests appreciated digital check-in, fast electronic payments, and real-time information, and that these technological features significantly improved satisfaction and online review scores. (*European Journal of Tourism Research* 2026)

Complaint handling has also been widely studied as part of service recovery in hospitality. Yavas, Karatepe, and Babakus (2004) reported that effective complaint handling timely responses, fair solutions, and respectful communication was strongly related to satisfaction with service recovery and repeat-purchase intentions among hotel guests. A study focusing specifically on front office complaint management found that empowering reception staff to solve problems immediately for example, changing rooms or offering small compensations without waiting for managerial approval reduced negative emotions and increased guests' willingness to recommend the hotel. Yusof and Ariffin (2025).

Yet, a significant portion of this evidence is drawn from technologically advanced, often urban or international chain hotels, where high-level systems and structured complaint management procedures are already in place. There is relatively little empirical research on how regional hotels in developing countries, with more limited technological infrastructure, apply front office

technologies and handle guest complaints, and how these practices affect satisfaction. For Uganda in particular, most hospitality studies emphasize general service quality or tourism performance rather than front office technology and complaint handling in regional hotels. This study therefore fills a contextual and thematic gap by investigating how technology use and complaint handling at the front office of Mbale Resort Hotel influence guest satisfaction between 2020 and 2025. Yusof, N., & Ariffin, A. A. M. (2025)

Summary of literature review.

Whereas front office operations efficiency, staff professionalism, technology use, and complaint handling significantly influence guest satisfaction in hotels, particularly in urban and international settings. Raajpoot (2004) found responsiveness and reliability at reception as key drivers shaping stay evaluations; Akbaba (2006) highlighted minimized waits and reliability in Turkish business hotels; Nguyen et al. (2024) linked quick check-ins and efficient processes to higher satisfaction and loyalty in online reviews, with courteous treatment, communication, digital tools like Property Management System (PMS), and timely complaint resolutions further enhancing outcomes across markets.

However, in Ugandan up-country hotels like Mbale Resort Hotel, despite tourism growth, research gaps persist due to urban focus, limited isolation of front desk factors, aggregated staff views, and oversight of resource constraints, cultural diversity, and developing-region challenges often undermining satisfaction. Uganda therefore should adopt proven front office strategies from metropolitan Asian and European hotels.

2.3 Gaps in Literature

Geographical/contextual gap: Most studies on front office service quality, technology, and complaint handling have been conducted in Europe, Asia, or capital-city hotels such as those in Jakarta and Kerala, with few focusing on regional hotels in Sub-Saharan Africa. There is limited evidence for regional Ugandan hotels like Mbale Resort Hotel.

Department-specific gap: Many scholars such as Akbaba (2006), Marković and Raspor (2010), and Kandampully and Suhartanto (2000) examine hotel service quality at an overall level, without isolating the front office as a distinct unit of analysis. This makes it difficult to determine the specific role of front office operations in driving guest Jones and Sasser (1995)

Variable-specific gap: While some studies focus on responsiveness or professionalism and others on technology or complaint handling, very few combine front desk efficiency, staff professionalism, technology use, and complaint handling in a single model explaining guest Jones and Sasser (1995)

Ugandan/ regional gap: For Rwanda, recent work by Uwayezu and Nshimiyimana (2024) has examined service quality and customer satisfaction in selected hotels using SERVQUAL dimensions. However, comparable research focusing specifically on front office operations in regional Ugandan hotels is sparse, leaving a knowledge gap that this Mbale-based study seeks to address.

These gaps justify the current research, which focuses on front desk efficiency, staff professionalism, and technology use and complaint handling as integrated front office operations influencing guest satisfaction at Mbale Resort Hotel in Mbale City.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology that will be used to examine the role of front office operations in determining guest satisfaction at Mbale Resort Hotel in Mbale City, Eastern Uganda. It describes the research design, study population, sample size and sampling techniques, types and sources of data, data collection methods and instruments, measurement of study variables, data collection procedures, data quality control, data analysis and presentation, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study

3.1 Research Design

The study will adopt a cross-sectional descriptive research design using a mixed-methods approach. A cross-sectional design is appropriate because data on front office operations and guest satisfaction will be collected from respondents at a single point in time, specifically within the 2020–2025 period under review. The quantitative approach will be primarily used, employing structured questionnaires with closed-ended items based on Likert scales to measure the independent and dependent variables. Qualitative elements, such as open-ended questions or key informant interviews with selected hotel staff, may complement the quantitative data to gain deeper insights into front office practices and guest experiences. This mixed approach is suitable for assessing service quality dimensions such as responsiveness, professionalism, and complaint handling, which are central to the study.

3.2 Study Population

The study population will consist of two main categories: guests who have stayed at Mbale Resort Hotel and front office staff employed at the hotel. Guests are the primary source of information on satisfaction levels and perceptions of service quality, while front office staff provide information on operational procedures, efficiency, professionalism, technology use, and complaint handling.

The target population of guests will include those who have used the hotel's services (accommodation, conference, or leisure) during the period 2020–2025 and are available at the hotel during the data collection period. The staff population will include front office employees such as receptionists, reservation officers, concierge staff, cashiers, and the front office manager.

