

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO SERVICE DELIVERY AT ECO-
TOURISM SITES IN GHANA: A CASE STUDY OF MOLE
NATIONAL PARK.**

By

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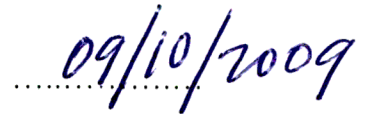
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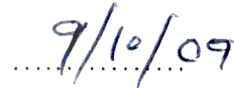
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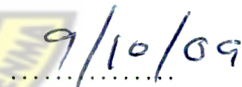
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ABSTRACT

With the continuous growth of competition in the market place, understanding customers has become more and more important to service providers. Research has shown that high service quality contributes significantly to profitability. In search of competitive advantage, both practitioners and academics are keen on accurately measuring service quality in order to better understand its essential antecedents and consequences, and ultimately establish methods for improving service quality. Equally, the importance of service quality for tourism and hospitality businesses is gaining tremendous attention. Tourism/hospitality businesses involve the constant interaction between guests and service providers, and it is the nature of the service a guest receives that determines his/her satisfaction of that particular encounter. This study examines tourists' perception of service quality at Mole National Park in relation to the services received whilst visiting the site.

Some key findings of the study are that Reliability (that is, employees performing service right the first time and honouring promises and their attitude) was the most significant and important service quality dimension expected by tourists and visitors in the ecotourism sector and most of them were concerned about the reliability of services delivered. However, a gap analysis revealed the highest gap scores for Responsiveness and Reliability.

The major implication for managers is that improvements in the behaviour and appearance of the employees are most likely to enhance tourists' perceptions of service quality.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

GTB	Ghana Tourist Board
SERVQUAL	Service Quality
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organisation
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council



CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Tourism has become one of the most important and fastest growing sectors of the global economy and a major socio - economic activity through out the world. It is believed to be one of the viable sources of growth or export earnings in some countries or regions such as Ghana with few other development options. In the foreword to Eagles *et al*, (2002), the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) observed that with this growth, a diversification of tourism products and destinations is taking place, with increased demand for nature-related tourism, including ecotourism, visitation to national and natural parks and rural-based tourism.

The tourism industry is one of the largest industries in the world, comprising 924 million international tourists in 2008, and accounting for 30% of the world's export of services. Global tourism generated US\$856 billion in revenues in 2007 and is forecast to grow in the long term, though at a slower pace for 2009, due to the current global economic downturn (UNWTO, 2009). In Africa, international tourist arrivals increased from 30,763 in 2003 to 33,222 in 2004 with corresponding receipts of US\$ 15,414,000 and US\$18,335,000 respectively (UNWTO, 2005).

In Ghana, the travel and tourism industry has made significant strides over the past decade earning US\$1.4 billion in 2008, becoming the fourth highest foreign exchange earner of the country after gold, cocoa and remittances from Ghanaians resident abroad. In the same year, 234,679 jobs were created (directly and indirectly) by the tourism sector (Ghana Tourist Board, 2009). This is illustrated by Table 1.1 below.

Table 1.1 Tourist Arrivals and Receipts from 2004-2008

Year	Tourist Arrivals	Revenue (US\$)
2004	583,821	649.37 million
2005	428,533	836 million
2006	497,129	987 million
2007	586,612	1.178 billion
2008	700,000	1.4 billion

Source: Ghana Tourist Board, 2009

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The number of people taking part in many outdoor activities such as ecotourism or nature-tourism is growing. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (2000), the eco-tourism market has expanded rapidly over the past two decades worldwide and estimated that eco-tourism accounts for 10% to 15% of global tourism. Carter (1994) reported that the global revenue from ecotourism in 1989 ranged from US\$10 billion by the Economist Intelligence Unit to \$200 billion by the Canadian Wildlife Service.

Services have grown dramatically in recent years. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2008), services account for close to 79 % of the United States gross domestic product and makes up 37% of the value of all international trade.

Tourism falls under services accounting for 30% of the world's export of services. The importance of service quality for tourism and hospitality businesses is gaining tremendous attention. Tourism/hospitality businesses involve the constant interaction between guests and service providers, and it is the nature of the service a guest receives that determines his/her

satisfaction of that particular encounter, (Khan and Su, 2003). The tourists themselves are becoming increasingly sophisticated in their demands not only in terms of luxury at the various establishments they use, but especially in terms of having a meaningful travel experience, including such aspects as cultural authenticity, contacts with local communities, and learning about flora, fauna, special ecosystems conservation and natural life in general. Service quality is an antecedent of consumer assessment of value. In an attempt to establish a competitive advantage, marketing practitioners often seek to differentiate their service offering upon quality service. Leveraging quality service has shown to assist in both the retention and expansion of the existing customer base. (Zeithaml, 2000). According to Khan and Su, (2003), in order to provide quality service to the customers, knowledge of their service quality expectations is considered very important.

Ghana is endowed with a wide range of natural, cultural and historical attractions, which provides the basis for the promotion of a wide variety of tourism products. Ecotourism sites however make up majority of Ghana's tourist attractions jotted across the countryside and attract special interest tourists and eco-tourists on adventure trips in Ghana and West Africa. These include the Mole National Park, Wechiau Hippo Sanctuary, the Paga Crocodile Pond, the Boabeng-Fiema Monkey Sanctuary, and the Wli Water Falls among others. These sites provide the opportunities for ecotourism activities such as flora and fauna viewing, scientific research and outdoor recreational activities such as cycling and boating with camping sites and some form of village type accommodation and eco-lodges provided to boost the local economy.

Mole National Park is the largest, popular and most frequently visited Wildlife Park in Ghana. It is reasonably well set up to cater for tourists from all walks of life and caters for all classes of tourists and interest. Mole National Park was selected over other tourist sites for this study because it is a protected area and has the widest range of wildlife in Ghana and provides the opportunity for the tourists to view elephants, antelope, bushbucks, monkeys, warthogs, baboons and other smaller wildlife that other sites do not offer in Ghana. In addition it has received significant attention and infrastructural improvement and would therefore offer insights into important service quality issues.

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1.2 Problem Statement

In spite of the increasing contribution of tourism to the national economy, access to where important tourist sites are located still remain poor with accompanying sub-standard facilities and services. According to Eagles *et al*, (2002), tourists are often attracted to remote areas because of their comparative advantage in terms of cultural, wildlife and landscape values with increasing demand for high quality recreational opportunities and the services that support them. A greater proportion of visitors to Mole National Park come from the capital and are exposed to a level of service quality. Consequently, those who normally receive quality service expect to be offered the same service quality by their leisure providers as well. They expect guides to be knowledgeable and good communicators. They want their host to make them feel welcome, comfortable and be part of the communities they visit. Increased eco-tourism means greater demand for specialized recreation and accommodation, and with focus on quality.

Conversely, most park agencies do not have service quality goals, or monitoring programmes, making their programmes appear unresponsive and primitive (Eagles *et al.*, 2002). Tourism is a very competitive business as people demand value for money, therefore tourism practitioners need to take specific actions that reflect the current need of the industry, government and the community, and actions that are aimed at protecting and strengthening Ghana's competitive position in the national and world eco-tourism markets. The challenge for Managers includes ensuring that they have service quality goals and programmes to deliver high quality service and monitoring programmes. Importantly, these sophisticated consumers recognize quality service and are willing to pay handsomely for it.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Eco- tourism is a rapidly growing niche market and this market is fueled by an increasing number of domestic and international tourists, and by the increasing availability of global communication.

Therefore, the study intends:

- i. To analyze the quality of services being offered by Mole National Park.
- ii. To find out the gaps in service delivery at Mole National Park.
- iii. To determine which dimensions are the determinants of overall service quality.
- iv. Based on the findings, to make recommendations for improving service delivery at eco-tourism sectors in Ghana

1.4 Research Questions

This study seeks to look at how tourist management has incorporated quality issues into their tourism programmes. Furthermore, it intends to provide a better understanding of service quality and how management can improve their service quality.

To achieve this purpose, the following research questions will be further investigated:

- i) What is the level of service quality at Mole National Park?
- ii) What is the state of the facilities at Mole National Park?
- iii) Which dimensions are the determinants of overall service quality?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study is justified on the basis that the growth in the eco-tourism market may provide several benefits to eco-tourism destinations. Mole National Park site is one of the major tourist sites in Ghana and receives a considerable number of visitors during the year. Therefore the findings of the study will enhance better understanding of the factors that affect quality customer service and their effects on profitability of the Park. Additionally it could serve as a reliable database for relevant government agencies such as the Ministry of Tourism and Diaspora Relations, the Ghana Tourist Board, the Ghana Wildlife Authority, and other tourism-related organizations and agencies interested in service quality and sustainable tourism issues in the country.

1.6 Methodology

A case study approach was used to investigate service quality in Mole National Park. A structured questionnaire using a five-point likert-scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to strongly disagree' was designed based on the SERVQUAL instrument and administered personally by the

researcher at the premises of the Park. A judgmental/purposive sampling technique was used in this study. A sample size of 120 was used out of which 72 responses were received representing 60%.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The study was conducted in Damongo in the West Gonja District of the Northern Region of Ghana with specific focus on Mole National Park. The Mole National Park is about 1,900 square miles (4,840 square km) in extent and has an abundant game population including elephants, monkeys, and crocodiles. The study looked at service quality delivery at Mole National Park.

1.8 Organization of the Study

The work is organized into five chapters. Chapter one introduces the study with background information on the tourism sector as well as the problem statement. This is followed by the objectives and relevance of the study, methodology, the scope and organization of the study as well as the limitations of the study. Chapter two provides a review of the literature relevant to the study, chapter three looks at the methodology and organizational profile whilst chapter four presents the findings and analysis of these findings. Finally, chapter five comprises summaries of major findings, recommendations and conclusions.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of current literature in the frame of the presented research problem. Key terms in the topic such as the concept of quality, service quality and its application in the hospitality industry are defined. Additionally, the conceptual framework is also looked at.

2.2 The Quality Concept

Quality thinking began with the rise of inspection in the early 1920s (Garvin, 1988, cited in Stromgren, 2007)). During the last four decades, the Japanese have successfully utilized quality tools and methodologies as part of a successful effort to become a leading nation in the manufacture of a vast array of electronic, automotive, and other goods. According to Talha (2004), many well known companies through out the world have emphasized quality as an important strategic dimension, companies like Hewlett-Packard (Canada, USA), Ford Motor Company, (Canada, USA), British Telecom (United kingdom), Fujitsu (Japan), Toyota (Japan), Crysler (Mexico), and Samsung (South Korea).

A search of literature revealed that the term quality means different things to different people. Traditionally, quality of product or prime service has not been a major issue for the management of service companies. However, growing pressure from the customer and fierce competition are now forcing the quality issue to the attention of service companies (Davis and Heineke, 2003)).

Quality as “conformance to specification” is a position that people in the manufacturing industry often promote. A product or service that exceeds our preconceived idea about quality of that

product or service is likely to be judged as having “high quality”. With regards to services, Davis and Heineke (2003) suggest that an approach to defining quality in services is to measure how satisfied the customer is with the service result and that customer’s satisfaction with the service is related to both their prior expectations about the service and their perceptions of the quality of service and how well the service was provided. These expectations are however developed based on previous experiences with services, word-of-mouth from others and from advertisement. According to them, one type of measurement that has been historically viewed by hospitality organizations in terms of product and service efficiency is quality.

Similarly, Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons (2001) notes that for customers, assessment of quality is made during the service delivery process and satisfaction with the service can be defined by comparing perceptions of service received with expectations of service desired. This assertion is supported by Robledo (2001) who asserts that customer satisfaction and loyalty are secured through high-quality products and services, providing value for money for the consumer and are essential for long-term survival and long-term success.

