



# IMPACT OF CUSTOMER CENTRIC STRATEGY ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION: A CASE STUDY OF GOLDEN PEACOCK VILLA HOTEL IN MUTARE, ZIMBABWE

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## ABSTRACT

*The hospitality industry is becoming competitive with hotel investments increasing even from different brands entering the market. Due to this, the existing hotels have to step up their approach of business operation and advance from Customer Relationship Management (CRM) to Consumer Centric Strategy (CCS) if they have to measure up for the intense competition and improve their customer value. To achieve this, the researchers focused on finding out whether customer centric people (or customer centric leadership) translates to better customer satisfaction, finding out the employees' knowledge on the CCS strategies set by the hotel and the extent to which this influences their service delivery, whether customer centric technology enhances customer data collection of individual customers in achieving customer satisfaction and the extent to which this influences the hotel service delivery and to determine if there is significant relationship between CCS practices and customer satisfaction in the hotel. The research design was descriptive and target population of 970 respondents from which a sample of 194 respondents was derived. Purposive and convenient sampling techniques were used for employees and customers respectively. Data was collected using structured questionnaires. The results of the study indicated that customer centric strategy practices were moderately practiced in the hotel. Also, there was a positive significant relationship between CCS practices and customer satisfaction.*



## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

At a time when guest-centric thinking has become critical for differentiating hotel brands, hoteliers need solid information about guest preferences and behavior in order to deliver customer centric strategies. Contemporary it has become very crucial to implement effective customer centric strategies to avoid customer loss to competitors. Brick and Berndt (2004) postulated that most companies exert excess effort in trying to lure new customers but only a few companies take the necessary measures to retain existing customers. Nowadays, customer satisfaction not only involves meeting customer expectations but rather exceeding them so that customers become loyal to the company's brand. Chokera & Dube (2011) insinuated that it is cheaper to market products to existing customers than to a new market. This implies that it is less costly to hold on to a customer than to acquire a new one, hence effective customer satisfaction has become a key objective for many companies. The study will focus on the impact of customer centric strategy on customer satisfaction using the practical example of Golden Peacock Villa Hotel in Mutare in Zimbabwe.

### 1.1 Relevance of the Study

Many investors in the hospitality industry have invested heavily on infrastructures to meet the demands of the industry and to match facilities with the international service providers. However, this kind of effort is lacking in or investors haven't given as much weight to their customers and this is especially so in the Zimbabwean hospitality industry. With the continuous growth of the hospitality industry in Zimbabwe which is the main economic driver, hotels have been focusing on Customer relationship management and thus a critical need to move further to CCS practices which places the customer at the center of all hotel practices through continuous improvement in customer value, retention and thereby improving satisfaction.

### 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Globalization, increased sophistication of consumers and advances in information and communication technology, has led to increased competition, greater customer choice and erosion of

customer loyalty (Kumar 2000). To survive in the global markets, focusing on the customer is becoming a key factor for all businesses. The existing hotels have to protect their existing market share if their long-term survival is to be ensured. This can be achieved by the hotels creating long-term relationships with the customers through effective customer centric strategy (CCS) strategies such as putting in place proper people with the right skills and behavior, proper customer centric technology and perfect leadership that has the capability to align the organization's processes to suit CCS in the pursuit of customer satisfaction. The decade has seen the emergence of customer relationship management (CRM) as technique to underpin organizational improvement in customer retention, customer satisfaction and customer value. However, evidence suggests that many CRM initiatives fail and suggests that CRM does not go far enough in changing the underlying processes and systems of the organization. What is needed is customer centric strategies, where by all business processes and individuals are focused on identifying and meeting the needs of customer. The study aims at evaluating customer centric strategy practices at Golden Peacock Villa hotel and their impact to customer satisfaction.

### 1.3 Research Objectives

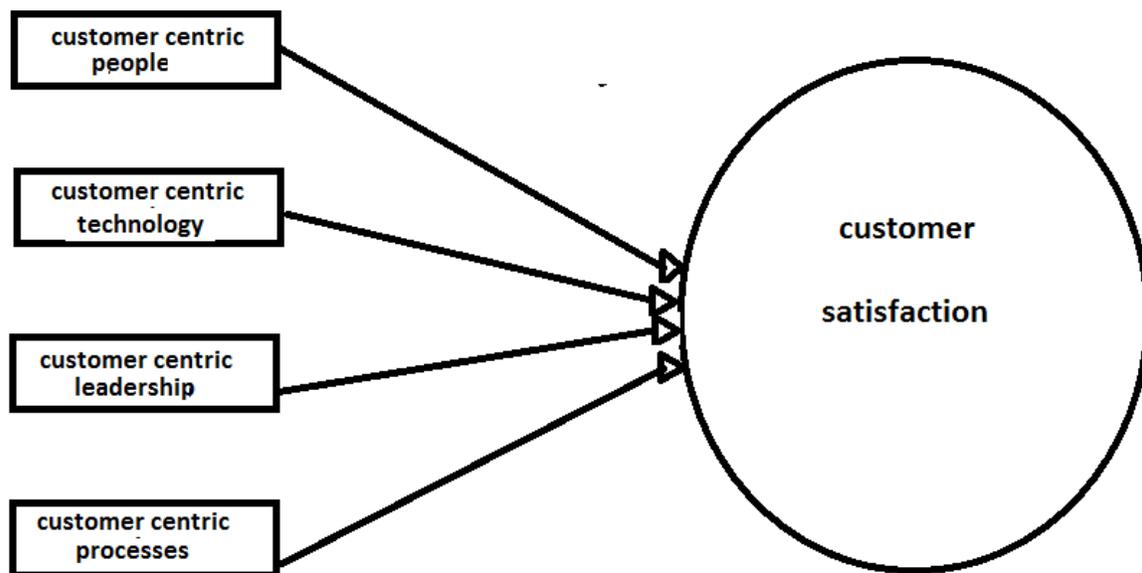
The main objective of this study is to determine the impact of customer centric strategy on customer satisfaction in tourism sector a case of Golden Peacock Villa, Mutare.

#### 1.3.1 Specific Objectives

The following specific objectives were used to exploit the main objective of the study

- i. To assess the extent to which customer centric people improve customer satisfaction.
- ii. To analyze the effects of customer centric technology on customer satisfaction.
- iii. To determine the impact of customer centric leadership on customer satisfaction.
- iv. To examine the effects of customer centric processes on customer satisfaction.