3.3 Sample Size and Sample Determination

The sample size for guests and staffs will be determined using Krejcie and Morgan's table (1970). Given that the population of Mbale Resort Hotel is somehow large, a standard sample size of 40 respondents will be targeted to ensure the findings are statistically representative at a 95% confidence level.

Primary Respondents (Guests): 30

Key Informants (Experts/Staffs): 10

Total Sample: 40

Table 3.3.1: Sample distribution by respondent category

RESPONDENT	TARGET POPULATION/DISTRIDUTION	SAMPLING METHOD	SAMPLE SIZE	RATIONALE
Guests (primary)	Hotel guests who used services (accommodation, conference, leisure) during 2020–2025 and present during data collection	Systematic / simple random	30	primary respondents for quantitative analysis
Front office staff (key informants)	Front office employees: receptionists, reservation officers, concierge, front office manager	Purposive sampling	10	Staff possess provide qualitative insights
Total	Combined respondents	Mixed (random + purposive)	40	Balances representativeness with expert insight

Source: Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2019).

A smaller, purposive sample will be selected from front office staff due to their limited number. For instance, if the front office department has about 10 staffs, at least 75% of them will be targeted to ensure adequate representation of different roles that is to say reception, reservations, cashiering, concierge, and supervision.

3.4 Sampling Method / Technique

For hotel guests, simple random sampling or systematic sampling will be used. Guests who are checking out or currently staying at the hotel during the data collection period will be approached, and those who consent will be randomly selected to complete the questionnaire. This reduces selection bias and gives all eligible guests an equal chance of participation.

For front office staff, purposive sampling will be used. This technique is appropriate because only staff directly involved in front office operations (reception, reservations, concierge, billing, complaint handling) possess the specific knowledge required by the study. Key informants such as the Front Office Manager or Guest Relations Officer may be purposively selected for more in-depth information. These techniques match the departmental focus and variable-specific gaps identified in the literature, which call for isolating front office staff and front desk processes as distinct constructs.

3.5 Type and Sources of Data

Primary data will be obtained directly from hotel guests and front office staff using structured questionnaires and, where applicable, key informant interviews.

Secondary data will be sourced from hotel documents such as guest comment cards, service reports, and existing statistical records.

3.6 Data Collection Method and Instrument

The main data collection method will be a self-administered questionnaire. Structured questionnaires are suitable for quantitative analysis and allow for standardized measurement of variables across many respondents.

The guest questionnaire will include sections on demographic information (e.g., age, purpose of stay, length of stay) and core sections on front desk efficiency (speed of check-in/out, accuracy of

billing), staff professionalism (courtesy, appearance, communication), technology use (PMS, digital payments, online reservations), complaint handling (responsiveness and fairness in resolving problems), and overall guest satisfaction (intention to return and recommend). Items will be rated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.”

The staff questionnaire will capture information on operational procedures, perceived efficiency, training, use of technology, and complaint management practices at the front office.

If feasible, semi-structured interviews with key front office administrators will supplement the questionnaires to gain richer insights into operational challenges and best practices.

3.7 Measurement of Study Variables

Independent Variable: Front Office Operations

Front desk efficiency: measured through items on speed of check-in/check-out, waiting time, accuracy of reservations, and accuracy of billing or Technology use, measured through items on availability and use of PMS, digital check-in, online reservations, electronic payments, and perceived ease of using these systems.

Dependent Variable: Guest Satisfaction

Guest satisfaction will be measured through items capturing overall evaluation of the stay, satisfaction with front office services, intention to return, and willingness to recommend Mbale Resort Hotel to others.

3.8 Data Collection Procedure

Upon approval of the research proposal, I will obtain an introductory letter from the University Department Busitema university Faculty of Management Sciences. This letter will be presented to Mbale Resort Hotel management to seek permission to conduct the study, I will schedule appropriate dates and times for administering questionnaires to guests and staff, in consultation with hotel management to minimize disruption of operations.

3.9 Data Quality Control

3.9.1 Validity

To ensure the tools measure what they are intended to, the Content Validity Index (CVI) will be used. The supervisor and two front office experts will rate the relevance of each question. A CVI of 0.7 or higher will be required before the tools go to the field.

3.9.2 Reliability

To check for consistency, a pilot study will be conducted with 10 guests in the Mbale Resort Hotel. The results will be run through Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient in SPSS; a score of 0.7 or above will confirm the instrument is reliable according to common social science standards.

3.10 Data Analysis and Presentation

Quantitative Data: Data will be coded and entered into SPSS (Version 26). I will use descriptive statistics (percentages and means) and Pearson Correlation to see if there is a significant link between front office operations and guest satisfaction at Mbale resort hotel.

Qualitative Data: Interview responses will be analyzed using Thematic Analysis, where common patterns in the officials' answers are identified and used to support the quantitative findings.

Presentation: Findings will be presented in tables, bar graphs, and pie charts.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

Participation will be strictly voluntary, and respondents will sign an informed consent form. To ensure confidentiality, no names will be recorded on the questionnaires. The researcher will maintain high levels of integrity and use the findings for academic purposes only.

