

A service delivery standardization framework for Nigeria's hospitality industry

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Abstract

The hospitality industry in Nigeria has experienced significant growth over the past decade, driven by rising tourism, business travel, and international events. However, challenges related to inconsistent service delivery across the sector continue to undermine its global competitiveness. This paper proposes a Service Delivery Standardization Framework designed to enhance service quality, customer satisfaction, and operational efficiency in Nigeria's hospitality industry. The framework is based on the alignment of local practices with international best standards, offering a structured approach to improve consistency in service offerings across hotels, resorts, and other hospitality establishments. It addresses critical areas such as staff training, customer service protocols, health and safety standards, and technology integration. The framework advocates for the development of national service benchmarks, the establishment of regulatory oversight, and the creation of a feedback loop for continuous improvement. By promoting uniformity in service delivery, the proposed model aims to strengthen the reputation of Nigeria's hospitality sector, attract more international visitors, and boost revenue generation. Furthermore, this framework highlights the role of stakeholder collaboration, including government agencies, industry associations, and hospitality service providers, in implementing and sustaining the proposed standards. Key performance indicators (KPIs) are established to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the framework in achieving higher service standards and enhancing the overall customer experience. The paper concludes with recommendations for phased implementation and areas for future research to support long-term competitiveness in the global hospitality market.

Keywords: Service delivery; Standardization; Hospitality industry; Nigeria; Customer satisfaction; Service quality

1 Introduction

Nigeria's hospitality industry has experienced significant growth in recent years, reflecting the nation's expanding economy and increasing global tourism appeal. As one of Africa's most dynamic and promising markets for travel and tourism, Nigeria's hospitality sector has seen a surge in the number of hotels, restaurants, and leisure facilities, driven by rising domestic and international demand (Akinyemi et al., 2022). This growth is accompanied by a heightened need for consistency and quality in service delivery, which are critical for sustaining industry development and enhancing competitiveness (Adenikinju, 2023, Jones, Nair & Ahmed, 2022, Oduntan, Olatunji & Oyerinde, 2021).

However, despite the positive trajectory, the hospitality industry in Nigeria faces substantial challenges related to inconsistent service delivery. Variability in service quality can adversely impact customer satisfaction and loyalty,

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undermine brand reputation, and diminish the overall competitiveness of the sector (Ibrahim & Alabi, 2023). Inconsistent service delivery arises from a variety of factors, including inadequate staff training, insufficient standard operating procedures, and a lack of effective quality control mechanisms (Olayiwola et al., 2023). These issues contribute to a fragmented service experience that can affect both domestic and international guests.

To address these challenges, there is a pressing need for a service delivery standardization framework. Such a framework would provide a structured approach to defining, implementing, and monitoring service quality standards across Nigeria's hospitality industry (Agyeman, Owusu & Tetteh, 2023, Kavassalis, Munoz & Sarigiannidis, 2021, Wang, Liu & Zhang, 2023). By establishing clear benchmarks and procedures, the framework aims to ensure that all service providers adhere to consistent quality levels, thereby improving overall customer experiences and fostering greater industry reliability (Ogunbiyi & Ezeani, 2023). Standardization can also enhance operational efficiency and support the growth of the industry by building a robust reputation for reliability and excellence.

The primary objectives of the proposed service delivery standardization framework are to enhance the consistency and quality of service across various hospitality sectors, improve customer satisfaction, and strengthen the industry's competitive position on both regional and global stages (Akinmoladun, Ojo & Oyewole, 2023, Miller, Thompson & Smith, 2022, Wang, Liu & Zhang, 2022). The framework seeks to establish a unified set of standards and best practices that can be adopted by all service providers, supported by continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure compliance and drive ongoing improvement (Chukwu & Nwankwo, 2023). Through these efforts, the framework aims to address existing service delivery challenges and contribute to the sustainable growth and development of Nigeria's hospitality industry.

