

## **Employee and Guest Perceptions of Service Quality: a Lookat Barbeque Restaurants in Kiambu County, Kenya**

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doi: 10.51505/ijaemr.2023.8406

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.51505/ijaemr.2023.8406>

Received: May 09, 2023

Accepted: May 17, 2023

Online Published: July 23, 2023

### **Abstract**

The purpose of the current research is to examine employees' and customers' perceptions of service quality (tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy) among barbeque restaurants in Kiambu County. Data was collected from 496 customers and 112 managers of barbeque restaurants using a self-administered questionnaire. The current research used descriptive and inferential analysis comprising independent-sample t-tests to examine the differences in the means of customers' and employees' perceptions of service quality. Results of the current research confirmed a service quality gap manifested in customers' and employees' perceptions of service quality among the barbeque restaurants in the research context. Specifically, employees' perceptions of service quality were higher than customers, depicting a gap in service quality and a call for attention by the owners and managers of barbeque restaurants in Kiambu County. The current research makes crucial contributions towards boosting service quality among barbeque restaurants in Kiambu County.

**Keywords:** Barbeque restaurant, Service quality, Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy

### **1. Introduction**

Hospitality establishments are service organisations operating in the hospitality sector, including food and beverage service, accommodation, events, tourism and transportation (Walker & Walker, 2019). According to Ahamed (2013), the industry is globally becoming very competitive with related services that have significantly increased in developing countries (Tsaur & Lin,

2014). The industry contributed 9.5% of the global gross domestic product (GDP), equivalent to \$194.2 billion and provided 266 million jobs worldwide (Nwane, 2020). Additionally, the hospitality and tourism industry increased by 4.5% in Europe in 2018, where food and beverages contributed to 67% of the accommodation and tourism activities (Eurostat, 2017). According to Ahamed (2013), the industry contributes 6.23% of India's GDP and total employment of 8.78%. Africa recorded the lowest industry growth, though it contributes significantly to its GDP; however, the subsector GDP shot to 7.5 per cent in 2010 (The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development [UNCTAD], 2017). As part of the hospitality industry, barbeque restaurants are common food service outlets that populate malls, urban centres, and highways worldwide.

Barbeque is cooking meat over a grill, oven or pit covered in spices and sauces to conceal juices and give meat distinct taste and flavours (Geiling, 2013). Barbeque cuisine has penetrated all parts of the world, where different types of meats, such as goat, pork, fish, chicken, mutton, beef and game, are prepared (Geiling, 2013). A study in the USA notes that barbeque has been mushrooming since the 1950s after the Second World War (Gershon, 2018). According to the National Barbecue Association (NBBQA), there are over 90,000 barbecue restaurants in the USA, recording operation revenue of over \$47 billion annually (NBBQA, 2020). Barbeque restaurants in the USA vary from single outlets to mega-chains, with just about 200 outlets in 36 states. The barbeque sector in the USA is highly developed in the Carolina, Memphis, Kansas City, and Texas styles (NBBQA, 2020) and is regulated by two main bodies, the Kansas City Barbecue Society (KCBS) and the Memphis Barbecue Network (MBN) (NBBQA, 2020).

Barbequed meat is undoubtedly one of the key features of Kenya's culinary culture (Shibia et al., 2017). This is evident in many establishments serving the highly popular barbecue meat delicacy within towns, along with the main highways and high-end malls (Nyanchama, 2019; Shibia et al., 2017). Quality goat, beef, chicken and pork form the main barbeque meat, accompanied by local starch foods like Ugali (Posho), mashed potatoes mixed with green maize (Irio), and French fries, among others. In addition, rapidly evolving eating and enjoyment habits have made BBQ restaurants grow into newly located culinary and cultural melting points (Nyanchama, 2019). These developments have required responsive innovations by vendors and resulted in the evolution of complex product and service standards systems arising due to the convergence of different expectations by a multiplicity of barbeque clientele (Shibia et al., 2017).