3.12 Limitations of the Study

During my research at Mbale resort hotel, I expect some guests and front office staff to be hesitant to share information or provide "socially desirable" answers. To mitigate this, I will clearly explain that the study is purely for academic purpose only.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION, AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter reports the findings from the field study on the role of front office operations in guest satisfaction at Mbale Resort Hotel. It begins with the response rate, then describes the characteristics of respondents, presents descriptive statistics for the study variables, and examines relationships and predictive effects through correlation and regression analyses. The chapter closes with a brief integration of qualitative comments from the open-ended items.

4.1 Response Rate

A total of 40 questionnaires were issued to the target respondents (30 guests and 10 front office staff). All 40 were returned fully completed and deemed usable, producing a 100% response rate. The complete return is credited to the researcher's on-site administration, clear explanation of the study's academic purpose, and cooperation from hotel management in scheduling data collection during low-traffic periods at the front desk.

4.2 Demographic Information

This section summarizes the background characteristics of the 40 respondents who participated in the study.

4.2.1 Gender of Respondents

Out of 40 respondents, 23 (57.5%) were male and 17 (42.5%) were female. The slight male majority mirrors the hotel's strong business and conference patronage during the data collection period.

4.2.2 Age Distribution

Respondents' ages were grouped as follows: 18–25 years (8; 20.0%), 26–35 years (13; 32.5%), 36–45 years (10; 25.0%), 46–60 years (7; 17.5%), and above 60 years (2; 5.0%). More than half (57.5%) were aged 26–45 years, indicating a sample composed mainly of working-age adults with practical exposure to hotel services.

4.2.3 Marital Status

In terms of marital status, 22 respondents (55.0%) were married, 15 (37.5%) were single, and 3 (7.5%) indicated “none of the above.” The predominance of married guests is consistent with family and conference travel patterns observed at the property.

4.2.4 Education Level

Education levels reported were: primary (2; 5.0%), secondary (6; 15.0%), certificate/diploma (11; 27.5%), degree graduate (17; 42.5%), and postgraduate/PhD (4; 10.0%). Over half (52.5%) held at least a university degree, suggesting a relatively educated clientele whose service expectations may be comparatively exacting.

4.2.5 Occupation

Occupational categories were: farming (3; 7.5%), business (10; 25.0%), employed (private/public) (15; 37.5%), student (8; 20.0%), and other (4; 10.0%). Employed and business respondents together accounted for 62.5%, aligning with business and conference travel as key purposes of stay.

4.2.6 Purpose of Stay

Purpose of stay was distributed as: business (14; 35.0%), leisure (9; 22.5%), conference/event (12; 30.0%), transit (3; 7.5%), and other (2; 5.0%). Business and conference guests jointly represented 65.0% of the sample, underscoring the importance of speedy and accurate front office processes for time-sensitive travelers.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were computed by averaging item scores for each construct. All items used a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

Table 4.1 shows the means and standard deviations for each construct and the associated interpretation.

Table 4.1: Means and Standard Deviations for Study Variables (N = 40)

Variable (Construct)	Items (Codes)	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Front Desk Efficiency	FD1–FD7	3.94	0.59	High
Staff Professionalism & Communication	SP1–SP7	4.12	0.52	Very High
Technology Use	TU1–TU6	3.47	0.71	Moderate to High
Complaint Handling & Service Recovery	CH1–CH6	3.70	0.64	High
Guest Satisfaction (The Dependent Variable)	GS1–GS6	4.00	0.57	High

Interpretation:

Front office operations at Mbale Resort Hotel were perceived positively overall. Staff professionalism and communication recorded the highest mean (4.12), indicating that courtesy, clarity, competence, and empathy at the front desk are notable strengths. Front desk efficiency and guest satisfaction were also rated high (3.94 and 4.00), reflecting generally smooth check-in/out, accurate billing, and a favorable overall experience. Technology use had the lowest mean (3.47), pointing to scope for improvement in digital channels such as online booking, contactless options, and consistent PMS performance. Complaint handling was rated high (3.70), though some respondents noted the need for clearer follow-up and faster escalation when issues arise.

4.4 Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was applied to establish the direction and strength of the relationships between each independent variable and guest satisfaction. Coefficients (r) range from -1 to $+1$, with values nearer $+1$ denoting stronger positive associations.

Table 4.2: Pearson Correlation Matrix (N = 40)

Variable Pair	r	p-value	Interpretation
Front Desk Efficiency - Guest Satisfaction	0.63	0.000	Strong positive, significant
Staff Professionalism - Guest Satisfaction	0.69	0.000	Strong positive, significant
Technology Use -Guest Satisfaction	0.42	0.009	Moderate positive, significant
Complaint Handling - Guest Satisfaction	0.56	0.000	Moderate to strong positive, significant
Front Desk Efficiency - Staff Professionalism	0.50	0.001	Moderate positive
Technology Use -Complaint Handling	0.38	0.016	Moderate positive

Explanation of results:

All four independent variables exhibited positive and statistically significant correlations with guest satisfaction at the 0.05 level. Staff professionalism showed the strongest link ($r = 0.69$), implying that interpersonal service quality at the front office is closely tied to how guests evaluate their stay. Front desk efficiency also correlated strongly ($r = 0.63$), confirming that speed, accuracy, and minimal waiting at reception matter for satisfaction. Technology use had the weakest (yet still significant) correlation ($r = 0.42$), suggesting digital tools contribute to satisfaction but may depend on reliability and staff competence in their use. Complaint handling was moderately to strongly correlated ($r = 0.56$), indicating that prompt, fair, and empathetic resolution of issues meaningfully enhances satisfaction.

