



**INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM**

**TELEVISION USE IN GUEST HOUSES: A SOCIOLOGICAL AND MEDIA STUDY  
OF SELECTED GUEST HOUSES IN ACCRA**

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**DEPARTMENT OF MEDIA AND JOURNALISM**

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SELECTED GUEST HOUSES IN ACCRA

BY

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## DECLARATIONS

### STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Majesty Bohitana Batera, declare that this thesis, except quotations and references contained in published works, which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere. Therefore, I bear the responsibility for any shortcomings.

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### SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

This Project Work has been prepared and presented under my supervision according to the guidelines for supervision and formatting of Project Work laid down by the University of Media, Arts and Communication UniMAC-IJ.

<b>Dr. Timothy Quashigah</b>		<b>9<sup>th</sup> December 2025</b>
<i>Supervisor Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my parents, Mr. Michael Bohitana and Mrs. Janet Bohitana, and my friend,

Mr. Paul Solomon Nketsiah

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am deeply grateful to God Almighty, whose strength, grace, and constant presence carried me through this academic journey. At moments when I felt overwhelmed or wanted to give up, His guidance renewed my determination and made it possible for me to reach this stage. My heartfelt appreciation goes to my supervisor, Timothy Quashigah, Ph.D for his exceptional support, patience, and dedication. His insightful guidance, countless corrections, late-night reviews, and willingness to give life to every chapter of this work have shaped this thesis immensely. I am truly thankful for his commitment and belief in my abilities.

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## ABSTRACT

This study examined how guests use in-room television in two guest houses in Accra and the meanings they attach to this practice. While television use is well studied in homes, little is known about its role in temporary, semi-private spaces such as guest houses. Guided by Uses and Gratifications Theory and Symbolic Interactionism, the study explored why guests turn on the television, what needs it meets, and how it shapes comfort and satisfaction. A qualitative approach was used, involving semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation at Golden Apple and Kikwor guest houses. Eighteen people participated, including twelve guests and six staff members, providing rich insights into individual viewing habits and institutional perspectives that often go unnoticed. Thematic analysis revealed clear patterns in how television was used. Guests relied on television for comfort, turning it on immediately to make the room feel familiar, welcoming, and less lonely. It served as background sound and a privacy buffer, reducing silence and masking noise from outside or nearby rooms. Many viewed it as a marker of quality, often checking it first when entering the room to judge the standard and perceived value of the space. Gendered viewing patterns were observed. Men preferred news, sports, and current affairs, while women often chose movies, telenovelas, and lifestyle programs. Some guests also reported using television to manage stress, pass time while waiting, and create a sense of routine during their stay, especially during periods of extended lodging. Overall, television played both functional and symbolic roles that shaped guests' experiences and their judgment of service quality. The study recommends regular maintenance, upgrades to smart TVs, and a balanced mix of channels to meet diverse preferences. It also highlights the need for more research on media use in temporary accommodation, including comparisons with hotels, hostels, and Airbnb stays to understand how broader social and technological contexts influence viewing behavior.

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## **KEY WORDS**

Guest Experience

Guest Houses

Hospitality Studies

Local Content Preferences

Media Sociology

Privacy Buffer

Symbolic Interactionism

Television Use

Temporary Spaces

Uses and Gratifications Theory

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

This chapter seeks to explain the historical and cultural background of television, its role in Ghanaian society, and why its use in guest houses deserves academic attention. Television has long been one of the most important media technologies across the world. Since its invention in the mid-20th century, it has developed into a central part of social and cultural life (Ghosh, & Bhowmi, 2025). In many societies, television has been more than a tool of communication; it has been a shaper of opinion, a cultural storyteller, and a mirror of collective identity (Moore, Comerford & Vettoreto, 2025). Globally, people have used television not only for news and entertainment but also to build shared understandings of events, trends, and lifestyles (Cabuk & Sirer, 2025). Even with the growth of digital media, television remains a trusted and widely available medium, especially in developing contexts where internet penetration is uneven (Lesitaokana, 2024; Yin, 2025).

In Ghana, television holds a special place as both a practical and symbolic medium. The Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) officially launched television broadcasting on 31 July 1965, marking the beginning of a new era in mass communication (Fosu, 2024). From the start, television was not just an entertainment channel but a platform for national development and cultural education. Lewis (2025) explains that the introduction of GBC TV reflected Ghana's broader state-led communication policy, which saw broadcasting as a tool for promoting unity and development.

Subsequent studies emphasize that Ghanaian television quickly became a cultural storyteller. Mohammed (2025) notes that locally produced dramas, news, and cultural programs helped to construct a sense of national identity by reflecting Ghanaian values and traditions. Agana et al., (2024) adds that the history of television in Ghana cannot be

separated from the country's political and social changes, as successive governments often used broadcasting to communicate policies, promote political agendas, and influence public opinion.

Over the decades, television has therefore served multiple roles: a source of information during elections, a platform for advertising and commerce, and a site of negotiation for cultural identity. Mohammed (2025) have shown how political communication dominates much of Ghanaian TV programming, while other researchers highlight children's viewing habits and the growing impact of advertising on lifestyle choices. Yet despite this wide body of research, very little attention has been given to how television is used in semi-private spaces like guest houses, where its functions and meanings may differ significantly from domestic or political contexts.

Guest houses occupy a unique space in Ghana's hospitality sector. Unlike large hotels that mostly serve business travelers, expatriates, or tourists, guest houses are more affordable and accessible to local residents (Boateng & Klopp, 2024). They are typically smaller establishments, sometimes family-run, that provide lodging for short stays (Bonney, 2025). In Accra, guest houses are often used by individuals or couples for weekend breaks, private retreats, or short visits where privacy and affordability are key considerations (García, 2024). In these settings, the television in the room is an important amenity. It may not be the main reason for choosing the accommodation, but its presence plays a role in how guests experience the space (Kumar & Sinha, 2025).

The act of turning on the television in a guest house is not always about content consumption. Some guests switch it on immediately upon entering the room because it creates a sense of normalcy in an otherwise unfamiliar space (Kumar & Sinha, 2025). Others do so because they believe that since they have paid for the facility, they must use everything provided (Kumar & Sinha, 2025). For some, the television is a source of entertainment,

catching up on sports, movies, or news (Bédard, Thain & Therrien, 2025). For others, it is simply background sound that makes the room feel less empty or a source of light in the room (Bédard et al., 2025). In some cases, television helps to mask external noises or provide a level of privacy during intimate moments (Konopka & Szymańska, 2024).

This pattern of television use raises important questions for both media studies and hospitality research. In media studies, television has traditionally been seen as something people watch attentively for information or entertainment. Yet in guest houses, television is often used symbolically: it represents comfort, privacy, or ownership of the space (Bédard et al., 2025). This challenges the traditional assumption that media is consumed mainly for content. Instead, it suggests that media also functions as an environmental and psychological tool (Hjorth et al., 2025).

From the hospitality perspective, the role of television as part of the guest experience is understudied. Hotels and guest houses are often evaluated in terms of cleanliness, customer service, food, or pricing (Singgalen, 2024). Television, if mentioned at all, is reduced to the idea of whether channels are available or whether the TV set is modern (Tang, 2025). But this overlooks the subtle ways television shapes a guest's comfort and satisfaction. A guest house that provides a working television with accessible local content may leave guests more satisfied than one that offers poor reception or limited programming (Ying, 2024; Talukder, 2025). Understanding how and why guests use in-room televisions can therefore provide valuable insights for managers who want to improve service delivery.

Beyond the practical, the question of meaning is equally important. Symbolic Interactionism reminds us that objects acquire meaning through interaction (Deegan, 2024). For a guest in Accra, switching on the television may symbolize ownership of the temporary space, turning it into something familiar and "homely" (Tang, 2025). In a society where amenities are linked with modernity and status, the act may also signal that the guest is

enjoying the full value of what they paid for (Xiao & Lutz, 2025). At the same time, Uses and Gratifications Theory helps us see that television provides specific gratifications, ranging from information to relaxation to escapism (Wei et al., 2024). These theoretical perspectives highlight that television use in guest houses is not random but socially and culturally shaped.

In short, the background to this study shows that while television remains central to Ghanaian media culture, its role in temporary, semi-private settings like guest houses has not been carefully examined. This study seeks to fill that gap by focusing on guest houses in Accra and exploring not only what guests watch, but why they turn on the television, how they use it, and what it means to them.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Despite the centrality of television in Ghanaian society, very little research has examined how it is used outside the home, particularly in guest houses. Most existing Ghanaian studies on media behavior have focused on political communication (Amankwah, 2024; Yeboah-Assiamah & Oduro, 2025), advertising and consumer influence or children's television viewing patterns (Norin et al., 2024). These studies confirm television's cultural and social importance but remain tied to the domestic or political sphere.

Hospitality research in Ghana, on the other hand, has concentrated on issues such as service quality, pricing, staff training, and tourism development (Agbenyegah & Neequaye, 2024; Adzinyo et al., 2024). While these works highlight what matters for customer satisfaction, they pay little attention to the role of media amenities such as in-room televisions. Even in global hospitality studies where television is mentioned, it is often reduced to a technical or secondary issue whether channels are available, whether the set is modern, or whether Wi-Fi or streaming has replaced traditional TV (Shirvani Moghaddam, 2025). This overlooks the subtle but significant ways that television shapes comfort and guest experience in temporary spaces.

This creates a knowledge gap. We do not know why guests turn on the television in these settings, what they watch, or what meanings they attach to the act. Without such insight, both media scholars and hospitality practitioners overlook an everyday behavior that may seem ordinary but is deeply tied to comfort, culture, and social meaning.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Research**

The central purpose of this research is to explore and understand the motivations and meanings behind television use in guest houses in Accra. While television is widely studied in homes, its use in temporary or semi-private spaces has been largely ignored, both in media studies and hospitality research. This study therefore seeks to go beyond surface-level observations by asking not only what people watch, but also why they turn on the television, what role it plays in shaping their experience, and what symbolic value it carries in such contexts.

The research aims to capture television as both a functional tool and a symbolic resource. On the one hand, guests may use the TV for entertainment, information, or relaxation and direct gratifications that align with existing theories like Uses and Gratifications. On the other hand, television use may also carry deeper meanings. It may help guests feel at home in a strange environment, create a sense of privacy, or signal value for money. By investigating these multiple layers, the study seeks to contribute to a broader understanding of media in everyday life while also providing insights for the hospitality industry in Ghana.

