



INTERNET CONNECTIVITY AS A DETERMINANT OF CUSTOMER RETENTION IN STAR RATED HOTELS IN KISUMU, KENYA

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of internet connectivity on customer retention in star rated hotels within Kisumu City, Kenya. Despite the growth of digital technologies in hospitality, few empirical research has examined how specific dimensions of internet connectivity, directly influence customer retention outcomes, especially in emerging hospitality markets. The study used a quantitative cross section research design, using data collected from 235 hotel guests in star rated hotels. Internet connectivity was operationalized through key dimensions which included speed, reliability, security, and hotspot availability, and customer retention was measured using repeat purchase, average order value, positive word of mouth, and intention to purchase. Simple linear regression analysis was used to assess, the influence of internet connectivity on customer retention. The findings indicated that internet connectivity has a positive and significant influence on customer retention ($\beta = 0.7238$, $p < 0.001$), explaining approximately 29.9% of the variance in retention outcomes ($R^2 = 0.2988$). This study contributes to hospitality literature by establishing internet connectivity, as an independent determinant of customer retention in digitally enabled hotel environments. From a management angle, the empirical

findings demonstrate that the reliable internet connectivity is a critical strategic resource for sustaining customer retention and competitiveness in contemporary hospitality settings.

Keywords: Customer retention; Hospitality industry; Digital service quality; Internet connectivity; Smart hospitality

INTRODUCTION

Integration of digital technologies in hospitality operations has fundamentally reshaped service delivery processes, positioning digital infrastructure as a critical component of guest experience in latest hotel environments. In modern hotel environments, internet connectivity has changed from a supplementary amenity to a fundamental service requirement, which underpins digital service delivery. Hotels increasingly rely on high quality connectivity that supports communication, enable technology driven services, and ensure that guest experiences are seamless (Buhalis & Leung, 2018). Recent developments in smart hospitality by greater extent, highlight the importance of interconnected digital systems, where technologies are integrated through networked infrastructure to enhance service efficiency and guest experiences (Nadkarni et al., 2020; Mercan et al., 2021). For these reasons, internet connectivity has become a critical component of service performance, directly shaping the evaluation of guests on hotel services and technology enabled hospitality experiences (Park et al., 2023).

Customer retention still remains a key strategic objective in hospitality, as it contributes to long-term profitability, competitive advantage, and sustainable business performance. In hotel contexts, retention is thought through observable behavioral outcomes such as repeat patronage, increased spending, and positive word of mouth. As prior research highlights the importance of service innovation and technology enabled environments, for customer experiences (Ali et al., 2023; Tai et al., 2021), limited attention is directly focused on influences of retention outcomes. Particularly, major infrastructural elements like internet connectivity remain underexplored, despite their growing relevance in digitally enabled hospitality settings.

Even though there is increasing integration of digital technologies, there remains limited empirical evidence on the role of internet connectivity, as a distinct determinant of customer retention. A lot of research has largely examined connectivity as part of broader technology adoption, digital transformation, or service innovation constructs in hospitality (Buhalis et al., 2024), without isolating its direct effect on customer retention. However, internet connectivity plays a central role in configuration of how guests evaluate service performance, especially in environments where digital access is essential for communication, work, and leisure activities.

Additionally, connectivity influences how guests share experiences through online platforms, which affects hotel reputation and future customer decisions (Mellinas & Nicolau, 2019). In contexts where connectivity performance is inconsistent, the poor service delivery mostly will disrupt guest experiences and lead to switching behavior, while reliable connectivity supports continued patronage.

In the Kenyan hospitality sector, specifically in emerging urban destinations such as Kisumu City, hotels operate in environments characterized by increasing digital expectations, and varying levels of technological infrastructure. Despite these advancements, improving customer retention remains a challenge for hotels, making it clear that an understanding of the specific service factors that drive continued patronage is required. However, studies that examine the direct influence of internet connectivity on customer retention within this context, remain limited. There is a contextual and empirical gap, in understanding how connectivity shapes retention behaviors in star rated hotels.

For this gap, the present study examines the influence of internet connectivity on customer retention in star rated hotels in Kisumu City, Kenya. Particularly the study focuses on key dimensions of connectivity speed, reliability, security, and hotspot availability, their effect on retention behaviors, including repeat purchase, average order value, positive word of mouth, and intention to purchase. By having a single objective, the study provides a precise analysis of the direct relationship, between internet connectivity and customer retention.