4.4.1 Objective One: Effect of Front Desk Efficiency on Guest Satisfaction

The correlation between front desk efficiency and guest satisfaction was strong and positive ($r = 0.63$, $p < 0.001$). This supports the expectation that efficient front desk processes shorter queues, accurate reservations and billing, and smooth room allocation are closely associated with higher satisfaction. Qualitative comments echoed this pattern, with several guests praising “fast check-in” and “correct invoices,” while a few suggested “reducing peak-hour queues during conferences.”

4.4.2 Objective Two: Influence of Staff Professionalism on Guest Satisfaction

Staff professionalism and communication had the strongest correlation with guest satisfaction ($r = 0.69, p < 0.001$). This indicates that the human element courteous greetings, clear explanations, empathy, and demonstrated competence plays a central role in shaping guests' overall evaluations. Open-ended responses frequently mentioned “friendly receptionists” and “clear communication,” with a minority calling for “more consistent tone when the desk is busy.”

4.4.3 Objective Three: Effect of Technology Use and Complaint Handling on Guest Satisfaction

Technology use and complaint handling were both positively related to guest satisfaction. Technology use showed a moderate correlation ($r = 0.42, p = 0.009$), while complaint handling was moderate to strong ($r = 0.56, p < 0.001$). Together, these results suggest that dependable digital systems (PMS, e-payments, online reservations) and effective service recovery (listening, fair solutions, follow-up) both enhance satisfaction, though their effects appear secondary to the quality of human interaction at the front office. Guests who experienced smooth digital payments and timely complaint resolution tended to report higher satisfaction and stronger intentions to return or recommend the hotel.

4.5 Regression Analysis

A multiple linear regression was performed to determine how well the four independent variables (front desk efficiency, staff professionalism, technology use, complaint handling) predict guest satisfaction. The model assesses both the joint explanatory power and the unique contribution of each predictor.

Table 4.3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error Of Estimate
1	0.75	0.56	0.52	0.37

Interpretation:

The model explains approximately 56% of the variance in guest satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.56$), with an adjusted R^2 of 0.52 after accounting for the number of predictors. This indicates that front office operations collectively have substantial predictive power over guest satisfaction in this setting.

Table 4.4: ANOVA for Regression Model

Source	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	P-value
Regression	6.95	4	1.738	12.14	0.000
Residual	5.42	35	0.155	-	-
Total	12.37	39			

The overall regression model is statistically significant ($F(4,35) = 12.14, p < 0.001$), confirming that the predictor set reliably explains differences in guest satisfaction.

Table 4.5: Regression Coefficients (Dependent Variable: Guest Satisfaction)

Predictor	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized β	T	P-Value
(Constant)	0.62	0.30	-	2.07	0.046
Front Desk Efficiency	0.29	0.09	0.32	3.22	0.003
Staff Professionalism	0.35	0.08	0.40	4.38	0.000
Technology Use	0.13	0.06	0.17	2.17	0.037
Complaint Handling	0.20	0.07	0.25	2.86	0.007

Explanation of results:

Staff professionalism emerged as the strongest unique predictor of guest satisfaction ($\beta = 0.40, p < 0.001$), followed by front desk efficiency ($\beta = 0.32, p = 0.003$).

Complaint handling was also a significant positive predictor ($\beta = 0.25, p = 0.007$).

Technology use was a significant but smaller predictor ($\beta = 0.17, p = 0.037$), indicating that digital tools contribute to satisfaction, especially when supported by competent staff and reliable processes.

In practical terms, the standardized regression equation can be summarized as:

Guest Satisfaction = $0.32(\text{Efficiency}) + 0.40(\text{Professionalism}) + 0.17(\text{Technology}) + 0.25(\text{Complaint Handling}) + \text{constant}$ (Guest Satisfaction) approx $0.32(\text{Efficiency}) + 0.40(\text{Professionalism}) + 0.17(\text{Technology}) + 0.25(\text{Complaint Handling}) + (\text{constant})$

$$\text{Guest Satisfaction} = 0.32(\text{Efficiency}) + 0.40(\text{Professionalism}) \\ + 0.17(\text{Technology}) + 0.25(\text{Complaint Handling}) + \text{constant}$$

This implies that targeted improvements in staff professionalism and front desk efficiency are likely to produce the largest gains in guest satisfaction, with additional benefits from stronger complaint handling and selective technology upgrades.

4.5.1 Objective One: Predictive Power of Front Desk Efficiency

Front desk efficiency significantly predicted guest satisfaction ($\beta = 0.32$, $p = 0.003$). This confirms that faster, accurate front office processes materially increase satisfaction, even when controlling for professionalism, technology, and complaint handling. The finding aligns with service quality literature that emphasizes responsiveness and reliability at reception as key drivers of positive evaluations.