### **1.4 Research Objectives**

The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To identify the reasons why guests, turn on and use televisions in guest houses.
2. To explore the symbolic and cultural meanings guests attach to television use in temporary

spaces.

3. To examine the influence of cultural and social norms on television use in guest houses.
4. To document staff observations and perspectives on guest television use.
5. To contribute to media sociology and hospitality studies by linking functional and symbolic uses of television.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

1. Why do guests in Accra guest houses use in-room televisions?
2. What symbolic or cultural meanings are attached to this behavior?
3. How do cultural and social norms shape guest television use in Accra guest houses?
4. How do staff perceive patterns of television use among guests?
5. In what ways does this behavior extend or challenge existing theories in media sociology and hospitality studies?

### **1.6 Scope of the Study**

This study is limited to the exploration of television use in three selected guest houses located in Accra, Ghana. The focus on guest houses rather than large hotels is deliberate. Guest houses form a significant part of Ghana's hospitality industry because they are more accessible and affordable for local residents. Unlike high-end hotels that mainly attract international tourists and business travelers, guest houses are widely used by ordinary Ghanaians for short stays, weekend breaks, and private moments. This makes them a particularly relevant site for studying everyday media use in semi-private spaces.

The study is not intended to provide a statistical overview of all guest houses in Accra or Ghana at large. Instead, it uses a qualitative approach, relying on in-depth interviews and observations to capture the meanings, motivations, and experiences associated with in-room television use. By concentrating on a small number of guest houses, the research aims to uncover rich detail and depth rather than breadth.

The scope also excludes other forms of hospitality, such as high-end hotels, hostels, or Air Bed and Breakfast popularly known as Airbnb accommodations. (Airbnb is an online platform that connects travelers with hosts offering unique accommodations, such as homes, apartments, or rooms, for short-term rentals). While these may have their own interesting patterns of media use, the emphasis here is on guest houses because of their cultural relevance and frequent use by local residents. Furthermore, the study does not attempt to analyze television content in itself, but rather focuses on how guests interact with and interpret the act of using the television in these settings.

### **1.7 Significance of the Study**

This study will do three main things. First, it will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on media studies in Ghana by shifting attention away from the home and public political spaces to semi-private environments such as guest houses. By doing so, it expands the scope of media research to show that television is not only consumed for news and entertainment but also for comfort, ambience, and symbolic meaning. For scholars, researchers, and students, this study offers fresh evidence on how television functions in everyday life beyond traditional contexts.

Second, it will add to theoretical debates by applying both Uses and Gratifications Theory and Symbolic Interactionism in the Ghanaian hospitality setting. This dual framework allows the study to highlight how television serves both functional needs (such as relaxation, information, or escapism) and symbolic roles (such as making a room feel homely, modern, or private). In this way, the research enriches media sociology by showing how Ghanaian practices of television use compare with, or depart from, global patterns.

Third, the study will provide practical and policy insights. For the hospitality industry, guest house managers can use the findings to improve service delivery, from channel offerings to creating a more satisfying guest experience. At the policy level, the results can

inform tourism development strategies and media regulation. By showing that in-room television matters not only as an amenity but also as part of cultural identity and comfort, the study provides evidence that can guide decisions on service standards, satellite broadcasting policies, and the promotion of culturally relevant content in the hospitality sector.

In short, this study bridges theory, practice, and policy. It strengthens academic knowledge, enriches sociological understanding of media use, and provides practical tools for hospitality operators and policymakers to better serve both domestic and visiting guests.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter reviews what scholars already know about why people use media, and how people give meaning to everyday actions. It does four things. First, it explains the two theories guiding this research: Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and Symbolic Interactionism. Second, it reviews studies that are closest to my topic: research on television use in guest houses, media use in temporary or semi-private spaces, and Ghanaian or African work on television and hospitality. Third, it defines and explains the main concepts in my study and last, it builds a conceptual framework that brings these ideas together for the specific case of guest houses in Accra.

The goal is simple: to show what has been studied, what is still missing, and how this study will fill the gap. Throughout, the chapter keeps a Ghanaian focus while learning from global work. It treats television not only as a source of content but also as part of the feel of a room, something people may turn on for comfort, privacy, status, or habit. In short, the review sets up the argument that understanding guest-house television requires us to think about both motives and meanings, not just viewing statistics.

#### **2.2 Theoretical Review**

##### **2.2.1 Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)**

Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) emerged as a reaction against the “hypodermic needle” and “mass society” views of media, which assumed that audiences were passive and powerless before media influence. Scholars such as Almeida (2024) studied why women listened to radio soap operas, showing that they found emotional release and guidance in them. Wei et al., (2024). Gratification and its associations with problematic internet use: A

systematic review and meta-analysis using Use and Gratification theory. Elihu Katz and Jay Blumler (1970) developed UGT into a full framework, arguing that audiences are active participants who consciously select media to meet specific needs. This marked a major shift in media studies by giving agency to the audience.

Over time, UGT has been widely applied to newspapers, radio, television, and, more recently, digital and social media (Jensen & Neuman, 2024). Its central claim is that individuals use media for different reasons, and the same medium can serve different functions for different people. For instance, television news may serve a cognitive purpose for one person who seeks information, while for another it may serve an affective purpose, such as reassurance or entertainment.

Scholars have typically identified five main categories of needs:

1. Cognitive needs – the desire for information, learning, and orientation.
2. Affective needs – the search for pleasure, emotional satisfaction, or aesthetic experience.
3. Personal-integrative needs – the drive for credibility, stability, and status.
4. Social-integrative needs – the need for companionship, social interaction, and connection.
5. Tension release/escapism – the desire to relax, reduce stress, or escape from problems.

In television research, UGT has been particularly useful in explaining why people watch news, sports, soap operas, or films. For example, Leite and Vaz (2024) found that television provides companionship for lonely individuals. Niu et al., (2024) extended the concept by showing how television is often used as a social backdrop for family interaction. In the context of guest house television use in Accra, UGT can explain a range of motives. For

example, a business traveler might watch the evening news to stay informed (cognitive need), while a couple on a weekend stay might watch a movie for entertainment (affective need). Some guests may use television as background noise while working or relaxing (tension release), while others might prefer local-language programs to feel connected to home (social integrative need). The flexibility of UGT also allows for the inclusion of less traditional motivations, such as turning on the television simply because it is part of the amenities in the room, signaling a sense of value for money or using it to mask noise for privacy during intimate moments. This aligns closely with the Ghanaian hospitality context, where both functional use and cultural habits influence behavior.

### **2.2.1.1 Core Assumptions of UGT**

Uses and Gratifications Theory rests on several key assumptions that distinguish it from earlier models of media effects. First, it assumes that the audience is active, and that media use is goal-directed (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). Unlike the hypodermic needle model which portrays audiences as passive recipients of messages, UGT argues that individuals deliberately select media to satisfy specific needs. Second, the theory assumes that people are generally aware of their own needs and can explain why they use particular media. This allows researchers to collect self-reported data on motives and gratifications (Hatamleh & Akkof, 2025). Third, UGT recognizes that media compete not only with each other but also with non-media activities in fulfilling needs. For instance, relaxation may be achieved by watching television or by engaging in conversation, exercise, or leisure activities. Last, the theory holds that media use can be classified into broad categories of needs: cognitive, affective, personal-integrative, social-integrative, and tension release or escapism (Anum & Zulfiqar, 2025). These assumptions provide the foundation for explaining the diverse ways people interact with media in everyday life.

### **2.2.1.2 Strengths of UGT**

The major strength of UGT lies in its recognition of audience agency. It moves away from outdated views of people as passive consumers and instead acknowledges that audiences actively shape their media experiences (Ppali et al., 2025). The theory also provides a clear and structured framework, particularly through its five categories of needs, which can be applied across different media types. Over the years, UGT has shown remarkable flexibility and adaptability, being applied successfully to traditional forms of media like radio and television as well as to new platforms such as the internet and social media (Blaži, 2025). Moreover, UGT fits particularly well with qualitative research, since individuals are often able to describe their motives in their own words during interviews or surveys, thereby offering insight into the personal significance of media use. These strengths explain why UGT has remained a central and enduring framework in media studies.

However, UGT has limitations. Critics argue that it often results in descriptive lists of gratifications without offering deeper theoretical explanations of why those needs exist in the first place (Amira, 2025). A second weakness lies in its assumption that individuals are always conscious of their motives and can clearly articulate them. In practice, people often use media out of habit or even unconscious behavior, which cannot be fully captured by self-reported data (Peeters et al., 2025). Another critique is that UGT tends to focus too much on the individual level, neglecting broader social, cultural, and institutional contexts that also shape media use (Amira, 2025). Finally, the theory explains what people do with media but does not always capture the symbolic meanings that media use may carry in specific social settings. This is precisely where theories like Symbolic Interactionism can complement UGT by revealing the deeper cultural significance of everyday media practices, often producing lists of motives without exploring the deeper cultural or symbolic meanings of media use (Bouvier & Way, 2021).

Despite these weaknesses, UGT is particularly useful for studying television use in guest houses in Accra. Guest house settings involve active choices: guests decide whether to switch on the television, what channel to select, and whether to watch actively or leave it as background sound. These decisions can be directly linked to gratifications such as:

- i. Cognitive: catching up on news or sports scores.
- ii. Affective: relaxing after a stressful day.
- iii. Social integrative: watching together with a partner.
- iv. Tension release: using TV sound to create comfort or mask noise.

In other words, UGT provides a ready-made lens to categorize the different ways guests use television, from functional needs like entertainment to subtle uses like reducing silence. While it does not fully explain the symbolic meaning of these actions, it offers a solid foundation for identifying and organizing guest motives, which is why it is paired with Symbolic Interactionism in this study. That is why Symbolic Interactionism is introduced as a complementary perspective.