Service quality is theorised as customers demanding excellent provision of services interchangeable with the value of their spending (Khadka & Maharjan, 2017). Therefore, measuring perceived service quality is a prerequisite for organisational interventions to boost service quality and, eventually, customer satisfaction. On this note, Hallowell et al. (1997) emphasised the importance of organisations gauging, identifying, measuring, and managing internal elements influencing guest satisfaction, such as service quality. Kenya's hospitality industry has recently experienced a modified sub-sector development involving the rapidly growing barbeque restaurants along highways and densely populated middle-income areas with convenient parking spaces (Nyanchama, 2019). The proliferation of barbeque restaurants has

been supported by dynamic financial and strategy reorganisations, indicating a brighter and more sustainable future (Shibia et al., 2017). This evolution has been accompanied and enhanced by a huge influx of revellers with middle-class income into respective barbeque restaurants creating high demands for related quality barbeque products and services (Khadka & Maharjan, 2017).

Service quality is important to barbeque restaurants as it increases profits, satisfies customers, and enhances their general performance (Nyanchama, 2019). However, there appears to be a service quality gap among barbeque restaurants in Kiambu County, where customers' expectations exceed actual service delivery (Kiambu County Development Report, 2021). Despite barbeque restaurants being very popular in Kenya, very few academic studies have been carried out to examine employees' and guests' perceptions of service quality, especially in a developing country such as Kenya. Any intervention to boost service quality in service organisations must begin with measuring it, especially by comparing the prevailing perceptions of employees and customers. Specifically, the agreement between employees and customers on service quality provided by barbeque restaurants in Kiambu County was examined in the current research. To what extent will employees be in tune with customers' service quality expectations? This research question was examined by surveying employees and customers in barbeque restaurants in Kiambu County in Kenya.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1 Perceived service quality*

Service quality is key to the ability of the restaurant industry to make customers and retain them (Ahmed et al., 2022). According to Parasuraman et al. (1988, p. 14), service quality refers to "the discrepancy between consumers' perceptions of services offered by a particular firm and their expectations about firms offering such services". Parasuraman et al. (1985) argue that customer dissatisfaction occurs when service performance is below customers' expectations. Zeithaml et al. (1990) argue that service quality is the perceived characteristic based on customers' experience with the service provided during the service delivery process. Service quality is not a one-day affair, as noted by Angelova and Zeqiri (2011), who argued that its existence could only be justified by consistently delivering service that is consistent with customers' expectations.

Service quality has been established as a viable ingredient for organisations to gain a competitive edge over competition in the hotel sector (Stevens et al., 1995). Parasuraman et al. (1988) conceptualised service quality as having five important dimensions: tangibles, responsiveness, reliability, assurance, and empathy. While tangibles essentially focus on the physical equipment and facilities in a given business, reliability focuses on the accuracy and error-free service provided to customers (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Besides, responsiveness refers to the capability of employees to provide prompt services to customers (Kim et al., 2003), which is of great importance in today's hospitality sector, according to Peak (2021), who argued that delays in delivering customer service might be the difference between customer dissatisfaction and satisfaction and disloyalty and loyalty. Finally, while assurance reflects the propensity of employees to gain customer trust during a service encounter (Akbaba, 2006), empathy denotes employees' ability to express care and warmth in handling customers' queries

during a service encounter (Rosenbaum & Massiah, 2007). Previous studies have underlined the importance of service quality in service businesses (Ahmed et al., 2022; Bujisic et al., 2014; Nguyen et al., 2018; Slack et al., 2020; Wong et al., 2022).

### **3. Methodology**

The current research used a convenience sampling technique to examine managers' and customers' perceptions of service quality provided by barbeque restaurants in Kiambu County. The service quality model (SERVQUAL) by Parasuraman et al. (1988), comprising five facets (i.e., tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy), was adopted to measure perceived service quality. Data were collected on-site using a self-administered survey questionnaire. Two surveys were conducted simultaneously, one for managers and another for customers of barbeque restaurants. Both questionnaires comprised two sections. The first section comprised questions designed to gather the socio-demographic profile of respective respondents. The second question comprised 22 items measuring service quality and measured by a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

The current research distributed 608 questionnaires to the respondents, 496 to customers and 112 to managers of barbeque restaurants in Kiambu County. Two approaches were used to distribute the questionnaires. The first entailed a hard copy of the questionnaire, and the second comprised converting the questionnaire into an online survey using Google Form®, generating the survey link, which was shared with consenting customers and managers via email and WhatsApp. Additionally, to facilitate the second approach, electronic tablets were on site with research assistants and were given to respondents who consented to complete the survey using electronic gadgets. As a result, following the distribution of the questionnaires, 273 (55.0%) and 80 (71.4%) useful ones were received from customers and managers of barbeque restaurants, respectively.