## 1.4 Conceptual Framework



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

From the above conceptual framework, it is clear that there is independent variable (customer centric strategy) and dependent variable (customer satisfaction). Customer centricism entails that organizations should have customer focus or customer-oriented mindset in all its activities. These include customer focus implementation on their employees (customer centric people). Employees should have the adequate skills, enhance by proper technology which allows enough data collection. However, customer centric leadership focuses on sharing the vision and provision of adequate facilities. The dependent variable (customer satisfaction) is an important aspect when it comes to service delivery. Organizations should strive to meet customer expectation and at times exceed them. Also, organizations should note that satisfied customers are always easy to retain and they remain loyal to the organization.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Theoretical Review of Customer Satisfaction

#### 2.1.0 Disconfirmation Theory

Disconfirmation theory says that satisfaction is comparable and equivalent to the proportion and magnitude of experience that occurs as a result of service performance appraisal. Szymanski & Henard (2001) found in the meta-analysis that the disconfirmation paradigm is the best predictor of customer satisfaction. However, Ekinici et al (2004) from their view, posits that disconfirmation theory is a

substantial theory that can measure customer satisfaction from perceived quality of products or services in order to measure the customer's satisfaction. The theory has two famous variables; expectation or desire and experience or perceived performance. It is an opinion that an offering has high level of gratification after consumption and also a feeling of satisfaction, considering equitable levels of under- or over-fulfilment. Customer satisfaction is the extent to which customers are satisfied with their purchased goods and services (Boone & Kurtz 2013). It also (customer satisfaction) asserts that there should be equity between the effort (money, time) and the output giving value to the customers. (Jeong et al 2010). Every firm tries to satisfy customer expectations and even to exceed the expectation if necessary. Therefore, there should be enterprise wide departmental strategy to produce customer value at most.

Kotler (2009) posits that customer satisfaction is generally understood as the pleasure of using product and service. Thus, the voice of a customer will differ from person to person. Anderson (2010) further articulates that it is an appraisal of how products and services of a company meet up or exceed customer anticipation. Jeong and Lee (2010) defined customer satisfaction as an emotional (sentimental) reaction or a manner of interactive recognition and perception. To add, Saunders (2010) also came with the notion that customer satisfaction is a response to the specific concentration on the expectations of production and the experience of using services and consumption. Thus,



customer satisfaction is a summary of the psychological manner in which a composite of customers' feeling about the unexplained expectations and his/her previous consumption experiences are encompassed.

### 2.1.1 The Equity Theory

According to the Equity Theory, satisfaction focuses on determining whether the distribution of resources (time, money, rewards) is fair to both parties (customers /organizations). Equity models are derived from the measurement of comparing the ratio of contributions (cost) and benefits (rewards) for each party. According to this theory, parties to an exchange will feel equitably treated (thus, satisfied), if in their minds, the ratio of their outcomes to inputs is fair (Oliver & DeSarbo 1988). The level of satisfaction of a customer depends on various aspects including the amount paid, the benefits received, the time and effort taken during the exchange process and the observation prior to previous transactions (Woodruff et al 1989). The belief is that people value fair treatment on the ratio of inputs to outcomes. This theory shares similarities with the Comparison Level Theory which posits that bases of comparison used by consumers in satisfaction judgements may be more than just expectations. Equity models of consumer satisfaction appear to be different from the other models, in that satisfaction is evaluated relative to other parties (people) in an exchange and the outcomes of all people sharing the same experience are accounted. Erevvels and Leavitt (1992) argue that equity models get to explore and gather consumer satisfaction information in a manner that is different from traditional satisfaction models. For example, they may be especially useful in modeling situations where satisfaction with the other party is considered to be an important element of the transaction.

Translated into a tourism context, Leavitt (1992) suggests that tourists compare perceived input-output (gains) in a social exchange: if the tourist's gain is less than their input (time, money, and other costs), dissatisfaction results. Thus, satisfaction is the pleasure

derived from fulfillment of one's wishes, expectations and needs. The output/input ratio for a service experience may be compared to the perceived net gain of some others (such as friends) who have experienced a similar offer (Meyer & Westerbarkey, 1996). According to this theory, satisfaction is seen as a relative judgement that takes into consideration both the qualities and benefits obtained through a purchase as well as the costs and efforts.

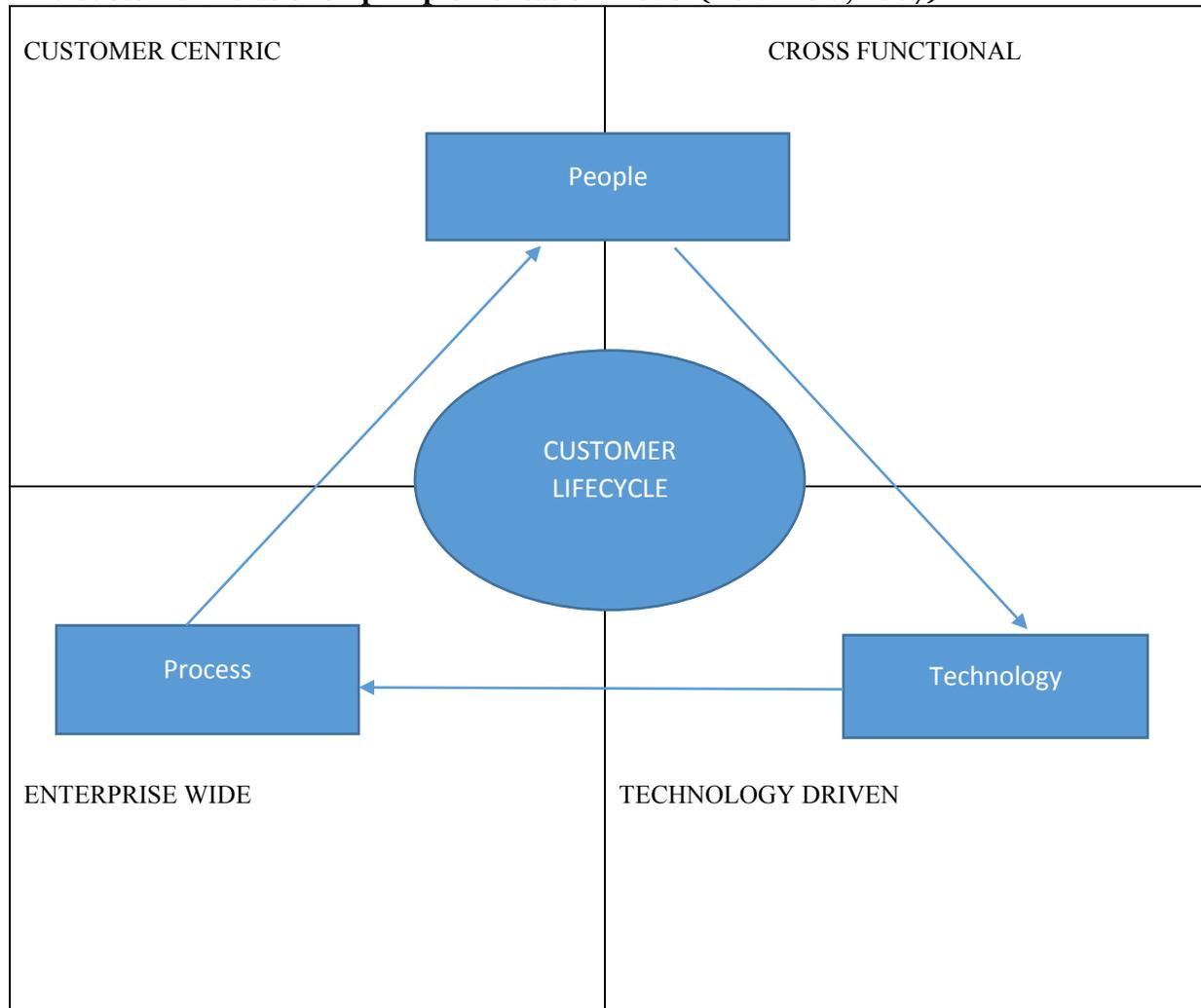
Tourist Satisfaction by Fisk & Coney (1997), found that consumers were less satisfied and had a less positive attitude toward a company when they heard that other customers received a better price deal and better service than them. In other words, their perceptions of equitable treatment by the company translated into satisfaction judgments and even affected their future expectations and purchase intentions. Equity theory applied to customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction has become accepted as an alternative way to conceptualize how comparisons work (Oliver & Desorbo, 1998). Equity disconfirmation has gained much empirical favor, though it applies primarily to social interactions.