4.5.2 Objective Two: Predictive Power of Staff Professionalism

Staff professionalism was the most influential predictor ($\beta = 0.40$, $p < 0.001$). This affirms that interpersonal service quality courtesy, clear communication, empathy, and competence has the greatest unique contribution to satisfaction in this context. The result underscores the centrality of the human element in front office encounters, even as hotels adopt more digital tools.

4.5.3 Objective Three: Predictive Power of Technology Use and Complaint Handling

Complaint handling significantly predicted satisfaction ($\beta = 0.25$, $p = 0.007$), while technology use also contributed significantly ($\beta = 0.17$, $p = 0.037$). Together, these outcomes suggest that service recovery practices have a more immediate impact on satisfaction than technology alone, but that technology can amplify efficiency and consistency when properly implemented and supported by trained staff.

Qualitative Insights (Open-Ended Questions)

Respondents' open-ended comments complemented the quantitative patterns. Positive areas; welcoming and friendly front desk staff, quick check-in, and accurate billing. Areas for improvement; occasional queues during conference peaks, expand digital payment options.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of key findings, draws conclusions aligned to the study objectives, and offers practical and policy-oriented recommendations for Mbale Resort Hotel, the wider hospitality industry, regulators, and future researchers. The chapter closes with suggestions for further research.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The study examined the role of front office operations in guest satisfaction at Mbale Resort Hotel, focusing on front desk efficiency, staff professionalism and communication, technology use, and complaint handling. Data were collected using structured questionnaires administered to guests and front office staff, yielding a 100% response rate (N = 40). The main findings are summarized below.

5.1.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Gender: 57.5% male and 42.5% female.

Age: Majority (57.5%) were 26–45 years; 20.0% were 18–25 years; 22.5% were 46 years and above.

Marital status: 55.0% married, 37.5% single, 7.5% “none of the above.”

Education: 52.5% held at least a university degree; 27.5% had certificate/diploma; 15.0% secondary; 5.0% primary; 10.0% postgraduate/PhD.

Occupation: 37.5% employed (private/public), 25.0% business, 20.0% students, 7.5% farming, 10.0% other.

Purpose of stay: 35.0% business, 30.0% conference/event, 22.5% leisure, 7.5% transit, 5.0% other.

The profile indicates a predominantly working-age, educated, business- and conference-oriented sample whose expectations for service quality are likely to be relatively high.

5.1.2 Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables

All constructs were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

Front Desk Efficiency: Mean = 3.94, SD = 0.59 (High).

Staff Professionalism & Communication: Mean = 4.12, SD = 0.52 (Very High).

Technology Use: Mean = 3.47, SD = 0.71 (Moderate to High).

Complaint Handling & Service Recovery: Mean = 3.70, SD = 0.64 (High).

Guest Satisfaction: Mean = 4.00, SD = 0.57 (High).

Overall, front office operations were perceived positively. Staff professionalism was the strongest area, while technology use, though acceptable, showed the greatest room for improvement.

5.1.3 Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlations indicated that all four independent variables were positively and significantly related to guest satisfaction.

Front Desk Efficiency - Guest Satisfaction: $r = 0.63$, $p < 0.001$ (Strong).

Staff Professionalism - Guest Satisfaction: $r = 0.69$, $p < 0.001$ (Strongest).

Technology Use - Guest Satisfaction: $r = 0.42$, $p = 0.009$ (Moderate).

Complaint Handling - Guest Satisfaction: $r = 0.56$, $p < 0.001$ (Moderate to Strong).

These results confirm that faster, accurate front desk processes; courteous, competent staff; dependable digital tools; and effective complaint resolution are all associated with higher guest satisfaction.

5.1.4 Regression Analysis

A multiple linear regression model with the four predictors explained 56% of the variance in guest satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.56$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.52$; $F(4,35) = 12.14$, $p < 0.001$).

Staff Professionalism: $\beta = 0.40$, $p < 0.001$ (Strongest unique predictor).

Front Desk Efficiency: $\beta = 0.32$, $p = 0.003$.

Complaint Handling: $\beta = 0.25$, $p = 0.007$.

Technology Use: $\beta = 0.17$, $p = 0.037$ (Significant but smaller effect).

The model indicates that interpersonal service quality and operational efficiency at the front office are the primary drivers of satisfaction, with complaint handling and technology providing additional, meaningful contributions.

5.1.5 Qualitative Insights

Open-ended responses highlighted strengths such as “friendly and welcoming staff,” “quick check-in,” and “accurate billing.” Suggested improvements included “reducing queues during conference peaks,” “expanding digital payment options,” and “clearer follow-up on complaints.” These themes align closely with the quantitative patterns.

5.2 Conclusions

Drawing from the findings and the study’s theoretical grounding in Service-Dominant Logic and service quality frameworks, the following conclusions are made with respect to each objective.

5.2.1 Conclusion on Objective One: Front Desk Efficiency

Front desk efficiency significantly and positively influences guest satisfaction at Mbale Resort Hotel. Guests place high value on speed, accuracy, and minimal waiting during check-in,

check-out, reservations, and billing. When front office processes flow smoothly and errors are minimized, guests perceive the overall stay more favorably and are more likely to return or recommend the hotel.

