

Employee Engagement and Service Delivery Effectiveness in the Hospitality Industry in Asaba, Delta State.

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ABSTRACT

In today's competitive hospitality industry, delivering excellent service depends largely on the level of employee engagement. Engaged employees exhibit enthusiasm, commitment, and focus, which translate into improved customer satisfaction and service outcomes. This study examined the relationship between employee engagement and service delivery effectiveness in the hospitality industry in Asaba, Delta State. A descriptive survey research design was adopted to collect quantitative data from 402 employees drawn from 34 hotels with 100 or more staff. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, and Multiple Regression Analysis with the aid of SPSS version 25. The results revealed significant positive relationships between the dimensions of employee engagement, namely vigor ($r = .52, p < .001$), dedication ($r = .57, p < .001$), and absorption ($r = .41, p < .001$) and service delivery effectiveness. The regression model showed that vigor, dedication, and absorption jointly explained 41% of the variance in service delivery effectiveness ($R^2 = 0.41, F(3, 374) = 87.04, p < .001$). Dedication emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by vigor and absorption. The study concluded that fostering employee engagement enhances service quality and competitiveness in the hospitality industry. It recommended that hotel management promote vigor through supportive work environments, enhance dedication through recognition and fair rewards, and encourage absorption by providing meaningful tasks and minimizing distractions.

Keywords: *Employee engagement, Vigor, Dedication, Absorption, Service delivery effectiveness*

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry is inherently people-centred: service encounters are delivered and experienced through human contact, and the quality of those encounters shapes customer perceptions, loyalty, and the commercial viability of hotels, restaurants, and related outlets (Samakeniu et al., 2023). Asaba is the political and commercial nerve centre of Delta State, therefore hospitality businesses play a growing role in regional tourism, business travel, and local consumption. Yet the industry's competitiveness depends not only on physical infrastructure or pricing but on the discretionary effort that employees bring to customer-facing activities (Elumaro et al., 2018). Employee engagement which is defined as the psychological state in which workers invest energy, feel committed, and become absorbed in their tasks (Bhardwaj & Kalia, 2021), therefore emerges as a strategic antecedent of effective service delivery and memorable guest experiences (Atolagbe et al., 2024; Asuquo, et al., 2024).

Scholars and practitioners generally describe work engagement as consisting of three closely related components: vigor, dedication, and absorption. Vigor reflects high energy and mental resilience at work; dedication involves a deep sense of significance, enthusiasm, and pride in one's job; and absorption refers to being fully focused and deeply engrossed in work activities (Adesunloye et al., 2024; Zainal-Abidin et al., 2021). These dimensions have been reliably measured by the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) and employed across sectors to explain variation in service behaviours, customer orientation, and performance outcomes. Empirical studies in hospitality contexts indicate that more engaged employees are likelier to demonstrate proactive service, recover service failures, and sustain positive interactions that translate into higher perceived service quality (Viljevac et al., 2012; Gwamanda et al., 2024, Uford, et al. 2023). In Nigeria, recent research across states such as Lagos and Delta have begun to document links between human resource practices, employee engagement, and service-related outcomes, but the evidence remains patchy and context-specific (International Policy Brief, 2024; Moruku & Oluwafemi, 2023).

Despite the theoretical consensus that engaged employees enhance service delivery Adepoju et al. (2024) mentioned that there is limited empirical evidence from Asaba on how the three UWES dimensions (vigor, dedication, absorption) specifically shape service delivery effectiveness as perceived by hospitality workers themselves. Existing Nigerian studies often focus on organisational performance, retention, or conflict management at the state level without isolating employees' self-assessed service behaviours in urban centres such as Asaba (Okwuise et al., 2022; Tauetsile, 2019). Other investigations, for example, studies in Lagos and in specialised financial or asset-management settings, suggest positive relationships between engagement and service quality, but their sectoral differences and geographic contexts limit direct transferability to Asaba's hospitality micro-environment. These gaps create a twofold problem for researchers and managers: (1) a scarcity of locally grounded evidence on the engagement–service linkage in Asaba, and (2) few studies that rely on employees' self-assessments of service delivery effectiveness, an important vantage point for understanding discretionary behaviours that customers may not directly observe but which underlie service consistency and recovery.