### 2.2 Models of Customer Centric Organization

The theory of customer centricism develops and relates foundational concepts to form framework that can be used in the development and implementation of customer centricity. To be customer centric is to restructure to respond and adjust well to customer needs. Customer centricity depends on leadership, people, processes, technology there by being the core of customer relationship management.

The figure below outlines the three-key dimension of CRM which are technology, people and process within the context of customer centric, technology driven, cross functional, and enterprise wide.

### 2.2.0 Customer Relationship Implementation Model (Reichheld, 2007)



**Figure 2: CRM Implementation Model (Source Chen & Popovich,2007).**

#### People

Reichheld (2007), asserts that people refer to members in an organization including, employer, executives, and employees. People in an organization must have the full commitment and a customer-oriented approach in order to implement CCS successfully. Relationships in the organization also have a relative effect on the relationship with the customers. It first starts with the employer employee relationship, if there is a good relationship between the two then, there is a relatively positive relationship between the employees and customers.

Reichheld (2007) posits that people practices refer to the human resource practices that need to be aligned to the strategy. Different strategies will require the practices in terms of skills and management practices, staff motivation, recruitment and training.

The shift towards a customer centric strategy requires a change of skills from a sales and marketing orientation to managing long-term relations that goes further than selling and negotiation skills. (Gronroos,2011). Another capability highlighted is that of financial understanding for the key account managers as they become accountable for the cost to service as well as the revenue produced. In addition, due to the focus on cross-functional teams organizations have actively recruited employees with various career experiences and that demonstrated teamwork as a competency. Therefore, different skills are required for different positions, thus organizations should adjust their recruitment and selection strategies and criteria as well as reassessing their training programs and rethinking career paths.



## Processes

Process-driven CRM builds around existing practices and rules using data sources to enrich process (Greenberg, 2004). Organizational process requires key structures to ensure that customer's data are used effectively. Human process such as executives and operational staff owes the capabilities of understanding, manipulating and analyzing customer knowledge to face and satisfy customers' needs in customer-oriented culture.

Processes and lateral capabilities define the collaboration information and decision-making flows across the structure. Lateral capabilities are the interpersonal and technological networks, teams and matrix relationships, lateral processes and integrative roles that function as the glue that brings the organization together. Reichheld (2007) posits that internal processes have been noted to be extremely different from the focus of developing and supporting customer relations compared to processes that are targeted at executing efficient customer transactions. From an operations perspective based on the theory of constraints we see that the path to customer centricity assist in highlighting the inefficiency in processes and guides organizations to streamline processes which eventually impact on customer experience. Based on the literature review conducted on customer centric enablers, (Peltier 2012) explained that horizontal communication and sharing information within and across functional lines is critical. Customer centric processes entrench the need for cross-functional coordination and organizations struggle with this.

## Technology

Databases are essential yet an advance in technology and have been of paramount importance to the success of CRM processes. Reichheld (2007) in his study concluded that technology has enabled businesses to break away from traditional ways of carrying out business transactions. Technologies like voice over social networking, speech recognition and internet protocol applications have improved relations with customers. The results of this advancement of technology, has enabled CRM analyst to face modeling and data analysis which increases means of obtaining and managing customer data. Businesses collect, store, evaluate and create a marketing decision relying on the results of data analysis. Customer database is the gathering of information about a business' customers. Reichheld (2007) suggests that information of customers collected are such as; basic information (name, address, ZIP code & telephone numbers), demographic information (age, gender, marital status, education etc.) other information (inquiries & referrals, satisfaction, loyalty).

Customer centricity takes full advantage of technological innovation, it uses technology to collect and analyze data on customer patterns, interpret customer behavior, develop predictive models, customized communication, deliver product or service value to individual customer value. Modern management need to be fast in embracing modern technology in order to keep pace with the ever-changing business environments, customer taste and preferences, the issue of customer self service technologies that are efficient in terms of time and costs.

## Cross-Functional Integration

Implementation of customer centricism cannot be applied in just a single division or department but the whole organization. It requires cooperation, collaboration, and commitment from organizational members in every department in an organization. When implementing customer centricism, it is necessary to conduct process re-engineering in order for it to be aligned with the customer-focused mindset. Change must occur therefore; customer centricism implementation requires every organizational member to participate and cooperate in this change. (Chen & Popovich, 2003)

By cross-functional integration Richfield meant that the departments need to work together to produce better value to the customers. Thus, the organization must have a same view towards the customers to work hand in glove to attain customer satisfaction. All departments should have the same view and goal to achieve thus allowing for cooperation and sharing of resources and diversity of ideas and knowledge.

## Customer-centric

Since CRM is focusing on customers, customer-centric context means placing customers at the core of the company's marketing effort, concentration on customers rather than sales. Organizational members must have a customer-focused mindset (Chen & Popovich, 2003; Prasonukarn, 2009). This cannot be achieved only through organizational members but also the process and people. Reichheld (2007) by customer centric meant that all the processes in an organization must be aligned with a customer-focused mindset as well.