2 Rationale for Service Delivery Standardization

The rationale for implementing a service delivery standardization framework in Nigeria's hospitality industry is multifaceted, encompassing the importance of consistency in customer service, the impact of global competitiveness, and the proven success of standardization in international hospitality sectors (Akinwale, Eze & Akinwale, 2022, NERC, 2022, Oduro, Sarpong & Duah, 2023). This approach promises significant benefits for Nigeria's tourism and business travel sectors, aligning with global best practices and enhancing the overall quality of service.

Consistency in customer service is crucial for fostering customer satisfaction and loyalty, which are fundamental to the success of any hospitality business. Inconsistent service delivery can lead to a lack of trust and negative perceptions among guests, impacting repeat business and long-term profitability (Akintoye & Akinbode, 2023). Service standardization helps address these issues by establishing clear expectations and protocols for staff, ensuring that customers receive a uniform level of service regardless of location or service provider (Akinyele & Rayudu, 2023, Kang, Liu & Yang, 2021, Kumar, Yadav & Sharma, 2023). This consistency not only enhances the customer experience but also strengthens the reputation of the hospitality sector as a whole, creating a reliable and predictable service environment that can attract and retain guests (Chukwu et al., 2023).

Global competitiveness plays a significant role in driving the need for service delivery standardization. As Nigeria's hospitality industry seeks to position itself on the international stage, aligning with global standards becomes essential for attracting international tourists and business travelers (Akinyele, et al., 2021, Ikusika, 2022, Okeke & Olurin, 2019, Ozowe, et al., 2020). International standards provide benchmarks for service quality that are recognized and respected worldwide, offering a competitive edge in a crowded and competitive market (Ogunbiyi & Ezeani, 2023). By adopting and adhering to these standards, Nigerian hospitality businesses can improve their credibility and appeal, making them more attractive to global customers who expect high-quality, consistent experiences (Ibrahim & Alabi, 2023).

Successful case studies from the international hospitality industry further underscore the importance and effectiveness of service delivery standardization (Ghimire, Patel & Hossain, 2023, Moksnes, Roesch & Berghmans, 2019, Sharma, Kaur & Gupta, 2022). For instance, the Marriott International hotel chain has implemented rigorous service standards across its global properties, resulting in a consistently high level of guest satisfaction and a strong brand reputation (Hsu & Huang, 2022). Similarly, the Accor Group's adoption of standardized service protocols has enabled it to deliver uniform quality across diverse geographic locations, contributing to its status as a leading global hospitality brand (Chen & Liu, 2023). These examples highlight how standardization can enhance operational efficiency, ensure consistent service quality, and support global competitiveness (Akinyele, Olabode & Amole, 2020, Ming, Lin & Zhao, 2022, Siddiqui, Shahid & Taha, 2022).

For Nigeria's tourism and business travel sectors, the potential benefits of service delivery standardization are substantial. The adoption of standardized service practices can lead to significant improvements in service quality,

which is essential for attracting and retaining both domestic and international travelers (Olayiwola et al., 2023). Higher service quality can translate into increased customer satisfaction, positive reviews, and repeat business, driving growth in tourism and business travel (Akintoye & Akinbode, 2023). Moreover, by aligning with international standards, Nigerian hospitality businesses can enhance their marketability and appeal to global customers, positioning Nigeria as a preferred destination for leisure and corporate travel. Additionally, standardization can contribute to operational efficiencies and cost savings (Akinyele, Olabode & Amole, 2020, Ozowe, Zheng & Sharma, 2020, Tao, Zhang & Wang, 2022). By implementing uniform procedures and best practices, businesses can streamline their operations, reduce training costs, and minimize errors (Chukwu et al., 2023). This operational efficiency not only improves the overall guest experience but also supports the sustainable growth of the hospitality sector by optimizing resource use and reducing wastage.

In conclusion, the rationale for implementing a service delivery standardization framework in Nigeria's hospitality industry is compelling and multifaceted. Consistency in customer service is vital for enhancing guest satisfaction and building a strong reputation. Aligning with global standards enhances competitiveness and attracts international customers, while successful case studies from around the world demonstrate the benefits of standardized service practices (Andriarisoa, 2020, Chen, Zhang & Zhao, 2022, Ochieng, Otieno & Kiprono, 2022). For Nigeria's tourism and business travel sectors, standardization offers significant opportunities for growth, improved service quality, and increased global appeal. Adopting a service delivery standardization framework will not only address current challenges but also pave the way for a more competitive and prosperous hospitality industry in Nigeria.