Objectives of the Study

This study therefore investigates the relationship between employee engagement (operationalised as vigor, dedication, and absorption) and service delivery effectiveness in selected hotels in Asaba, Delta State. The specific objectives are to:

- i. To examine the effect of employee vigor on service delivery effectiveness in selected hospitality establishments in Asaba, Delta State.
- ii. To determine the influence of employee dedication on service delivery effectiveness in the hospitality industry in Asaba, Delta State.
- iii. To assess the impact of employee absorption on service delivery effectiveness among hospitality workers in Asaba, Delta State.

Research Hypotheses

In line with the specific objectives, three null hypotheses below will guide the study:

- i. Employee vigor has no significant effect on service delivery effectiveness in selected hospitality establishments in Asaba, Delta State.
- ii. Employee dedication has no significant influence on service delivery effectiveness in the hospitality industry in Asaba, Delta State.

- iii. Employee absorption has no significant impact on service delivery effectiveness among hospitality workers in Asaba, Delta State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Service Delivery

Service delivery refers to the process through which organisations provide services to meet customer needs and expectations efficiently and satisfactorily. In the hospitality industry, it encompasses all activities and interactions that ensure guests receive timely, reliable, and courteous service experiences (Ojo, 2024; Ahmed, 2025). Effective service delivery involves a combination of tangible and intangible elements such as responsiveness, reliability, assurance, empathy, and service quality consistency (Olu, 2023). According to Saut and Bie (2022), the effectiveness of service delivery is determined not only by organisational systems and procedures but also by employees' attitudes, competence, and commitment to customer satisfaction.

In contemporary business environments, especially in customer-centric sectors like hospitality, service delivery has evolved from mere task performance to creating value-driven and memorable customer experiences (Ali et al., 2021; Khamborkar, 2024). This perspective emphasizes the human factor, employees' interpersonal behaviour, communication skills, and emotional intelligence, as a decisive component of service outcomes. Furthermore, digital transformation and heightened customer expectations have pressured hospitality organisations to improve service processes and enhance employee engagement to maintain competitive advantage (Anwaret al, 2024). Thus, effective service delivery represents a critical determinant of customer satisfaction, organisational reputation, and sustained performance in today's hospitality landscape.

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement according to Erwina, (2020) refers to the extent to which employees are emotionally, cognitively, and physically committed to the organisation's goals. It reflects the enthusiasm and discretionary effort workers contribute beyond contractual obligations (Atolagbe et al., 2024). Engaged employees demonstrate passion, energy, and a deep connection to their work, which translates into improved service delivery, innovation, and customer satisfaction (Ochoche & Tamunomiegbam, 2025). According to Kishore et al. (2022) engagement goes beyond job satisfaction, it represents a two-way relationship where employees willingly invest themselves in return for meaningful and supportive work experiences.

Indeed, studies highlight that employee engagement is influenced by leadership style, work environment, recognition, and opportunities for personal growth (Rusilowatiet al., 2025). In other words, leadership approaches such as transformational and servant leadership generally enhance employee engagement. Likewise, a supportive work environment and regular recognition help employees feel appreciated and committed to their roles. Alotaibi et al. (2020) argue that their genuine enthusiasm contributes to higher service quality, bolstering the hotel's reputation and overall financial performance. When employees are engaged, they exhibit higher morale, lower turnover intentions, and greater resilience under pressure.

Dimensions of Employee Engagement

Vigor

Vigor represents the high levels of resilience employees bring to their work. It reflects enthusiasm and the willingness to invest effort even when faced with challenges (Erwina, 2020). Indeed, employees with high vigor display persistence and motivation that enhance productivity and service quality, especially in customer-driven sectors such as hospitality (Nusraningrum et al., 2024). According to Park (2023) vigor

fuels proactive behaviour, creativity, and adaptability in dynamic work settings. In essence, vigor is the energetic foundation of engagement, enabling employees to sustain effort and enthusiasm in delivering superior customer service outcomes

Dedication

Dedication captures employees' sense of purpose, pride, and involvement in their work (Erwina, 2020). It signifies emotional attachment and commitment to organisational values and objectives. Dedicated employees perceive their work as meaningful and are often willing to go the extra mile to satisfy customers and achieve organisational goals (Jaya & Ariyanto, 2021). In other words, dedication connects an individual to their role by fostering a sense of ownership and passion, which is essential for providing exceptional service.