## Technology-Driven

Reichheld (2007) argues that technology is considered as an enabler or driver in CRM. Technologies like data mining or data warehouse or CRM software allow the organization to obtain, manage, process, and interpret customer information more conveniently and efficiently. Chen & Popovich (2003) argues that the organization must analyze and consider whether the existing technology in the

organization is efficient enough to respond to the change aligned with customer-focused mindset change.

### Enterprise-Wide

Since the implementation of CRM should not be limited to a particular department, it should be implemented across the entire company. The vision and goals of the organization should also be aligned with the customer-focused mindset (Chen & Popovich, 2003; Prasonsukarn, 2009).

In agreement to all the definitions of CRM, it may also be defined as the strategic process focusing on using customer information to know more about customers (customer life cycle) and maintaining a relationship with them. CRM is the integration between people, process and technology in the context of customer-centric, cross functional, technology driven and enterprise-wide.

### 2.2.1 Customer Centric Organization (Payne, 2007)

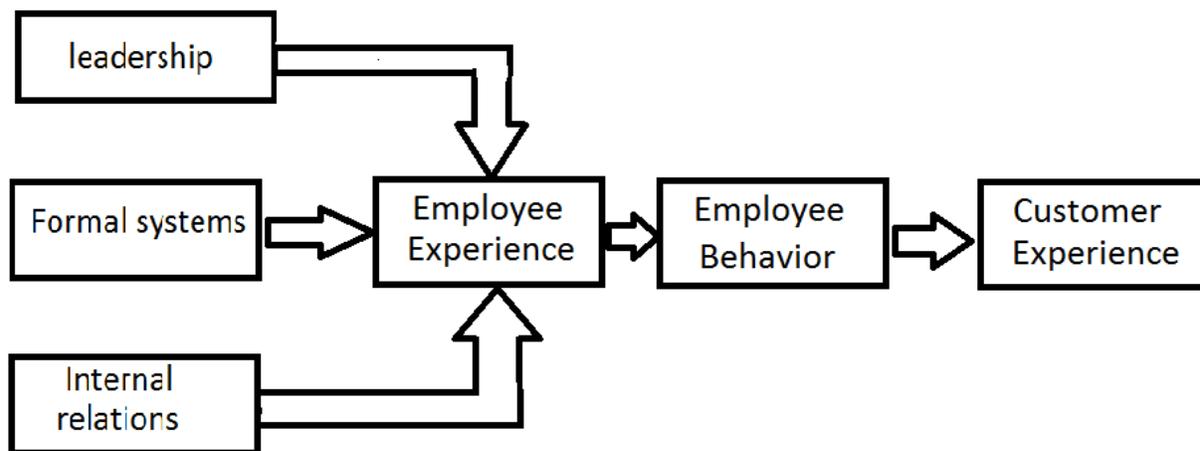


Fig 3: Customer Centric Organization Model (Source: Chen & Popovich, 2007)

#### Leadership

By leadership, Payne (2007) meant a vital asset for any organization that prevails to be customer centric. Payne argues that there is need for a management by in, in that management should have a say in everything that takes place in the organization in aiming to create value to customers, measure employee performance, customer retention, referral behavior. In this regard leadership provides oversight, develop a team spirit, share of organizational culture, beliefs, values and the roadmap. Leadership will also give vision to various departments and facilitate their integration and measure their contribution. It also develops and directs the company's strategic focus, acquiring and developing resources (information, materials, people, technology) that create products that satisfy the customer. Thus, leadership design structures, strategies, processes to meet customer requirements.

#### Formal Systems

On formal systems it requires the management to fairly reward the employees, employee performance appraisals and recognition. The above aspects allow the motivation of employees, employee experience and this triggers their behavior towards customer satisfaction

and the organization achieving its set objectives. Modern day management need to rethink their systems in order to match with their set objectives failure to do so will render employee dissatisfaction that distorts customer experience. Employees are vital assets they need to be retained due to their skills and talents that may differentiate the organization and gain a sustainable competitive advantage.

#### Internal Relations

The other aspect is internal relations. This means sharing the vision with the whole organization. The organizations vision is shared across work groups to attain the main objective of the organization. It entails that the different departments should work hand in glove to produce results and share the customer information. Internal relations entail that there should be harmony among different departments of an organization. This means that marketing, accounting, human resources and sales departments should work together to achieve the common objectives of the organizations well as creating value to the customers. In this regard internal relations results in organizational excellence in service delivery leading to customer satisfaction.



## 2.3 Empirical Research

### i) **Study by Daniel and Marques on the use of customer centric philosophy to improve customer loyalty.**

Daniel et al (2016), in their research on the use of customer centric philosophy in hotels to improve customer satisfaction, empirical results and findings indicate that by improving the online quality offered by hotels with a personalized technologies and increased efficiency of the service, reducing information asymmetry, search and transaction time and bargaining costs, building loyalty by customization and innovation, the customer perceives more value in the service provided by the hotels. Thus, customer centric philosophy has much impact on customer satisfaction in every service industry especially the hotel industry.

### ii) **Study by Ada Palacios on the implementation of CRM and customer centric strategies to improve hotel performance.**

Ada, et al (2010) conducted a research in 45 hotels in Hong Kong with the aim of investigating how hotels were implementing customer relationship and consumer centric strategies (CCS) practices at the property level. Hotels managers were the respondents and they cut across the various department in the hotels. The hotels involved cut across low to high tariff hotels according to Hong Kong Tourism Board classification. The findings reflected that all participating hotels had practices in place to manage customer relationships. The most commonly cited goal for CCS being guest retention which reflected on performance of the specific hotel. The evaluation and control activities were perceived as very important not only to create value for the customers, but also to track the performance of the guest contact departments. All hotels studied were noted to have similar CCS practices but those in the high rate range had more complex systems and processes.

### iii) **Study by Skogland and Siguaw on the impact of satisfaction on customer loyalty.**

Recently, Skogland & Siguaw (2004) proclaim that "research on customer loyalty has primarily focused on customer satisfaction. However, they reported that results on the relationship between repeat purchase behaviour and satisfaction were unclear. Therefore, many studies have indicated significant relationships, whereas others have argued that satisfaction explains little in regards to repeat purchases. Skogland and Siguaw suggest antecedent of involvement on loyalty received inadequate consideration. Their research examined the degree to which satisfaction impacts loyalty and they explored how satisfaction may affect

involvement to better understand how involvement may directly influence loyalty.