A number of definitions offered on quality ranged from quality as the totality of features and characteristics of the product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs (American Society for Quality Control: Kotler and Armstrong 2008) to continuous improvement in every respect (including human resources), with the aim of satisfying the explicit and implicit expectations of customers and all relevant stakeholders (Curry and Kadasah, 2002). The common element of the definitions is that quality of a product or service refers to the perception of the degree to which the product or service meets the customer’s expectations. Thus, it can be said that quality has no specific meaning unless related to a specific function and/or object or service.

Consequently, quality is a perceptual, conditional and somewhat subjective attribute (Wikipedia).

2.2.1 Perceived Quality

Perceived quality reflects the opinion of the consumer regarding the superiority or global excellence of a product or service (Zeithaml, 1988). However, finding the components of perceived quality has proven to be more elusive. Perception, obviously, is one of those components. Generally speaking, most researchers acknowledge that customers also have expectations and that they play a certain role as standards or reference points used by consumers to evaluate the performance of a company (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1990, Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988,).

Quality from that angle is therefore defined as the gap between customers' expectations and perceptions ($CQ = P - E$), and a customer will perceive quality positively only when the service provider meets or exceeds his expectations. The most important model developed upon this theory is SERVQUAL (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985) which will be discussed later.

2.3 Service

Services lie at the very hub of economic activity in any society and have undergone a transformation from the traditional concept of a service transaction to one of an experience. Gronroos (2001) offers a comprehensive definition of services where service is defined as *an activity or series of activities of more or less intangible nature that normally, but not necessarily take place in interactions between customer and service employees and/or physical resources or goods and/or systems of the service provider, which are provided as solutions to customer problems*. For the customer, service is an experience occurring in the environment of the service

facility and the quality of service is enhanced if the service facility is designed from the customer's perspective.

In tourism, service provision according to Page (2005) can be conceptualized as a system where elements of the product are created, assembled and delivered to the customer. He further stated that whilst parts of the service are visible to the customer, the manner of delivery of the service is what will entail exposure and judgment by the tourist. And the level of service in tourism is measured by tourist satisfaction.

Similarly, service in the hospitality industry according to Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons (2001) is regarded as a package of explicit and implicit benefits (bundle) performed within a supporting facility and using facilitating goods. They intimated that attention to interior decoration, furnishings, layout, noise and even color can influence the customer's perception of the service.

Service provision and delivery plays a key role in the assessment of a holiday maker. The quality of a tourism product or its rating is a key determinant in the decision making process of a potential holiday maker in terms of where to stay. All service organizations should therefore aim at a customer service based on a set of values that come from integrating its commercialization with a quality experience for the visitor.

2.3.1 Service Characteristics

It is important to distinguish between a service and goods. Service characteristics are hard to define and even harder to measure (Carman, 1990; Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). Four characteristics namely, intangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity and perishability are often cited which differentiates services from physical products.

Services are said to be *intangible* because they can't be tasted, felt or smelt before they are purchased. It is often asserted that services are more like a process, more a performance than a physical object, and are experienced rather than "consumed", (Wallstrom, 2002). Consequently, hospitality products are usually viewed as an experience. For example, a tourist on an excursion cannot see the result before the purchase and only keeps memories of the tour after the excursion. Managing the tourist experience is a vital and complex requirement in the operation of tourist attractions and it is essential for tourism management to recognize the significance of the tourist experience in sustaining tourist satisfaction and inevitably visitor numbers. To reduce this uncertainty, tourists often look for signals of service quality and draw conclusions from the place, people, price, equipment and communications that they can see.

Inseparability of services refers to the assertion that services are produced and consumed simultaneously and there is an interaction between the service provider and the customer in the service delivery process. Therefore both the provider and the customer affect the service outcome.

Heterogeneity means that the service performances are highly variable from one service transaction to another. The quality of service varies from one time to another depends on who provides them as well as when, where and how they are provided.

Furthermore, *perishability* means services can't be stored or saved. It can be understood that services will not exist if they are not consumed at their appointed time. What this means is that the value of a service per day/or hour is time bound and if and when this elapses without the service being used, its value becomes zero. For example, the value of a hotel room is zero if it is not sold for the day and so is a seat on a safari van if it is not sold, it cannot be stored and sold the next day. It also reflects that service marketers have less control for handling supply and demand fluctuations (Hoffman and Bateson, 2002).

2.2.2 *Service Encounter and the Hospitality Industry*

Unlike material products or pure services, most hospitality experiences are an amalgam of products and services. Therefore, it is possible to say that satisfaction with a hospitality experience such as a hotel stay, a safari or a restaurant meal is a sum total of satisfactions with the individual elements that make up the experience.

It is however realized that there is no uniformity of opinion among marketing experts as to the classification of the elements in the service encounter. Reuland *et al.* (1998) suggest that hospitality services consist of a harmonious mixture of three elements: the material product in a narrow sense which in the case of a restaurant is the food and beverages, the behavior and attitudes of the employees who are responsible for hosting the guests, serving the meal and beverages and who come in direct contact with the guests and the environment, such as the building, the layout, the furnishing, the lighting in the restaurant etc.

Czepiel *et al.*, (1985) on the other hand suggest that satisfaction with a service is a function of satisfaction with two independent elements: the functional element, that is the food and beverage

in the restaurant and the performance-delivery element that is the service. And to prove the independence of the two elements from each other, the authors claim that restaurant clients are quite capable of having responses to each element that differ from one another: “the service was great, the food poor”.

Invariably, it can be said that the common thread running through the above discussion is that customers want prompt service by people who know what to do and how to do it, and who care about them as valued customers.

2.3 Service Quality

What constitutes service quality has attracted the attention of researchers all over the world. In the “age of the customer”, delivering quality service is considered an essential strategy for success and survival in today’s competitive environment (Dawkins and Reichheld, 1990; Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985; Reichheld and Sasser, 1990; Zeithaml *et al.*, 1990) and it is reported as having apparent relationship to costs, profitability, customer satisfaction, customer retention, behavioural intention and positive word-of-mouth. Also as a critical measure of organizational performance, service quality remains at the forefront of both the marketing literature generally and the services marketing literature specifically (Johnston, 1997). Unfortunately, Kotler and Armstrong (2008) notes that service quality is harder to define and judge than product quality because customers assess quality differently and the service outcome often depends on the interactions between employees and the customer. Practitioners and academics alike are keen on accurately measuring service quality in order to better understand its essential antecedents and consequences, and ultimately establish methods for improving quality to achieve competitive advantage and build customer satisfaction (Palmer and Cole, 1995).

Gronroos (1982) described the total service quality as customer's perception of the difference between the expected service and the perceived service. He then defined the concept of perceived service quality as the outcome of an evaluation process where the consumer compares his expectations with the service he perceives or has received.

Similarly, in their earlier research Parasuraman *et al.*, (1985) defined service quality as the consumers' comparison between service expectation and service performance and proposed service quality to be a function of pre-purchase customer expectations, perceived process quality and perceived output quality. In a later research, Parasuraman *et al.* (1988) indicated that service quality is determined by the differences between customer's expectations of the service and their perceptions of the service experience. They further defined service quality as *the discrepancy between consumers' perceptions of services offered by a particular firm and their expectations about firms offering such services.*

The definitions on service quality therefore focus on meeting the customer's needs and requirements, and how well the service delivered matches the customer's expectations of it.

However, Johnston (1995) suggests that one of the pressing issues before services research concerns the identification of the determinants of service quality. He argues that this should be a central concern for service management academics and practitioners, as the identification of the determinants of service quality is necessary in order to be able to specify measure, control and improve customer perceived service quality.

Early studies during 1980s focused on determining what service quality meant to customers and developing strategies to meet customer expectations (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). The early pioneers of services marketing in Europe argued that service quality consists of two or three

underlying dimensions. Lehtinen and Lehtinen (1985) referred to physical and interactive quality while Gronroos (1984) identified a technical dimension, a functional dimension and the firm's image as a third dimension. In later years, Parasuraman *et al.* (1988) published empirical evidence from five service industries that suggested that five dimensions more appropriately capture the perceived service quality construct. Building on the pioneering work of the Nordic School of services management and particularly Christian Gronroos, they established service quality as the core of services marketing. Their landmark article in 1985 conceptualized service quality as a gap between consumers' expectations and perceptions (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985) and inspired many researchers to examine the services quality construct within a marketing premise (Berry *et al.*, 1985).

For this study, service quality is taken as the difference between what tourists expect from each of the service quality attributes and what the tourist actually perceives to have received while visiting the Mole National Park. That is, if the tourists' initial perceptions of service quality exceeded their expectations of service quality, then the Mole National Park is considered as providing high quality service and the vice versa, if the tourists' expectations of service quality exceeded their initial perceptions of service quality, then the Park is considered as providing low quality service.

2.4 Eco-tourism

Ecotourism has emerged as one of the most discussed and debated segments of the tourism industry in the past 15 years. It has been called by various names such as nature tourism, low-impact tourism, alternative tourism, green tourism, social tourism, cultural tourism, adventure tourism, soft tourism, and sustainable tourism (Weaver, 2001).

Some studies by Owusu, (2008), and Diamantis (2004), have attempted to define ecotourism. These studies have linked ecotourism with nature-oriented travel, whilst others found it part of leisure travel to experience nature. Diamantis (2004) cites Knowles and Felzensztein as asserting that ecotourism is often associated with other forms of non-consumptive tourism based on natural history such as nature tourism, wildlife tourism and adventure tourism with a requirement for a contribution to the conservation of ecosystems as tourist destinations and emphasis on links between ecotourism and sustainable tourism. According to them ecotourism from a marketing perspective is sold as a specialty product, appealing largely to the up-market, highly educated and affluent travelers.

Similarly, Khan and Su (2003) observed that eco-tourists are people looking for natural experiences in pristine environments. According to them, eco-tourists exhibit the following characteristics: they are more interested in active and participatory activities, and are considered highly affluent with higher education, higher income, and mostly living in major cities. They usually stay for longer periods and are willing to pay more for facilities that are eco-friendly. In addition, they expect eco-tourist businesses to be environmentally friendly, and prefer services that are courteous, informative, and trustworthy.

The International Tourism Society defined eco-tourism as responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well being of local people.

A special report by the UNWTO (March 2003) on the U.S. eco-tourism market also defined eco-tourism as a specialized form of travel to natural areas that has a number of niches in the broader “nature-based” and “sustainable” tourism markets. The report observed that the American eco-tourists are more likely to participate in packaged tours and spend less than the general tourists. The trend of the eco-tourists in the U.S is towards the younger age groups of those between 18 –

34 years old. For length of stay, eco-tourists stay longer than the general tourists with a median number of 12 nights versus 9 nights, respectively. Additionally, U.S. eco-tourists prefer excellent guides, small groups, uncrowded destinations and meaningful educational trip content. Wildlife viewing and being in the wilderness are specific activities of interest to eco-tourists in addition to the environmental and ecological excursions.

Nature tourism is being increasingly promoted as a means to combat the inequality and dependency in rural areas. Ecotourism as a subset of nature tourism has emerged as a potential mechanism for involving rural communities in the management of their natural resources, and thus benefit from their conservation efforts. It is observed that ecotourism is planned and operated along defined principles some of which include minimizing impact, building environmental and cultural awareness and respect, providing positive experiences for both visitors and hosts, providing direct financial benefits and empowerment for local people and finally raising sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental and social climate.