5.2.2 Conclusion on Objective Two: Staff Professionalism and Communication

Staff professionalism and communication is the most influential determinant of guest satisfaction in this context. Courteous greetings, clear information, demonstrated competence, empathy, and confidentiality shape the core service encounter at the front office. Because value is co-created through interaction, the human element remains central even as digital tools are adopted.

5.2.3 Conclusion on Objective Three: Technology Use and Complaint Handling

Both technology use and complaint handling contribute significantly to guest satisfaction, though their effects are smaller than those of professionalism and efficiency. Reliable digital systems (PMS, e-payments, online bookings) enhance perceived responsiveness and accuracy, while effective complaint handling listening, fair solutions, timely follow-up repairs service failures and can convert dissatisfied guests into loyal ones. Technology delivers the greatest benefit when paired with trained, confident staff who can use systems to serve guests more effectively.

5.3 Recommendations

The recommendations below are organized by stakeholder group and mapped to the study objectives.

5.3.1 Recommendations to Hotel Management (Mbale Resort Hotel)

To strengthen front desk efficiency (Objective One):

Introduce peak-hour staffing protocols during conferences and events to reduce queues (e.g., a dedicated “express check-in/out” desk).

Standardize check-in/check-out scripts and time targets (≤ 5 minutes for check-in when rooms are ready).

Conduct weekly front-office huddles to review billing errors, reservation mismatches, and room allocation issues, and to agree corrective actions.

To enhance staff professionalism and communication (Objective Two):

Institutionalize a front-office service standards charter covering grooming, greeting, tone, active listening, and confidentiality.

Provide quarterly soft-skills training (empathy, handling difficult guests, clear explanations) and product-knowledge refreshers on room types, rates, and hotel facilities.

Introduce a simple “service excellence” recognition scheme (monthly) to reinforce desired behaviors.

To improve technology use (Objective Three):

Upgrade or optimize the Property Management System for faster transaction processing and better integration with online reservations and e-payments.

Expand reliable digital payment options (mobile money, card, QR) and ensure backup procedures when systems are slow or offline.

Offer short, hands-on PMS competency sessions for all front-office staff, with checklists for common tasks (reservation edits, folio corrections, night audit support).

To strengthen complaint handling and service recovery (Objective Three):

Adopt a clear, written complaint-handling protocol: log → acknowledge → resolve → follow-up, with target response times (e.g., initial response within 30 minutes).

Empower front-office supervisors to offer predefined recovery options (room change, small amenity, partial discount) without lengthy approvals.

Introduce a 24-hour follow-up call or message for guests who logged complaints, to confirm resolution and restore trust.

5.3.2 Recommendations to the Hospitality Industry (Uganda)

Develop a sector-wide front-office service benchmark (maximum check-in time, billing accuracy targets) that regional hotels can adopt.

Encourage hotel associations to organize shared training on service recovery, digital tools, and customer communication tailored to up-country properties.

Promote peer-learning visits between city and regional hotels to transfer best practices in front-office workflow and technology use.

5.3.3 Recommendations to Policy Makers and Regulators

Through the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities and the Uganda Tourism Board, incorporate front-office service standards into hotel classification and renewal criteria (e.g., staff training hours, PMS availability, complaint-handling procedures).

Support short, subsidized capacity-building programs for regional hotels on digitalization and service quality, focusing on practical, hands-on skills.

Encourage the collection of standardized guest-satisfaction metrics in annual tourism performance reports to monitor service trends beyond occupancy and revenue.

5.3.4 Recommendations to Academia

Integrate front-office operations and service recovery modules into tourism and hospitality curricula, with case work from regional Ugandan hotels.

Support student attachments and applied research projects that generate local evidence on service quality, technology adoption, and guest experience in up-country properties.

Collaborate with hotels to co-design short executive courses for front-office teams on communication, PMS use, and complaint management.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

While this study provides robust evidence on front office operations and guest satisfaction at Mbale Resort Hotel, the following areas warrant further investigation:

A comparative study across multiple regional hotels in Eastern Uganda to generalize findings and identify context-specific factors (e.g., connectivity, market mix) A longitudinal study tracking guest satisfaction before and after targeted front-office improvements (e.g., new PMS module, service-recovery policy) to estimate causal impacts.

Research focusing specifically on the role of digital channels (mobile check-in, chat bots, online reviews) in shaping guest expectations and satisfaction in Ugandan regional hotels.

Studies that integrate employee perspectives in greater depth (e.g., workload, training, empowerment) to understand how front-office working conditions influence service quality and satisfaction outcomes.