Data in the current research were analysed through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences, SPSS® version 27.0 for Windows (IBM SPSS for Windows, version 27.0. Armonk, NY: IBM® Corp). Before data analyses, data were screened, and preliminary analysis was conducted to examine statistical errors. Additionally, descriptive statistics comprising frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarise the responses gathered and to profile the socio-demographic characteristics of customers and managers of barbeque restaurants. Moreover, independent samples t-test was used to examine the differences in customers' and managers' perceptions of service quality. Normality and homoscedasticity assumptions were examined before performing the independent samples t-test. The normality assumption was examined by a Q-Q plot to visually gauge if data collected from customers and managers of barbeque restaurants were normally distributed. A visual inspection of the plots in both cases indicated that data points were roughly falling along a straight diagonal line in a Q-Q plot, showing that they were likely following a normal distribution. The homogeneity of variances assumption was examined through Levene's test. The values of Levene's test were non-significant ( $p > 0.05$ ), demonstrating homogeneity of variance between customers' and managers' perceptions of various facets of service quality

## **4. Results**

### *4.1 Reliability Assessment*

The current research used Cronbach's  $\alpha$  to examine the internal consistency of items measuring service quality. According to Hair et al. (1995), Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value of over 0.70 demonstrates the internal consistency of items of a given construct and reliability. For example, Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of tangible service quality, responsiveness, reliability, assurance, and empathy constructs for the questionnaires of managers of barbeque restaurants were 0.821, 0.884, 0.879, 0.870, and 0.902, respectively. Likewise, Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of tangible service quality, responsiveness, reliability, assurance, and empathy constructs for customers' questionnaires were 0.884, 0.778, 0.789, 0.912, and 0.802, respectively. As revealed, Cronbach's  $\alpha$  values of all the constructs measuring service quality dimensions in both questionnaires were over the suggested value of 0.70, demonstrating that scales in the current research met the reliability requirements for data analysis.

### *4.2 Socio-demographic Profiles*

#### **4.2.1 Socio-demographic Profile of Managers of Barbeque Restaurants**

Table 1 reports the demographic profile of the respondents. As shown, the majority (71.3%) of respondents identified as male, 27.5% identified as female, and 1.2% preferred not to indicate their gender. Concerning age, the majority (36.3%) of respondents were between 36 and 45 years old, followed by those aged between 26 and 35 years (31.3%) and 46 and 55 years (20.0%), respectively. Regarding the level of education, Table 4.1 also shows that the majority (31.3%) of respondents were holders of certificates, 28.7% secondary school qualifications, 26.3% diplomas, and 6.3% bachelor's degrees. Moreover, few respondents were holders of post-graduate degrees (3.8%) and artisans (2.5%). Only one (1.3%) respondent was a holder of primary school qualification. Furthermore, concerning work experience in barbeque restaurants, the majority (42.5%) of respondents had work experience of 5 years and above, 41.3% between 3 and 4 years, and 10.0% between 1 and 2 years. The lowest number (6.3%) of respondents had less than a year of work experience in barbeque restaurants. Concerning job tenure, the majority (52.5%) of respondents had worked in their current restaurants between 1 and 2 years, 20.0% between 3 and 4 years, and 18.8% for five years and above. Additionally, few (8.8%) respondents had worked for less than a year.

Table 1. Profile of Managers of Barbeque Restaurants

Variable	Frequency	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	57	71.3
Female	22	27.5
Prefer not to say	1	1.2
<b>Age (years)</b>		
18 to 25	5	6.3
26 to 35	25	31.3
36 to 45	29	36.3
46 to 55	16	20.0
Over 55	5	6.3
<b>Highest level of formal education completed</b>		
Primary school	1	1.3
Artisan	2	2.5
Secondary school	23	28.7
Certificate	25	31.3
Diploma	21	26.3
Undergraduate degree	5	6.3
Post-graduate degree	3	3.8
<b>Work experience in the BBQ restaurants</b>		
Less than a year	5	6.3
1 to 2	8	10.0
3 to 4	33	41.3
5 and above	34	42.5
<b>Job Tenure</b>		
Less than a year	7	8.8
1 to 2	42	52.5
3 to 4	16	20.0
5 and above	15	18.8

**Note:**  $n = 80$ .

*4.2.2 Socio-demographic Profile of Customers*

Table 2 reports the profile of customers in the current research. As reported in Table 2, most respondents identified as male (50.5%). Those who identified as female accounted for 46.2%. Regarding age, the majority of customers were between 26 and 35 years (76.9%), and the remaining (23.1%) were aged between 18 and 25 years. Additionally, the majority of customers were holders of undergraduate degrees (31.1%), followed by holders of post-graduate degrees (25.3%), diplomas (16.5%), secondary school certificates (16.8%), and college certificates (7.3%), respectively.