### **2.2.2 Symbolic Interactionism**

Symbolic Interactionism is a sociological theory that developed from the work of George Herbert Mead in the early 20th century and was later formalized by Herbert Blumer (1969). At its core, Symbolic Interactionism argues that people act toward things based on the meanings those things hold for them. These meanings are created through social interaction and are continuously interpreted and reinterpreted in everyday life. Unlike structuralist or functionalist theories that emphasize large social systems, Symbolic Interactionism focuses on the micro-level of human behavior, paying attention to how individuals define situations, assign meanings, and act accordingly. The television set, for example, is not just a device that

delivers content, it becomes a symbol that people use to create comfort, signal status, or negotiate relationships in specific contexts.

### **2.2.2.1 Core Assumptions**

Blumer (1969) outlined three basic premises of Symbolic Interactionism:

- i. Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings those things have for them.
- ii. The meanings of things are derived from social interaction.
- iii. These meanings are modified through interpretation as people deal with the situations they encounter.

This means that everyday actions, such as switching on a television, can carry multiple layers of meaning depending on the social context. This theory emphasizes that human behavior is not simply a reaction to external stimuli but is mediated through the meanings individuals assign to objects, events, and actions. In media studies, Symbolic Interactionism shifts attention from media content to the uses and meanings of media in social life.

For example, turning on the television is not just about accessing content; it may symbolize family togetherness, signal the start of relaxation, or create a sense of normalcy in a new environment. Cabalquinto (2022) noted that television often works as a social resource, organizing family routines and marking boundaries between public and private time.

In the context of guest houses in Ghana, Symbolic Interactionism helps us understand that when a guest turns on the TV, they may not be primarily interested in watching a program. Instead, the act may symbolize ownership of the space, create privacy by masking outside noise, or serve as a marker of modernity and value. These meanings cannot be captured by UGT alone, which is why the two theories complement each other.

### **2.2.2.2 Strengths of Symbolic Interactionism**

One of the main strengths of Symbolic Interactionism is that it captures the subjective dimensions of human behavior. It recognizes that people do not simply react to media or technology mechanically but assign meanings to them in ways that shape how they are used (Bailey et al., 2022). This makes the theory especially useful for qualitative research, where participants' own voices and interpretations are central. Symbolic Interactionism also allows researchers to explore how the same action can mean different things to different people in different contexts. For instance, while one guest may switch on a television in a guest house to relax, another may do so to mask noise or to claim ownership of the room. By paying attention to these differences, the theory produces a rich and nuanced understanding of everyday practices. Another strength is its flexibility; it can be applied across diverse fields, from media studies to sociology, education, and communication, wherever meaning-making processes are central.

Critics of Symbolic Interactionism argue that it can sometimes be too focused on micro-level interactions and may neglect broader social structures (Hannem, 2021). However, for a study like this, which is concerned with everyday practices in semi-private spaces, its strength lies in capturing the symbolic dimension of behavior

### **2.2.2.3 Why Both Theories Together**

Bringing UGT and Symbolic Interactionism together provides a fuller lens for this research. UGT explains what gratifications guests seek when using television; relaxation, entertainment, information, companionship, or escape. Symbolic Interactionism explains what meanings guests attach to the act of using television; comfort, privacy, ownership, modernity, or cultural belonging. In a guest house context, these two dimensions often overlap. A guest may tune in to a football match to relax (UGT), but the act of doing so also signals that the room is theirs to control (Symbolic Interactionism). Another guest may keep

the TV on as background sound to reduce tension (UGT), but this also symbolizes a claim to privacy (Symbolic Interactionism). By using both frameworks, this study avoids the narrowness of looking only at gratifications or only at meanings. It acknowledges that television in guest houses is both a functional tool and a symbolic resource. This dual perspective makes it possible to analyze guest behavior more comprehensively, offering contributions to both media sociology and hospitality research.

## **2.4 Empirical Review / Overview of Literature Reviewed, Discussed, and Applied**

### **2.4.1 International Research on In-Room Television and Hospitality Media**

Globally, in-room television has long been recognized as a core hospitality amenity. Yousuf and Chaker (2023) note that even budget hotels almost always include televisions, because guests perceive them as a basic expectation. In fact, many travelers equate the absence of a TV with a drop in service quality. Kim and Han (2022) observed that the television is often the first amenity guests test when they enter a room, suggesting that beyond entertainment, it serves as a marker of the room's functionality.

Research also shows that television plays multiple roles beyond program viewing. Hjorth (2025) found that guests in Australian hotels often used television as a source of background noise to create ambience and reduce feelings of emptiness in unfamiliar rooms. Similar patterns have been observed in Europe and the United States, where guests keep televisions on not necessarily to watch but to establish a sense of routine (Abu-Salma et al., 2025). The concept of "ambient media" captures this practice: the television is "on but unattended," shaping the mood of the room (Hjorth, 2025).

Another line of research highlights content preferences. Ibrahim (2023) discovered that in American hotels, news, sports, and films dominate guest selections, reflecting both information-seeking and entertainment gratifications. Industry reports confirm spikes in hotel

TV usage during major events such as the FIFA World Cup or breaking news coverage (Sobral, Fairley & O'Brien, 2022). This demonstrates that in-room television remains relevant even in the age of personal devices, especially during moments of shared global interest.

The usability of technology also matters. George et al (2024) found that modern systems with simple navigation encouraged active engagement, while outdated or complicated setups discouraged use. Thus, international studies point to three consistent findings: television in hotels functions as (1) a symbol of quality, (2) an ambient comfort tool, and (3) a source of preferred content, especially news and sports.

#### **2.4.2 Media Use in Temporary and Semi-Private Spaces**

Beyond hotels, studies of other transient environments such as airport lounges, waiting rooms, and dormitories offer insights into how people use media in unfamiliar spaces. Hjorth (2025) noted that travelers often use media to recreate familiar routines when away from home. Jeon (2025) described television as a “social companion” that helps manage isolation, even when viewers are not paying attention to the content. Similarly, Jeon et al (2025) argued that technology in transient spaces provides a form of “simulated social presence,” easing anxiety by mimicking the comfort of human interaction.

Egbuna et al (2025) in Nigeria observed that in guest houses and hotels, guests frequently used television sound to mask intimate or private activities, aligning with the broader literature on media as a privacy buffer. Studies of everyday media habits reinforce this pattern: many people have a ritual of switching on the TV as soon as they enter a room (Boross, 2024). This micro-ritual of “enter, bag down, TV on” reduces cognitive load, fills silence, and reassures the individual that the environment is working as expected. For some, the first five minutes of TV in a room set the tone for their entire stay.

Thus, research on temporary and semi-private spaces shows that television use is as much about psychological comfort and habit as it is about content. These insights transfer directly to guest houses in Ghana, where guests may use television to symbolize control, privacy, and belonging in a rented room.

### **2.4.3 African Studies on Media Use in Hospitality or Semi-Private Spaces**

In Africa, empirical studies on in-room television are limited, but related research provides important clues. Dayour (2023), in a study of Ghanaian hotels, found that access to satellite TV and internet influenced guest choices, though his study focused more on ICT adoption than on lived experience. Edosomwan and Okoro (2024) examined hotel television habits and found that guests strongly prioritized access to local-language channels and Nollywood films. This preference reflects the cultural importance of familiarity in media consumption. Similarly, Yin (2025) argued that audiences across West Africa often prefer regional or culturally proximate programming to international channels, even when both are available.

African studies also highlight the role of television in managing privacy and intimacy. Zou and Mawby (2021) explored “temporary transience” in African cities, showing how individuals use media to feel safe or comfortable in unfamiliar environments. In hotel and guest house contexts, this translates into the use of television as background noise to reduce vulnerability.

The evidence, therefore, suggests two key findings for Africa: first, content preferences are culturally anchored, with Nollywood, Kumawood, and local-language channels providing a sense of home; and second, television in hospitality settings functions symbolically as a tool for privacy, safety, and comfort.

#### **2.4.4 Ghanaian Studies on Television Use**

Ghanaian media studies have historically focused on television as a tool for political communication, public debate, and cultural identity. Bedu-addo (2022) examined how news and talk shows influence political participation, while the Ghana Statistical Service tracked television access and digital migration. Family viewing studies highlight television as a communal practice, strengthening bonds and creating a shared cultural experience. Andoh-Mensah (2022). emphasized the pride Ghanaians attach to local-language and Ghanaian-produced content, reinforcing television's role in cultural identity.

However, research on hospitality contexts remains scarce. Verma and Thakur (2022) noted that ICT amenities in hotels, but did not explore how guests actually used in-room televisions. Other hospitality studies in Ghana concentrate on tourism development, pricing, and service quality (Khuan et al., 2024), with little attention to media amenities. This gap is striking given the growth of guest houses in Accra. Many of these facilities serve not international tourists but residents seeking privacy, making their media use distinct and worthy of study.

#### **2.4.5 Summary of Gaps**

A systematic review of existing research shows three major gaps:

- i. Global studies confirm that hotel television use is common, but they often overlook symbolic and cultural meanings, focusing instead on satisfaction and usability.
- ii. African studies highlight content preferences and privacy-related uses but rarely explore symbolic meanings in depth.
- iii. Ghanaian studies remain preoccupied with politics and family viewing, leaving hospitality contexts rarely studied.

Together, these gaps justify the present research. By focusing on guest houses in Accra, this study addresses the overlooked intersection of media sociology and hospitality studies, showing how television in temporary spaces is used for both functional gratifications and symbolic, culturally shaped meanings.

## **2.5 Conceptual Review**

### **2.5.1 Concept of Television in Everyday Life**

Television is not just a box that shows programs; it is a medium that has become deeply woven into daily routines, social relationships, and ideas about modern living. Historically, television moved from being a novel technology to an ordinary household item that helps people organize time, talk about events, and feel connected to the wider world (Letak, 2022; Garcia-Da-Rocha, 2022). Scholars have described television as both a “cultural storyteller” and a “social companion,” highlighting the way it frames shared experiences and everyday interactions (Boddie et al., 2024). In many places and particularly in Ghana, owning or using a television is often read as a sign that a household is “up to date” or comfortable (Du, 2023). In short: TV gives information, entertainment and means things such as modernity, belonging and comfort.

From a practical point of view, television serves predictable functions. People turn it on to find out what is happening (news, weather, sports), to be entertained (movies, drama, music), or to relax and pass the time. Santoso (2021) emphasized the role of television in relaxation and companionship, while Holler (2023) described television as “ambient media” often left on in the background to fill silence. Hjorth (2025) similarly observed that televisions in hotel rooms are frequently switched on but not actively watched, creating atmosphere rather than delivering content. Together, these studies suggest that television is more than an information source: it is part of the environment. Yet not all scholars agree. Larsson and Chehade (2025), for instance, saw such ambient use as evidence of people

seeking “simulated social presence,” raising questions about whether this behavior reflects comfort or dependency.