In Ghana, ecotourism is an emerging trend and is in its nascent stage. The results of a study by Owusu (2008), on three traditional areas around the Mt Afadjato and Agumatsa Range in Ghana on their perceptions of the costs/benefits of ecotourism revealed that local communities see ecotourism as an opportunity to develop the area rather than a conservation tool. However, the status of biodiversity and the range of potential opportunities and costs suggest that local people could benefit more from conservation and ecotourism if they are prepared to bear the costs. During the last two decades ecotourism in Ghana has begun to be an important player in international markets and has been positioned as a product with high quality value.

2.5 Service Quality in the Hospitality Industry

The importance of service quality for tourism and hospitality businesses is gaining tremendous attention. The hospitality industry is a “people-based” industry where the end product is often produced by a number of employees, together delivering the end product for the organization. In view of this, it poses a major task for management of this industry due to the potential for significant variability of performance of staff involved in the over all end product or service (Kandampully, 1997). Additionally, there is constant interaction between guests and service providers and this service encounter often referred to as “the moment of truth” determines the satisfaction/dissatisfaction with service quality by customers. In order to provide quality service to the customers, knowledge of the customers’ service quality expectations is considered very important. As a result, effective training is required to provide unique and differentiated standards of service in the industry in order to increase profitability.

In a research conducted by Khan and Su (2003) on tourists visiting the Cheju Island in Korea, it was revealed that the service quality expectations of these eco-tourists were moderate, and a hierarchy of service dimensions was evident. It shows that these tourists tend to expect more of those services that are courteous and informative, and convey a feeling of trust and confidence. In addition, local cultural influence was considered more important than environmentally friendly facilities.

2.6 Service Quality Dimensions

This study attempts to identify service quality attributes which satisfy tourists when they visit Mole National Park. Some studies have been done in this area which seeks to determine the

global attributes of services that contribute significantly to relevant quality dimensions. An exploratory research by Parasuraman *et al.* (1985) revealed that the critical factors used by consumers in assessing service quality fit ten (10) potentially overlapping dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, communication, credibility, security, competence, courtesy, understanding/knowing the customer and access. These are explained in detail in the table below:

Table 2.1 Determinants of Service Quality

Service Dimension	Quality	Measurement criteria
Tangibles		It includes physical evidence of the services.
Reliability		It means that the firm performs the service right the first time and the firm honours its promises.
Responsiveness		It concerns the willingness or readiness of employees to provide service
Communication		It means keeping customers informed in a language they can understand and listening to them.
Credibility		It involves trustworthiness, believability and honesty.
Security		It is the freedom from danger, risk or doubt
Competence		It means that possession of the required skills and knowledge to perform the service.
Courtesy		It involves politeness, respect, consideration and friendliness of contact personnel.
Understanding		Knowing the customer involves making effort to understand the customers' needs.
Access		It involves approachability and ease of contact.

Source: Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985

These ten dimensions and the descriptions serve as the basic structure of the service quality domain from which items are derived for the SERVQUAL scale.

In their subsequent research, (Parasuraman *et al.* 1988), they further refined the ten dimensions to five: reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy and responsiveness which constitute the base of a global measurement for service quality. The SERVQUAL model identifies specific criteria by which customers evaluate service quality. These criteria are classed into five major dimensions (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988) and were used to develop a 22-item service quality scale as explained in the table below:

Table 2.2, 22-Item Service Quality

Service Quality Dimensions	22-Item Scale
Reliability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Providing service as promised ➤ Dependability in handling customer's service problems ➤ Performing services right the first time ➤ Providing services at the promised time ➤ Maintaining error-free records
Assurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Employees who will instill confidence in customers ➤ Making customers feel safe in their transactions ➤ Employees who are consistently courteous ➤ Employees who have the knowledge to answer customers questions
Tangibles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Modern equipment ➤ Visually appealing facilities ➤ Employees who have a neat, professional appearance ➤ Visually appealing materials associated with service
Empathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Giving customers individual attention ➤ Employees who deal with customers in a caring fashion ➤ Having the customers best interest at heart ➤ Employees who understand the needs of their customers ➤ Convenience business hours
Responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Keeping customers informed as to when services will be performed ➤ Prompt service to customers ➤ Willingness to help customers ➤ Readiness to respond to customer's requests ➤

Source: Parasuraman *et al.* (1988)

It was realized during their studies that customers ranked the importance of two SERVQUAL dimensions consistently. According to them, regardless of the service industry, reliability was the most critical and important dimension of service quality, followed by responsiveness, assurance and empathy and tangibles were of least concern and importance to customers.

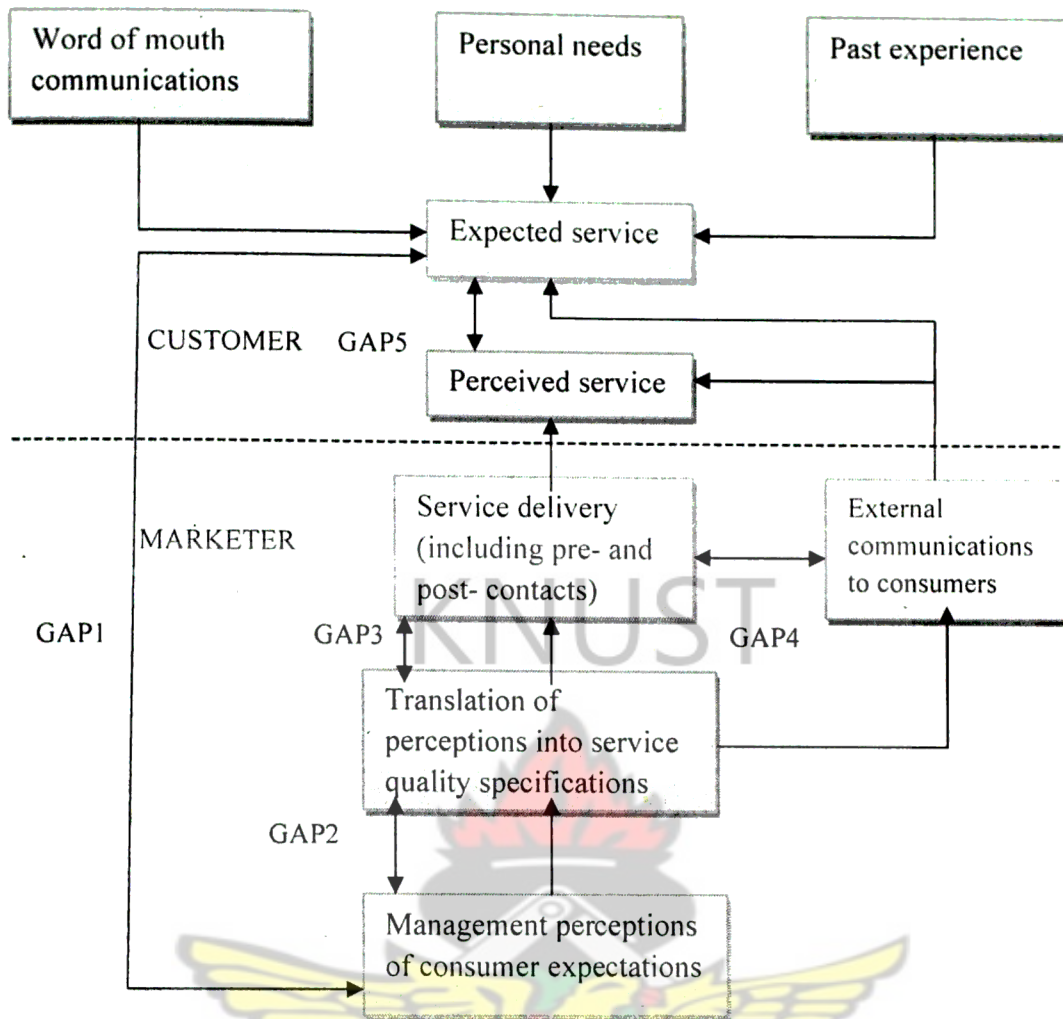
2.7 Conceptual Models

Conceptual models in service quality enable management to identify quality problems. Models are developed to aid understanding of key concepts in research.

2.7.1 The Service Quality Gap Model

The gap model was developed as a result of the recognition that problems arise in the course of delivering quality service to customers. Parasuraman *et al.* (1985) developed the model which identified the possible gaps between elements in the design and delivery of services that can ultimately affect the relationship between expected and perceived service. The research revealed that service quality stemmed from a comparison of the customers' expectations or desires of the service from the service provider with their perceptions of the actual service performance. According to them the model provides a framework for focusing on customer needs and the elements that need to be managed to consistently meet those needs. They postulate that to deliver good service, it is important to have effective and capable people in the customer contact positions. They developed a service quality model based on gap analysis which is explained by

Figure 2.1 below:



Source: Parasuraman *et al.* 1985

Figure 2.1, Service Quality Gap Model

GAP1: The “Knowledge GAP” is the difference (discrepancy) between guest’s expectation and management’s perceptions of those expectations, that is, management’s lack of understanding what consumers expect.

GAP2: The “Standards GAP” is management’s inability to formulate target levels of service quality to meet perceptions of customer’s expectations and translate these into workable specifications, that is, lack of commitment to service quality standards.

GAP3: The “Delivery GAP” is the difference between service quality specifications and service actually delivered, that is, the service performance gap. In other words, service delivery does not meet specifications set by management.

GAP4: The “Communications GAP” is the difference between service delivery and the external communications to guests about service delivery, that is, whether promises matched the delivery.

GAP5: The “Overall GAP” is the difference between guest’s expectations and perceived service.

This gap depends on the size and directions of the four previously mentioned gaps associated with the delivery of service on the marketer’s side.

The first four gaps (GAP1, GAP2, GAP3 and GAP4) are identified as functions of the way in which service is delivered, whereas GAP5 pertains to the customer and as such is considered to be the measure of service quality. The GAP5 is what the SERVQUAL model influences.

2.7.2 The SERVQUAL Model

SERVQUAL is a multi-item scale developed to assess customer perceptions of service quality in service and retail businesses. It is often defined as the discrepancy between a customer’s expectation for a service offered and the customers’ perceptions of the service received. (Parasuraman, *et al.*, 1988). Consisting of five quality dimensions, they were used to develop twenty two items and require the respondents to answer questions about both their expectations and their perceptions. Originally developed from the Gap model, SERVQUAL has been applied

widely by companies and industries as a diagnostic methodology for uncovering wide areas of an organization's service quality weaknesses and strengths. The method involves a development of an understanding of the perceived service needs of target customers. These measured perceptions of service quality for the organization in question are then compared against an organization that is "excellent". The resulting gap analysis may then be used as a driver for service quality improvement.

The customer's level of satisfaction on a product or service is the key factor of whether a customer is willing to give repeat business. It is also the significant element for service industry to remain in business (Huang, 2003). Derived from the service industry's advertising, the customers form service expectations, by word of mouth, and based on their past experiences, they would in turn compare the perceived service against the expected service. Realistically, if the perceived service is below the expected service, the customers will feel disappointed. On the other hand, if the perceived service meets or exceeds their expectations, they will be willing to patronize again (Kotler, 2003).

The SERVQUAL model is however criticized on the grounds of the validity of the five dimensions and the uniform applicability of the method to all service sectors. Cronin and Taylor (1992) as cited in Khan and Su (2003), whilst acknowledging the contributions of Parasuraman *et al.*, emphasized the importance of service quality and its relationship with consumer satisfaction, service value and purchase behaviour/intentions. They argued that service quality should be measured as an attitude and developed the SERVPERF scale based on performance items instead of expectations. They suggested that caution should be exercised in the use of SERVQUAL score and that further work is needed in the development of measures for assessing the quality of services. Despite criticisms, the SERVQUAL instrument has emerged as the most

popular, standardized questionnaire to measure service quality and has been used, adapted or adopted in a variety of contexts in hospitality/tourism research. (Akbaba, 2005).