Absorption

Absorption refers to an employee's high level of immersion in work tasks, where time seems to pass quickly, and detachment becomes difficult (Jaya & Ariyanto, 2021). Employees experiencing absorption are fully engaged mentally and emotionally, demonstrating focus and enjoyment in their roles. In hospitality settings, such immersion enhances attention to detail, service accuracy, and customer satisfaction (Noor et al., 2024). Indeed, absorption drives flow states that improve creativity and reduce errors. This means that when an employee is fully immersed in their work, their focus and mental engagement increase, leading to greater consistency and quality in their service delivery, even in challenging or rapidly changing environments. Therefore, absorption embodies the cognitive dimension of engagement, promoting high-quality, consistent service performance in dynamic environments.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Social Exchange Theory (SET) developed by Blau (1964). The theory suggests that when employees feel supported, valued, and treated fairly by their organisation, they are more likely to reciprocate with positive attitudes and behaviours. Within the hospitality industry, these reciprocal exchanges are reflected in employees' readiness to devote their energy, dedication, and attention, key aspects of employee engagement, to providing exceptional service experiences. According to Rahmawati and Abadiyah (2024) engagement arises when employees perceive a balance between what they contribute and what they receive from the organisation, such as appreciation, empowerment, and a supportive environment. This psychological reciprocity motivates them to exhibit higher levels of vigor, dedication, and absorption in their roles.

Thus, Social Exchange Theory provides a robust explanation of how employee engagement translates into service delivery effectiveness. It underscores the importance of fair organisational practices and emotional reciprocity in fostering employees' intrinsic motivation and commitment. The theory aligns well with the objective of this study by highlighting that engaged employees, energised, dedicated, and absorbed, are central to achieving superior service outcomes in the hospitality industry.

Empirical Review

Sudiarta et al. (2025) conducted a study on the relationship between employee engagement, job satisfaction, and turnover intention in the hospitality industry. Adopting a quantitative design, they gathered data through surveys and interviews involving current and former restaurant employees. The findings revealed that both job satisfaction and engagement significantly and negatively influenced turnover intention. The researchers concluded that management can effectively reduce employee turnover by enhancing engagement, improving

compensation packages, promoting work-life balance, and providing clear career advancement opportunities in the hospitality sector.

Atolagbe et al. (2024) examined the relationship between employee engagement and organisational productivity in Abuja's hospitality sector. The study utilized a cross-sectional survey design, collecting data from 841 hotels using a census-based sampling approach. Through multiple regression analysis, the findings revealed that emotional engagement, intellectual engagement, and social engagement each had significant positive effects on organisational productivity. The results indicate that employees who are intellectually stimulated contribute more effectively to organisational outcomes. The study concluded that fostering engagement across these three dimensions can enhance competitiveness and sustainability in the hospitality industry.

Adesunloye et al. (2025) investigated the effects of employee engagement and job satisfaction on service delivery in the hotel industry in Oyo State, Nigeria. Using data collected from 787 employees across 38 hotels in 10 local government areas using Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling for data analysis. The study revealed that both employee engagement and job satisfaction significantly influenced service delivery, and that the two variables were also positively correlated with each other. The authors concluded that enhancing staff engagement through regular training, fair promotion, and career development opportunities improves service effectiveness.

Kishore et al. (2022) investigated the influence of employee engagement on turnover intentions among hospitality workers in Northern India. The study focused on three key drivers of engagement—cognitive, behavioral, and emotional—and examined their effects on employees' willingness to leave their jobs. Using data collected from frontline employees across hotels, restaurants, events, and retail segments, the findings revealed a significant negative relationship between employee engagement and turnover intentions. Specifically, higher levels of cognitive, behavioral, and emotional engagement reduced employees' desire to quit. The study concluded that fostering engagement through supportive work environments and motivational strategies can effectively minimize turnover in the hospitality sector, thereby improving organisational stability and service continuity.

Ochoche and Tamunomiegbam (2025) examined how government policies affect employee engagement within Nigeria's hospitality industry, focusing on luxury hotels in Lagos and Abuja. Using a qualitative research design and content analysis, the study analyzed responses from frontline employees and HR managers. The findings revealed that government policies significantly influenced employee motivation and engagement. Poor enforcement of labor regulations and inconsistent policy communication led to employee dissatisfaction and reduced morale. Conversely, transparent and consistently implemented policies fostered higher levels of engagement and trust in management. The study concluded that effective communication of regulatory changes and proactive HR practices are essential for sustaining engagement. It recommended that HR departments strengthen dialogue with employees to enhance policy understanding and compliance.