Television also plays a powerful social role. In many households, it structures family time through shared viewing, provides topics for conversation, and acts as a social companion for those who are alone (Fingerman et al., 2022). Ghanaian research supports this view. Adjin-Tettey and Etrue (2025) showed how prime-time programs in Ghana foster family conversations and collective interpretations of social issues. Agana et al (2024) further argued that television reinforces cultural identity, especially when programming is in local languages or reflects Ghanaian social realities. However, this communal dimension may look different in transient or semi-private spaces such as guest houses, where television is often used individually or by couples, and its meanings may shift toward privacy and comfort rather than family togetherness.

The Ghanaian context also highlights the cultural significance of television content. Since the early years of GBC television, the medium has been central to national storytelling and public information (Agana, 2024). Local drama and regional film industries such as Nollywood and Kumawood are widely watched because they speak familiar languages and reflect everyday concerns (Edosomwan & Okoro ,2024). Even within pay-TV systems like DSTV, Ghanaian and regional content remains important because it anchors viewers in their cultural environment, balancing global programming with local familiarity.

Importantly for this study, the everyday meaning of television varies by place. In a family living room, TV may represent togetherness; in a guest house, it may symbolize service quality, modernity, or simply the comfort of familiar sound in an unfamiliar room (Rosen, 2023). Kim and Han (2022) found that many guests switch on the TV as soon as they enter a room, treating it as a ritual that signals the room is functioning and reduces anxiety.

Staff accounts from guest houses often confirm this practice, noting that televisions are left on even when no one is actively watching.

For my research, treating television as both functional (what it does) and symbolic (what it means) is essential. This means that during fieldwork, I will not only ask guests what programs they watch but also pay attention to observational details: which channels are left running, what times the television is used, and how staff perceive typical guest habits. These small practices provide clues to the non-content uses of television in temporary spaces, providing insights that are missing from existing Ghanaian scholarship and that this study seeks to contribute.

### **2.5.2 Concept of Hospitality and Guest Houses in Ghana**

Hospitality is generally understood as the business of providing food, lodging, and related services to people away from their homes (Tahiri, 2021). In Ghana, as in many parts of the world, it covers a wide range of establishments, including hotels, restaurants, hostels, lodges, and guest houses. Each of these categories, however, performs a slightly different role in society. While large hotels are often associated with international tourism, business travel, and expatriate visitors, guest houses occupy a more intimate and everyday position within Ghana's hospitality sector.

Guest houses are typically smaller, more affordable, and often privately or family-owned. According to Adu-Gyamfi (2022), they represent one of the fastest-growing segments of Ghana's accommodation industry, especially in urban and peri-urban areas. Their affordability and accessibility make them attractive to a wide range of users. Unlike hotels, which primarily serve international or business guests, guest houses are used heavily by local residents. Students, young professionals, couples, and small families frequently patronize them for short stays, weekend breaks, or moments of privacy. Bour-Pepurah et al (2022) argue

that this local orientation sets guest houses apart from hotels by embedding them within the rhythms of Ghanaian urban life.

Amenities play a central role in how these spaces are experienced. Because guest houses operate on smaller budgets and often lack the luxury services of hotels, the presence of basic amenities such as a functioning television becomes highly symbolic. Kim (2022) observed that across hospitality contexts, televisions are one of the first amenities guests look for in a room. Ghanaian evidence supports this view: the Ghana Statistical Service reported that televisions remain among the most expected features in guest houses, sometimes ranking above Wi-Fi access in importance. For many guests, the television signifies value for money, comfort, and modernity. Even when it is not actively watched, it helps create an atmosphere that makes the space feel complete and familiar.

Guest houses in Ghana therefore, go beyond providing mere shelter. They offer privacy, intimacy, and comfort, qualities that are reinforced through amenities like television. For some guests, the television is a functional tool, giving access to news, sports, or movies. For others, it is a symbolic presence, offering background sound, masking external noise, or providing light in the room. In both cases, the television contributes to the overall hospitality experience in ways that extend beyond entertainment.

For this research, guest houses provide the ideal site of study because they capture a unique combination of intimacy, locality, and symbolic meaning. Unlike international hotels where in-room entertainment is tied to global standards, guest houses in Accra reflect Ghanaian cultural practices and everyday routines. Studying television use in these spaces therefore opens a window into both personal habits and broader social meanings, situating media use within the lived realities of urban Ghana.

### **2.5.3 Concept of Media Use in Temporary and Semi-Private Spaces**

Much media research has focused on two extremes: the home as a private site of everyday routines, and public spaces such as markets or town squares where media is shared collectively. However, there is an understudied middle ground: environments that are temporary and semi-private. These include guest houses, hotels, dormitories, hostels, airport lounges, and even waiting rooms. They are not fully public like markets, but they are not fully private like homes either. People occupy them for short periods of time, often with the goal of comfort, privacy, or a sense of belonging in an unfamiliar setting.

Scholars argue that in such contexts, media practices are often carried over from the home. Hjorth (2025), for example, observed that travelers who routinely switch on the television at home often repeat the same ritual in hotels or guest houses. This behavior is less about watching specific content and more about reproducing a familiar action that reduces stress and signals normalcy. Kim (2022) described this as television's role as a "social companion," filling silence and helping people avoid the feeling of being alone. Yet others, such as Kim (2022), caution that what looks like comfort may also signal dependency on technology to simulate social presence. This tension highlights that while media use in semi-private spaces may reduce anxiety, it also raises questions about how deeply people rely on ambient technologies for reassurance.

Privacy management is another important theme. Egoh and Okon (2021), studying Nigerian guest houses, found that guests often used television sound to mask conversations or intimate activities, supporting earlier observations that television can act as a shield in environments with thin walls or close neighbors. This complements findings from Ward (2023) who showed that ambient television is often less about content and more about creating an auditory environment that protects personal space. The consensus across these studies is that television serves as both a comfort tool and a privacy buffer. However, the

African work (Egoh & Okon, 2021) extends this argument by grounding it in contexts where infrastructure, housing density, and cultural practices shape how much privacy people expect or negotiate in temporary spaces.

Another dimension is multitasking and partial attention. Television in semi-private spaces often runs in the background while people check their phones, eat, rest, or talk with companions. Hjorth (2025) described this as “ambient media”, television that is on but not the center of attention, shaping mood rather than delivering content. This echoes Garganas' (2024) earlier work, but more recent studies add that the rise of mobile devices means television now complements, rather than dominates, other media in these spaces. Thus, in semi-private environments, television is not abandoned but integrated into broader multi-screen habits.

For guest houses in Accra, these insights are highly relevant. Such spaces are heavily used by locals for temporary privacy, short breaks, or private meetings. Television in this setting is rarely just about following a program; it is about making the room feel secure, familiar, and worth the cost of the stay. By situating television use within the concept of semi-private spaces, this study shows how media routines are transplanted from the home, adapted to new environments, and given fresh symbolic meanings.

#### **2.5.4 Functional Uses of Television in Guest Houses**

One of the clearest ways to understand television use is to look at the functions it serves for people. Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) offers a helpful framework, arguing that audiences actively select media to satisfy particular needs (Xu et al., 2025). These needs are typically grouped into cognitive, affective, personal-integrative, social-integrative, and tension release. In guest houses, television meets all of these needs, but in ways shaped by the temporary and semi-private nature of the setting.

First, television satisfies cognitive needs. Guests may turn on the television to check news, sports results, or weather updates. For a traveler, this provides orientation in an unfamiliar city; for a local guest, it offers continuity with daily habits. As Pérez and De Los (2023) noted in a hospitality study, the presence of news channels is often seen as a marker of quality service. Yet, unlike at home where information seeking may be sustained, in guest houses this use may be brief, symbolic, or even ritualistic checking the headlines before leaving the TV on for ambience.

Second, television meets affective needs. After stressful journeys or daily routines, guests often watch comedies, films, or music channels to relax and elevate mood. Hjorth (2025) described this affective use in hotels as a form of “emotional escape” that helps guests detach from the pressures of daily life. In Ghana, this may involve Kumawood films or Nollywood dramas that feel both familiar and entertaining, offering comfort through cultural proximity (Olympio, 2022).

Third, television addresses personal-integrative needs. Watching certain programs, particularly international news channels like BBC or CNN, can enhance a guest’s sense of credibility and social status. Hoxhaj et al (2023) observed, media choices often reflect self-image. In semi-private spaces, this dimension may be amplified: the guest house stay is temporary, but the identity work performed, “I watched CNN, so I am informed,” extends beyond the room.

Fourth, television supports social-integrative needs. Couples or friends staying together may watch a film, follow a football match, or comment on news stories, turning the television into a shared activity. Even solo guests may feel connected to a larger imagined community of viewers. Kacane and Hernández-Serrano (2023) described this as television’s “social companionship,” bridging physical isolation with symbolic connection.

Finally, television provides tension release and escapism. Boursier et al (2021) found that many viewers use television as a coping mechanism, a finding echoed in contemporary hospitality studies. In guest houses, this is perhaps the most common function: television offers distraction from stress, comfort in silence, and relaxation after the day's activities. For Ghanaian audiences, this may involve sports viewing, local dramas, or music channels that resonate with cultural identity.

What is important is that these functions often overlap. A guest may turn on the television initially for information but leave it running to create background ambience. Another may watch for entertainment while also using the shared viewing experience to strengthen a relationship. This demonstrates UGT's strength in categorizing functions, but also its limits: as critics note, people are not always consciously aware of their motives, and much media use is habitual (Soror et al., 2022). In guest houses, this complexity is particularly visible. The television is not merely a device for watching programs; it is a multi-functional tool that addresses practical, emotional, and social needs within a temporary space.

### **2.5.5 Symbolic Meanings of Television in Guest Houses**

As outlined earlier in the theoretical framework, Symbolic Interactionism is useful for explaining how people act toward things based on the meanings those things hold (Azarian, 2023). In the context of this study, it helps us see why turning on a television in a guest house is not simply about consuming programs but about what the act itself represents.