The following study attempted to find out what service quality dimensions were considered important by travelers visiting the Mole National Park in northern Ghana. The study utilized the service quality scale (SERVQUAL) developed by Parasuraman *et al.*, (1985, 1988, 1991).

2.7.2.1 Application of SERVQUAL Model in the Ecotourism Sector

Earlier research seldom applied the SERVQUAL model to tourism industry. In the recent years however, there is progressively more service quality research focused on the tourism industry. An adapted version of the SERVQUAL instrument was used in Khan (2003) and Akama and Kieti (2003). In Khan's research, only the expectation items were adapted to measure service quality. The factor analysis revealed six service dimensions of eco-tangibles, assurance, reliability, responsiveness, empathy, and tangibles. Eco-tangibles had the highest mean score followed by assurance, reliability, responsiveness, empathy, and tangibles. The findings of Akama and Kieti however revealed that the service quality gaps of the seven dimensions which included tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, price and perceived value were positive. That is, the overwhelming majority of international tourists were satisfied by the quality of the park's nature attractions and the services provided by the employees.

The SERVQUAL model has been widely applied in measuring service quality in different service-oriented industry such as hotel, airline, travel agency, museum, theme park, restaurant, resort, tourism center, park and recreation place (Chiang, 2004).

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Research is defined by Malhotra and Birks (2007) as a systematic investigation of a subject matter with the aim of uncovering new information, and/or interpreting relationships among the subject parts. It is a process that enables one to arrive at a dependable solution or understanding of problems/phenomena through planned, systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of data. The primary goals of research, according to Kannae, (2004) are to advance knowledge with no particular application in mind and to address a practical problem. There are different types of approaches available to the researcher and the choice of a particular approach will be dictated by the research question(s) the researcher seeks to answer, and the objective(s) of the study (Saunders et al. 2007). In this chapter the research process will be described.

3.2 Research Design

Malhotra and Birks (2007) defined research design as a framework or blueprint for conducting a research project. It details the procedures necessary for obtaining the information needed to structure or solve research problems. They further classified research design broadly as either exploratory or descriptive (conclusive). Saunders *et al.* (2007) however classified research into exploratory studies, descriptive and explanatory studies. According to them, exploratory study is a valuable means of finding out what is happening, to seek new insights, to ask questions and to assess phenomena in a new light. Descriptive research on the other hand purports to portray an accurate profile of persons, events or situations. Explanatory research however seeks to establish causal relationships between variables.

This research was exploratory since the purpose was to gain a better understanding of the level of service quality Mole National Park. In this way we may seek out new insights on service quality in the industry.

3.3 Research Approach

Research approaches are classified broadly into two main types namely quantitative and qualitative methods. One way of differentiating between the two is to focus on numeric or non-numeric data. According to Saunders *et al.* (2007), quantitative research is predominantly used as a synonym for any data collection technique (such as questionnaire) or data analysis procedure (such as graphs or statistics) that generates or uses numerical data. In contrast, qualitative is used predominantly as a synonym for any data collection technique (such as an interview) or data analysis procedure (such as categorizing data), that generates or use non-numerical data. Both methods have their advantages and disadvantages and their selection should be based on the purpose of the study. It is however increasingly becoming common in business and management research where in a single research study, researchers use both quantitative and qualitative techniques and procedures in combination, that is using more than one data collection technique and analysis procedures to answer the research question (multiple methods).

In this study, both quantitative and qualitative methods were used. This is because it was useful and provided a better opportunity for the researcher to answer the research questions and also evaluate the extent to which the research findings could be trusted and inference made from them.

3.4 Research Strategy

According to Saunders *et al.* (2007), the choice of the research strategy should be guided by the research question(s) and objective(s) and the extent of existing knowledge. Additionally, the amount of time and resource availability are all factors to consider. Yin (2003) however cautioned that no research strategy is inherently superior or inferior to any other or are they mutually exclusive.

There are five main research strategies to use when collecting and analyzing empirical evidence in the field of social science namely survey, experiment, archival analysis, history and case study. The choice of a particular research strategy will depend on the research questions and objectives.

This study used the case study approach as a means of gaining insight into service quality and its dimensions in the hospitality/ecotourism industry.

3.4.1 Case Study

Robson (2002), as cited in Saunders *et al.* (2007) defines a case study as a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence. Case studies are useful in answering 'why', 'what' and 'how' questions. As Fisher (2007) points out, case studies enable the researcher to give a holistic account of the subject of the research. In particular, they help the researcher focus on the interrelationships between all the factors, such as people, groups, policies and technology that make up the case studies.

Yin (1994) identified the following characteristics of a case study:

- ❖ It investigates a contemporary phenomenon within real-life context especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident.
- ❖ It has a single site, such as a team or an organization, but many sites.
- ❖ A case study uses a variety of research methods and can happily accommodate quantitative data and qualitative material.
- ❖ Case study researchers tend to use theoretical propositions developed prior to the study to guide the data collection.

It is argued that the strengths of a case study are its ability to provide rich descriptive detail, conveying a feeling of what it is like to experience in an organization, event or problem from the inside. In addition, it allows discovery of grounded theory and the comparison of existing literature and theory with what actually happens in reality. A case study can either be a single or a multiple case.

3.5 Sources of Data

There are two types of data sources available to the researcher, namely primary and secondary data/sources. Primary data are data originated by a researcher for the specific purpose of addressing the problem at hand. In other words, primary data sources are directly related to the study purpose and consist of data collected throughout the study that directly can be related to the study purpose both personally gathered or through a third party. On the other hand, secondary data are data that have already been collected for purposes other than the problem at hand. Either choice has its advantages and disadvantages.

Both primary and secondary data sources were used in this research. The primary data was collected through an empirical study undertaken by the researcher.

A closed-ended questionnaire using a five-point likert- scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' was designed and administered. The questionnaire was based on Parasuraman et al. (1988) definition of service quality which they said was the discrepancy between consumers' perceptions of services offered by a particular firm and their expectations of the service performance. Accordingly, the study looked at customers' perceptions of the quality they received, compared to their expectations in a one-column format.

Secondary data sources consulted included books, journals and other literature reviewed by the researcher.

3.6 Sampling Procedures

Sampling is a method of selecting some part of a group to represent the total group and provides a range of methods that enables the researcher to reduce the amount of data needed to be collected by considering only data from a subgroup rather than all possible cases or elements.

Two broad traditional sampling techniques available and mostly used are the probability (representative) and non-probability (judgmental) sampling techniques. Probability sampling is often associated with survey and experimental research strategies whilst non-probability sampling (other than quota sampling) is more frequently used when adopting a case study strategy (Saunders et al. 2007).

Non-probability sampling provides a range of alternative techniques based on the researcher's subjective judgment. The researcher uses subjective methods such as personal experience, convenience and expert judgment to select the elements in the sample. Four commonly used non-probability sampling methods are quota sampling, purposive (judgmental) sampling, snowball sampling and convenience sampling. Purposive (judgmental) sampling enables the researcher to use his judgment to select cases that will best enable the researcher answer the research question(s) and to meet the research objective(s).

In order to adequately answer the research question(s) and objective(s) and the need to undertake an in-depth study that focuses on the case study area, a purposive/judgmental sampling technique was used in this study. In addition, the difficulty of specifying a sampling frame justified the choice of a non-probability sampling technique.

3.6.1 Sample

The sample population for this research was composed of local and foreign tourists who visit the Mole National Park. The survey was conducted over a one-week period. The questionnaire was administered personally by the researcher at the premises of the Park. Respondents were approached and informed about the purpose of the survey before they were given the questionnaire.

According to visitor statistics provided at the site, Mole received 37 tourists a day in 2007 and this increased to 46 tourists a day in 2008. A total number of 16,807 tourists were received in 2008. A sample size of 120 was therefore targeted. No particular attempt was made to apply a random sample or to select particular segments. However, tourists were selected at different times of the day. A total of one hundred and twenty (120) questionnaires were distributed at site

to respondents, out of which seventy two (72) were returned, representing sixty percent (60%).

The respondents answered the questions in the context of their service quality expectations and what they perceived to have received from Mole National Park.

3.7 Data Analysis

Data analysis is an important aspect of the research process. It involves editing, coding, entering and analyzing the data. SPSS software was used to do content analysis, variance and regression analysis.

3.7.1 Regression Analysis

Regression analysis assesses the strength of a relationship between one dependent (response variables) and specified independent variables. The objective is to identify whether relationships between variables exists, which is usually based on a study of correlations between the variables (Saunders et al. 2007).

Regression coefficient; estimates display regression coefficient B, standard error of B, standardized coefficient beta, t value of B and two-tailed significance level of t. confidence intervals display 95% confidence intervals for each regression coefficient or a covariance matrix. Covariance matrix displays a variance – covariance matrix of regression coefficients with variances off the diagonal and variances on the diagonal. The coefficient represents the proportion of the variation in the dependent variable that can be explained statistically by the independent variable.

Linear regression estimates the coefficients of the linear equation, involving one or more independent variables that best predict the value of the dependent variable. For each value of the independent variables, the distribution of the dependent variable must be normal. The variance of

the distribution of the dependent variable should be constant for all values of the independent variable. The relationship between the dependent variable and each independent variable should be linear, and all observation should be independent.

All variables must pass the tolerance criterion to be entered in the equation regardless of the entry method specified. The default tolerance level is 0.0001. Also, a variable is not entered if it would cause the tolerance of another variable already in the model to drop below the tolerance criterion.

Model fit; the variables entered and removed from the model are listed, and the following goodness-of-fit statistics are displayed: multiple R, R² and adjusted R², standard error of the estimate, and an analysis-of-variance table.

R squared change is the change in the R² statistic that is produced by adding or deleting an independent variable. If the R² change associated with a variable is large, that means that the variable is a good predictor of the dependent variable.

Descriptive provide the number of valid cases, the mean and the standard deviation for each variable in the analysis. A correlation matrix with a one-tailed significance level and the number of cases for each correlation are also displayed.

Partial correlation: the correlation that remains between two variables after removing the correlation that is due to their mutual association with the other variables. The correlation between the dependent variable and an independent variable, when the linear effects of the other independent variables in the model, have been removed from both.

Part correlation: the correlation between the dependent variable when the linear effects of the other independent variables in the model, have been removed from the independent variable. It is

related to the change in R^2 when a variable is added to an equation. This is sometimes called the semi partial correlation.

3.8 The Study Area

Mole National Park, the largest eco-tourism site in Ghana, is located 170 kilometres west of Tamale in the West Gonja District of the Northern Region. It is home to over 93 species of mammals, about 400 species of birds, 9 amphibians, 33 reptilian and several insectivorous species and 5 endemic butterfly species have been recorded. The mammals include some 600 elephants, 2,000 roan antelopes, 3,000 hartebeests, 4,000 waterbucks, 5,000 buffaloes and some 6,000 warthogs. Uncounted lions, leopards, hyenas and various primates can also be seen in Mole.

A total of 600km of game protection and viewing roads have been developed within the Park. The Park covers approximately 4,840 km² and is the largest and most prestigious protected area in Ghana under the aegis of the Wildlife Department. Mole National Park was the first Wildlife Protected Area to be established in Ghana. The Park lies within two physiographic regions - 65% lies within the Voltaian sandstones basin and 35% within the savannah high plains. The topography is generally undulating with flat-topped hills which are dominated by the Konkori scarp that runs north-south through the park and reaches up to 250m a.m.s.l. The Park forms part of the Volta River catchment and numerous rivers cross or originate in it to drain into the White Volta River. Mole National Park represents a fairly undisturbed guinea savannah ecosystem dominated by open savannah woodland and has very rich flora and fauna.