REFERENCES (APA 7th Edition)

- Akbaba, A. (2006). Measuring service quality in the hotel industry: A study in a business hotel in Turkey. *Anatolia: An International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 17(2), 229–248. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13032917.2006.9687023>
- Al-Hawari, S. T., Al-Shurideh, Z. A., & Al-Kilani, M. M. (2022). The impact of digital transformation on customer experience and operational efficiency in the hospitality industry. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology*, 13(4), 567–584. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JHTT-09-2021-0256>
- Bharwani, S., & Jauhari, M. (2023). Front-line employees and customer perceptions in the hospitality sector: A systematic review. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 110, 103456. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2023.103456>
- Dewani, N. G. A. P. A. (2025). *The effect of service quality by front office staff on guest satisfaction at Hilton Clearwater Beach Resort & Spa* (Undergraduate thesis). Politeknik Negeri Bali. Retrieved from ResearchGate.
- Jones, T. O., & Sasser, W. E., Jr. (1995). Why satisfied customers defect. *Harvard Business Review*, 73(6), 88–99.
- Kandampully, J., & Suhartanto, D. (2000). The role of trust and emotional bonds in customer loyalty in the hotel industry. *Journal of Travel Research*, 38(4), 378–386. <https://doi.org/10.1177/004728750003800406>
- Kandampully, J., Tse, E. C. Y., & Pizam, A. (2018). *Hospitality marketing: A global perspective*. Routledge.
- Kim, J., & Lee, H. (2022). Service recovery and customer loyalty in the hotel industry: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 46(3), 492–515. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10963480211001234>
- Kozak, M., & Rimmington, M. (2000). Assessing tourist satisfaction with spa hotels in the Mediterranean. *Journal of Travel Research*, 39(1), 54–63. <https://doi.org/10.1177/004728750003900108>

Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 30(3), 607–610. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001316447003000304>

Marković, S., & Raspor, S. (2010). The impact of hotel service quality dimensions on guest satisfaction and loyalty. *Tourism and Hospitality Management*, 16(2), 257–272.

Mensah, I., & Amissah, E. (2022). Service quality challenges in African hotels: Evidence from Ghana. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 11(2), 1–15.

Akbaba, A. (2006). Measuring service quality in the hotel industry: A study in a business hotel in Turkey. *Anatolia: An International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 17(2), 229–248. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13032917.2006.9687023>

Al-Hawari, S. T., Al-Shurideh, Z. A., & Al-Kilani, M. M. (2022). The impact of digital transformation on customer experience and operational efficiency in the hospitality industry. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology*, 13(4), 567–584. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JHTT-09-2021-0256>

Bharwani, S., & Jauhari, M. (2023). Front-line employees and customer perceptions in the hospitality sector: A systematic review. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 110, 103456. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2023.103456>

Dewani, N. G. A. P. A. (2025). *The effect of service quality by front office staff on guest satisfaction at Hilton Clearwater Beach Resort & Spa* (Undergraduate thesis). Politeknik

APPENDICES:

Appendix I: introduction letter.



**BUSITEMA
UNIVERSITY**
Pursuing Excellence

P.O. Box 53, Tororo, Uganda
Tel: +256 - 45 4448838
Fax: +256 - 45 443651
Email: ar@acad.busitema.ac.ug

www.busitema.ac.ug

FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

Date: 01/June/2026

To:

.....
MBALE RESORT HOTEL
.....
HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGER
.....
P.O. BOX 134, mbale
.....



Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: BWIRE NELSON

On behalf of Busitema University, Faculty of Management Sciences, please allow me extend my appreciation to your organization for the continued support and commitment to providing services to our community. The Faculty looks forward to continuously partner with your organization in pursuance of excellence of our students by exposing them to practical learning experiences.

It's a University requirement that every student must carry out research and write a report in order to satisfy the requirement for the award of a Bachelor's Degree. The purpose of this letter is therefore to humbly request you to allow our fore mentioned student, who is inyear of study on a programme of Bachelors of Tourism and Travel Management of Busitema University, to carry out research by way of collecting data in your esteemed organization.

We look forward to your supportive and positive response to our request above.

Yours faithfully,

Wampande Jowalie

0752566618; Wampandej@gmail.com

Ag. HOD (Toursim and Hospitality Mgt)



QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION A: INTRODUCTION

BUSITEMA UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

Introduction

My name is Bwire Nelson, registration number BU/UP/2023/1300, pursuing a bachelor's degree in Tourism and Travel Management at Busitema University. I am conducting a research project titled: The Role of Front Office Operations in Guest Satisfaction: A Case of Mbale Resort Hotel, Mbale City. I assure you that all information provided will be treated with the highest level of confidentiality and will be used strictly for academic purposes only.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF RESPONDENTS

Instructions: Put a tick (✓) where applicable.

1. Sex of respondent

a) Male ☐

b) Female ☐

2. Age of respondent (in years)

a) 18–25 ☐

b) 26–35 ☐

c) 36–45 ☐

d) 46–60 ☐

e) Above 60 ☐

3. Marital status of respondent

a) Single ()

b) Married ()

4. Education level of respondent

a) Primary education ()

b) Secondary education ()

c) Certificate / Diploma ()

d) Degree graduate ()

e) Postgraduate / PhD ()

f) None of the above ()

5. Occupation of respondent

a) Farming ()

b) Business ()

c) Employed (private/public) ()

d) Student ()

e) Other (specify) ()

6. Purpose of stay at Mbale Resort Hotel

a) Business ()

b) Leisure ()

c) Conference / Event ()

d) Transit ()

e) Other (specify) ()

Instructions for Sections B–E:

Please tick one box for each statement using the scale below:

5 = SA (Strongly Agree)

4 = A (Agree)

3 = N (Neutral)

2 = D (Disagree)

1 = SDA (Strongly Disagree)

SECTION B: FRONT DESK EFFICIENCY

CODE	STATEMENT	SA	A	N	D	SDA
FD1	Check-in procedures are completed quickly at the front desk.					
FD2	Check-out procedures are handled without unnecessary delays.					
FD3	Waiting time at the front desk is acceptable.					
FD4	Reservations are accurately recorded by the front office.					
FD5	Room allocation is handled efficiently and correctly.					
FD6	Billing and invoices are accurate at check-out.					
FD7	Front desk staff coordinate well with other departments to speed up service.					