Theoretically, the study advances existing literature by examining internet connectivity as a multidimensional construct, and positioning it as a direct determinant of customer retention. Empirically, it gives context specific evidence from emerging hospitality market. Practically, it shows the importance of hotel managers to invest in reliable, high quality internet connectivity, as a strategic tool for enhancing customer retention and maintaining competitiveness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Customer Retention in Hospitality

Customer retention still fronts itself as a central performance indicator in service industries, where long term relational exchanges underpin sustained competitiveness. In the hospitality sector, retention paints a hotel's capacity to maintain enduring relationships with guests, through consistent service delivery, perceived value, and experiential quality. Unlike transactional outcomes, retention embodies a longitudinal behavioral orientation where customers repeatedly choose the same service provider over and over. Prior studies demonstrate that, retaining existing customers is more cost effective than acquiring new ones,

because repeat guests tend to exhibit higher levels of trust, reduced price sensitivity, and strong relationship commitment (Salem, 2021).

The growing integration of digital technologies has gone ahead to amplify the strategic importance of retention in hospitality contexts. Technology enabled service environments allow hotels to; personalize guest experiences, streamline service encounters, and enhance engagement across multiple touchpoints. Empirical studies indicate that, service innovations and smart hospitality systems contribute to improved guest experiences and stronger loyalty behaviors (Buhalis & Leung, 2018; Tai et al., 2021). Similarly, automation and technology driven service delivery have enhanced operational efficiency and customer satisfaction, which often link to retention outcomes (Ivanov et al., 2017). However, despite this consensus, existing studies largely assume a linear relationship between technology adoption and retention, paying little attention to contextual variations across emerging hospitality markets.

Customer retention in hospitality is thought through observable behavioral outcomes that signal a guest's willingness, to sustain a relationship with a service provider. These include repeat patronage, average order value, and positive word of mouth communication. In addition, online reviews together with digital ratings have become critical manifestations of retention related behaviors, influencing both firm reputation, and future customer acquisition (Mellinas & Nicolau, 2019). While other studies incorporate attitudinal indicators such as repurchase intention, some emphasize actual behavioral metrics, leading to inconsistencies on how retention is conceptualized and measured. This difference suggests that retention is a multidimensional construct with both behavioral and intentional components, yet the relative contribution of each dimension, remains insufficiently clarified in hospitality research.

Even though technological innovations have been widely linked to customer satisfaction and loyalty (Shin & Kang, 2020; Tai et al., 2021), limited empirical studies explicitly model customer retention as a distinct dependent variable, and rely on satisfaction or intention as proxies. This creates conceptual ambiguity, because satisfaction does not necessarily translate into repeat behavior (Khalid et al., 2021), particularly in highly competitive and technology driven environments. Additionally, most existing research aggregates retention into broad constructs, without its behavioral components, thereby overlooking the differential effects of specific indicators, such as repeat purchase, average spending, word of mouth and intention to purchase.

Critically, there remains an empirical and contextual gap in understanding customer retention within emerging hospitality markets such as Kenya, where technological adoption, service expectations, and infrastructure constraints, differ significantly from those in developed markets. Furthermore, not many studies have operationalized retention using multiple

behavioral indicators, within a single empirical framework. Addressing these gaps, the study conceptualizes customer retention in four observable outcomes: repeat purchase, average order value, positive word of mouth, and purchase intention, to provide a more comprehensive and context sensitive evaluation of retention in star rated hotels.

Internet Connectivity and Digital Technologies in Hospitality

Internet connectivity is a foundational element supporting digital transformation within the hospitality industry, underpinning the functionality of smart technologies, and digitally mediated service delivery systems. Modern hotel environments increasingly depend on stable, high speed, and secure internet infrastructure that supports communication networks, automation processes, and technology driven services. The concept of smart hospitality emphasizes interconnected technological ecosystems that facilitate seamless interactions, thereby enhancing operational efficiency and service performance (Buhalis & Leung, 2018). To this regard, internet connectivity is a critical infrastructure that determines the effectiveness and reliability of digital service delivery. It is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing speed, reliability, security, and accessibility. Speed equals to efficiency of online activities, reliability is for network stability, security ensures safe data transmission, and accessibility relates to hotspot availability. These dimensions shape guests' perceptions of how service quality should be, and influence their satisfaction and behavioral intentions. Previous research on technology enabled service environments, shows that variations in system performance, reliability, and security influence trust and continued usage (Shin & Kang, 2020). Thus, this study measures connectivity using these key dimensions.