Mole has an important history linked to the national slave trade route project. The ancient caravan route from Salaga to Wa and beyond to Mali, passed through the heart of the park. This

route was used for both trading and to transport slaves to coastal markets. The park Headquarters is located right at a place where two famous slave raiders (Samore and Babatu) raided and erased a village to the ground. The Head quarters is named after one of them - Samole. There is a cave in the Konkori escarpment that was used as a refuge from slave raiders by the local indigenes. Other important attractions in the Park include Kwomwoghlu and Asibey pools, wetland areas (unique bird-watching sites), waterfalls on the Konkori escarpments and remains of many old villages destroyed by slave raiders. Other important tourist sites such as the Larabanga Mosque and Mystery Stone are located 6km south-west of the Park.

A wide range of accommodation is available at the motel from budget hostel style accommodation to en-suite chalets with air-conditioning overlooking the watering hole. The motel offers competitive prices. For the more adventurous travellers, it is possible to camp out in Mole.

3.9 Delimitation

The SERVQUAL model, though generally used to assess service quality has limitations in terms of applications to all sectors. It is best used in the services sector of which eco-tourism falls within. The research is confined to service quality using the Mole National Park as a case study. Consequently, other aspects of eco-tourism may not be applicable to all sites in Ghana. Again, inadequate funds to undertake the study were a limitation. The research involved long distance travels to gather data including the cost of accommodation and some form of honoraria to respondents, typing, printing and binding of the report. Furthermore, there was the challenge gaining access and getting interviewees to respond to the questionnaire. The challenge was managed by using tour guides who were closer to the tourists.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. O DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of data gathered on ecotourism in the Mole National Park. The analysis covered the background of respondents, the profile of the park, the gaps in service delivery, and the quality of services delivered via expectation-perception analysis. Major issues emerged from the analysis which formed the basis for recommendation for improved service delivery in the park and overall tourism development in the country

4.2 Background of Respondents

4.2.1 Age and Sex Distribution

The gender and age profiles of respondents are summarized in Table 4.1 below. Males and females were equally distributed, representing fifty percent (50%) each. Majority of the respondents were between the ages of 18-27 and 28-37, which represents 47% and 29% respectively, out of which 62% of the 18-27 age group are males as compared to only 38% in the 38-47 age group. This means that the youth love to travel.

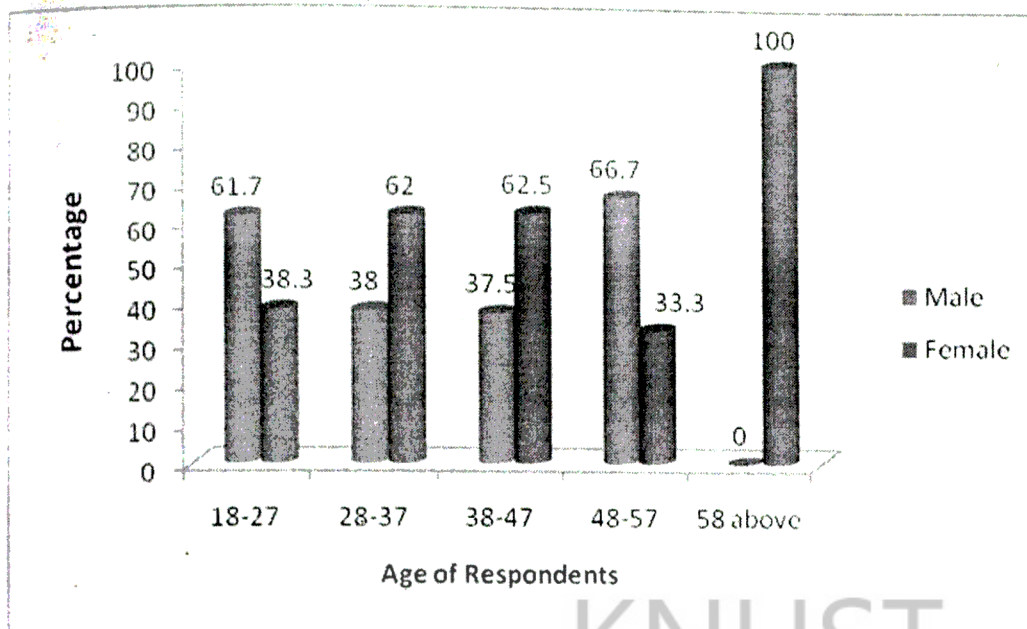


Figure 4.1 Age of Respondents

Source: Field Survey, April 2009

4.2.2 Information Source

An analysis of respondents' prior knowledge and source of information about Mole National Park revealed that family and friends in the form of word-of-mouth communication constitute a major proportion, representing sixty-five percent (65%). At least 22% of information was received through advertisements. This means that not enough was being done in the form of formal marketing and promotional activities to sell Mole National Park to the outside world. Figure 4.1 below illustrates the respondents' source of information on Mole.

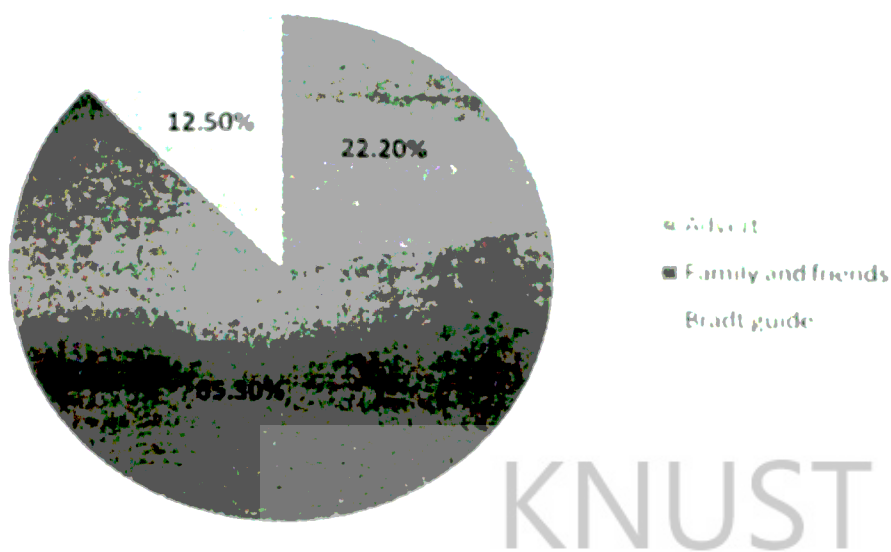


Figure 4.2: Source of Information on Mole National Park
Source: Field Survey, April 2009

4.2.3 Educational Status

Majority of the tourists visiting Mole National Park it was observed were very educated as illustrated in table 4.2 below with those with education up to the tertiary level constituting 72%. This will enhance their appreciation of quality issues. Following behind that category was Senior High School with 13.9%. About 6.9% of them had non-formal education, vocational/technical level 5.6% and Junior High School 1.4% in that order. The discovery supports the literature gathered by this researcher.

Table 4.1 Educational Status of Respondents

Level of Education	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Tertiary	52	72.2
SHS	10	13.9
JHS	1	1.4
Voc/Tech	4	5.6
Non Formal	5	6.9
Total	72	100.0

Source: Field Survey, April 2009

4.3 Profile of Services and Infrastructure at Mole National Park

4.3.1 Overview of the Park

Covering a total land area of about 4577 sq. km, the Mole National Park is the largest and most popular wildlife park in Ghana. It provides a unique combination of cultural and wildlife experience and has varied tourist attractions. It is located mainly in the Northern Region and was gazetted as a national park in 1971. However, it falls within the jurisdiction of four district assemblies namely; West Gonja, Sawla-Tuna-Kalba, Wa East and West Mamprusi. The park is state-owned and managed by the Wildlife Division of the Forestry Commission of Ghana.

Tourism activities provided by the Park include wildlife viewing, cultural experiences and adventure tourism. One of the highlights of visitors to the park is the safari/hiking to view wildlife.

4.3.1.1 Wildlife Attraction

The Mole National Park is the best location to view elephants and a selection of other wildlife species with relative ease. The Park supports 94 species of mammals, and its Reverine Forest offers by far the greatest diversity and abundance of more than 335 species of resident and migratory birds, 33 species of reptiles (including three species of crocodiles) and 9 species of amphibians. A unique and potentially marketable wildlife experience is suggested by the excellent game viewing hides and platforms at one of the dams below the Motel and a new double-storey tree hide. Adventurous persons willing to spend the night on the platform will be treated to dawn choruses and especially when the moon provides sufficient light to see animals come and go. The principal mammal species occurring in the park, and those of particular interest to tourists include elephants, waterbuck, western kob, bushbuck, warthog, roan antelope, hartebeest, buffalo, lion, leopard, spotted hyena, several cats, caracal, oribi, grey duiker, red-flanked duiker, 5 species of primates (olive baboon, grey monkey, patas monkey, black and white colobus and galago) and aardvark. Generally, wildlife numbers and densities are at reasonable levels and game viewing is considered good. Buffalos are rarely seen in the park by tourists and there are increasing sightings of lion and leopards. Elephants and a number of antelope and primate species are however every day sightings. With the active participation of investors, it is anticipated that viewing results will improve.

The flora of the Park has another relevant property (alongside its ecological function), which is its aesthetic value. Such beautiful hanging yellow flowers of *Cassia sieberiana* (Vabine), red flower balls of *Parkia clappertoniana* and the sight of completely lifeless but still alive trees like *Lannea spp* contribute to the ecotourism experience of the park. The Park provides an excellent

opportunity for tourists to learn about the local plants ethno-botanical importance in the park communities.

4.3.1.2 *Historical/Cultural Attractions*

One of the selling points of the Park is local culture, and opportunities for a visitor to get closer to the people and understand their local way of life. The Mognori Eco-village and Sonyor communities close to the Park are largely untouched by outside cultural influence. Local architecture using mud walls and flat gravel roofs and where you enter the houses via walking on the rooftops is typical of these communities. Visitors are often treated to cultural performances such as the 'dungo' (local dance) and other entertainments. Visitors can sometimes purchase sculptures of fetish symbols, carved catapults etc.

Some recent addition has been made to the stock of tourist attractions at the park. These include caves, a stone spring/waterfall, remnants/relics of Babatu and Samori slave raids base.

Ten minutes drive from the gate of the Park, are the Larabanga Mosque, which is one of the most fascinating prayer centers in the world and the Mystery Stone. These two sites complement the Park. The map below outlines the communities surrounding Mole National Park.