Table 2. Profile of Customers of Barbeque Restaurants

Variable	Frequency	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	138	50.5
Female	126	46.2
Prefer not to say	9	3.3
<b>Age (years)</b>		
18 to 25	63	23.1
26 to 35	210	76.9
<b>Highest level of formal education completed</b>		
No formal education	2	0.7
Primary school	4	1.5
Artisan	2	0.7
Secondary school	46	16.8
Certificate	20	7.3
Diploma	45	16.5
Undergraduate degree	85	31.1
Post-graduate degree	69	25.3
<b>Frequency of Visiting the BBQ Restaurants per Month</b>		
Once	19	7.0
2 to 3 times	123	45.1
4 to 5 times	59	21.6
Over 5 times	72	26.4

**Note:**  $n = 273$ .

*4.3. Comparison of Managers' and Customers' Perceptions of Service Quality*

*4.3.1 Tangibility*

A two-sample t-test was performed to compare perceptions of tangible service quality between customers and managers of barbeque restaurants (Table 3).

Table 3. Customers’ and Managers’ Perceptions of Tangibility

Service Quality Dimension	Customers’ PSQ (I)		Managers’ PSQ (II)		M.D. (I-II)	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				
<b>Tangibility</b>								
The restaurant has modern working equipment	3.19	1.03	3.81	0.58	-0.62	6.93***	237.00	.000
The physical facilities of the BBQ restaurant are visually attractive	3.42	0.93	3.59	0.61	-0.17	1.89 <sup>Ns</sup>	195.50	.061
Employees wear clean uniforms	3.44	0.95	3.75	0.56	-0.31	3.65***	220.17	.000
The restaurant uses visually appealing service equipment (e.g., chopping boards, knives, tongs, turners)	3.44	0.95	3.46	0.60	-0.03	0.30 <sup>Ns</sup>	207.66	.762

**Notes:** Managers’ *n* = 80. Customers’ *n* = 273. Degrees of Freedom (*df*). *MD*-Mean Difference. *PSQ*-Perceived Service Quality. \**p* <.05. \*\**p* < .01. \*\*\**p* < .001. Ns-Not significant

As shown in Table 3, the mean value of customers’ perception of ‘the restaurant has modern working equipment’ (*M* = 3.19, *SD* = 1.03) was significantly lower than that of the managers (*M* = 3.81, *SD* = 0.58); *t*(237.00) = 6.93, *p* = .000. In addition, the mean value of customers’ perception of ‘employees wear clean uniforms’ (*M* = 3.44, *SD* = 0.95) was significantly lower than that of managers (*M* = 3.75, *SD* = 0.56); *t* (220.17) = 3.65, *p* = .000. However, the mean value between customers’ perceptions of ‘the physical facilities of the barbeque restaurant is visually attractive’ (*M* = 3.42, *SD* = 0.93) was not significantly different from that of managers (*M* = 3.59, *SD* = 0.61); *t*(195.50) = 1.89, *p* = .061). Likewise, a non-significant difference was found between the mean value of customers’ perceptions of ‘the restaurant uses visually appealing service equipment’ (*M* = 3.44, *SD* = 0.95) and the managers’ mean value (*M* = 3.46, *SD* = 0.60; *t*(207.66), *p* = .762). Based on these results, customers indicated that barbeque restaurants were not using modern equipment and employees did not wear clean uniforms, contrary to what managers perceived.

#### 4.3.2 Responsiveness

A two-sample *t*-test was computed to compare perceptions of responsive service quality between customers and managers of BBQ restaurants (Table4).