### iv) **Study by Sigala on the development of ICT capabilities, Customer Centric strategies and business processes.**

Sigala (2005) conducted a research on the Greece hotels involving 84 hotels cutting across 3 to five-star hotels. The main aim was to develop a model for managing and integrating ICT capabilities into CRM and CCS strategies and business processes. Data from the Greek hotel sector provided evidence that ICT is not the panacea and the exclusive CCS determinant factor. So, ICT are more important in large than small hotels, while other organizational and managerial factors such as culture, staff motivation and processes and development also play a vital role on CCS's and CCM success. From the findings the research proposed a model for CCM implementation, which instead of overstating the role of ICT, it suggests that an integrated managerial approach among three areas namely ICT, relationship and knowledge management, should be adopted. As acknowledged in the research a major limitation of the study is that the findings revealed or represented the perceptions and opinions of hotel business managers only and not of a wide sample of different operational and other managerial staff.

### v) **Study by Waitutu on the impact of customer centric strategy on business performance.**

This study focused on the assessment of customer centric strategy on the performance of commercial banks in Kenya. It was driven to determine the impact of customer centric strategy on acquisition and retention of customers in commercial banks; the impact of customer centric strategy on the profitability of commercial banks; and the challenges facing customer centric strategies in commercial banks and a way forward for improving these strategies. The study determined that customer centric strategy enables banks to develop better relationships with existing clients as well as acquire new customers. The study concludes that customer centric strategy enables organizations to serving the customer's needs and hence increase customer satisfaction and thus strengthen the organization in terms of growth and profitability. The study has determined that customer centric strategy creates boundary conditions for banks to serve their niche markets profitably since the customer centric strategy offers a clear-cut attitudinal segmentation which is formed on the basis of identifying attractive segments and it gives a detailed knowledge about the market segments which allow the banks to determine segment profitability.



### 3.0 METHODOLOGY

Kumar (2008) outlines research design as methods used in conducting research. The research design that was used for this study was descriptive. Rumens (2008) posits that a research philosophy is a summary of research experience and research interest, including the past, present and future endeavors. There are different types of research philosophies but the researchers used pragmatic research philosophy. The researchers opted for pragmatic philosophy as it considers theories, concepts, ideas, hypotheses and research findings not in an abstract form, but in terms of the roles they play as instruments of thought and action, and in terms of their practical consequences in specific context. Reality matters to pragmatists as practical effects of ideas, and knowledge is valued for enabling actions to be carried out successfully. The research study focused on a quantitative type of methodology using a descriptive research design. Quantitative method was used by the researchers for the reason that they can analyse data established on representative samples of a large scale and have an entire set of classification for the study. The researchers decided to use both primary and secondary sources of data because these sources are mainly valid for the nature of research for the reason that there is need to collect data from the field as well as already collected information which is equipped for use. The researchers used questionnaires so as to accomplish or achieve the objectives in chapter one. The researchers actually used a structured questionnaire to collect data from customers and employees. Structured (closed) questions were meant to save respondents time in filling the questionnaires because the respondents would tick in the appropriate boxes among the provided alternatives in a time space of forty-five minutes. The researchers personally administered the questionnaires to the selected guests when they were checking out just before their departure from the hotel. Selected employees were asked to fill the questionnaires at lunch hour. The researchers chose self-administered questionnaires to enhance closer contact with respondents thus providing clarification of questions to those respondents who needed clarity. The questionnaire comprised of three sections which are biodata/demographic, five-point Likert scale to establish the level of satisfaction in the hotel and lastly

measuring customer satisfaction. The demographic section allowed the respondent to fill in a number of demographic characteristics such as age as well as gender. Such characteristics are useful in the interpretation and analysis of results as these have an effect on how subjects respond. Moreover, questionnaires gave participants freedom of expression due to customer anonymity. The questionnaires were also a cheap way of data derivation and they also facilitated easy data processing. In this research, the target population comprised of customers who visited Golden Peacock hotel, workers and the management. The target population comprised of 900 customers, 15 managers and 55 workers. Based on Wright's view of sample size, the researchers used a 20% sample size of the total population; that is 5 managers, 20 employees, as well as 169 customers. Gilbert (2003) posits that purposive sampling involves the selection of suitable units who have knowledge concerning the research topic. The researchers chose this method to select the managers and employees who were supposed to participate in the research. The researchers chose the sample based on the expertise and knowledge that the managers and employees had on the topic of customer centricism and customer satisfaction. The researchers used convenience sampling to obtain data from customers. The researchers chose those customers who were present at the hotel on that day. The researchers used this sampling technique because of its easiness to obtain information. Furthermore, convenience sampling was a faster method of collecting data.

### 4.0 RESULTS PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

#### 4.1 Response Rate

The rate of response seeks to find the actual number of participants who successfully contributed to the research in relation to the initially targeted sample size. The researcher used questionnaires to collect data.

#### 4.2 Questionnaire Response Rate

The questionnaire response rate seeks to find the actual number of participants who gave their responses to the researcher. Table 4.2.1 shows the number of issued questionnaires against returned questionnaires which led to the derivation of the response rate.

**Table 4.2.1 Questionnaire Response Rate**

Respondents	Questionnaire Issued	Questionnaires Returned	% Response Rate
Customers	169	150	89
Employees	20	20	100
Total	189	170	90

The table depicts that out of the 169 questionnaires which were issued to customers, only 150 were returned

which led to an 89% response rate. 11% of the customers who failed to give their responses were very



busy to the extent that they failed to complete the questionnaires within the stipulated time. However, all the 20 questionnaires which were issued to employees were returned leading to a 100% response rate. The overall questionnaire response rate was 90%. According to Yim (2009), a questionnaire response rate should range from 20-94% to produce reliable results. This implies that the 90% questionnaire response rate for this study will be able to produce reliable results.

#### 4.2.2 Reliability Test

The reliability test proposes a measure of stability and consistency in measuring an instrument (Sekaran, 2001). Cronbach alpha depicts that constructs should preferably exceed the preferable scores of 0.70 indicating that the measurement scales of the constructs were stable and consistent.

**Table 4.2.2 Reliability Test**

	Cronbach Alpha	Number of items
Customer centric people	0.825	4
Customer centric technology	0.912	4

From the table above Cronbach alpha constructs ranged from the lowest 0.825 (customer centric people) to 0.912 (customer centric technology). In conclusion the results showed that the scores of the Cronbach alpha for the constructs used in this research exceeded the preferable scores of 0.70 thus making the research reliable.

#### 4.3 Demographic Data

Demographic data refers to the various characteristics which were used to classify respondents and such are gender, age, level of education and work experience.

##### 4.3.1 Response rate by Gender

The respondents included both males and females. Table 4.3.2 and 4.3.3 shows the proportion of male and female respondents for both employees and customers.