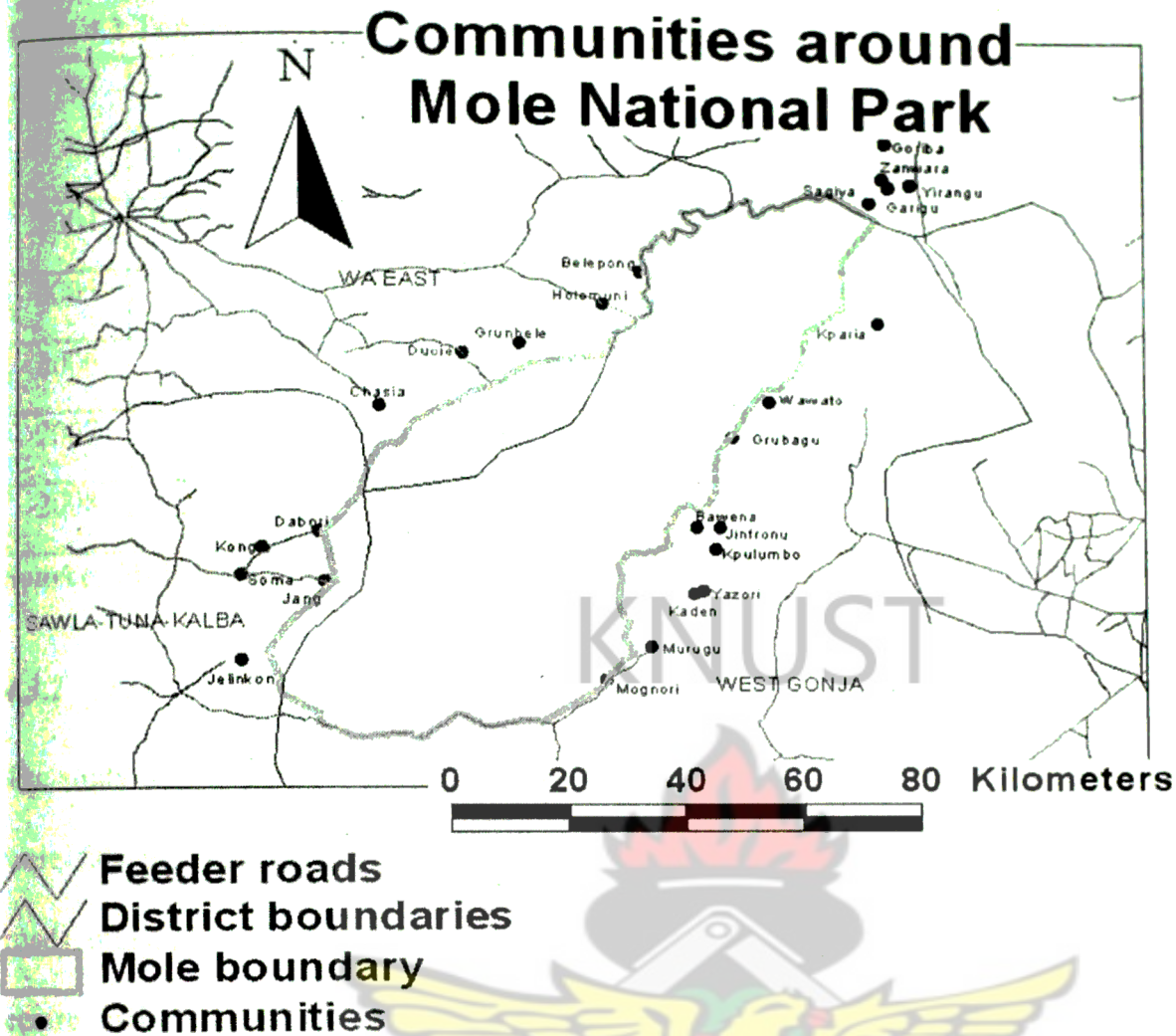


Figure 4.3 Communities around Mole National Park

Source: Mole National Park, April 2009

4.3.1.3 Tourist Arrivals and Receipts

According to visitor statistics provided at the site, Mole received 37 tourists a day in 2007 and this increased to 46 tourists a day in 2008. A total number of 16,807 tourists were received in 2008. This shows that tourists' arrivals have grown by over 50% from 10,427 in 2004 to 16,807 in 2008.

Revenue also increased from GH¢37,158.71 in 2004 to GH¢50,682.00. This is illustrated in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2 Tourist Arrivals and Revenue from 2004 – 2008

Year	Tourist Arrivals		Total	Average visitors per day	Revenue
	Local	Foreigners			
2004	4,130	6,297	10,427	29	GH¢37,158.71
2005	5,414	7,108	12,522	34	GH¢40,436.03
2006	5,117	7,617	12734	35	GH¢39,908.45
2007	5,512	8,222	13,734	37	GH¢44,762.525
2008	8,048	8,759	16,807	46	GH¢50,682.00

Source: Mole National Park; April 2009

4.3.2 Existing Tourist Infrastructure

The study revealed that the overall infrastructure and services offered by the Mole National Park were fair and required improvements. Supporting services and facilities in the Park include roads, transport, accommodation, portable water, electricity, communications, tourist information centre and conference facilities. Other facilities include a restaurant, health and education services.

4.3.2.1 The Motel (Accommodation & Catering)

A Motel is part of the facilities provided by the Mole National Park and it is operated by private management. It has a thirty-two (32) room-capacity and offers comfortable accommodation facilities for overnight stay with ninety-bed (90) chalets and rooms for tourists. Additionally, a restaurant provides both continental and local dishes from an expansive menu with an attached bar serving a broad selection of cold drinks. A swimming pool is also located within the Motel for guests to cool off. The Motel overlooks a dam (pool) that provides drinking and bathing water for elephants and other animals, and gives opportunity to guests to view animals at very close range whilst either having their meals or cooling off in the swimming pool.

It was however observed that the accommodation facilities were inadequate considering the large number of tourists who visited the Park and could not be accommodated.

4.3.2.2 Roads/Transport/Communication

Roads, transport and communication services play a very critical and major role in tourism development and the delivery of quality services. Access to and from Mole National Park is by second-class feeder road from Fulfulso-Junction through Damango to Mole and from Sawla on the famous Bole-Bamboi road. Visitors often have to endure long hours through bumpy and corrugated roads. One can however get public transport from the major cities of Accra, Kumasi, Techiman, Wa and Bolgatanga to Tamale. The Park has arranged with the Metro Mass Transport for bus services from Tamale to the Park in the afternoons.

The Park also has an airstrip that receives charter services from Tamale and other major airlines. This facility is however underutilized because it is not promoted well enough.

Private individuals have acquired bicycles at Larabanga, 7km from the Park that are made available to tourists on rental basis.

Whilst in the Park, one 4x4 car rental services is available to take tourists on the safari.

Telecommunication services in the form of internet (café), cellular networks (Mobile phones) and landline telephone services are provided in the Park.

4.3.2.3 Power Supply

The Park is hooked on the national electricity grid and enjoys 24-hour power supply. Management has also installed a stand-by generator as back-up in case of power outage. Street lighting within the Park especially from the main entrance to the Motel and other facilities must be improved. Animals roam freely at night and could pose danger to guests.

4.3.2.4 Water Supply

The Park enjoys regular supply of clean portable drinking water. This enhances the stay and comfort of guests.

4.3.2.5 Health Services

The Park is served by a clinic that is located within the Park and is opened to both tourists and staff and their families. The district hospital at Damongo is about 30km away and very serious cases are referred there. The clinic is powered by electricity and is equipped with basic facilities for first aid and other treatment

4.3.2.6 Tourist Information

The Park has an Information Centre which serves as the first point of call for tourists and a place to book safaris. It also houses a crafts shop for display of tourist information materials and souvenirs with a small convenience shop attached and a conservation room. A large meeting room for seminars and conferences is also available

4.4 Quality Expectations

The average expectations (on the scale, strongly disagree =1 to strongly agree =5) of the proposed twenty-two Service Quality issues as rated by the respondents are illustrated. Table 4.3 presents the item statistics, which is sorted by occurrence in the questionnaire.

Table 4.3: Item Statistics (Expectations)

Question number	Mean	Std. Deviation
Modern looking equipments	3.5833	0.8999
Visually appealing physical facilities	3.7083	0.8296
Neat appearing employees	4.0000	0.7691
Visually appealing materials associated with the service	3.8472	0.8334
Keeping promise to do something by certain time	3.8750	0.7861
Showing sincere interest in solving a customer's problem	4.0278	0.6707
Performing service correctly the first time	4.0417	0.7399
Providing the service at the time the service was promised	4.0694	0.7378
Insisting on error-free records	4.0694	0.7930
Employees telling customers exactly what service will be performed	3.9861	0.8306
Employees giving prompt service to customers	3.7361	0.7871
Employees always willing to help to help customers	3.8611	0.7563
Employees are never too busy to respond to customers' request	4.4028	3.6061
The behavior of employees instilling confidence in their customers	3.8750	0.8547
Customers feeling safe in their transactions	4.0417	0.6804
Employees being consistently courteous with their customers	4.0278	0.7310
Employees having the knowledge to answer customers' questions	3.9722	0.7310
Giving customers individual attention	3.7778	0.6759
Operating hours convenient to all their customers	3.8194	0.8106
Employees giving customers personal attention	3.8611	0.7563
Having the customers best interest at heart	3.9306	0.8278
The employees understanding the specific needs of customers	3.8611	0.7563

4.4.1 *Leading (Most Significant) Dimension*

The dimension statistics show the importance of the dimensions as perceived by the respondents. Reliability such as understandable, knowledge and dependable seems to be very important. This gives an indication, based on the factor analysis and the average mean score that these elements appear to be particularly important and leading contributors to service quality evaluation in the ecotourism industry. This is indicated in Table 4.4 below.

This is similar to the previous research (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988) where reliability was regarded as the important dimension in service quality.

Table 4.4 Dimensions Ranked

Dimension (Ranked)	Weighted mean average	Main emphasis
Reliability	4.0166	The employees are understandable, knowledgeable and dependable and the service is delivered as promised and right the first time
Responsiveness	3.9965	Employees are willing to help customers and provide prompt service
Assurance	3.9791	Employees are competent, courteous and are able to inspire trust and confidence
Empathy	3.8500	The employees are understanding, caring and gives individualized attention to customers
Tangibles	3.7847	Modern looking, visually appealing, easy to use and comfortable equipment, fixtures and appearance of personnel

4.5 Quality Perception

The table below presents the mean and standard deviation for the five-point likert scale and describes the perceptions of the respondents regarding the quality of service received.

Table 4.5 - Item Statistics (Perceptions)

Question number	Mean	Std. Deviation
Modern looking equipments	3.6667	0.71207
Visually appealing physical facilities	3.7083	0.79501
Neat appearing employees	4.0694	0.77508
Visually appealing materials associated with the service	3.8333	0.80491
Keeping promise to do something by certain time	3.8889	0.83169
Showing sincere interest in solving a customer's problem	3.7500	1.05817
Performing service correctly the first time	3.9444	0.72944
Providing the service at the time the service was promised	3.7778	0.90728
Insisting on error-free records	3.7639	0.88003
Employees telling customers exactly what service will be performed	3.6250	1.11882
Employees giving prompt service to customers	3.7361	0.96404
Employees always willing to help to help customers	3.9167	0.85168
Employees are never too busy to respond to customers' request	3.7222	0.96739
The behavior of employees instilling confidence in their customers	3.8194	0.81061
Customers feeling safe in their transactions	4.0833	0.66608
Employees being consistently courteous with their customers	3.8750	0.82116
Employees having the knowledge to answer customers' questions	3.7083	1.10616
Giving customers individual attention	3.6389	1.09165
Operating hours convenient to all their customers	3.8333	0.87210
Employees giving customers personal attention	3.7083	0.82969
Having the customers best interest at heart	3.8194	0.81061
The employees understanding the specific needs of customers	3.7639	0.81350

Item Statistics (sorted by mean)

4.6 Gaps in Service Delivery

During the investigation conducted by this researcher on service quality at the Park, most responses were negative; that is, the respondents' perceptions were lower than what they had expected, with an overall weighted SERVQUAL score of -0.6 recorded. The summary scores for each dimension are shown in Table 4.6. As can be seen from the table, the highest gap scores were for Responsiveness and Reliability and this should be a real cause for concern and provides a definite starting point for service improvements. The relatively low importance of Tangibles could be attributable to the fact that customers are aware of the financial constraints which are typical of government funding context, and simply do not expect much from when it comes to aesthetics. Instead, they attach more importance to the delivery aspects of the service.