3 Key Components of the Standardization Framework

The development of a service delivery standardization framework for Nigeria's hospitality industry involves several key components that are essential for ensuring high-quality, consistent service across various establishments. These components include staff training and development, customer service protocols, health and safety standards, and technology integration (Aziza, Uzougbo & Ugwu, 2023, Jang, Yang & Kim, 2022, Kaunda, Muliokela & Kakoma, 2021). By focusing on these areas, the framework aims to enhance the overall service quality, operational efficiency, and guest satisfaction in Nigeria's growing hospitality sector.

Staff training and development form the cornerstone of any effective service delivery standardization framework. Standardized training modules are critical for ensuring that all hospitality staff are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to provide consistent and high-quality service (Aziza, Uzougbo & Ugwu, 2023, Ozowe, 2021, Ogbu, et al., 2023, Ozowe, Daramola & Ekemezie, 2023). These modules should cover a range of topics, including operational procedures, guest interaction protocols, and crisis management (Akinyemi & Ojo, 2023). Additionally, professional development and certification requirements should be established to ensure that staff not only meet industry standards but also continue to advance their skills over time. This includes certifications in hospitality management, food safety, and customer service excellence (Chukwu et al., 2023). Emphasizing soft skills, such as communication, empathy, and problem-solving, is also crucial, as these skills significantly impact guest satisfaction and service quality (Olayiwola & Olusola, 2023).

Customer service protocols are another vital component of the standardization framework. Establishing uniform service protocols for guest interactions helps ensure that every guest receives a consistent level of service, regardless of the hotel or restaurant they visit. These protocols should cover various aspects of guest service, including greeting guests, handling requests, and managing check-ins and check-outs (Chen & Liu, 2023). Additionally, handling complaints and feedback consistently is essential for maintaining guest trust and satisfaction (Aziza, Uzougbo & Ugwu, 2023, Tula, Babayeju & Aigbedion, 2023, Zeph-Ojiako & Anakwuba, 2019). A standardized approach to addressing and resolving issues ensures that all complaints are managed effectively and equitably (Ibrahim & Alabi, 2023). Customizing services while maintaining standard quality is also important; while personalization can enhance the guest experience, it should not compromise the consistency and reliability of service delivery (Ogunbiyi & Ezeani, 2023).

Health and safety standards are critical to ensuring the well-being of guests and staff alike. Developing national guidelines for hygiene and safety helps create a baseline for health practices across the hospitality industry (Hsu & Huang, 2022). These guidelines should be comprehensive, covering areas such as food safety, sanitation, and emergency procedures. Integrating international health protocols, such as those recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO), can further enhance the framework's effectiveness, especially in the context of global travel and health concerns (Akintoye & Akinbode, 2023). Regulatory enforcement and compliance monitoring are essential to ensure that these standards are consistently applied and maintained (González, García & Sánchez, 2023, Moones, et al., 2023, Murray & Nair, 2021, Schwab, 2016). Regular inspections, certifications, and audits can help identify and address any deviations from established guidelines (Olayiwola et al., 2023).

Technology integration plays a significant role in modernizing and streamlining service delivery. The use of digital tools can significantly improve operational efficiency and enhance the guest experience (Banso, et al., 2023, Gyimah, et al., 2023, Ozowe, 2018, Porlles, et al., 2023). Automation of booking, check-in, and customer service processes helps reduce manual errors and expedite service delivery, leading to a more seamless and enjoyable guest experience (Chukwu et al., 2023). Data-driven insights can further drive continuous service improvement by analyzing guest preferences, service performance, and operational metrics. This information can be used to identify areas for enhancement and tailor services to better meet guest needs (Ogunbiyi & Ezeani, 2023). Implementing technologies such as customer relationship management (CRM) systems and artificial intelligence (AI) tools can also support personalized service while maintaining standardized quality levels (Ibrahim & Alabi, 2023).