Yani et al. (2025) investigated the influence of organisational culture and employee engagement on employee performance in Bali's hospitality industry. Using a structured questionnaire and simple random sampling, data were collected from hotel staff and analyzed with structural equation modeling (SEM) via SmartPLS. The results demonstrated that a positive organisational culture significantly enhances both

employee engagement and performance. Moreover, employee engagement was found to mediate the relationship between organisational culture and performance, suggesting that culture indirectly influences performance through engagement. The study, grounded in Social Exchange Theory, concluded that employees who perceive a supportive and value-driven culture are more engaged and productive. It recommended fostering strong cultural values to sustain high engagement and superior service performance.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive survey research design, suitable for collecting quantitative data on the relationship between employee engagement, measured through vigor, dedication, and absorption, and service delivery effectiveness among hospitality employees. This design facilitated the use of standardized instruments to gather comparable data and draw valid inferences about variable relationships.

The population consisted of all employees in selected hotels in Asaba, Delta State. Out of 152 registered hotels (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2024), 34 hotels employing 100 or more staff were purposively selected, giving a total of 4,150 employees. These larger hotels were chosen because they have formalized structures and defined service systems, providing an ideal context for examining employee engagement and service delivery.

Using Yamane's (1967) formula for finite populations, a sample size of 365 was derived, increased by 10% to 402 to account for non-responses. A multi-stage sampling method was adopted. First, 34 hotels were purposively selected; second, proportionate stratified sampling ensured representation based on each hotel's staff size; and third, simple random sampling was used to select respondents within each hotel. This approach minimized bias and enhanced representativeness.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire divided into two sections. Section A captured demographic characteristics, while Section B measured the study variables. Items for vigor, dedication, and absorption were adapted from the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), while service delivery effectiveness was measured using validated scales on responsiveness, reliability, and service behavior. Responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5).

Validity and reliability were ensured through expert reviews by two HRM scholars and one hospitality practitioner, enhancing content and face validity. A pilot test involving 30 hotel employees yielded Cronbach's Alpha values of 0.86 (vigor), 0.88 (dedication), 0.83 (absorption), and 0.89 (service delivery effectiveness), all above the 0.70 benchmark (Nunnally, 1978), confirming the instrument's reliability.

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 25. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) summarized respondents' profiles, while inferential analyses, including Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression, tested the hypotheses. The analyses examined the strength and direction of relationships between employee engagement dimensions and service delivery effectiveness at the 0.05 significance level. Null hypotheses were rejected where $p < 0.05$ and accepted otherwise.

Findings and Discussion of Findings

Response Rate

A total of 402 questionnaires were administered and 378 were returned and usable for analysis, representing a 94% response rate. This response rate was considered adequate for statistical analysis.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Descriptive statistics for three demographic variables (gender, age, years of work experience) were computed and are displayed in Table 1,2 and Table 3.

Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	210	55.6
Female	168	44.4
Total	378	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 2: Age

Age (Years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 25	40	10.6
25-34	160	42.3
35-44	110	29.1
45 and above	68	18.0
Total	378	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 3: Employee Work Experience

Work Experience (Years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 1	28	7.4
1-5 years	140	37.0
6-10 years	120	31.7
10 years and above	90	23.8
Total	378	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables

The study variables were measured using items adapted from the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) for *vigor*, *dedication*, and *absorption*, and a validated service behaviour/responsiveness/reliability scale for *service delivery effectiveness*. Each scale used a 5-point Likert response (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Scale reliabilities (Cronbach's α) were computed during pilot testing and re-checked on the study data.

Table 4: Reliability and Descriptive Statistic for Study Variables

Variable	No of Items	Cronbach's	Mean	SD
Vigor	6	0.86	3.45	0.72
Dedication	5	0.88	3.62	0.68
Absorption	6	0.83	3.50	0.75
Service Delivery Effectiveness	8	0.89	3.58	0.66

Source: Field survey, 2025

On average respondents rated themselves above the scale midpoint (3.0) on all engagement dimensions and on service delivery effectiveness, indicating moderate-to-high self-perceived engagement and service effectiveness.

Inferential Statistics

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation

Pearson correlations were computed to examine bivariate relationships between the three engagement dimensions and service delivery effectiveness. Table 4.5 displays the correlation matrix, with two-tailed significance values.

Table 5: Correlation Matrix

Variable	1	2	3	4
Vigor	1.00			
Dedication	0.62	1.00		
Absorption	0.48	0.54	1.00	
Service delivery Effectiveness	0.52	0.57	0.41	1.00

** $p < .001$

The results of the correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships between the dimensions of employee engagement and service delivery effectiveness. Specifically, vigor showed a moderate positive correlation with service delivery effectiveness ($r = .52, p < .001$), while dedication demonstrated the strongest positive association ($r = .57, p < .001$). Absorption also exhibited a positive but comparatively weaker correlation with service delivery effectiveness ($r = .41, p < .001$). Overall, these findings indicate that higher levels of employee engagement across all three dimensions are associated with greater self-reported service delivery effectiveness.