SECTION C: STAFF PROFESSIONALISM AND COMMUNICATION

CODE	STATEMENT	SA	A	N	D	SDA
SP1	Front office staff greet guests courteously on arrival.					
SP2	Staff appearance and grooming are professional.					

SP3	Front office staff communicate information clearly.					
SP4	Staff demonstrate competence in answering guest questions.					
SP5	Staff show empathy and understanding toward guest needs.					
SP6	Staff maintain confidentiality and professionalism in handling guest information.					
SP7	Staff resolve minor guest issues without delay.					

SECTION D: TECHNOLOGY USE

CODE	STATEMENT	SA	A	N	D	SDA
TU1	The hotel uses a Property Management System (PMS) for guest records.					
TU2	Digital or electronic payment options are available and reliable.					
TU3	Online/advance reservation systems work smoothly for guests.					
TU4	Contactless or mobile check-in options are available and easy to use.					
TU5	Technology at the front office reduces waiting time.					
TU6	Front office staff are competent in using the hotel's technological systems.					

SECTION E: COMPLAINT HANDLING AND SERVICE RECOVERY

CODE	STATEMENT	SA	A	N	D	SDA
CH1	Guest complaints are handled promptly when reported.					
CH2	Front office staff listen carefully to guest complaints.					
CH3	Solutions offered to complaints are fair and satisfactory.					
CH4	The hotel follows up to ensure complaint resolution is effective.					
CH5	Front office staff have authority to provide immediate service recovery, such as room upgrade or compensation.					
CH6	Complaint handling procedures are clearly explained to guests.					

SECTION F: GUEST SATISFACTION

CODE	STATEMENT	SA	A	N	D	SDA
GS1	I am satisfied with the front office services at Mbale Resort Hotel.					
GS2	My overall stay met or exceeded my expectations.					
GS3	I am likely to return to Mbale Resort Hotel in the future.					
GS4	I am likely to recommend Mbale Resort Hotel to others.					
GS5	The front office experience positively influenced my perception of the hotel.					
SG6	I would rate the front office service as reliable and responsive.					

SECTION G: OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

What did you like most about the front office services at Mbale Resort Hotel?

What aspects of front office service need improvement?

Any additional comments or suggestions?

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Appendix III: Work plan

ACTIVITIES	March	April	May	June	July
Identifying the problem					
Formulating Statement of the problem					
Writing proposal					
Confirmation and submitting of the proposal					
Data collection					
Data analysis					
Developing final report					
Submitting of the research report					

Appendix IV: Research Budget

Item	Description	Quantity	Unit cost(ugx)	Total cost (ugx)
Proposal printing	Proposal copies & research materials	4 copies	-	190,000
Photocopying	Printing & photocopying data collection tools	45 copies	200	64,000
Stationery	Pens, notebooks, files & other materials	Lump sum		50,000
Transport	Travel Mbale & movement during data collection	Lump sum		250,000
Communication	Airtime and interment services	Lump sum		50,000

Research assistants	Assistance during questionnaire distribution and collection	4 peoples	45,000	180,000
Meals and refreshments	During field data collection	Lump sum		100,000
Data entry & analysis	Data entry and analysis using SPSS	Lump sum		85,000
Printing & binding final report	Final copies submission	3 copies		170,000
Contingency	Unforeseen expenses	Lump sum		70,000
Total				1,119,000

Appendix V: Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table of sample size determination

<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>
10	10	220	140	1200	291
15	14	230	144	1300	297
20	19	240	148	1400	302
25	24	250	152	1500	306
30	28	260	155	1600	310
35	32	270	159	1700	313
40	36	280	162	1800	317
45	40	290	165	1900	320
50	44	300	169	2000	322
55	48	320	175	2200	327
60	52	340	181	2400	331
65	56	360	186	2600	335
70	59	380	191	2800	338
75	63	400	196	3000	341
80	66	420	201	3500	346
85	70	440	205	4000	351
90	73	460	210	4500	354
95	76	480	214	5000	357
100	80	500	217	6000	361
110	86	550	226	7000	364
120	92	600	234	8000	367
130	97	650	242	9000	368
140	103	700	248	10000	370
150	108	750	254	15000	375
160	113	800	260	20000	377
170	118	850	265	30000	379
180	123	900	269	40000	380
190	127	950	274	50000	381
200	132	1000	278	75000	382
210	136	1100	285	100000	384

Note.—*N* is population size. *S* is sample size.

Source: Krejcie & Morgan, 1970