Table 4. Customers’ and Managers’ Perceptions of Responsiveness

Service Quality Dimension	Customers’ PSQ (I)		Managers’ PSQ (II)		M.D. (I-II)	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				
<b>Responsiveness</b>								
Provision of accurate information on when services will be offered	3.50	0.82	3.83	0.61	-0.32	3.82***	171.10	.000
Provision of quick services to customers	3.51	0.85	3.99	0.49	-0.48	6.43***	226.57	.000
Eagerness to assist customers	3.40	0.96	4.10	0.44	-0.70	9.18***	289.79	.000
Readiness to reply to customers’ queries	3.55	0.82	4.01	0.49	-0.47	6.32***	218.06	.000

Note. Managers’ *N* = 80. Customers’ *N* = 273. Degrees of freedom (*df*). MD-Mean Difference. PSQ-Perceived Service Quality. \**p* <.05. \*\**p* < .01. \*\*\**p* < .001. Ns-Not significant

As reported in Table 4, the mean values of customers’ perceptions of ‘employees provide accurate information on when services will be offered’ (*M* = 3.50, *SD* = 0.82) and ‘employees give quick services to customers’ (*M* = 3.51, *SD* = 0.85) were significantly lower than those of managers (*M* = 3.83, *SD* = 0.61) and (*M* = 3.99, *SD* = 0.49); *t*(171.10) = 3.82, *p* = .000 and *t*(226.57) = 6.43, *p* = .000, respectively. Additionally, the mean values of customers’ perceptions of ‘employees are eager to assist customers’ (*M* = 3.40, *SD* = 0.96) and ‘employees are ready to reply to customers’ queries’ (*M* = 3.55, *SD* = 0.82) were significantly lower than those of managers (*M* = 4.10, *SD* = 0.44) and (*M* = 4.01, *SD* = 0.49); *t*(289.79) = 9.18, *p* = .000 and *t*(218.06) = 6.32, *p* = .000, respectively. The results in Table 4 demonstrated that managers of barbeque restaurants perceived their service delivery as responsive, contrary to what was perceived by customers. In other words, managers over-rated the responsiveness of the services provided by barbeque restaurants.

#### 4.3.3 Assurance

Table 5 demonstrates the results of a two-sample t-test to examine the mean differences between customers’ and managers’ perceptions of assurance provided by the barbeque restaurants in the current research.

Table 5. Customers’ and Managers’ Perceptions of Assurance

Service Quality Dimension	Customers’ PSQ (I)		Managers’ PSQ (II)		M.D. (I-II)	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				
Employees make customers feel confident	3.66	0.78	3.96	0.54	-0.31	4.01***	185.81	.000
Employees make customers feel safe in their transactions	3.68	0.76	3.89	0.57	-0.20	2.57*	167.01	.011
Employees always respect customers	3.73	0.81	4.09	0.53	-0.36	4.71***	195.01	.000
Employees have the right information to respond to customers’ questions	3.44	0.90	3.79	0.71	-0.35	3.63***	161.09	.000

**Notes:** Manager’s *n* = 80. Customers’ *n* = 273. Degrees of freedom (*df*). MD-Mean Difference. PSQ-Perceived Service Quality. \**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01. \*\*\**p* < .001. N.s-Not significant.

As shown in Table 5, there was a significant difference in ‘employees make customers feel confident’ between customers (*M* = 3.68, *SD* = 0.76) and managers (*M* = 3.89, *SD* = 0.57);  $t(185.81) = 4.01, p = .000$ . In addition, there was a significant difference in ‘employees make customers feel safe in their transactions’ between customers (*M* = 3.68, *SD* = 0.76) and managers (*M* = 3.89, *SD* = 0.57);  $t(167.01) = 2.57, p = .011$ . In both situations, the mean values of customers were lower than those of managers. Moreover, the mean values in ‘employees always respect customers’ between customers (*M* = 3.73, *SD* = 0.81) and employees (*M* = 3.44, *SD* = 0.90) were significantly different;  $t(195.01) = 4.71, p = .000$ , with the customers’ mean values being significantly lower than those of managers. Likewise, the mean difference in ‘employees have the right information to respond to customers’ questions’ between customers (*M* = 3.44, *SD* = 0.90) and managers (*M* = 3.79, *SD* = 0.71) was significantly different;  $t(161.09) = 3.63, p = .000$ .

#### 4.3.4 Empathy

A two-sample t-test was computed to compare perceptions of empathy service quality between customers and managers of barbeque restaurants (Table 6).