The increasing adoption of advanced digital technologies, including artificial intelligence and service automation, further reinforces the strategic importance of connectivity in hospitality settings. Studies show that technology enabled service environments improve service efficiency, and enable more consistent service delivery, across customer touchpoints (Ali et al., 2023; Ivanov & Webster, 2019).

However, much of the literature treats digital technologies as homogeneous constructs, instead of the underlying role of internet connectivity, as a distinct determinant of service performance. This assemblage limits the ability to isolate how variations in connectivity quality, influence customer outcomes, particularly in relation to continued patronage.

Internet connectivity also plays a central role in shaping how guests evaluate service performance. Travelers today increasingly rely on internet access for communication, entertainment, and work related activities, making connectivity a fundamental expectation more

than a value added feature. Disruptions in connectivity such as slow speeds, unstable networks, or security concerns can directly undermine service delivery, and negatively influence customers' decisions to continue or discontinue their relationship with a hotel. Conversely, high quality connectivity supports uninterrupted service experiences and reinforces continued patronage.

Internet connectivity also influences how guests evaluate hotel services characterized by online reviews, ratings, and social sharing. Service performance perceptions can significantly affect customer evaluations and subsequent booking decisions (Mellinas & Nicolau, 2019). Additionally, technology contexts have been associated with improved perceptions of reliability, safety, and overall service credibility (Shin & Kang, 2020). However, existing studies predominantly look at connectivity at a macro level, without focusing on its specific dimensions such as speed, reliability, security, and accessibility, limiting a detailed understanding of its role in shaping retention related behaviors.

Internet connectivity is frequently subsumed under broader digital technology constructs, limiting its independent examination as a determinant of customer retention creating a conceptual gap. Again, a methodological gap exists; previous studies largely rely on alternative outcome measures, rather than directly modeling customer retention as a distinct behavioral outcome. Thirdly, an empirical gap reinforces itself in the limited disaggregation of connectivity into its core components, thereby obscuring the distinct effects of speed, reliability, security, and hotspot availability on retention behaviors. Lastly, a contextual gap is evident, as much of the existing evidence is derived from technologically advanced regions, especially from developed economies with limited research focusing on emerging hospitality markets such as Kenya. To address these gaps, the present study examines internet connectivity as a multidimensional construct, and evaluates its influence on customer retention in star rated hotels.

Theoretical framework

Relationship between internet connectivity and customer retention in hospitality, can be explained using the Expectation Disconfirmation Theory (EDT), which describes how customer evaluations of service performance influence subsequent behavioral outcomes. EDT posits that customer's form expectations prior to consumptions, and satisfaction occurs when perceived performance meets or exceeds these expectations (Oliver, 1980). In hotel environments, internet connectivity has evolved from a supplementary amenity to a core service attribute, with guests expecting reliable, fast, and secure access as part of their overall service experience.

When these expectations are fulfilled, positive disconfirmation occurs, leading to satisfaction and favorable behavioral responses, including repeat patronage and continued engagement.

However, while EDT effectively explains satisfaction formation, its application to customer retention requires further extension. Retention represents a longitudinal behavioral outcome that goes beyond immediate satisfaction, incorporating repeated interactions and sustained relationship commitment. To this regard, internet connectivity can be conceptualized as a crucial factor, where failure to meet expected standards (e.g., poor speed or unreliable connection) leads to dissatisfaction and switching behavior, while consistent performance supports retention. This highlights the need to integrate EDT with complementary theoretical perspectives that account for continued usage and technology interaction over time.

To address this limitation, the Technology Acceptance and Continuance perspectives provide additional explanatory power. The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) indicates that, users' behavioral intentions toward technology are usually influenced by perceived usefulness and ease of use (Venkatesh et al., 2003). In hospitality contexts, guests who are more likely to engage with hotel technologies, do so when internet connectivity enables seamless and efficient service experiences. In the same way, the Expectation Confirmation Model (ECM) extends EDT by explaining post adoption behavior, positing that continued use of information systems is mostly driven by satisfaction and perceived usefulness following initial usage (Bhattacharjee, 2001). These perspectives are particularly relevant in technology enabled hospitality environments, where guest interactions with digital services depend on the underlying quality factor of internet connectivity.