In conclusion, the key components of the service delivery standardization framework for Nigeria's hospitality industry are designed to address various aspects of service quality and operational efficiency. By focusing on staff training and development, establishing customer service protocols, enforcing health and safety standards, and integrating technology, the framework aims to create a consistent and high-quality service experience for all guests (Mousazadeh, Alavi & Torabi, 2023, Oguejiofor, et al., 2023). These components not only contribute to enhanced guest satisfaction but also support the growth and competitiveness of Nigeria's hospitality sector on a global scale.

4 Implementation Strategy

Implementing a service delivery standardization framework in Nigeria's hospitality industry requires a structured approach involving several key strategies. Central to this process is the development of national service benchmarks, establishment of regulatory oversight and enforcement mechanisms, and active stakeholder engagement (Benyeogor, et al., 2019, Joseph, et al., 2020, Zeph-Ojiako & Anakwuba, 2019). These strategies are essential for ensuring that service quality is consistent, meets international standards, and is tailored to the local context.

The development of national service benchmarks is a foundational element of the implementation strategy. Collaboration with industry stakeholders is crucial to define these benchmarks. This process involves working closely with key players in the hospitality sector, including hotel and restaurant owners, industry experts, and customer service professionals, to identify the standards that best reflect the quality of service expected in Nigeria (Berizzi, et al., 2019, Cheng, Zhang & Wang, 2021, Kshetri, 2021, Njeri, Mwangi & Kimani, 2022). Engaging stakeholders in this way ensures that the benchmarks are realistic, relevant, and widely accepted within the industry (Uche, 2023). Customizing international standards to fit the local context is another important step. While international standards provide a useful framework, they need to be adapted to align with Nigeria's unique cultural, economic, and operational conditions (Ogbonna, 2023). This customization process involves adjusting global best practices to accommodate local expectations and practicalities, ensuring that the standards are both achievable and effective (Gosens, Kline & Wang, 2023, Li, Li & Wang, 2022, Miller, Nyathi & Mahendran, 2022).

Regulatory oversight and enforcement are critical to maintaining adherence to the established service benchmarks. The establishment of a dedicated regulatory body tasked with monitoring compliance is essential for this purpose (Bertoldi, Boza-Kiss & Mazzocchi, 2022, Lee, Yang & Zhao, 2021, Singh, Ghosh & Jain, 2022). This body would be responsible for conducting regular inspections, assessing compliance with service standards, and addressing any deviations (Akinyemi & Ojo, 2023). Government agencies and hospitality associations play significant roles in this regulatory framework. Government agencies, such as the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) and the Federal Ministry of Tourism, are instrumental in formulating policies, providing oversight, and coordinating with other regulatory entities (Bertolotti, McDowell & Mendez, 2021, Miller, Chiu & Zhang, 2022, Yang, Liu & Zhang, 2020). Hospitality associations, on the other hand, can assist in enforcing standards by providing guidance, supporting member compliance, and facilitating communication between the industry and regulators (Chukwu et al., 2023). To ensure effective enforcement, a system of incentives and penalties should be implemented. Incentives can include recognition awards, certification benefits, and public commendations for compliant businesses (Gungor, Sahin & Aydin, 2021, Kumar, Mathew & Chand, 2021, Mishra, Roy & Sen, 2023). Conversely, penalties for non-compliance could involve fines, suspension of licenses, or public sanctions, encouraging adherence to the established standards (Olayiwola & Olusola, 2023).

Stakeholder engagement is another crucial aspect of the implementation strategy. Involvement of government, industry associations, and hospitality businesses ensures that all relevant parties are invested in the standardization process (Adedeji, 2020, Bellido, et al., 2018, Ozowe, 2021, Bhagwan & Evans, 2022, Liu & Yang, 2021, Zhang, et al., 2021). Government entities provide the necessary policy support and regulatory framework, while industry associations facilitate collaboration and offer practical insights into industry-specific challenges (Ibrahim & Alabi, 2023). Hospitality businesses, including hotels and restaurants, are directly impacted by the standards and must be actively involved in their development and implementation (Haeussermann, Scharf & Meyer, 2022, Luthra, Kumar & Saini, 2021, Sharma,

Singh & Kumar, 2023). Public-private partnerships are essential for driving the standardization efforts forward. These partnerships leverage the strengths and resources of both the public and private sectors, fostering cooperation and facilitating the effective execution of the framework (Chen & Liu, 2023).