Table 4.6 SERVQUAL scores for Ecotourism Services (Gaps)

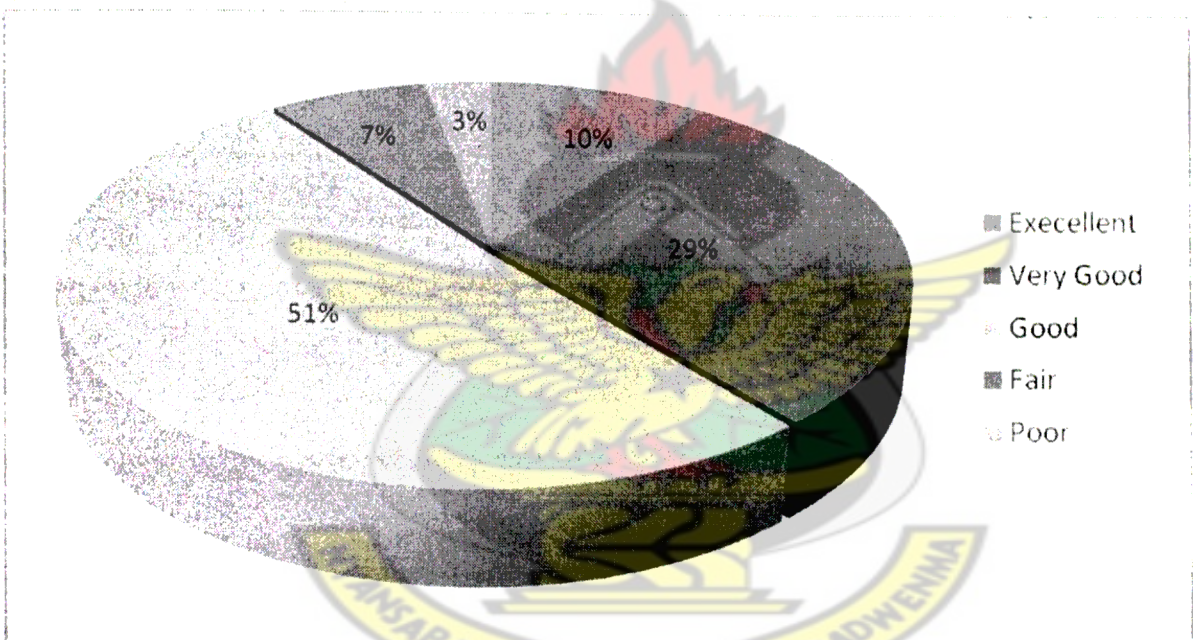
Dimension	Expectations	Perceptions	Gap scores
Reliability	4.0166	3.8250	-0.1916
Responsiveness	3.9965	3.7500	-0.2465
Assurance	3.9791	3.8715	-0.1076
Empathy	3.8500	3.7528	-0.0972
Tangibles	3.7847	3.8194	0.0347

Note: Overall average weighted SERVQUAL score = -0.6

4.7 Overall Satisfaction Level

The questionnaire ended up with a request for a view on the customers’ overall satisfaction level experienced throughout their stay. The figure 2 below gives the respondents’ overall service quality satisfaction level. Respondents overall rating of services provided by the Park was quite high with those perceiving the services to be “good” representing 51%, followed by “very good” with 29%. The least score was “poor” with 3%

Generally speaking, this implies that the current service delivery level is good and management should consolidate and build on these strengths. However, more still need to be done to convert the negatives into positives.



Source: Field Survey, April 2009

Figure 4: Overall Satisfaction Levels of Respondents

4.8 Determinants of Overall Service Quality

Regression analysis was used to investigate the best predictor of service quality in the ecotourism. The model summary table below indicates the strength of the relationship between the model and the dependent variable, the overall service quality. R, the multiple correlation coefficients, is the linear correlation between the observed and the model predicted values of the dependent variable. Its large value indicates a strong relationship.

R Square, the coefficient of determination, is the squared value of the multiple correlation coefficients. It shows that about 90% of the variation is explained by the model.

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Table 4.8: Model Summary (b)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.947(a)	0.897	0.729	0.44776

- a. Predictors: (Constant), reliability, responsiveness, tangibility, assurance, empathy.
- b. Dependent Variable: Overall service quality

4.9 Dimensions of Service Quality in the Eco-Tourism Sector

The next stage of the data analysis was to explore the dimensions of service quality in the eco-tourism industry. The analysis conducted indicated that the five dimensions namely, reliability, assurance, tangibility, empathy and responsiveness were important in the ecotourism industry with regards to service quality. However, reliability in terms of knowledge of staff and how dependable they were was regarded as the most important dimension.

4.10 Challenges to Quality Service Delivery

4.10.1 Limited Capacity of Staff

The park currently has six (6) tour guides to serve the numerous tourists who visit the Park. This is against the background that two safaris are organized a day and the same guides have to send tourists on the safaris. Because they do not have any day off within the entire week, it leads to fatigue and depression and therefore affecting quality service delivery.

4.10.2 Limited Infrastructure

Inadequate infrastructure and visitor reception facilities were a serious challenge to quality service delivery in the Park. It was observed that the accommodation facilities were inadequate considering the large number of tourists who visited the Park and could not be accommodated. Though the Motel has witnessed increased visitor numbers over the years, from 16 visitors per day in 2001 to 35 visitors per day in 2006, this is not commensurate with the 32-room accommodation provided since the early 1970s.

4.10.3 Poor Road/Transport System

The over all transport services available in Mole is poor and improvements are required. Transport to Mole can be a long and arduous journey from the Bole-Bamboi road through Sawla and the Fulfulso-Damongo road. A second class road exists and visitors often have to endure several hours through bumpy and corrugated roads.

Public transport is available to Tamale from the major cities of Accra, Kumasi, Wa and Bolgatanga. But while in Tamale it is difficult to find straight transport to Mole as the only bus

that goes to Mole leaves in the afternoon. Even when one is in Mole, transport to facilitate the safari is inadequate. The only car rental charges very high fees for the services. Visitors, who alight at the Mole junction at Larabanga village, either have to hire bicycles to take them into the Park or make the 7km journey on foot.

Due to challenges associated with travel, it is not always easy to have a comprehensive understanding of realities of quality issues.

4.10.4 *Encroachment on Protected Areas*

Encroachment by humans on protected areas poses a threat to the animals and is one of the major challenges to quality service delivery in Mole. The Park is 4840 km² wide and surrounded by over twenty- settler communities. Poaching pressure on popular game animals (antelopes, primates, warthog etc) is therefore rampant. The number of persons arrested and prosecuted for poaching between July and December 2006 stood at eleven (Table 4.10). This creates aggression and conflicts between the locals, Rangers and tourists. The Park management should work with the local communities to address the issue of hunting and farming within the protected area.

Table 4.8 Arrest and prosecutions of poachers in Mole National Park during July – December 2006

Date		Number of persons arrested	Offence	Result
July – December				
17	August	2	Multiple offences	Fined GH¢200.00
23	August	2	Multiple offences	One sentenced to 6 months in prison and one fined GH¢100.00
9	September	3	Multiple offences	One fined GH¢360.00 and the two fined GH¢100.00
10	October	2	Multiple offences	Serving 6 months in prison each.
10	December	2	Multiple offences	Sentenced 9 years in prison with hard labour and the other fined GH¢ 200.00
		11		GH¢ 960.00
				Total fines: GH¢960.00
				Total sentences: 126 months

Source: Mole National Park, April 2009

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the findings, recommendations and conclusions of the study. Major findings resulting from the survey are presented and suggestions and recommendations highlighted to guide management and policy makers in their future decisions. Areas for future research are also suggested.

5.2 Key Findings

5.2.1 *Inadequate Marketing and Promotion*

The majority of the visitors learnt about the Park by word-of-mouth which represents about 65%. However, advertisements in the form of brochures, maps, signboards, prints and electronic media accounted for only 20%.

5.2.2 *Inadequate Infrastructure and Reception Facilities*

It was observed that infrastructure in the form of accommodation and reception facilities were inadequate to support the current ecotourism activities and visitor numbers. The Motel has 32 rooms with 75 beds and a restaurant that can seat only 20 guests. This compels tourists who cannot be accommodated to stay at sub-standard guest houses at Larabanga, 7km away and they are charged fresh entry fees each time they enter the Park.

5.2.3 *Reliability*

The research revealed that, Reliability was the most significant and important service quality dimension expected by tourists and visitors in the ecotourism sector and most of them were concerned about the reliability of services delivered. However, a gap analysis revealed the highest gap scores for Responsiveness and Reliability. This therefore should be a real cause for concern for management and provides a definite starting point for service improvements. On the other hand, Tangibility received the lowest gap score. The relatively low importance of Tangibles could be attributable to the fact that customers are aware of the financial constraints which are typical of government funding context, and simply do not expect much when it comes to aesthetics. Instead, they attach more importance to the delivery aspects of the service.

5.2.4 *Highly Educated Tourists*

Majority of the visitors to Mole National Park are highly educated with 72.2% of them at the tertiary level and followed by Senior High School with 13.9%. This finding supports the literature, as cited by Khan and Su (2003) who observed that eco-tourists are people interested in active and participatory activities, and are considered highly affluent with higher education, higher income, and mostly living in major cities. It is often said that highly educated people are very discerning and would demand better value-for-money.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Quality Issues

- ✦ Managers of ecotourism facilities need to take a critical look at the specific dimensions as a guide in evaluating their services since service quality is intangible and hard to evaluate. Managers can use the five dimensions explored in this study as the five most important ones in service quality to evaluate service quality delivered to customers. In this way Park managers may assess their strength and weaknesses relative to competitors.
- ✦ Additionally, the dimension of service quality like reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibility are not stay alone. It is important to note that the dimensions may be closely associated with each other. Managers in the ecotourism industry are therefore advised to focus their resources on the dimensions selected in this study according to their relative importance to improve the overall perceived service quality in the industry.
- ✦ Furthermore, though majority of visitors praised the services of the Park as being good and smooth, that of the Motel was judged to be very slow and the Motel staff perceived to be rude and unprofessional. As noted earlier, reliability which is regarded as the most important dimension, consist more of the attitude aspects of service quality. In order for Mole National Park to function effectively and efficiently as a whole, it is important for the Motel staff to have extensive training on customer service and basic human relations so that employees will feel professional and confident taking care of the guests. Continuous training of frontline staff at various tourist touch points to communicate the right product information with the right attitude, must be seen as a priority. Staff must be helpful: this will help reinforce the tourists' perception of Ghana as a friendly destination.

- ✚ The Park and Motel management should take immediate measures to ensure that Mole National Park operates as one. As it currently stands now, the two do not function as one. Therefore visitors, bad feelings and experiences at the Motel mars the efforts of the Park staff to give visitors a good treat and a life time experience.
- ✚ There is the need to reasonably price the services and products provided in order to stay competitive and to attract more guests so that it will be in keeping with market value and visitor satisfaction. This is particularly applicable to the Motel where most guests complained that the restaurant and housekeeping services were rather too slow but prices high.
- ✚ Staffing, particularly at the Motel was observed to be inadequate. There will be the need to engage more qualified staff to beef up the current staff strength.

5.3.2 *Marketing and Promotion*

- ✚ Marketing and promotional activities such as signage, brochures, maps and advertising have to be intensified. Management could consider branding all promotional items with their logo.
- ✚ The Park must also keep and advertise an active website and encourage tour operators to feature packaged holiday tours. The growth and access to ICT especially the internet makes it easier for travelers to search for information about destinations, and industry organisations that are online, stand to benefit enormously.

- ✦ There is the need to link up and encourage local and international tour operators to increase their ecotourism tour promotion and to actively market the destination.
- ✦ Documentaries on both the local and international television stations including major airlines should be employed to help promote the Park.
- ✦ Park management should liaise with the Motel management to offer special incentive packages for tourists during off-seasons.