Studies supports the relevance of these theoretical frameworks, indicating that perceived service performance and value, significantly influence continued usage intentions and behavioral outcomes in hospitality settings (Li et al., 2021; Tai et al., 2021). Nevertheless, existing applications of these theories tend to direct attention on technology adoption and satisfaction, rather than explicitly modeling customer retention as a distinct outcome. Moreover, many studies often treat technological performance as a generalized construct (Demir & Demir, 2025; D'Souza & D'Souza, 2023), without linking specific connectivity dimensions such as speed, reliability, security, and accessibility to retention related behaviors.

From a theoretical perspective, several gaps appear. First, EDT primarily explains satisfaction formation, but does not fully account for sustained retention behavior over time. Second, UTAUT and ECM emphasize technology adoption and continuance, but provide very limited insight into how infrastructural quality, such as internet connectivity, translates into long

term customer retention. Thirdly, existing studies rarely integrate these frameworks, to explain retention within technology intensive hospitality environments. Finally, there is limited theoretical application in emerging market contexts, given the variations in digital infrastructure which significantly may influence guest expectations and experiences. Addressing these gaps, the present study utilizes EDT, UTAUT, and ECM to provide a comprehensive framework, for understanding how multidimensional internet connectivity influences customer retention in hospitality settings.

Internet Connectivity and Customer Retention

Internet connectivity is emerging as a fundamental determinant of service performance in the hospitality industry, particularly in increasingly digitalized and technology driven service environments, shaped by Industry 4.0 transformation trends (Buhalis et al., 2024). As hotels adopt smart technologies and IoT enabled systems into their operations, the reliability, speed, and accessibility of internet services, play a critical role of shaping the overall effectiveness of service delivery (Mercan et al., 2021). High quality connectivity enables seamless access to digital services, supports uninterrupted guest activities, and ensures consistency in service performance during hotel stays, particularly where Wi-Fi speed and connectivity quality influence customer satisfaction in hotel environments (Grechyn & McShane, 2021). In contrast, poor connectivity, that has slow speeds, unstable networks, or limited access, disrupts essential service interactions and undermines the overall service experience.

Empirical studies on digital service environments indicate that the performance of technology enabled services significantly influences customer evaluation and response to hospitality offerings within hospitality ecosystems (Buhalis et al., 2019; Ali et al., 2023; Dai et al., 2025). While much of this research is about general service environments, it highlights the importance of reliable digital infrastructure in shaping customer decisions. In hotel contexts, internet connectivity forms a core service attribute that directly affects guests' ability to engage personal digital activities, particularly in technology driven hotel environments, where guest technologies significantly shape customer experience and service evaluations (Park et al., 2023). As such, inconsistency in connectivity quality can directly influence whether, a customer maintains or discontinue their relationship with a hotel.

Furthermore, the influence of internet connectivity on customer retention is evident in situations where service performance, fails to meet expected standards. In hospitality environments, connectivity disruptions can lead to service interruptions, reduced functionality of digital systems, and diminished overall service reliability, where technological failures negatively

affect service experiences and operational performance (Wong et al., 2024). These failures, can result in negative service evaluations and increase the likelihood of switching behavior. Conversely, consistent and high quality connectivity with reliable service delivery will reinforce continued patronage.

Despite the recognized importance of digital infrastructure, studies have continued to examine connectivity within broader technology adoption, digital transformation, and service innovation constructs in tourism and hospitality (Buhalis et al., 2024). In addition, prior hospitality technology research has frequently emphasized expected benefits, customer behavior, behavioral intention, and service evaluation outcomes within smart hotel environments and not explicitly modeling customer retention, as a distinct long term behavioral endpoint (Kim et al., 2021; Sujood et al., 2024). Moreover, limited empirical work has conceptualized internet connectivity using core dimensions such as speed, reliability, security, and hotspot availability. Existing studies have largely examined Wi-Fi quality and connectivity challenges broadly, with limited attention to internet connectivity as an integrated service infrastructure determinant influencing retention behavior (Mellinas & Nicolau, 2020).

In Kenyan hospitality industry, most studies have examined customer retention strategies, customer relationship management, service quality, and technology utilization within hotel environments. These suggest that service performance and technology supported experiences influence customer repeat patronage among hotel guests (Ndunda et al., 2021; Achieng, 2021; Koskei, 2014). However, limited attention has specifically focused on internet connectivity as a distinct infrastructural determinant that influencing customer retention in star rated hotels.