One important symbolic meaning is ownership of space. When a guest enters a room and immediately switches on the television, the act can symbolize control and settlement. It transforms the room from an unfamiliar, rented environment into one that feels temporarily theirs. Just as unpacking a bag or adjusting a pillow personalizes a space, turning on the TV makes the guest feel at home. Hjorth (2025) observed this ritual among travelers in Australia,

while (Karadzhov, 2023) described it as part of how people reduce anxiety in temporary accommodations.

Television also symbolizes modernity and value-for-money. In Ghana, where amenities are closely tied to perceptions of quality, the presence and use of a working television reassure guests that the facility meets a standard of modern comfort (Sadik, 2021). Even when the television is not actively watched, its mere availability and use can validate the money spent. In this sense, the television becomes evidence that the guest house is “worth it.”

Another symbolic role is privacy management. Guests often use the sound of television to mask external noises or to shield intimate activities from being overheard. Sampaio-Dias (2024) referred to this as television’s “structural use,” where it helps organize or protect the social environment. Egoh and Okon (2021) confirmed this in Nigerian guest houses, noting that televisions often served as noise buffers in settings with thin walls. Thus, television symbolizes safety and control in spaces that might otherwise feel exposed.

Television can also represent familiarity in a strange place. Guest houses, by definition, are temporary spaces. For many guests, leaving the TV on reproduces the routines of home: the voice of a news anchor, the rhythm of football commentary, or the chatter of a local soap opera provides comfort and normalcy (Sadik, 2021). Even far from their own living rooms, guests recreate a sense of “home” through television.

Finally, television use in guest houses reflects social identity and cultural belonging. Selecting local-language channels, Kumawood, or Nollywood films signals attachment to cultural roots. Conversely, choosing international channels such as CNN or BBC may symbolize global sophistication or status. Hoxhaj (2023) noted that such media choices often

reflect self-image as much as information needs. Thus, what guests watch is not only about content but also about what that choice communicates to themselves and others.

In short, the symbolic meanings of television in guest houses demonstrate that media is never neutral. The act of turning on a television, the choice of channel, or even the decision to let it run in the background all carry layers of social and cultural significance. For this study, recognizing these symbolic uses is essential. It shows that television in Ghanaian guest houses is more than an appliance; it is a tool through which guests negotiate comfort, privacy, identity, and value in temporary spaces.

### **2.5.6 Concept of Guest Experience and Satisfaction**

In hospitality research, the concept of guest experience remains central, referring to the overall impression a visitor forms during a stay, shaped not only by physical facilities but also by emotions, interactions, and other cues. The quality of amenities is a key part of this, influencing not only comfort but also guests' psychological and evaluative responses (Demirciftci et al., 2024; "Hotel Amenities, Customer Satisfaction and Customer Experience," 2022).

Among amenities, in-room technology (which may include television or entertainment systems) appears increasingly important. A recent systematic review of hotel-amenity literature identifies technology- and general-amenity features as major determinants of guest satisfaction and perceived quality. (International Journal of Hospitality Management, 2025). Empirical evidence confirms that amenities significantly influence customer experience and satisfaction guesthouses and hotels with well-maintained amenities tend to record higher satisfaction and likelihood of return (Demirciftci et al., 2024).

However, what remains under-researched, especially in peer-reviewed literature from 2020 onwards, are specific patterns such as: how television (versus other media) contributes

to symbolic perceptions of modernity, cultural familiarity (e.g. local-language film channels), or social-integrative functions among guests in guest houses, especially in African contexts like Ghana. These remain valuable hypotheses rather than documented findings.

### **2.5.7 Conceptual Synthesis for This Study**

The concepts reviewed above show that television in guest houses is far more than an entertainment device. It sits at the intersection of media use, hospitality practices, and social meaning. To understand guest behavior in Accra's guest houses, we need to see television in two complementary ways: as a functional tool and as a symbolic object.

From a functional perspective, television satisfies cognitive, emotional, personal, and social needs. Guests may use it to check news and sports (cognitive), to relax or escape stress (affective), to affirm credibility or social standing (personal-integrative), or to share viewing moments with partners and friends (social-integrative). These functions are practical and easy to observe, fitting neatly within the framework of Uses and Gratifications Theory.

From a symbolic perspective, however, television use is about meanings rather than just functions. Turning on the TV may symbolize ownership of a temporary room, privacy, modern comfort, or even cultural belonging. Guests may not be interested in what is showing, but the very act of switching it on can reduce anxiety, make the room feel homely, or confirm that the money spent was worthwhile. These meanings are best explained through Symbolic Interactionism, which focuses on how people create and interpret meaning in everyday acts.

Bringing these strands together, this study views television in guest houses as a dual-purpose medium:

- i. Functional: it provides information, entertainment, and stress relief.
- ii. Symbolic: it shapes feelings of privacy, familiarity, comfort, and cultural identity.

The concept of guest experience and satisfaction ties these two dimensions together. Guests judge their stay not only by whether the television works but also by how its use supports their deeper needs for comfort, privacy, and connection. In other words, television influences both the practical outcome of the stay and the emotional impression it leaves behind.

For research purposes, this synthesis means that the study will not limit itself to asking “what programs do guests watch?” Instead, it will look at television as part of a broader experience, asking why guests turn it on, what meanings they attach to it, and how it contributes to their satisfaction in guest houses. This holistic approach ensures that the research contributes to both media studies and hospitality scholarship, bridging a gap that has so far been overlooked in Ghana.

## **2.6 Conceptual Framework**

A conceptual framework shows how the theories and literature reviewed in this chapter connect to the present study. It guides both the design of the research and the interpretation of findings. For this study, the framework combines two perspectives: Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and Symbolic Interactionism.

From UGT, the study draws the idea that guests in guest houses use television to satisfy functional needs such as:

- i. Cognitive needs (information, orientation, news, sports highlights),
- ii. Affective needs (pleasure, relaxation, distraction),
- iii. Social integrative needs (companionship with a partner, sharing a common activity),
- iv. Tension release or escapism (relieving stress, masking silence or noise).

From Symbolic Interactionism, the study draws attention to the meanings people attach to the act of turning on the television. In guest houses, television may not always be about content but about what the act symbolizes:

- i. Ownership of space — making a temporary room feel like one’s own.
- ii. Privacy — using the sound of television as a buffer.
- iii. Modernity and value — showing that the facility is functional and worth the price.
- iv. Familiarity — recreating the feeling of “home” in a new environment.

By integrating these two perspectives, the conceptual framework recognizes that television in guest houses is both a practical tool and a symbolic resource. Guests may satisfy immediate needs while also attaching deeper social and cultural meanings to the behavior.

### **2.6.1 Proposed Conceptual Model (Textual Description)**

At the center of the model is Guest Television Use in Guest Houses.

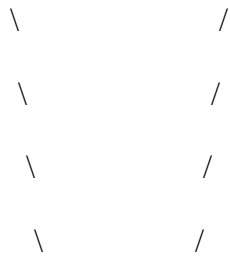
- On one side, Functional Gratifications (UGT) feed into it: information, relaxation, entertainment, social connection, and escapism.
- On the other side, Symbolic Meanings (Interactionism) feed into it: ownership of space, privacy, familiarity, and value for money.
- These two streams are shaped by the hospitality context (Accra guest houses, local cultural norms, availability of DSTV/local channels).
- Together, they influence the overall guest experience and satisfaction.

#### Diagram

Functional Gratifications (UGT)	Symbolic Meanings (Interactionism)
- Information	- Ownership of space
- Entertainment	- Privacy buffer
- Relaxation	- Familiarity/home-like feeling

- Social connection                      - Value for money/modernity

- Escapism



Guest Television Use in Guest Houses



Guest Experience & Satisfaction

## 2.7 Hypothesis and Justification Tied to Prior Statements

In qualitative research, hypotheses are often framed as guiding assumptions rather than fixed predictions. They are derived from theory and prior studies and serve to orient the research focus. In this study, the hypotheses are shaped by the Uses and Gratifications Theory, Symbolic Interactionism, and the empirical gaps identified in the literature review.

### 2.7.1 Working Hypotheses / Assumptions

1. Television use in guest houses goes beyond active viewing of content and includes symbolic and ritualistic uses. Guests are likely to turn on the television not only to watch programs but also to create background sound, claim ownership of the room, and make the environment feel comfortable.
2. Functional gratifications will overlap with symbolic meanings in shaping guest behavior.
3. For example, a guest may watch sports for entertainment (UGT) while simultaneously using the act of watching to affirm value for money or signal modernity (Symbolic Interactionism).

4. Cultural norms and local content shape patterns of television use in Ghanaian guest houses.
5. Guests may prefer local-language channels, Ghanaian entertainment, or Nollywood/Kumawood films because these provide familiarity and reinforce cultural belonging.
6. Staff observations will provide an alternative perspective on guest television use.

Staff may notice patterns such as guests leaving TVs on when they are not present, switching to specific channels, or using the television more at night. These observations can validate or extend guest self-reports. These assumptions are justified by the gaps highlighted earlier. Global literature shows that hotel televisions are often used for ambience, but symbolic dimensions remain underexplored. African studies confirm the importance of local content but do not analyze symbolic meanings. Ghanaian studies focus on television in the home or in politics, leaving hospitality spaces unexamined.

By testing these assumptions through interviews and observations, the study will extend Uses and Gratifications Theory to semi-private spaces and enrich Symbolic Interactionist perspectives with evidence from Ghana. This dual approach ensures that both functional motives and symbolic meanings are captured, making the study relevant to both media scholars and hospitality practitioners.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the research methodology adopted for the study. It provides justification for the use of a qualitative design, explains the study area, sampling methods, data collection tools, and data analysis procedures. The chapter also highlights measures taken to ensure trustworthiness, discusses ethical considerations, identifies potential limitations, and ends with a summary. The aim is to provide transparency and clarity about how the study will be conducted and to show that the methodological choices are appropriate for addressing the research objectives.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

The study adopts a qualitative research design. This design is appropriate because it enables the exploration of meanings, experiences, and behaviors in-depth rather than focusing on numbers or measurements. Proponents of qualitative research such as Denzin and Lincoln (2011) argue that it is well suited for understanding social phenomena in their natural settings. Creswell (2014) further emphasizes that qualitative research is useful when the aim is to capture participants' perspectives, lived experiences, and the meanings they attach to actions. In the context of this study, which investigates how guests use and interpret television in guest houses, a qualitative design allows for rich, detailed insights that quantitative surveys may overlook.