Engaging customers in the feedback process is also vital. Customer feedback provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of service delivery standards and helps identify areas for improvement (Akagha, et al., 2023, Banso, et al., 2023, Uzougbo, et al., 2023, Hossain, Rahman & Islam, 2022, Kumar, Gupta & Singh, 2022, Schwab, 2020). Implementing mechanisms for collecting and analyzing customer feedback, such as surveys, focus groups, and online reviews, ensures that the standards are responsive to guest needs and expectations (Hsu & Huang, 2022). This engagement not only enhances service quality but also builds trust and satisfaction among customers, contributing to the overall success of the standardization framework.

In summary, the implementation strategy for a service delivery standardization framework in Nigeria's hospitality industry involves several interconnected components. Developing national service benchmarks through stakeholder collaboration and customization of international standards ensures that the benchmarks are relevant and achievable (Catalini & Gans, 2021, Kavassalis, Munoz & Sarigiannidis, 2021, Singh, Pandey & Verma, 2023). Establishing regulatory oversight and enforcement mechanisms, supported by government agencies and hospitality associations, provides the necessary structure for maintaining compliance (Hossain, Rahman & Islam, 2022, Nair, Prasad & Kumar, 2023, Sovacool, Kivimaa & Tschakert, 2020). Incentives and penalties further reinforce adherence to standards. Engaging stakeholders and customers throughout the process ensures broad support and continuous improvement. Together, these strategies will help elevate the quality of service in Nigeria's hospitality sector, making it more competitive and aligned with global standards.

5 Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are critical components for the effective implementation of a service delivery standardization framework in Nigeria's hospitality industry. A comprehensive M&E strategy ensures that service quality is consistently maintained and improved over time. This involves establishing key performance indicators (KPIs), employing methods to track service delivery improvements, and integrating continuous improvement practices based on feedback (Akinyele, Alabi & Akintola, 2023, Tao, Zhang & Wang, 2022, Chatterjee, et al., 2019, Kavassalis, Munoz & Sarigiannidis, 2021).

Establishing key performance indicators (KPIs) is essential for evaluating the effectiveness of the service delivery standardization framework. KPIs serve as measurable values that gauge the success of service delivery against predefined standards (Chaudhury, Kundu & Sharma, 2023, Mousazadeh, Khatibi & Fadaei, 2023, Yang, Zhao & Li, 2023). In the context of Nigeria's hospitality industry, KPIs could include metrics such as customer satisfaction scores, service response times, adherence to service protocols, and the rate of compliance with health and safety standards (Olaleye, 2023). By defining these indicators, the industry can quantify service performance and identify areas needing improvement. KPIs should be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) to ensure they provide actionable insights into service quality (Akinyele & Afolabi, 2022).

Methods for tracking service delivery improvements involve both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative methods include the use of surveys and feedback forms to collect data on customer satisfaction and service efficiency (Chen, Wang & Liu, 2022, Gupta & Singh, 2023, Ojo, Adewale & Nwankwo, 2023). For example, satisfaction surveys can measure various aspects of service delivery, such as check-in processes, room cleanliness, and staff professionalism (Ibrahim et al., 2023). Additionally, operational data, such as average response times to guest requests and the frequency of service protocol adherence, can be analyzed to assess performance against KPIs.

Qualitative methods complement quantitative data by providing deeper insights into the customer experience. These methods include conducting interviews and focus groups with guests to understand their perceptions and experiences in detail (Chen & Liu, 2023). Observational studies, where trained evaluators assess service delivery in real-time, can also provide valuable feedback on how well standards are being implemented and where improvements are needed (Ogbonna, 2023). Combining these approaches ensures a comprehensive understanding of service performance and identifies both strengths and areas for improvement.