These limitations reveal a clear empirical gap. Insufficient direct evidence linking multidimensional internet connectivity to customer retention, particularly within emerging hospitality markets such as Kenya exists. Infrastructural variability and differing levels of ICT advancement may significantly influence service performance in hospitality environments (Abir & Khan, 2022). Addressing this gap, this study examines internet connectivity as a multidimensional construct, and evaluates its direct effect on customer retention in star rated hotels.

Hypothesis

Based on the foregoing arguments, the study hypothesizes that;

H₀: Internet connectivity has no significant influence on customer retention in star rated hotels.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A cross sectional survey design was employed to examine the influence of Internet connectivity on customer retention in star rated hotels in Kisumu City. The collected Data were from 235 hotel guests selected through proportionate stratified sampling across the 11 star rated hotels. Each hotel had a sampling stratum, and respondents were selected proportionately based on the number of guest rooms in each hotel. The strata wise sample distribution is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Actual sample size selected from
11 star rated hotels in Kisumu City

Hotels	Star Rating	Total guest rooms	Actual sample size
Acacia Premier Hotel	4 star	92	38
Vic Hotel	3 star	106	44
Kisumu Hotel	3 star	86	36
Imperial Hotel	3 star	78	32
Sovereign Hotel	3 star	32	13
Jambo Impala Eco Lodge	3 star	12	5
Sunset Hotel	2 star	50	21
Savana County Lodge Hotel	2 star	49	20
Le Savana County Lodge & Hotel	2 star	39	16
Kiboko Bay Resort	2 star	10	4
Dew Church Drive Hotel	1 star	13	6
Total		567	235

The study focused on star rated hotels because the EAC star classification system, administered by the Tourism Regulatory Authority (TRA), remained an officially recognized framework during the study period. Even though TRA has introduced a Gold, Silver, and Bronze accreditation framework, star rating continues to provide an appropriate basis for identifying hotels with relatively standardized service characteristics (Tourism Regulatory Authority, 2025). Hotel classification was used only as a sampling criterion and not as a variable in the regression analysis and therefore, the evolving accreditation framework does not affect the validity of the study.

The study used Yamane's formula to determine the sample size. The primary data were collected using a semi structured questionnaire via the Kobo Toolbox application on Android

devices by trained research assistants. The instrument captured demographic characteristics, and perceptions of Internet connectivity and customer retention.

All questionnaires items were measured by a five point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Internet connectivity was operationalized using Wi-Fi hotspot accessibility, internet speed, reliability of internet connection, and internet security. Composite scores were computed for each construct prior to inferential analysis. The reliability of each Internet Connectivity measurement scale was assessed independently by use of Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The alpha values ranged as from 0.712 to 0.796, exceeding the recommended minimum threshold of 0.70. This confirms the satisfactory internal consistency for all four measurement scales as presented in table 2.

Table 2: Reliability Analysis of the
Internet Connectivity Measurement Scales

Measurement scale	Cronbach's Alpha
Wi-Fi Hotspot accessibility	0.781
Internet speed	0.712
Reliability of internet connection	0.713
Internet security	0.796

Completed questionnaires were uploaded to the Kobo Toolbox cloud server and subsequently downloaded in Excel before being imported into STATA (version 20) for further data management and analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondent characteristics. Means and standard deviations were reported for continuous variables and frequencies and percentages reported for categorical variables.

Simple linear regression was used for inferential analysis to examine the relationship between Internet connectivity and customer retention. Customer retention was treated as the dependent variable, while Internet connectivity served as the independent variable. Prior to model estimation, regression assumptions including normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity were examined. Statistical significance was assessed at the 5% level.

The study observed Ethical considerations throughout. Participation was voluntary with informed consent obtained from all respondents where confidentiality of responses was assured. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from relevant hotel management and institutional authorities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive statistics

The demographic characteristics of the respondents were analyzed to provide an overview of the sample used in the study.