**Table 4.3.2 Gender of the customers**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	81	54
Female	69	46
Total	150	100

Table 4.3.2 depicts that 54 % of its customers are males and 46% are females. The hotel receives more male visitors than females. This is because females do not

usually travel because of family responsibilities like parental care for the young ones and other household duties.

**Table 4.3.3 Gender of the employees**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	6	30
Female	14	70
Total	20	100

Table 4.3.3 illustrates that the hotel's employees comprises of 70% females against 30% males. This indicates that the hotel has more female workers than male workers because women have good interpersonal skills which lure customers than man. Furthermore, women are also said to be more presentable than males

hence most hotels prefer to employ a huge proportion of females.

#### 4.4 Distribution of respondents by Age

The respondents belonged to various age groups. Table 4.4.1 shows the various age groups of the respondents.

**Table 4.4.1 Age Bracket of Respondents**

Customers			Employees		
Age	Frequency	Percentage	Age	Frequency	Percentage
Below 25	7	5	Below 25	10	50
25-34	30	20	25-34	6	30
35-44	53	35	35-44	3	15
45-54	45	30	45-54	1	5
55 and above	15	10	55 and above	0	0
Total	150	100	Total	20	100



Table 4.4.1 depicts that 5% of the hotel's customers are below the age of 25. Furthermore, 20% are 25-34 years old. However, a proportion of 65 % ranges between 35 and 54 years. The remaining percentage of 10 is 55 years and above. The data illustrates that the majority of customers are aged between the age of 35 and 54 because they are economically active hence they can afford to visit the hotel for both business and leisure purposes.

The table also shows that 50% of the hotel's employees are below the age of 25- 30% range from 25-34 years.

15% of the employees range from 35-44 years. Lastly a proportion of 5% is 45 years and above. This implies that most of the hotel's employees range from below 25 - 34 years because they are still young hence more energetic and prompter when it comes to serving customers.

#### 4.5 Work Experience

This refers to the quantity of time that a worker had exposure to his area of responsibility. Table 4.5.1 shows the employees work experience.

**Table 4.5.1 Work Experience of employees**

Work Experience (yrs.)	Frequency	Percentage
0-3	2	10
3-7	10	50
7-11	6	30
11 and above	2	10
Total	20	100

Table 4.5.1 depicts that 10% of the employees have below 3 years of experience. However, 50% of the employees range from 3-7 years of experience. 30% of the employees also range from 7-11 years. A smaller proportion of 10% are 11 years and above. The data shows that the majority of employees range from 3-7 years of experience. This implies that the company employs workers who have reasonable years of

experience to enhance delivery of quality services and achieve customer satisfaction.

#### 4.6 Level of education

The researcher also looked at the level of education for employees and customers. Table 4.6 shows the various levels of education.

**Table 4.6 Level of education for employees and customers**

Employees			Customers		
Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage	Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage
O level	10	50	O level	7	5
A level	6	30	A level	15	10
Diploma	4	20	Diploma	45	30
Degree and above	0	0	Degree and above	83	55
Total	20	100	Total	150	100

Table 4.6 depicts that half of the employees have O level only, whilst 30 % have A level. The remaining employee proportion of 20 % possesses a diploma and none of the workers has a degree. The majority of workers are not highly learned because their job of service delivery does not require a high intellectual ability but requires basic knowledge on how to handle customers well. Furthermore, the table shows that 15% of the customers have O and A level only. 30% have a diploma and 55% have a degree and above. This implies that the hotel's majority of customers are highly learned since most of them are professionals

who usually visit the hotel. Also, majority of these guests had a good education background with only 45% having less than a bachelor's degree. This made the researcher confident that the respondents' judgment on CCS issues was well informed.

#### 4.7 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics refers to measures of central tendency or measures of variability. The researcher used graphs, tables and discussions to help the reader understand the meaning of the analyzed data.



#### 4.7.1 Rating of the mean score

Table 4:7 showing the mean score rating

Low level rate	$1 \leq x < 2.5$
Moderate level rate	$2.5 \leq x \leq 3.5$
High level rate	$3.5 \leq x \leq 5$

#### 4.8 Employees responses on CCS Practices in the Hotel.

To establish the extend to which the hotel has adopted customer centric strategy, respondents were required to show the degree to which they agreed to the customer

centric practices statements. The responses were subjected to descriptive statistics and the findings were presented in the table below.

Table 4.7.1 Descriptive Statistics on Customer Centric People in the Hotel.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	S. D
The organization recruits the right personnel and in right amounts	20	1	5	4.80	1.599
The employees have the appropriate skills in creating and delivering customer value	20	1	4	4.65	1.345
The employees have an interactive behavior that enables the rich interaction with customers	20	1	4	4.70	1.281
The organization motivates the employees to serve the customers	20	1	4	4.55	1.745
<b>Accrued Mean</b>				<b>4.675</b>	<b>1.493</b>

Table 4.7.1 looked at employees' perceptions on customer centric people in the hotel as one of the indicators of CCS practices. The results indicated that customer centric people strategy in the hotel is high ( $\mu=4.675$ ) because most of the respondents agreed with customer centric people statements. It was evident that the hotel's employees have the appropriate skills and knowledge required in creating and delivering customer value since majority strongly agreed ( $\mu=4.65$ ). These responses were not diverse as the standard deviation was 1.493 showing uniformity in the employees' responses and thus high chances of truth in their responses. Also, the employees agreed that the management ensures that the staffs are enough to facilitate successful implementation of the CCS strategy. This is a clear indication that the hotel is keen to ensure that its staff are equipped with the right knowledge in providing services at the hotel and thus ensuring customer centric practices. These findings

agree with Gronroos (2007) who argues that in reviewing customer-centric people several aspects such as skills and behavior of employees should be considered as employees have great contribution in service delivery. The above argument is also supported by Zeithaml (2011) who states that human resources are the most important factor in the implementation of CRM because they are in direct contact with customers, and may disclose all of their desires, needs and expectation.

#### 4.8 Employees responses on customer centric technology in the Hotel

To determine the level to which the hotel has adopted customer centric technology, respondents were asked to indicate how customer centric strategy had impacted their organization in terms of its technology. The respondents were subjected to descriptive statistics and the findings were presented in the table below.