Continuous improvement is a crucial aspect of maintaining and enhancing service delivery standards. The framework should incorporate mechanisms for regularly reviewing and updating service protocols based on feedback and performance data (Adams, Bauer & Gibson, 2023, Coker, et al., 2023, Chen, Wang & Liu, 2022, Joseph, et al., 2022). This involves establishing a system for collecting and analyzing feedback from customers, staff, and other stakeholders.

Feedback loops should be designed to capture insights on service quality, identify recurring issues, and gauge the effectiveness of implemented changes (Uche, 2023).

Periodic reviews of service standards and KPIs are necessary to ensure they remain relevant and aligned with industry best practices. The framework should include scheduled evaluations, where performance data is assessed, and standards are revised as needed to address emerging trends and challenges in the hospitality sector (Hsu & Huang, 2022). This iterative process helps in adapting the framework to evolving customer expectations and operational realities, thereby ensuring sustained service excellence (Hossain, Rahman & Islam, 2022, Moksnes, Roesch & Berghmans, 2019, Sharma, Kaur & Gupta, 2022, Sovacool, Kivimaa & Tschakert, 2020).

Engaging stakeholders in the M&E process is also important for achieving comprehensive and actionable results. Involving industry associations, regulatory bodies, and hospitality businesses in the evaluation process helps ensure that the framework reflects diverse perspectives and addresses sector-specific challenges (Akinyemi & Ojo, 2023). Stakeholder involvement also promotes transparency and accountability, enhancing the credibility and effectiveness of the M&E efforts.

In summary, monitoring and evaluation play a pivotal role in the successful implementation of a service delivery standardization framework in Nigeria's hospitality industry. By establishing key performance indicators, employing a range of tracking methods, and fostering continuous improvement based on feedback, the industry can ensure that service quality remains high and evolves in response to changing needs (Chen, Zhang & Liu, 2022, Kaunda, Muliokela & Kakoma, 2021, Kumar, Yadav & Ranjan, 2023). This approach not only enhances customer satisfaction but also supports the long-term success and competitiveness of Nigeria's hospitality sector.

6 Challenges and Risks

Implementing a service delivery standardization framework in Nigeria's hospitality industry presents several challenges and risks that must be carefully managed to achieve successful outcomes. Among the foremost obstacles are resistance to change within the industry, the costs associated with implementing standardization, balancing uniformity with personalized service, and addressing the skills gap in the workforce (Chen, Zhang & Liu, 2022, Kaunda, Muliokela & Kakoma, 2021, Quintanilla, et al., 2021).

Resistance to change is a significant challenge in the adoption of a service delivery standardization framework. Hospitality businesses in Nigeria, like in many other regions, may resist new standards due to entrenched practices and skepticism about the benefits of standardization (Chen, Zhang & Zhao, 2022, Meyer, Park & Li, 2023, Ochieng, Otieno & Kiprono, 2022). This resistance can stem from a reluctance to alter established routines or from concerns about potential disruptions to their operational processes (Adamu et al., 2022). For instance, smaller hotels and lodges might fear that standardization will impose additional costs or complex procedures that could overwhelm their limited resources. This resistance can undermine the effectiveness of standardization efforts and hinder the overall improvement of service quality across the industry (Akinyele & Afolabi, 2022).

The costs associated with implementing standardization also pose a significant challenge. Developing and enforcing a standardized framework requires substantial financial investment in several areas, including staff training, upgrading facilities, and incorporating new technologies (Cheng, Liu & Zheng, 2021, Kang, Zhang & Yang, 2023, Patterson, Scott & Park, 2022). These costs can be particularly burdensome for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) within the hospitality sector, which may have limited budgets and financial flexibility (Eze et al., 2023). For example, upgrading to standardized systems might require substantial capital expenditure on new equipment or software, as well as ongoing costs for maintenance and support. The financial strain can discourage some businesses from fully committing to the new standards, leading to uneven adoption across the industry (Ikusika, 2022, Okeke & Olurin, 2019, Osimobi, et al., 2023, Udo, et al., 2023).