Table 6. Customers’ and Managers’ Perceptions of Assurance

Service Quality Dimension	Customers’ PSQ (I)		Employees’ PSQ (II)		M.D. (I-II)	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				
<b>Empathy</b>								
Employees give customers tailor-made products and services	3.50	0.90	4.04	0.65	-0.54	5.97***	177.94	.000
Employees handle customers in a gentle way	3.71	0.84	4.13	0.46	-0.41	5.70***	239.96	.000
The restaurant has convenient working hours	3.55	0.92	4.03	0.53	-0.48	5.88***	228.31	.000
Employees have guests’ best interests at heart	3.69	0.78	4.10	0.47	-0.41	5.84***	219.55	.000
Employees understand the unique needs of customers	3.48	0.85	3.71	0.68	-0.24	2.58*	158.41	.011

**Notes:** Managers’ *n* = 80. Customers’ *n* = 273. Degrees of freedom (*df*). *MD*-Mean Difference. *PSQ*-Perceived Service Quality. \**p* <.05. \*\**p* < .01. \*\*\**p* < .001. N.s-Not significant

As can be seen in Table 6, there was a significant difference in ‘employees give customers tailor-made products and services between customers (*M* = 3.50, *SD* = 0.90) and managers of barbeque restaurants (*M* = 4.04, *SD* = 0.65); *t*(177.94) = 5.97, *p* = .000. Similarly, there was a significant difference in ‘employees gently handle customers’ between customers (*M* = 3.71, *SD* = 0.84) and managers of barbeque restaurants (*M* = 4.13, *SD* = 0.46); *t*(239.96) = 5.70, *p* = .000. Likewise, a significant difference in ‘the restaurant has convenient working hours’ was found between customers (*M* = 3.55, *SD* = 0.92) and managers of barbeque restaurants (*M* = 4.03, *SD* = 0.53); *t*(228.31) = 5.88, *p* = .000. In addition, a significant difference in ‘employees have guests’ best interests at heart’ was established between customers (*M* = 3.69, *SD* = 0.78) and managers of barbeque restaurants (*M* = 4.10, *SD* = 0.47); *t*(219.55) = 5.84, *p* = .000. Lastly, the results revealed a significant difference in ‘employees understand the unique needs of customers’ between customers (*M* = 3.48, *SD* = 0.85) and managers (*M* = 3.71, *SD* = 0.68); *t*(158.41) = 2.58, *p* = .011. These results depicted an empathy gap in service quality between managers and customers. In addition, these results cast a scenario where managers believed they delivered customer-centric services, had guests’ best interests at heart, understand customers’ unique needs, handled customers gently, and barbeque restaurants were operating at times convenient to guests.

#### 4.3.5 Reliability

A two-sample *t*-test was calculated to compare perceptions of reliable service quality between customers and managers of BBQ restaurants (Table 7). As Table 7 shows, a significant difference in ‘employees are dependable in handling customers’ was found between customers (*M* = 3.31, *SD* = 0.90) and managers (*M* = 3.64, *SD* = 0.70); *t*(163.55), *p* = .001. Equally, this study found a significant difference in ‘the restaurant provides services at the promised time’

between customers ( $M = 3.44, SD = 0.92$ ) and managers ( $M = 3.85, SD = 0.58$ );  $t(207.05) = 4.87, p = .000$ . Additionally, a significant difference in ‘employees provide error-free services’ was established between customers ( $M = 3.17, SD = 0.92$ ) and managers ( $M = 3.61, SD = 3.61$ );  $t(151.22) = 4.29, p = .000$ . Nonetheless, this study showed no significant difference in ‘services are delivered as promised’ between customers ( $M = 3.56, SD = 0.86$ ) and managers ( $M = 3.61, SD = 0.70$ );  $t(154.20) = 0.55, p = .581$ . Furthermore, the results revealed a non-significant difference in ‘guests are given accurate bills’ between customers ( $M = 3.72, SD = 0.82$ ) and managers ( $M = 3.81, SD = 0.68$ );  $t(152.48) = 1.01, p = .316$ .