5.3.3 *Infrastructure Development and Institutional Upgrading*

- ✦ There is the need to continuously improve the facilities. Although efforts have been made by Park management to improve roads and hiking trails within the Park, the main access from Fulfulso Junction through Damongo and Sawla to Mole National Park, remains poor. This diminishes the benefits to the local communities and government of their tourism products. Government therefore as a matter of priority should re-gravel and asphalt these roads.
- ✦ Flight (airline) services to the Park should be revamped. Management should link up with major local Airlines especially Antrak Air, Citylink and Charter Flight companies to get them to include Mole National Park in their routes.
- ✦ Management should consider re-investing part of their revenue into the provision of more accommodation and catering facilities to take advantage of the numerous tourists who visit the Park and cannot be accommodated.

- ✚ The private sector needs to be encouraged to partner with the Park to provide decent accommodation and catering facilities. The government's policy of Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) in tourism must be given weight and facilitated to work.
- ✚ The District Assemblies and other Agencies within whose jurisdiction the Park falls must be brought onboard in the development and marketing of the Park. Some tourist sites are refusing to pay the statutory fees and levies to these Agencies, thus alienating them and stifling their commitment and support to the sites. More collaboration should be encouraged.
- ✚ Ghana Tourist Board must step up its monitoring and evaluation exercises to ensure that high standards are enforced and maintained. In this regard they must be resourced adequately through the provision of cross-country vehicles and logistics to enable them carryout this mandate.
- ✚ The findings also suggest that by focusing on the key dimensions only then can ecotourism practitioners achieve high levels of satisfaction and service quality.

5.3.4 *Safety and Security*

Some tourists expressed some concerns about their safety whilst at the Mole. The baboons roam freely around the Motel especially the restaurant area and at the least opportunity scatter visitors' bags, cameras, food and clothes when they are either eating or in the swimming pool. As much as we understand that the animals are in their natural habitat, the safety and security of the tourists is prime and should supercede any other considerations. These encounters traumatize the guests and send negative signals about Mole National Park and for that matter Ghana as a safe

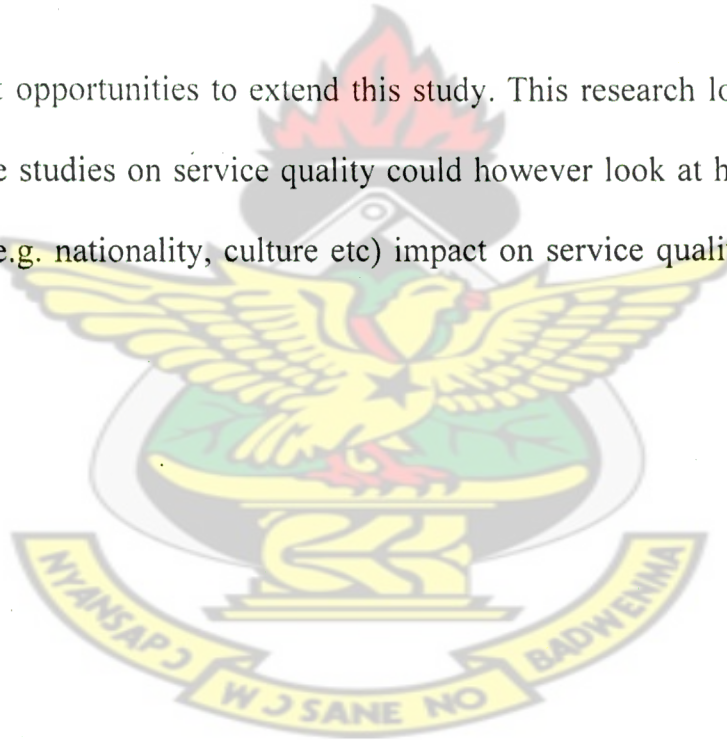
tourists' destination. Steps should therefore be taken to post guards around the Motel especially the restaurant and the swimming pool to protect guests and their property.

Adequate and visible warning information should be displayed at vantage points to educate and caution tourists.

5.4 Conclusion

The research was a study on Mole National Park with specific focus on service delivery. It was an attempt to find out how Mole was handling service delivery. While this research provides some perspectives to the field of service quality in Mole, it is believed that the findings and recommendations could be applicable to other ecotourism sites.

There are many different opportunities to extend this study. This research looked at all tourists who visited Mole. Future studies on service quality could however look at how different socio-demographic variables (e.g. nationality, culture etc) impact on service quality expectations and perceptions.



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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, KUMASI

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

TOPIC: An Investigation into Service Delivery at Eco-tourism Sites in Ghana: A Case Study of Mole National Park

Introduction

This questionnaire is meant for a study to find out the quality of service delivery at Mole National Park. The researcher therefore appeals for your candid opinion to the questions give below. Thank you in advance.

Section 1

Instructions:

Where options have been given, please tick or circle the appropriate option(s).

Personal Data

1. Age: (a) 18-27 (b) 28-37 (c) 38-47 (d) 48-57 (e) 58 & above
2. Sex (a) Male (b) Female
3. Marital status: (a) Single (b) Married (c) Divorced (d) Widowed (e) Separated
4. Educational Level: (a) Tertiary (b) Senior High School
(c) Junior High School (d) Post Secondary
(e) Vocational/Technical (f) Non-formal
5. How did you get to know of Mole? (a) Advert (b) Family/Friends (c) other, specify.....
6. Is it your first time of visiting Mole? (a) Yes (b) No

Section 2: Customer Quality Expectations

This survey deals with your opinion of Mole National Park’s (Mole) services. Please show the extent to which you think the Park should possess the features described by each statement. Please circle the number from “strongly disagree=1 to strongly agree=5” to reflect your quality expectations from an excellent organization (i.e. Mole National Park)

a. Tangibility dimension

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Modern looking equipments | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Visually appealing physical facilities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Neat appearing employees | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Visually appealing materials associated with the service | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

b. Reliability dimension

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5. Keeping promise to do something by a certain time | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Showing sincere interest in solving a customer’s problem | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Performing service correctly the first time | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Providing the service at the time the service was promised | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Insisting on error-free records | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

c. Responsiveness dimension

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10. Employees telling customers exactly what service will be performed | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. Employees giving prompt service to customers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. Employees always willing to help customers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. Employees are never too busy to respond to customers’ requests | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

d. Assurance dimension

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 14. The behavior of employees instilling confidence in their customers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. Customers’ feeling safe in their transactions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. Employees being consistently courteous with their customers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. Employees having the knowledge to answer customers’ questions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

e. Empathy dimension

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 18. Giving customers individual attention | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. Operating hours convenient to all their customers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. Employees giving customers personal attention | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. Having the customers best interest at heart | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. The employees understanding the specific needs of customers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Section 3: Customer Quality Perceptions

This survey deals with your opinion of Mole National Park’s (Mole) services. Please show the extent to which you think the Park should possess the features described by each statement. Please circle the number from “**strongly disagree=1** to **strongly agree=5**” to reflect your **quality perceptions** from an excellent organization (i.e. Mole National Park)

a. Tangibility dimension

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Modern looking equipments | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Visually appealing physical facilities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Neat appearing employees | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Visually appealing materials associated with the service | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

b. Reliability dimension

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5. Keeping promise to do something by a certain time | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Showing sincere interest in solving a customer’s problem | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Performing service correctly the first time | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Providing the service at the time the service was promised | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Insisting on error-free records | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

c. Responsiveness dimension

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10. Employees telling customers exactly what service will be performed | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. Employees giving prompt service to customers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. Employees always willing to help customers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. Employees are never too busy to respond to customers’ requests | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

d. Assurance dimension

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 14. The behavior of employees instilling confidence in their customers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. Customers’ feeling safe in their transactions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. Employees being consistently courteous with their customers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. Employees having the knowledge to answer customers’ questions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

e. Empathy dimension

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 18. Giving customers individual attention | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. Operating hours convenient to all their customers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. Employees giving customers personal attention | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. Having the customers best interest at heart | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. The employees understanding the specific needs of customers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Section 4: Respondents' Overall Satisfaction Levels

Please tick against one (1) of the following satisfaction levels of service quality of Mole National Park:

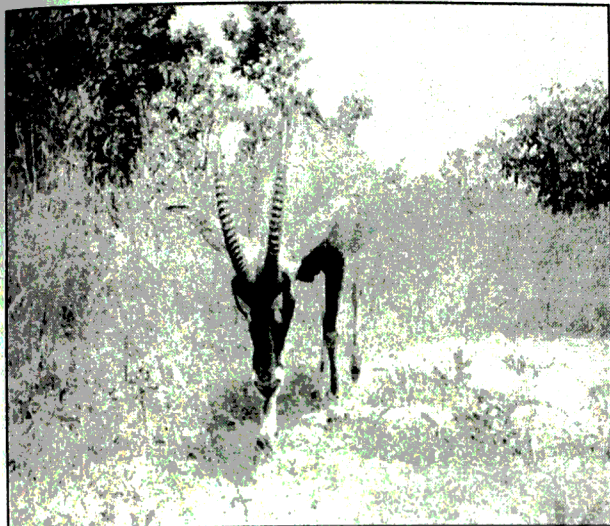
- a) Excellent
- b) Very Good
- c) Good
- d) Fair
- e) poor

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Some Animal Species at Mole National Park

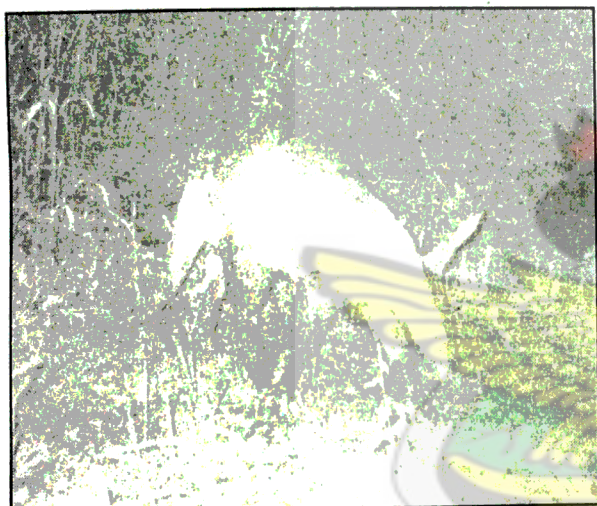
Appendix 2



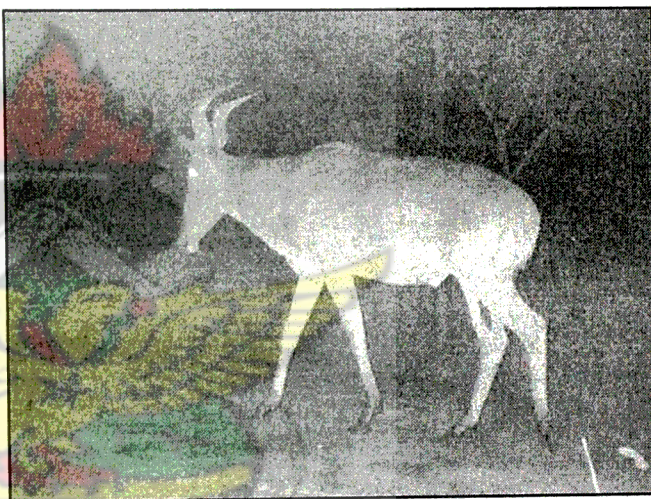
Roan; *Hippotragus equinus koba*



Red Flanked duiker



Aardvark; *Cryptopus afer*



Hartebeest; *alcelaphus buselaphus major*