**Table 4.8.1 Descriptive Statistics on Customer Centric Technology in the Hotel**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	S. D
The organization has the appropriate technology to gather and store customer data	20	1	4	4.33	1.445
The organizations' technology has the ability to run CRM programs and functions	20	1	2	4.65	1.789
The technology provides online customer information	20	1	2	4.45	1.510
The technology is able to do valuable analysis for important management decision making	20	1	2	3.89	1.403
<b>Accrued Mean</b>				<b>4.33</b>	<b>1.54</b>

The results of table 4.8.1 indicate that the rating of the hotel in having IT infrastructure to help in collecting and sharing relevant customer data is high ( $\mu=4.33$ ) according to the scale used. A standard deviation of 1.54 which showed that technology had a great impact on the hotel's customer relations and the responses did not differ across the respondents. The possession of the IT platforms in the hotel is a major ingredient in the success of CCS strategy in the hotel. This makes it easier for the hotels to capture customer data, process it into marketing information and provide high class customized services to the customers and achieve high levels of customer satisfaction. According to Ada et al (2010) having the appropriate technological tools will certainly assist the hotel manager in managing the CCS

program more effectively. Berry et al (2005) also asserts that with appropriate CRM technology for data collection and distribution, firms will be in the position to enhance prospect, improve communication and sales presentations, and be able to customize their product configurations.

#### 4.9 Employees responses on customer centric leadership in the Hotel

The respondents were asked to indicate how customer centric leadership had impacted their organization in terms of building customer centricism. The respondents were subjected to descriptive statistics and the findings were presented in the table below.

**Table 4.9.1 Descriptive Statistics on Customer Centric Leadership in the Hotel**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
The management shows a strategic direction and focus towards customer centricism	20	1	3	4.15	1.226
The management enhances customer value creation through sharing organizational vision, mission and culture	20	1	2	3.55	1.442
The management engages itself in resource and infrastructure provision	20	1	2	4.11	1.322
The management have value proposition that entails providing products and services	20	1	2	3.25	1.458
<b>Accrued Mean</b>				<b>3.77</b>	<b>1.362</b>

Table 4.9.1 looked at employees' perceptions on hotels leadership as one of the indicators of CCS practices. The results indicated that customer centric leadership in the hotel is averagely high ( $\mu=3.77$  SD 1.362) because most of the respondents agreed with customer centric leadership statements. It was evident that the hotel leadership embraces a strategic direction and focus towards achieving customer centric goals. The enterprise wide strategy ensures the communication of the hotels mission and values to employees since majority strongly agreed ( $\mu=3.55$ ). This is a clear indication that the hotel is keen to ensure its staff

understands their mission at an early stage and thus ensuring customer centric practices which translates into repeat visits and thus boosting performance. These findings agree with Buttle (2006) who argues that a customer-centric firm will be resourced and organized to understand and satisfy customer requirements profitably. They continue to argue that the generation of an appropriate set of beliefs, norms and values in an organization providing services which consumers need or want will produce a real consumer orientation.

**Table 4.10 Descriptive Statistics on Customer Centric Processes in the Hotel**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
The organization offers career development opportunities for the employees	20	1	4	4.70	1.801
The organization has on the job training facilities to enhance employee skills	20	1	4	4.55	1.510
The organization has reward systems adequate to motivate the employees	20	1	2	4.55	1.510
The organization recruitment and selection systems are people oriented	20	1	4	4.60	1.754
<b>Accrued Mean</b>				4.6	1.643

Table 4.10 describes employees' perceptions on the service processes in the hotel. The results indicate that the rating of service processes in the hotel is high ( $\mu=4.6$ ) because most of the respondents agree that hotel management have well designed service processes for successful implementation of a CCS, which is high according to the scale used. It is also evident from the results that there was slight homogeneity of responses as the accrued standard deviation (1.643) was close to 1. These processes can be classified as front-of-the house, where interactions with customers take place, and back-of-the house, where the different departments support the delivery of services to the customers. Buttle (2004) argues that processes need to be designed and operated so that they contribute to the creation of value, or at least not to

damage the value being created for customers. This implies both efficiency (low cost) and effectiveness to deliver the desired outcomes. In addition, none of the CCS indicators was rated very high by the employees which shows that the hotels still have a great need for improvement in all the aspects CCS.

#### 4.11 Customers responses on their level of satisfaction in the Hotel

To establish the extent to which the hotel's customers are satisfied, respondents were required to show the degree to which they agreed to the customer satisfaction questions. The responses were subjected to descriptive statistics and the findings were presented in the table below.

**Table 4.11.1 Descriptive Statistics on Customer Satisfaction level in the Hotel**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
The hotel always makes effort to understand the individual customer needs and preferences	150	1	4	4.89	1.670
The hotel has knowledgeable employees who have the ability to respond to guest complains and questions	150	1	5	4.87	1.017
The hotel employees always provide necessary customer information in all service processes	150	1	2	4.82	1.341
The hotel assures prompt service delivery from its employees	150	1	5	4.85	1.665
The hotel has visual appealing facilities and materials associated with the service	150	1	4	4.83	1.349
Overall I'm satisfied with this hotel and I consider it as my first choice	150	1	4	4.65	1.990
Am willing to have a close long-term relationship with the hotel	150	1	4	4.85	1.665
Am willing to recommend the hotel to friends and relatives	150	1	4	4.64	1.854
Using this hotel was a good experience	150	1	3	4.68	1.482
<b>Accrued Mean</b>				<b>4.79</b>	<b>1.577</b>



Table 4.11. looked at customers' perceptions on the services offered by the hotel in assessing the extent to which customer centric strategy affects customer satisfaction. The results indicate that customer satisfaction in the hotel is high ( $\mu=4.79$ ) according to the scale used. The hotel makes efforts to understand individual customer needs and preferences as well as putting customers first were highly rated compared to other aspects of the indicator assessed. However, the high average customer ratings is an indication that the hotel is very consumer centric but improvement is needed to ensure the staffs are more responsive to customer complaints. According to Buttle (2006) customer-centric firms are those resourced and organized to understand and satisfy customer requirements profitably. They continue to argue that the generation of an appropriate set of beliefs, norms and values in an organization which is providing services which, consumers need or want will produce a real consumer centric focus. From the results, it was evident that the hotel staff were willing to help customers in a responsive manner and also work together in providing customer service ( $\mu=4.9$ ) as compared to other aspects of the indicators assessed. Huma (2009) argues that people factor has played a very critical role in project's success. Therefore; they are needed to be managed wisely. Technology alone cannot perform miracles if people do not use it properly. In this regard, relationship shared by different stakeholders is also critical to any CCS success. The above argument is also supported by Gummerson (2011) who states that human resources are the most important factor in the implementation of CCS because

they are in direct contact with customers, and may disclose all of their desires, needs and expectations. Majority of the respondents were strongly agreeing that the hotel is always their first choice in Mutare ( $\mu=4.65$ ). Also, majority of customers ( $\mu=4.64$ ) were willing to refer others to the hotel as well as creating long term relationship with the hotel ( $\mu=4.85$ ). The very high rating of perceived customer loyalty is good news to the hotel as it may aim to retain their valuable customers. According to Anderson (2009) Customers who feel they have obtained value from a product or service may develop loyalty. Loyalty, in turn, breeds retention, which translates into higher corporate profits. Dalton (2003) cites three factors that drive customer loyalty – value, trust and going the extra mile. He states that customers are loyal to people who help us solve problems and expand beyond what is expected. With respect to trust, Dalton (2003) adds, "we are loyal to people whom we trust, whom we know will come through for us and will put our interests first." He argues that loyalty can be derived from a customer if the provider of the service or product embraces the customers' needs.