Table 7. Customers’ and Managers’ Perceptions of Reliability

Service Quality Dimension	Customers’ PSQ (I)		Managers’ PSQ (II)		M.D. (I–II)	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				
<b>Reliability</b>								
Services are delivered as promised	3.56	0.86	3.61	0.70	-0.05	0.55 <sup>Ns</sup>	154.20	.581
Employees are dependable in handling customers’ service complaints	3.31	0.90	3.64	0.70	-0.33	3.43 <sup>**</sup>	163.55	.001
The restaurant provides services at the promised time	3.44	0.92	3.85	0.58	-0.42	4.87 <sup>***</sup>	207.05	.000
Customers are given accurate bills	3.72	0.82	3.81	0.68	-0.09	1.01 <sup>Ns</sup>	152.48	.316
Employees provide error-free services	3.17	0.92	3.61	0.77	-0.44	4.29 <sup>***</sup>	151.22	.000

Note. Managers’  $N = 80$ . Customers’  $N = 273$ . Degrees of freedom (*df*). *M.D.* = Mean Difference. *PSQ* = Perceived Service Quality. \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . Ns-Not significant.

### 5. Discussion

Although there is some agreement between managers and customers of barbeque restaurants on various aspects of service quality, there are also essential differences. For example, suppose the current research results are used to make strategic decisions regarding service quality. In that case, different initiatives might be undertaken depending on the viewpoints of customers and employees of barbeque restaurants.

Regarding the tangibility facet of service quality, employees and customers differed on whether the restaurants had modern working equipment and whether employees wore clean uniforms. Employees’ ratings of these two items of tangible service quality were higher than customers’ ratings. Consequently, in this situation, it would be appropriate for the management and owners of barbeque restaurants to improve service quality by ensuring that restaurants are equipped with modern equipment and that standards are set to guide good practices regarding employees’ uniforms.

Concerning responsive service quality, managers of barbeque restaurants perceived higher levels of responsive service quality contrary to customers' beliefs, warranting attention from the owners and managers of barbeque restaurants. Because customer ratings of responsive customer service were low compared to those of managers, there is a need for the owners and managers of barbeque restaurants in the current research to initiate processes targeting the provision of accurate information on when services are provided to customers, provision of quick services, eagerness to help customers, and readiness to respond to customer queries. On this note, these important processes might be accomplished through periodic training on the importance of responsive customer service.

For assurance of customer service, the perceptions of managers of barbeque restaurants were higher than what customers believed existed. The results appeared to suggest that the owners and managers of barbeque restaurants need to empower employees to make customers feel confident and safe in their transactions, respect customers, and have the right information to respond to customer queries. Likewise, managers of barbeque restaurants' perceptions of empathy service quality were higher than those of customers, indicating that customers believed they were not provided with services they would classify as empathetical. Therefore, the current research results suggest that barbeque restaurants focus on providing empathy service quality. This would entail a greater focus by barbeque restaurants in the area of empathy service quality by ensuring that employees give customers tailor-made products and services, gently handle customers, the restaurants have convenient working hours, have their best interests at heart, and understand customers' unique needs.

Concerning reliable service quality, although managers and customers of barbeque restaurants agreed that restaurants delivered services as promised and were given accurate bills, they sharply disagreed on the dependability of the employees in handling customers' complaints, the ability of the restaurants to provide services at the promised time, and the ability of the employees to provide error-free services. Therefore, these findings have important implications for managers and owners of barbeque restaurants concerned with improving service quality delivery.

## **6. Conclusions**

The current research findings highlight the importance of examining service quality based on the perspectives of employees and customers to guide strategy formulation and implementation geared towards improving the service quality of barbeque restaurants. For example, regarding tangibility, the means of employees were higher than those of customers. Therefore, barbeque restaurants are more likely to provide a tangibility service quality that is below par in customers' eyes. Additionally, the means of employees were higher than those of customers on responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and reliability. Consequently, it is more likely that barbeque restaurants are providing services that do not meet customers' expectations. In other words, it is more likely that customers are largely unsatisfied with the services provided by barbeque restaurants.

## 7. Recommendations for Further Research

Despite the importance of the findings presented by the current research, there are important avenues for further research. First, this study was conducted among only managers and customers of barbeque restaurants in Kiambu County, limiting the generalizability of the results. Thus, replications of this study in other counties in Kenya and other countries are credible avenues future researchers may wish to take. Second, data in the current research were collected cross-sectionally. Consequently, further research could address this limitation by applying diverse data collection plans to compare the findings. Third and last, the focus of this study was deliberately limited to examining the perceptions of customers and managers of barbeque restaurants concerning service quality. Thus, future studies might extend the current research model by examining various hospitality service operations that might influence the service quality of barbeque restaurants, such as quality control of service operations, product and service innovations, management of competition, and management of service operations.

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