Table 3. Demographic profile of the respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	86	36.6
Male	149	63.4
Age Group (Years)		
18–27	35	14.89
28–37	56	23.83
38–47	44	18.72
48–57	37	15.74
58–67	24	10.21
68–77	19	8.09
78 and above	20	8.51
Education Level		
Diploma	29	12.34
Bachelor's Degree	63	26.81
Master's Degree	129	54.89
Short skills course	14	5.96
Employment Status		
Business	48	20.43
Civil servant	60	25.53
Technology	48	20.43
Others	79	33.62
No of times stayed in the hotel for the last 3 years		
1	11	4.68
2	17	7.23
3	51	21.7
4	38	16.17
5 and above	77	32.77
No of days stayed in the hotel during the last visit		
One day	12	5.11
Two days	33	14.04
Three days	87	37.02
Four days	32	13.62
Five days and above	71	30.21
Total	235	100

Based on the data, the majority of guests who visited star rated hotels were male. From the study, we realised that 63.4% of male guest visited the star rated hotels in Kisumu with personal different reasons and this was similar to a study conducted by Uganda Bureau of statistics, 2022 who reported that 81% of male guest visited rated hotels in Uganda 2021 with difference personal issues. The reason why most men visited hotels compared to women was because of planning on business, employment issues and activities requiring temporary accommodation. According to data, 81.7% of customers who visited the star rated hotels attained university degree as level of education and this is similar to a study conducted by Qi et.al, (2024) who reported that 70% of customers who visited hotels in Eastern Africa attained University degree. This is because customers with highest education level secured better jobs and they believed that hotels are the best places to relax during their holidays. On the other hand, 45.9% of customers who visited the star rated hotels are civil servants and business employed and this is also similar to Qi et.al, (2024), who in their study in five star hotels in Macau, reported 52.3% of guest were professionals or business executives. Reasons being hotels are in strategic location to meet and discussed business issues and other problems. The majority of the customers who visited the hotels 5 times and above in the last three years while 37.02% spent three days during the last visit in the hotels.

Regression Results for Internet Connectivity and Customer Retention

Composite scores that were generated from the internet connectivity indicators, were used to assess the overall influence of internet connectivity on customer retention among hotel guests.

Table 4. Simple linear regression model of internet connectivity on customer retention

Statistic	Value
Number of observations	235
F-statistic	99.31
Prob > F	< .001
R ²	0.2988
Adjusted R ²	0.2958
Root MSE	0.7735

Note: R² = coefficient of determination; Root MSE = root mean squared error;

Prob > F = probability value for the F-statistic.

Table 5. Regression coefficients

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t	p-value
Internet Connectivity	0.7238	0.0726	9.97	< .001
Constant	0.6788	0.1243	5.46	< .001

Note: Std. Error = standard error; t = t-statistic; p-value = probability value

Regression analysis was conducted to assess the influence of internet connectivity on customer retention in star-rated hotels. The analysis aimed to determine whether internet connectivity significantly predicts customer retention among hotel guests.

Tables 4 and 5 present the regression model summary and coefficient estimates for the influence of internet connectivity on customer retention. The results show that the overall regression model is statistically significant $F(1, 233) = 99.31, p < 0.001$, indicating that internet connectivity significantly predicts customer retention.

The model explains approximately 29.9% of the variance in customer retention ($R^2 = 0.2988$), with an adjusted R^2 of 0.2958. This suggests that internet connectivity accounts for a substantial proportion of variation in customer retention, although additional factors not included in the model may also influence retention outcomes.

The regression results further indicate that internet connectivity has a positive and statistically significant influence on customer retention ($\beta = 0.7238, t = 9.97, p < 0.001$). This implies that higher levels of internet connectivity are associated with increased repeat patronage, spending behavior, positive word-of-mouth, and intention to purchase among hotel guests. The magnitude of the coefficient reflects a strong positive relationship between internet connectivity and customer retention.

Discussion of Findings

The findings show a significant and positive influence of internet connectivity on customer retention in the hospitality industry. This result emphasizes the importance of digital service infrastructure as a core component of service performance, where digitalization shapes operational efficiency and guest service delivery (Wynn & Lam, 2023). The positive relationship identified in this study indicates that, internet connectivity services directly shapes customers' decisions. This finding aligns with recent advancements in smart hospitality, where interconnected digital systems are increasingly recognized as essential for enhancing service delivery, and guest experiences (Nadkarni et al., 2020; Mercan et al., 2021).