#### 4.12 Relationship between CCS Practices and Customer Satisfaction

This phase looked at the relationship between CCS practices in the hotel as perceived by employees and customers. The data were analyzed using Pearson Product moment correlation to determine if there was a statistical relationship between CCS practices in the hotel and customer satisfaction.

**Table 4.12 T-test Hotel One-Sample Test**

	Test Value = 4					
	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the difference	
					Lower	Upper
Customer centric people	9.079	19	.000	1.65	1.27	2.03
Customer centric technology	13.077	19	.000	1.5	1.26	1.74
Customer centric leadership	14.236	19	.000	1.6	1.36	1.84
Customer centric processes	12.568	19	.000	1.65	1.38	1.92

Table 4.12 Indicate one-sample t-test for significant relationship between customer centric people, technology, leadership and processes on CCS strategies in the hotel. Results indicates that for the four indicators of Customer-centric strategy, the P-Values are less than 0.05 significance level ( $P=.000$ ). Hence,

indicating that there is a significant positive relationship between customer satisfaction and CCS practices as perceived by customers and employees in the hotel. The findings are in line with those of Stone et al, (2000) who acknowledges that CCS allows firms to develop a robust customer focus and enquiry



management processes and this help boost businesses significantly. CCS improves customer retention and loyalty – customer stays longer, buys and buys more often, thus increasing their long-term value to the business. Swift, (2000) also states that the main goal of CCS is to ensure customer value, satisfaction and retention. It is important to note that CCS provides a good platform to continually monitor the changing customer needs and expectations and hence customize products and services to consistently meet the needs with aim of retaining the customers. The hotel should thus focus on effectively implementing the CCS practices if they are to ensure high levels of customer satisfaction which will consequently boost performance. This will enable the hotel to maintain their existing market share and make it easier to grow this market share as they acquire more new customers resulting from positive recommendation.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusions

#### 5.1.1 Impact of Customer Centric People on Customer Satisfaction

The study has determined that customer centric people creates value between the organizations and customers and this value built in customers" leads to continued patronage between them and the organizations. It has also been determined that customer centric people used in the hotel ensures that customers are satisfied. From the study, it can be concluded that creation and delivering of value in customers is the main drive that enables the organizations to retain them and this evokes positive feelings from customers leading to their long-term commitment with the organizations. The study has determined that customer centric people is and can be used to create specific products for specific customers and the CCS in the hotel which can help it to customise its service, and thus produce the services and/or products for that particular market by prioritizing the needs of these customers as well as understand what customers are willing to pay for services and products.

#### 5.1.2 Impact of Customer Centric Technology on Customer Satisfaction

The study determined that customer centric technology enables the hotel to develop better relationships with existing clients as well as acquire new customers. The study concludes that customer centric technology enables the hotel to serving the customer's needs and hence increase customer satisfaction and thus strengthen the organization in terms of growth and profitability. The study has determined that customer centric technology creates customer data bases, enhance decision making and the sharing of customer

data across the different departments of the hotel. The study also has determined that customer centric technology comes up with marketing and sales concepts that are suitable for each market segment since it ensures that the voice of the customer is integrated in the organization's core business process through interface functions running of CRM programs.

#### 5.1.3 Impact of Customer Centric Leadership on Customer Satisfaction

The study has determined that leadership plays an important role in the core creation of customer value and satisfaction. Hotel management need to adopt different leadership styles that are participative in order to allow much employee participation. However, leadership should also note that its internal employees should be satisfied first before any stakeholder. This would ensure that the employees will create a more conducive environment for the customers and excellent service delivery. The study concludes that hotels have enough personnel who have the appropriate level of knowledge and skills to guarantee that customer centric strategy in the hotel offers customer-level treatment and not account-level treatment.

#### 5.1.4 Impact of Customer Centric Processes on Customer Satisfaction

The study determined that the hotel processes includes different aspects such as human resource policies, reward systems, performance appraisals. These processes should be adequate and appropriate in creating customer centric processes. The hotel management need to ensure that they reward their employees in influencing their behaviour in service delivery. Also, to enhance employee's knowledge and skills the management need to provide career development opportunities, on the job training and performance appraisals that enhance their performances.

In conclusion, the researcher recognized that customer centric strategy (people, technology, leadership and processes) influences customer satisfaction since the respondents (employees and customers) agreed that customer centric strategy used by Golden Peacock is important. In regard to staff skills on CCS strategies, effort need to be done to improve employee's knowledge and skills in service delivery, solving customer complaints, developing teamwork among employees and general attitude of the hotel employees. Hence the researchers fail to reject the null hypotheses related to the above findings.

### 5.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations were proposed to improve both CCS practices and customer satisfaction.

#### 5.2.1 Customer Centric People

In relation to CCS practices, the hotel needs to cultivate a strong customer-oriented culture and to regularly,



remind their employees about the mission and core values that guide their operations and service to customers. The employees should also be encouraged, to make effort to understand individual customer needs and customize services to meet each of the customer's expectations. However, customer centricism also requires the hotel to keep on the track in recruiting the right personnel with the right skills and in their right numbers so to create excellent services and value to the customers. Also, the hotel management need not to ignore the fact that, employee motivation is an essential facet in customer centricism, motivated employees are willing to take their organisation to greater heights.

### 5.2.2 Customer Centric Technology

The top management in the hotel should also provide IT platforms to be able to share customer information across customer contact points such as marketing desk, sales desk and customer relations desk among others. This would go a long way to ensure uniform service across hotel departments. Particularly more investment in IT infrastructure is needed and update software to be able to collect, store, analyse and share customer information across hotel departments for improved service delivery. Hence the technology should be able to provide online information to the customers to meet their requirements and track their behaviours.

### 5.2.3 Customer Centric Processes

In relation to staff knowledge, training on communication skills and service quality delivery is needed across the hotel categories and revising the employee reward systems to align them with customer evaluations on employees' service delivery. Also, the hotel needs to increase on empowering employees to handle most of the customer complaints and improving general employees' attitude is needed. To improve service processes all the hotel categories need to ensure customer information is available at all service points. The hotel needs to integrate their marketing, sales and customer relations activities to improve service to the customers.

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