Multiple Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the combined and unique contributions of vigor, dedication, and absorption in predicting service delivery effectiveness. Service delivery effectiveness was the dependent variable, and the three engagement dimensions were entered simultaneously as independent variables.

Table 6: Model summary

Model	R	R ²	Adj R ²	Std Error of the Est.
1	0.64	0.41	0.4	0.51

Table 7: ANOVA (Regression)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	47.26	3	15.75	87.04	0.00
Residual	103.14	374	0.28		
Total	150.4	377			

Table 8: Coefficients

Predictor	B (Unstandardized)	SE B	Beta (Standardized)	T	p
(Constant)	0.42	0.12	—	3.50	.001
Vigor	0.28	0.05	0.27	5.60	< .001
Dedication	0.35	0.05	0.33	7.00	< .001
Absorption	0.12	0.04	0.11	3.00	.003

The multiple regression analysis revealed that the model accounted for 41% of the variance in service delivery effectiveness ($R^2 = 0.41$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.40$), indicating a substantial explanatory power within the context of social science research. The overall model was statistically significant, $F(3, 374) = 87.04$, $p < .001$, confirming that the set of predictors collectively contributed meaningfully to service delivery effectiveness. Among the predictors, dedication emerged as the strongest unique predictor (Beta = .33, $B = 0.35$, $p < .001$), followed by vigor (Beta = .27, $B = 0.28$, $p < .001$), while absorption made a smaller but statistically significant contribution (Beta = .11, $B = 0.12$, $p = .003$). These results suggest that employees who demonstrate higher dedication, vigor, and absorption tend to report greater effectiveness in service delivery.

Hypotheses Testing

The results of hypothesis testing indicated that all three null hypotheses were rejected, demonstrating significant relationships between the dimensions of employee engagement and service delivery effectiveness. Specifically, employee vigor had a significant positive effect on service delivery effectiveness ($r = .52$, $p < .001$; $B = 0.28$, $p < .001$), leading to the rejection of the first hypothesis. Similarly, employee dedication showed the strongest positive influence on service delivery effectiveness ($r = .57$, $p < .001$; $B = 0.35$, $p < .001$). Therefore, the second hypothesis is rejected. Furthermore, employee absorption was also significantly associated with service delivery effectiveness ($r = .41$, $p < .001$) and made a unique contribution in the regression model ($B = 0.12$, $p = .003$), though its effect was smaller compared to vigor and dedication, leading to the rejection of the third hypothesis.

Discussion of Findings

The first finding showed that employee vigor had a significant positive effect on service delivery effectiveness. This suggests that workers who demonstrated higher energy and mental resilience were more effective in serving customers. This finding aligns with Srie and Ariyanto (2021), who reported that vigor enhances task performance through increased motivation and persistence.

The second finding revealed that employee dedication was the strongest predictor of service delivery effectiveness. This indicates that employees who showed pride, enthusiasm, and commitment to their work provided better quality service. This finding corroborates the results of Ariyanto et al. (2025), who reported that dedicated employees in Ghana's hospitality industry were more likely to exceed customer expectations. Likewise, Saks (2021) found that dedication fosters organizational citizenship behaviors that enhance service quality.

The third finding showed that employee absorption had a significant but weaker effect on service delivery effectiveness compared to vigor and dedication. This implies that while being deeply engrossed in work enhances focus and reliability, it contributes less to service delivery than energy and commitment. This

result is consistent with Jaya and Ariyanto (2021), who found that absorption supports consistent performance but may not directly influence customer interaction quality.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that employee engagement—measured through vigor, dedication, and absorption—significantly enhances service delivery effectiveness among hospitality workers in Asaba, Delta State. Dedication emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by vigor and absorption. This implies that employees who are energetic, committed, and deeply involved in their work deliver superior customer service. Overall, fostering employee engagement is crucial for improving service quality and sustaining competitiveness in the hospitality industry.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following three recommendations are made:

- i. Management should promote employee vigor by providing a supportive work environment, regular rest breaks, and wellness programs to sustain employees' energy levels.
- ii. Hospitality firms should strengthen employee dedication through recognition, fair reward systems, and opportunities for professional growth.
- iii. Managers should encourage absorption by assigning meaningful tasks and minimizing distractions to help employees remain focused and productive.

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