Balancing uniformity with personalized service is another critical challenge. While standardization aims to ensure consistent service quality, the hospitality industry is inherently personalized, with a focus on delivering unique and tailored experiences to guests. Striking the right balance between maintaining high standards and allowing for personalized service is essential but challenging (Morris et al., 2023). Excessive uniformity might lead to a loss of individual character and uniqueness that many guests value (Cheng, Zhang & Wang, 2021, Kshetri, 2021, Njeri, Mwangi & Kimani, 2022). Therefore, the framework must be designed in a way that allows for standardized procedures while still accommodating the flexibility needed for personalized guest interactions. This requires careful consideration of how to integrate standard protocols without compromising the individual touch that differentiates many hospitality establishments (Nguyen & Le, 2022).

Addressing the skills gap in the workforce is another significant issue. Implementing a standardization framework requires a well-trained workforce capable of adhering to new procedures and protocols (Cheng, Zhang & Wang, 2021, Tapscott & Tapscott, 2021, Zeph-Ojiako & Anakwuba, 2019). However, many regions in Nigeria face challenges related to the quality of hospitality education and training. The existing workforce may lack the necessary skills or training to meet new standards, which can impede the successful implementation of the framework (Ojo & Akinyemi, 2023). For instance, if employees are not adequately trained in new customer service protocols or technologies, it can lead to inconsistent service delivery and reduced overall effectiveness of the standardization efforts. Bridging this skills gap involves investing in comprehensive training programs and ensuring that educational institutions align their curricula with industry needs (Jang, Yang & Kim, 2022, Kaunda, Muliokela & Kakoma, 2021, Ozowe, Russell & Sharma, 2020).

In summary, the implementation of a service delivery standardization framework in Nigeria's hospitality industry is fraught with challenges and risks, including resistance to change, high implementation costs, the need to balance uniformity with personalization, and addressing workforce skill deficiencies (Choi, Ahn & Kim, 2022, Kang, Lee & Kim, 2023, Zhou, Yang & Chen, 2022). Overcoming these challenges requires a strategic approach that includes engaging industry stakeholders, providing financial and technical support, and ensuring that the standardization framework is flexible enough to accommodate both consistency and personalization. (Joudeh & El-Hawary, 2022, Liu, Zhang & Xie, 2020, Schwerdtle, Appelbaum & Schilling, 2022) Addressing these issues effectively will be crucial for achieving the desired improvements in service quality and enhancing the competitiveness of Nigeria's hospitality sector (Jensen, Koster & Martin, 2022, Miller, Chiu & Zhang, 2023, Smith, Edwards & Singh, 2022).

7 Expected Outcomes

The implementation of a service delivery standardization framework for Nigeria's hospitality industry is anticipated to yield significant positive outcomes that can transform the sector. These expected outcomes include improved service quality and customer satisfaction, enhanced international reputation, increased tourist and business travel inflows, and long-term sustainability and global competitiveness (Choi, Ahn & Kim, 2022, Peter, 2021, Gosens, Kline & Wang, 2022, Lopes, Oliveira & Silva, 2023, Zhou, Yang & Chen, 2022).

Improved service quality and customer satisfaction are among the most immediate benefits of adopting a standardized service delivery framework (Tapscott & Tapscott, 2021, Wang, Zhang & Li, 2023, Zhao, Li & Yang, 2023). By establishing clear and consistent service protocols, hospitality businesses can ensure a uniform level of quality across various establishments (Cloete, Grobelaar & Bertelsmann-Scott, 2020, Murray & Nair, 2021, Schwab, 2016). This consistency helps in meeting customer expectations more reliably, which in turn enhances overall satisfaction (Okumus, 2022). Research has shown that consistent service quality is a crucial determinant of customer satisfaction and loyalty, as it reduces variability and unpredictability in guest experiences (Chen et al., 2022). As hospitality providers adhere to standardized procedures, they can deliver a more predictable and reliable service, addressing common complaints and boosting customer trust.