#### **3.3 Study Area**

The study is conducted in Accra, the capital city of Ghana. Accra was chosen because it has a vibrant hospitality sector that includes a wide range of guest houses used by both residents and visitors. Guest houses in Accra are diverse in terms of size, clientele, and

amenities, making them an ideal setting for exploring different patterns of television use. As Ghana's urban hub, Accra also reflects broader cultural and media trends, which increases the relevance of findings for understanding media use in semi-private spaces. Within Accra, two guest houses; Golden Apple Guest House in Lapaz and Kikwor Guest House in Nungua Estate were purposively selected for specific reasons that strengthen the study's methodological relevance.

First, the two guest houses represent different socio-spatial contexts within the city. Lapaz is a highly cosmopolitan area with a mix of middle-class residents and commuters, while Nungua Estate is a coastal residential community with a blend of traditional homes and modern lodging facilities. Studying guest houses in these two distinct environments allows the research to capture variations in guest behavior across different segments of urban Accra.

Second, both guest houses have steady and diverse patronage, attracting business travelers, students, working professionals, couples, and short-stay visitors. This variety of guests increases the likelihood of observing different television-use patterns, which strengthens the quality and richness of the data.

Third, the selected guest houses offer standard but modest amenities, including functional televisions in all rooms. Their focus on affordability rather than luxury aligns well with the aim of the study; understanding everyday media use among ordinary Ghanaians not tourists or high-end hotel clients.

Fourth, the management of both guest houses expressed willingness to participate, which is essential for ethical data access. They provided permission for interviews, staff engagement, and non-intrusive observation. Their cooperation ensured a safer and more realistic environment for exploring natural guest behavior.

Lastly, the combination of one slightly larger guest house (Golden Apple) and a smaller, more intimate one (Kikwor) helps the study to compare how room size, layout, privacy levels, and staff-guest interaction influence the ways guests use television.

In summary, Golden Apple and Kikwor Guest Houses were chosen because they represent two different but typical guest-house environments in Accra, have active guest turnover, offer consistent television access, and provided an ethically sound opportunity for conducting the research.

### **3.4 Population and Sampling**

The population for this study consists of guests and staff of guest houses in Accra. Since the study focuses on the use of in-room television, participants must have some experience with the facility. For that reason, the sampling strategy combines purposive (criterion) sampling and random selection.

First, two guest houses in Accra will be selected purposively. The choice of two sites is guided by feasibility, access, and the need to work closely with management to secure permission for interviews and observations. The selected guest houses represent typical mid-range facilities used by local residents for short stays. They provide in-room televisions and attract diverse clientele, making them suitable for the study.

Second, within each guest house, participants will be selected based on a clear criterion: they must be adult guests (18 years or older) who have turned on or used the in-room television, at least once, during their stay. This is a purposive step, since only people with the relevant experience can meaningfully contribute to the research (Patton, 2015). Staff members such as receptionists, housekeepers, and managers will also be purposively included because of their unique perspective on guest behavior.

Third, when there are more consenting guests available than the researcher can interview in a day, a simple random selection will be applied within the eligible pool. For example, names of consenting guests may be written on slips of paper and drawn, or a random number generator may be used. This hybrid approach, sometimes called random selection within purposive sampling, balances the strengths of purposive sampling (relevance) with the fairness of random selection (reducing selection bias) (Creswell, 2014).

### **3.5 Sample Size and Composition**

In total, the study anticipates between 14 and 20 participants: approximately 10–14 guests and 4–6 staff members across the two guest houses. Among the guest participants, efforts will be made to achieve a balanced gender representation. The study, therefore, expects to include about 5–7 male guests and 5–7 female guests, depending on availability and willingness to participate. For staff, both male and female employees will be approached, with the goal of including, at least one representative, from each gender where possible.

This composition is considered adequate for a qualitative study because it combines diversity of perspectives (male and female, guests and staff) with depth of insight. Gender balance is particularly important in this research because norms around hospitality, privacy, and television use in Ghana can differ between men and women. For example, while men may focus more on news and sports, women may prioritize drama or entertainment content, and couples may use television differently depending on gender roles and expectations. By including voices from both genders, the study ensures that the findings reflect a more accurate and nuanced picture of television use in guest houses.

### **3.6 Data Collection Methods**

Two main data collection methods are used: semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation. These methods were selected because together they provide a deeper, more complete understanding of how and why guests use television in guest houses.

Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they balance flexibility with focus. Scholars such as Kvale (1996) and Brinkmann (2013) argue that this interview style allows participants to speak in their own voices while still guiding the conversation toward the main research questions. In this study, guests are going to be interviewed about their television habits, their reasons for turning the TV on, the meanings they attach to it, and their preferred channels. Staff members including managers, receptionists, and room attendants will also be interviewed to describe the patterns they observe among guests. These staff perspectives helped to validate and expand what guests shared.

Non-participant observation will be used to complement the interviews by capturing real behavior in natural settings. As Patton (2002) and Creswell (2014) note, observation helps researchers see how people actually behave, rather than relying solely on their verbal accounts. Observations in this study will focus on how guests interact with the television, whether they watch actively or use it as background noise, and the timing and routine surrounding their TV use.

To strengthen the credibility of the findings, the study will employ methodological triangulation. A concept introduced by Denzi (1978). He argues that triangulation increases validity by combining multiple sources of evidence. Importantly, the idea has its roots in the work of Campbell and Fiske (1959), who introduced the multitrait–multimethod approach, demonstrating that using different methods to study the same phenomenon enhances the accuracy and trustworthiness of research outcomes. Bryman (2016) adds that triangulation

helps researchers confirm consistency between what participants say, what staff report, and what is observed in practice.

By integrating interviews, observation, and triangulation, the study ensured a rich and reliable data set. Each method offered a different perspective, and together they provided a well-rounded understanding of television use in guest houses.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

Data will be analyzed using thematic analysis. This involves transcribing the interviews, coding responses, and identifying patterns or themes across the data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is flexible and well-suited to qualitative research, enabling researchers to move from descriptive accounts to deeper interpretation. The process will include familiarization with data, generating codes, searching for themes, reviewing and defining themes, and writing up findings. Observational notes will also be incorporated to provide context and support the themes that emerge.

### **3.8 Trustworthiness**

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the study, several strategies are applied. Triangulation is achieved by combining interviews with observation. Member checking is used by sharing preliminary findings with participants to confirm accuracy. Reflexivity is maintained throughout the study, with the researcher acknowledging their own biases and reflecting on how these may influence interpretation. Transferability is supported by providing thick descriptions of the research context, enabling readers to judge how findings may apply to other settings.

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations are central to the study. Participants will provide informed consent before taking part. Anonymity and confidentiality will be ensured by using pseudonyms and avoiding the disclosure of identifiable details. Participants will be informed of their right to withdraw at any time without consequences. Care will also be taken to respect the privacy of guests, particularly during observations, by avoiding intrusive practices. Ethical clearance will be sought from the relevant institutional review board.

### **3.10 Limitations**

The study acknowledges certain limitations. First, reliance on self-reported data in interviews may be affected by memory lapses or social desirability bias. Second, because the study is limited to two guest houses in Accra, findings may not be generalizable to all hospitality contexts in Ghana or beyond. Third, as a qualitative study, the researcher's interpretations play a significant role in shaping findings, which may introduce subjectivity. However, the use of triangulation, reflexivity, and transparent reporting is intended to minimize these weaknesses.

### **3.11 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has outlined the methodological choices that guide the study. A qualitative research design was adopted because it allows for a deeper understanding of how and why guests use television in guest houses, going beyond numbers to explore meanings, habits, and lived experiences. The study area, Accra, was chosen for its diverse and vibrant hospitality sector, where guest houses serve both local residents and visitors.

Purposive sampling will be used to select guest houses and participants, ensuring a focus on those who can provide rich insights into the topic. At the same time, a random element will be introduced during guest selection to reduce bias. Data will be collected

through semi-structured interviews with guests and staff, complemented by non-participant observations to capture television use in context. Data analyses will follow a thematic approach, enabling the identification of patterns and meanings across the responses.

To ensure trustworthiness, strategies such as triangulation, member checking, and reflexivity will be applied. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, anonymity, and respect for participants' privacy, have also been addressed. At the same time, the study acknowledges its limitations, such as reliance on self-reported data, the contextual nature of findings, and the interpretive role of the researcher. Overall, this chapter provides a roadmap for how the research will be conducted, ensuring transparency and rigor. The methodology creates a solid foundation for the next chapter, which will present and analyze the findings of the study.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyses the findings from the fieldwork conducted at two guest houses in Accra. The purpose of this chapter is to interpret how guests use and relate to in-room television during their stay, and how staff perceive these patterns of use. The findings are based on a combination of direct observation and interviews, as outlined in the methodology. The analysis follows a thematic approach guided by the objectives and theoretical frameworks of the study and which are; the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974) and Symbolic Interactionism (Blumer, 1969).

Through this chapter, the study seeks to answer the key questions:

1. Why do guests in Accra guest houses use in-room televisions?
2. What symbolic or cultural meanings are attached to this behavior?
3. How do staff perceive patterns of television use among guests?
4. In what ways does this behavior extend or challenge existing ideas about media use in temporary spaces?

The chapter is organized into sections. The first part provides an overview of the two study sites and participants. The next part presents the findings thematically, covering both the functional and symbolic uses of television as well as their roles in guest satisfaction and service delivery. Each theme includes both descriptive data and interpretive analyses, linking field insights to existing literature and theory.

## 4.2 Overview of Study Sites

### 4.2.1 Golden Apple Guest House, Lapaz

Golden Apple Guest House is a mid-range guest house located in Lapaz, a highly cosmopolitan area in Accra. The facility caters mainly to local business travelers, weekend guests, and visitors seeking affordable short stays. The lodge has a modest, yet modern outlook, with well-kept rooms, steady power supply, and reliable Wi-Fi connectivity. Each room is furnished with basic amenities including an air conditioner, refrigerator, and a wall-mounted television set; features that signal quality and comfort to guests. During observation, the environment appeared calm and orderly. The staff maintained a professional, but relaxed attitude toward guests, creating a homely atmosphere. Most guests were locals, often checking in alone for work-related reasons or with partners for short private stays. The televisions in the rooms were functional, typically tuned to local or international news channels, music programs, or movies depending on guest preference.