These results are consistent with prior research which show technology enabled service environments to shape customer responses in hospitality settings (Ali et al., 2023; Dai et al.,

2025). While existing studies often emphasize broader digital service attributes in shaping guest satisfaction and behavioral intentions, the present findings extend this evidence by demonstrating that internet connectivity, exerts a direct influence on customer retention (Zhang et al., 2022). This suggests that connectivity is not merely a supporting feature but a critical service attribute that determines continued patronage.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings support EDT, by positing that customers evaluate service performance based on how well it meets their expectations (Oliver, 1980). In the context of this study, internet connectivity represents a fundamental service expectation in modern hotel. When connectivity performance meets expected standards such as stable speed, reliability, and secure access, customers are more likely to continue their relationship with the service provider. Conversely, disruptions in connectivity can lead to negative service evaluations and increase the likelihood of switching behavior (Mellinas & Nicolau, 2020). This reinforces the relevance of service performance consistency, as a key determinant of customer retention.

The findings also align with broader literature on technology driven services, which indicate that reliable service performance influences how customers evaluate hospitality offerings. This determine their future service decisions (Mellinas & Nicolau, 2019; Chotisarn & Phuthong, 2025). In digitally connected environments, where guests rely on internet access for communication, work, and leisure activities, connectivity failures can significantly disrupt service and affect perceptions of service quality within digitally enabled hospitality environments (Gheibdoust et al., 2023). Thus, customers are more likely to shift to alternative service providers who offer more reliable digital infrastructure (Awara et al., 2022).

Importantly, the findings mark the internet connectivity in emerging hospitality markets such as Kenya very relevant. Such variations in digital infrastructure may significantly affect service performance. In such contexts, consistent and high quality connectivity becomes a critical factor that maintains customer relationships. In contemporary hotels, Guests increasingly expect uninterrupted digital access and technology enabled service experiences as part of standard service provision (Chen et al., 2021). Hotel managers need to prioritize investment in quality internet infrastructure as a strategic tool for enhancing customer retention.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Managerial Implications

Hotels should prioritize investment in reliable, high speed, and secure internet infrastructure to meet the fast changing expectations of modern travelers. With consistent connectivity performance, this can strengthen repeat patronage, encourage positive word of mouth, and enhance overall customer relationships in digitalized hotel environments.

Hotel managers should also adopt internet connectivity with broader digital service systems, including smart technologies to support seamless service delivery. Reliable connectivity enhances the effectiveness of these systems and contributes to consistent service performance across all points of contact.

Hotels should also continuously monitor and evaluate the performance of their internet services. This ensures stability and uninterrupted digital access. Early identification and resolution of connectivity challenges can minimize service disruptions. This reduces the likelihood of switching behavior among guests who mostly rely on digital services during hotel stays.

Limitations of the Study

Despite its contributions, this study has limitations. One, the study adopted a cross sectional research design. This limits the ability to observe changes in the relationship between internet connectivity and customer retention over time. Two, the study focuses on star rated hotels in Kisumu City, Kenya. This may limit the generalizability of the findings to other geographical contexts. Three, the study concentrated specifically on internet connectivity as the primary determinant of customer retention. Other service related factors also influence retention behavior in hospitality settings.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies to consider adopting longitudinal research designs that may examine changes in customer retention over time. This ensures deeper insight into the stability of the observed relationship. Researchers may also explore other determinants of customer retention, such as pricing strategies, service quality attributes, and broader service delivery factors, in order to enhance understanding of retention in hospitality settings. Further research should include the influence of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and smart hotel systems, on service performance and customer retention. Future studies could also focus on different regions and hotel categories to improve the generalizability of findings.

Conclusion

The study examined the influence of internet connectivity on customer retention in star rated hotels. The findings showed that internet connectivity has a significant influence on customer retention, suggesting that higher levels of connectivity are associated with increased repeat patronage, spending, positive word of mouth, and intention to purchase. This results further demonstrate that internet connectivity explains a substantial proportion of variation in

retention behavior. This reinforces its importance as a core service attribute in contemporary hospitality environments.

The findings further support theoretical perspectives emphasizing the importance of service performance. This shapes customer retention behavior within digitally enabled hospitality settings. In this context, internet connectivity represents a critical service attribute. The performance directly influences customers' decisions to maintain relationships with hotel service providers.

Overall, the study establishes that internet connectivity is not merely a supporting feature. It is a strategic component of service delivery that directly shapes retention behavior in the hospitality industry. There is need of investing in reliable and high quality internet infrastructure as a means of sustaining customer relationships and also maintaining competitiveness in increasingly digitalized hotel environments.

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