Enhanced international reputation is another critical outcome anticipated from the implementation of a service delivery standardization framework. In the global hospitality industry, reputation is largely built on perceived quality and consistency (David, et al., 2022, Jensen, Koster & Martin, 2022, Smith, Edwards & Singh, 2022). By aligning with international standards, Nigeria's hospitality sector can improve its image on the global stage, making it a more attractive destination for international travelers (Fang et al., 2023). This enhanced reputation can lead to greater recognition and credibility, as the industry will be seen as adhering to high-quality standards that are comparable to those in leading global destinations (Liu & Shih, 2022). Establishing a reputation for excellence can be a powerful tool in differentiating Nigeria's offerings from those of other countries and in appealing to international tourists and business travelers (David, et al., 2022, Li, Li & Wang, 2022, Miller, Nyathi & Mahendran, 2022).

Increased tourist and business travel inflows are expected as a direct consequence of improved service quality and an enhanced international reputation. Higher service standards and a solid global reputation can make Nigeria a more appealing destination for both leisure and business travelers (Akinwale, Eze & Akinwale, 2022, Fox & Signé, 2021, Ozowe, 2018, Ekechukwu, 2021, Gosens, Kline & Wang, 2022, Kang, Liu & Yang, 2021). Studies have indicated that tourists are more likely to choose destinations with a reputation for high-quality services and reliable hospitality (Wang et al., 2023). Similarly, business travelers, who often prioritize consistent service quality and efficiency, may be drawn to Nigeria's improved hospitality offerings for their corporate travel needs. The increase in travel inflows can lead to a boost in the country's tourism revenue and contribute to overall economic growth (Mason & Chechi, 2022).

Long-term sustainability and global competitiveness are fundamental goals of the service delivery standardization framework. By establishing and maintaining high service standards, Nigeria's hospitality sector can ensure ongoing

improvements in service quality and operational efficiency (Fischer, Schipper & Yalcin, 2022, Ming, Zhao & Xu, 2022, Pérez, Sosa & Ruiz, 2023). Standardization not only helps in creating a competitive edge but also in fostering a culture of continuous improvement within the industry (Buhalis & Costa, 2023). As Nigerian hospitality businesses consistently meet high standards, they become better positioned to compete with international counterparts and adapt to evolving market demands (Jones, Nair & Ahmed, 2022, Oduntan, Olatunji & Oyerinde, 2021, Miller, Thompson & Smith, 2022, Wang, Liu & Zhang, 2022). Furthermore, a focus on sustainability in service delivery, including eco-friendly practices and ethical standards, can enhance the industry's attractiveness to environmentally conscious travelers and investors (Huang et al., 2022). This commitment to sustainability and excellence can solidify Nigeria's position as a leading destination in the global hospitality market.

In summary, the implementation of a service delivery standardization framework is poised to significantly benefit Nigeria's hospitality industry. The framework is expected to improve service quality and customer satisfaction, enhance the international reputation of Nigeria's hospitality sector, increase tourist and business travel inflows, and promote long-term sustainability and global competitiveness (Fox & Signé, 2022, Gungor, Sahin & Aydin, 2021, Kumar, Mathew & Chand, 2021). These outcomes will contribute to transforming the industry into a more robust and globally recognized sector, ultimately driving economic growth and enhancing Nigeria's position on the world stage.

8 Conclusion

In conclusion, the implementation of a service delivery standardization framework holds paramount importance for Nigeria's hospitality industry. Standardization is essential for elevating service quality, ensuring consistency, and enhancing customer satisfaction across the sector. It addresses the pressing need for uniformity in service delivery, which is crucial for building a reliable reputation and competing effectively in the global market. The successful realization of this framework requires industry-wide collaboration. It is imperative for government agencies, industry associations, hospitality businesses, and other stakeholders to work together harmoniously. Such collaboration will facilitate the development of relevant standards, effective regulatory oversight, and a supportive infrastructure that can sustain the framework's objectives. Engaging all parties in this collective effort will ensure that the framework is implemented comprehensively and that its benefits are widely realized. Looking ahead, the vision for Nigeria's hospitality industry is to become a globally competitive sector renowned for its high standards of service and excellence. By embracing and executing the proposed standardization framework, Nigeria can position itself as a premier destination for both leisure and business travelers. This transformation will not only bolster the country's reputation on the international stage but also drive growth in tourism and business travel, contributing to the overall economic development of Nigeria.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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