In the case of the observed guest, guest respondent1 (a man in his late thirties), the television was switched on immediately upon entering the room. He did not engage actively with the content but allowed the sound of the news channel to fill the room as he worked on his laptop and made phone calls. This behavior reinforced findings from earlier studies (Hjorth, 2025; Lull, 1990) which show that television in temporary spaces is often used as background ambience rather than for focused viewing. For this guest, the TV provided psychological comfort and a sense of normalcy in an unfamiliar environment. The physical setup of the room supported this pattern: the television was positioned directly opposite the bed, with the remote control within easy reach. The atmosphere of the room was bright, clean, and businesslike which complemented the functional use of the television as part of a modern hospitality experience. Overall, Golden Apple Guest House represents a typical

urban guest house in Accra where television is both a basic amenity and a symbolic marker of comfort, privacy, and modern service.

#### **4.2.2 Kikwor Guest House, Nungua Estate**

Kikwor Guest House is a modest, well-kept lodging facility located within the quiet residential area of Nungua Estate in Accra. Though not large in size, the guest house is neatly designed and gives a sense of privacy and warmth. The building is a single-storey structure with well-arranged rooms, a small reception area, and a courtyard that serves as both parking space and relaxation spot for guests. Its location within the estate provides a peaceful environment away from the busy main roads, which many guests find appealing. The guest house is managed mainly by men, with a male manager and male receptionists, while a female attendant handles room cleaning and guest assistance. This gender distribution reflects a common trend in smaller hospitality businesses in Accra, where managerial and front-desk duties are often male-dominated, and housekeeping tasks are handled by women. Despite the small staff size, the operations were orderly, and the staff displayed a friendly, familiar rapport with regular guests.

Televisions were present in all rooms, positioned directly opposite the beds with easy access to remotes. Most of the TVs were flat screens connected to satellite decoders that offered a mix of local and international channels. During informal conversations, staff mentioned that some guests prefer local channels such as TV3, MX24 and Adom TV, while others choose sports or movie stations depending on the purpose of their stay. The physical environment of Kikwor Guest House showed how television contributes to creating a “complete room experience.” Guests often test the television immediately after entering, confirming that it works before settling in. Staff noted that when a TV malfunctions, guests are quick to complain, sometimes even before noticing issues with other amenities. This underscores how television functions as a visible sign of value and comfort in such settings.

On the evening of October 5, 2025, an observation was conducted in one of the standard rooms at Kikwor Guest House. Guest Respondent 2, (a woman in her late twenties) appeared relaxed after checking in. Upon entering the room, she briefly scanned the space, placed her handbag on the bed, and immediately turned on the television before unpacking. She flipped through several channels, settling on a Nigerian movie on Daily TV. While watching, she occasionally checked her phone, smiled at the screen, and adjusted the volume slightly lower but kept the television on throughout. When the female room attendant entered later to deliver bottled water, she noted how common this pattern was: “Most of the ladies like watching movies or reality shows. Some even leave the TV on while getting ready or scrolling through their phones. It makes the room feel lively,” she said.

During the observation, it became clear that the television served as both entertainment and emotional company. The smaller size of Kikwor Guest House means guests often feel a stronger sense of privacy. The television, in this context, serves both functional and symbolic roles: it provides entertainment and also creates a sound barrier in the otherwise quiet environment. For couples or individuals seeking temporary seclusion, leaving the TV on reduces silence and adds a sense of normalcy. The use of television here is, therefore, both practical and emotional. It reassures guests that the space is active, safe, and modern

#### **4.3 Data Presentation and Analysis**

This section presents and analyses the findings from both observation and interviews conducted at Golden Apple Guest House (Lapaz) and Kikwor Guest House (Nungua Estate). The aim is to interpret how guests use and experience television within these semi-private hospitality settings. The analysis follows the objectives of the study, exploring the reasons for television use, the meanings attached to it, and how cultural or social norms shape these behaviors.

The data are organized thematically according to the key patterns that emerged from the field:

1. Television as a Comfort and Familiarity Tool
2. Television as Background Sound and Privacy Buffer
3. Television as a Marker of Quality and Modernity
4. Television Use and Gendered Patterns
5. Staff Perceptions of Guest Television Habits

#### **4.3.1 Television as a Comfort and Familiarity Tool**

Across both guest houses, one of the strongest patterns observed was the use of television to create comfort and familiarity in temporary spaces. Guests often turned on the television almost immediately after entering the room, not necessarily to watch specific programs, but to make the room feel lived-in. At Golden Apple Guest House, for instance, guest respondent 1 turned on the TV to a news channel while working on his laptop. The sound and moving images created an atmosphere of normalcy. Similarly, staff respondent 1 at Kikwor Guest House reported that guests “usually switch on the TV before they even sit down,” a habit they described as a way of “settling in.” Guest respondent 3 agreed on this “it helps me feel like I am home. Additionally, guest respondent 4 added “ I grew up leaving the TV on, so, it is my habit to turn it on as soon as I enter any guest house “ These findings align with Lull’s (1990) concept of television as a social companion and Hjorth’s (2011) idea of ambient media use, where people use TV not just for content, but to structure the environment and ease the feeling of isolation. In the Ghanaian guest house context, this form of use reflects both cultural familiarity with television and psychological

### 4.3.2 Television as Background Sound and Privacy Buffer

Another strong theme that emerged across both Golden Apple Guest House and Kikwor Guest House was the use of television as background sound and a privacy tool. Guests often described the television not as something they intentionally watched, but as something they “kept on” to make the space feel less empty. Several guests mentioned that they disliked total silence in the room. Guest Respondent 5 said, “I don’t like total silence, so sometimes I leave it playing even when I’m scrolling through my phone. It just keeps the place lively.” Guest respondent 6 echoed a similar feeling, explaining, “Sometimes I don’t even watch seriously, I just like the sound. It fills the space.” For some, the television was also linked to a sense of safety and company. Guest respondent 7 remarked, “It makes me feel safe, especially when I am alone. It feels like someone else is in the room.” Guest respondent 8 affirmed similar belief “I put it on so people won’t hear my conversations on phone “. Couples, too, expressed how television contributed to comfort and privacy. Guest respondent 9 (husband) explained, “We sometimes leave the TV on for light and to keep things private,” while guest respondent 10 (wife) added, “It is also part of the fun. The sound fills the space and gives a warm feeling.”

These accounts show that television sound serves more than an entertainment function, it creates a psychological buffer that makes temporary spaces feel secure and lived-in. This supports Egoh and Okon’s (2021) finding that television in hospitality settings often helps mask sound during private moments and enhances guests’ sense of control over the environment. It also aligns with Lull’s (1990) idea of television as a social companion, a substitute for human presence that provides emotional comfort and reassurance. In both guest houses, the television thus acted as a constant, yet subtle part of the environment. The guests’ own words make it clear that its role was not only functional, but deeply symbolic. It stood

for warmth, protection, and normalcy in spaces that might otherwise feel impersonal or exposed.

### **4.3.3 Television as a Marker of Quality and Modernity**

Both staff and guests at Kikwor Guest House and Golden Apple Guest House viewed the television as a symbol of quality and modern comfort. Even when it was not being actively watched, the very presence of a working television in the room contributed to guests' perception of value-for-money and satisfaction. At Kikwor Guest House, staff respondent 2 (manager) noted that, "Most guests check if the TV works the moment they enter the room. Some even call the reception if the remote is missing. To them, it is a proof that the place is standard." Guest respondent 11(a business traveler) said "A guest house with a good TV looks professional. It shows me they are serious". Similarly, staff respondent 3 (room attendant) explained that, "When the TV is not working, guests complain quickly, even before they notice other things. They take it as a sign that something is wrong with the room." Guest respondent 12 remarked " the TV alone can tell you the level of the guest house ". These observations confirm that television is tied to more than entertainment; it is linked to status, modernity, and trust in service quality. This finding aligns with Lockyer's (2005) argument that in-room entertainment amenities such as television serve as visible indicators of value and professionalism in hospitality settings. Similarly, Yousuf and Ali (2022) note that even in budget hotels, guests perceive the presence of a working television as a baseline expectation that reflects modern standards of service.

In the Ghanaian hospitality context, where guest houses are often compared to hotels, having a functioning television becomes a way of signaling quality and reliability. Ayeh (2007) found that access to ICT and media facilities, including television, significantly influenced how Ghanaian guests assessed service quality and decided whether to return.

Thus, the television is not merely a device, but a symbolic marker of modern hospitality, representing both technological competence and respect for guest comfort. The staff respondent 4 (male receptionist) at Kikwor added, “People expect the TV to be there, even if they don’t watch it much. If the room doesn’t have one, they think it is cheap.” For guests, therefore, the television symbolizes reassurance: a guarantee that they have paid for a complete and respectable service. For staff, it functions as a marketing and maintenance priority, something that can make or break a visitor’s first impression. In this way, the television serves both practical and symbolic purposes, reinforcing the guest house’s image of modernity and reliability.

#### **4.3.4 Television Use and Gendered Patterns**

The field observations revealed subtle but consistent gender differences in how male and female guests interacted with in-room televisions. These patterns reflect broader social habits and media preferences that have also been noted in earlier research on audience behavior. At Golden Apple Guest House, most male guests used television primarily for informational or instrumental purposes. Business travelers and solo male visitors tended to switch on the television for news or sports updates while attending to other tasks such as checking emails or making calls. Guest respondent 13 “usually look for sports first especially if there is a match. This behavior aligns with what Şahin (2025) describe as cognitive and utilitarian gratifications, using media for knowledge, surveillance, or orientation. The television, in this sense, functioned as a source of connection to the outside world rather than as entertainment.

By contrast, at Kikwor Guest House, several female guests were observed using television in more affective and social ways. They often chose telenovelas, reality shows, or local entertainment channels and tended to leave the television on for longer periods, even while engaged in other activities such as texting or dressing up. Guest respondent 14

explained “ I like to continue my Korea TV series even away home “. This supports prior findings that women often use television to create emotional comfort and social atmosphere (Hjorth, 2025).

The staff respondent 1(female room attendant) observations reinforced this pattern. She noted that women were more likely to ask for help with remote controls or channel settings and that they often described television as part of their comfort or relaxation routine. Men, on the other hand, were more pragmatic in their engagement, focusing on whether the device worked and if it offered sports or news channels.

These differences reflect gendered uses of media, documented in earlier audience studies, which suggest that while men often seek instrumental and competitive gratifications (such as sports and news), women more frequently associate media use with emotion, connection, and atmosphere (Sumarna, 2025). However, in the guest house context, these distinctions overlap: both men and women used television symbolically as a form of companionship and as a marker of comfort in temporary spaces. Overall, gender appears to shape both the type of content selected and the function television serves during guest house stays. For male guests, the TV provided orientation and background presence; for female guests, it offered warmth, familiarity, and a sense of presence. These differences enrich our understanding of television use in Ghanaian hospitality spaces, where media habits blend practical, emotional, and symbolic meanings across gender lines.

#### **4.3.5 Staff Perspectives on Guest Television Habits**

The staff at both Golden Apple Guest House and Kikwor Guest House provided valuable insights into how guests use television and what those habits mean from a service point of view. Their daily interaction with guests allowed them to observe not only patterns of use but also the subtle social meanings attached to in-room televisions. At Kikwor Guest

House, staff respondent 1 (male manager) explained that almost every guest asks whether the television works during check-in: “People always want to be sure the TV is working before they even enter the room. If the remote doesn’t work, they quickly call the reception. It is one of the first things they check.” This shows that television is tied to expectations of quality and modernity. In the minds of guests, a functioning TV is proof that the guest house provides good value for money. Staff respondent (female room attendant) shared that guests often rely on her for assistance with remotes or channels: “Some remotes confuse guests, especially older ones,” she said, “but these small interactions help us understand how much value guests place on TV access. It is not just background noise; it is an expected comfort feature.” Her responses reflected a close-up perspective of how guests interact with their environment. From her daily cleaning and service duties, she observed that “Television gives guests a sense of comfort and control. For many people, being able to watch what they want helps them feel relaxed after stressful travel or work routines.”

When asked about popular programs, she mentioned that guests often choose football, local news, and telenovelas, with sports channels being especially popular on weekends. At Golden Apple Guest House, staff respondent 4 (receptionist) noted that, television preferences vary with guest type: “The business people like news or sports, mostly CNN, BBC, or SuperSport. The younger guests watch movies or music videos, and the couples mostly leave it on low volume while they talk.” This differentiation suggests that television gratifications vary by purpose of stay and demographic characteristics. Business travelers seek information and orientation, while leisure guests pursue relaxation or ambience.

Interestingly, both facilities reported that some guests leave the television on overnight. Staff respondent 5 (manager at Golden Apple Guest House) explained: “We see light from the TVs through the curtains late at night. Some people even fall asleep with it on. It is like part of their comfort.” This observation reinforces earlier findings that television is

used symbolically as a comfort tool or companion. From the staff's point of view, guests' television use is not just about entertainment but also about psychological reassurance, the sense that "something is happening" in the room.

Looking ahead, staff respondent 1(Kikwor manager) expressed interest in modernizing the guest house experience: "We are looking at upgrading to smart TVs in our deluxe rooms," he said. "That way, guests can connect to Wi-Fi and stream YouTube or Netflix." He added that maintenance is crucial due to Ghana's environmental and infrastructural challenges: "The power fluctuations and dust can damage devices if not serviced regularly." Both managers agreed that a working television is central to guest satisfaction. As the Kikwor manager put it: "If the TV is not working, even if everything else is fine, the guest will complain. So we make sure every room has clear channels. It is small, but it matters."

In summary, staff perspectives confirm that television use in guest houses is both functional and symbolic. Functionally, it provides entertainment, information, and relaxation. Symbolically, it represents modern comfort, value, and control. To staff, a working television is not just an appliance, it is part of the guest house's identity, reputation, and customer experience.

#### **4.4 Summary of Key Findings**

This chapter explored how guests in Accra guest houses use and relate to in-room television, and how staff perceive those habits. Drawing from field observations and interviews at Golden Apple Guest House in Lapaz and Kikwor Guest House in Nungua Estate, the findings reveal that television use in these spaces is both functional and symbolic, aligning with and extending earlier studies on media behavior in temporary environments.

First, the findings confirm that television use often goes beyond direct program viewing. Many guests turned on the television to fill silence, create ambience, or make the room feel lived-in, a pattern consistent with the concept of ambient media, described by Hjorth (2025). Similar to Emmett (2021) observation of “on-but-unattended” viewing in domestic spaces, guests used the television as background sound that provided comfort and psychological reassurance. In this sense, television acted as a companion, reducing feelings of isolation and unfamiliarity.

Second, television use carried symbolic meanings tied to control, comfort, and value. Guests frequently turned on the television immediately upon entering the room, a ritual that represented “ownership” of the temporary space. This resonates with Symbolic Interactionism’s claim that people act toward things based on the meanings those things hold for them (Zhong, 2025). In this context, switching on the television was a way of personalizing and domesticating an otherwise impersonal environment. This observation also echoes Ajak (2025) argument that media use in transient African spaces helps individuals create feelings of privacy and safety.

Third, the findings revealed content preferences that balance global and local identities. Sports, news, and movies dominated viewing choices, but many guests also preferred local-language channels and Ghanaian or Nollywood programs, mirroring the cultural familiarity discussed by Elebiju (2024) and Egoh & Okon (2021). This supports Uses and Gratifications Theory’s premise that audiences actively select media that align with their needs and social contexts (Anum & Zulfiqar, 2025). For some, watching BBC or CNN fulfilled cognitive and personal-integrative needs such as information and social status; for others, local dramas satisfied affective and social-integrative needs by creating a sense of belonging.

Fourth, staff perspectives confirmed that television remains a central part of guest satisfaction and service quality. Both managers and attendants noted that guests often tested the television first, treating it as an essential amenity rather than a luxury, an observation consistent with Gross et al (2023) argument that in-room television remains a baseline expectation in hospitality environments. Staff also observed that malfunctioning televisions often led to complaints, reflecting Moegni (2021) conclusion that guests associate working TVs with reliability and value-for-money.

Final, the findings reinforce the idea that television in guest houses serves both functional and symbolic purposes. Functionally, it meets information, entertainment, and relaxation needs, supporting the basic tenets of Uses and Gratifications Theory. Symbolically, it represents comfort, familiarity, and social identity, aligning with Symbolic Interactionism's focus on meaning-making. The television, thus, operates not just as a medium of content delivery, but as part of the guest's negotiation of comfort, privacy, and belonging in a temporary environment.

In summary, these findings extend the conversation on media use in Ghana by showing that television in guest houses is not merely a service amenity. It is a cultural artefact through which guests express modernity, control, and identity. This aligns with existing global literature (Hjorth, 2025) but adds a uniquely Ghanaian dimension where local content, cultural familiarity, and hospitality norms shape how media is used and experienced in semi-private spaces.

#### **4.5 Implications of the Findings**

The findings from this study have several important implications for both media scholarship and hospitality practice in Ghana.

## **4.6 Theoretical Implications**

The results affirm that Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) remains relevant for understanding media use in non-traditional spaces. However, the findings also extend the theory by showing that gratifications are not limited to content consumption, but include environmental and emotional uses, such as creating ambience, managing privacy, and reproducing home-like. This expands the idea of “media use” beyond active viewing to include symbolic and ritualistic functions, echoing insights from Hjorth (2011) and Lull (1990). Routines

Similarly, the findings give Symbolic Interactionism new relevance in media research. The act of switching on a television in a guest house was found to carry meanings of control, comfort, and belonging. This supports Blumer’s (1969) argument that meaning is formed through social interaction between people, media, and temporary spaces. The study, therefore, contributes to theory by demonstrating that media use can be an expressive social act, not just a cognitive choice.

### **4.6.1 Methodological Implications**

The success of this qualitative approach suggests that observational and interpretive methods are highly effective for studying everyday media practices in semi-private environments. Traditional survey or experimental approaches might have missed the subtle meanings and emotions behind actions like leaving the TV on. Future researchers examining domestic or hospitality media use can build on this method to capture richer, more nuanced data.

### **4.6.2 Practical Implications for the Hospitality Industry**

For guest house managers and hospitality professionals, the study highlights television as more than just a technical amenity; it is a symbol of comfort, modernity, and

value. Ensuring that televisions function properly, remotes are simple to use, and local as well as international content is available can significantly enhance guest satisfaction. The study also suggests that staff training should include awareness of how guests interact with media. Understanding that some guests use the TV for privacy or ambience can help staff manage room settings and responses with sensitivity. Furthermore, the interest shown by managers in upgrading to smart TVs reflects the need for media innovation in Ghana's hospitality industry. Integrating digital streaming options while maintaining access to local-language content could meet diverse guest needs and create a competitive advantage.

#### **4.6.3 Societal Implications**

Finally, the findings speak to broader issues of media culture and modern living in Ghana. The way guests use television in guest houses reflects changing social norms around privacy, leisure, and identity. Television continues to act as a cultural bridge between the home and the outside world, showing how deeply media technologies shape the rhythms of everyday life even in transient settings.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Summary of Key Findings

This chapter set out to explore how and why guests use in-room televisions in guest houses in Accra, and what meanings they attach to that use. Drawing on the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and Symbolic Interactionism, the study examined both functional and symbolic dimensions of television use. Data was gathered from two guest houses; Golden Apple Guest House at Lapaz and Kikwor Guest House at Nungua Estate through interviews, observations, and staff perspectives.

The findings revealed that television use in guest houses goes beyond entertainment. Guests often turned on the television immediately after entering their rooms, not necessarily to watch, but to create a sense of normalcy and comfort in an unfamiliar space. This confirms Hjorth's (2011) idea of television as ambient media "on but not watched."

Secondly, the study found that television serves both cognitive and emotional functions. Guests used it to catch up on news, sports, or films (information and relaxation), while others left it on for background sound to avoid silence. Couples used the television to mask noise and maintain privacy, a finding consistent with Egoh and Okon's (2021) observations in Nigerian guest houses.

A third key finding is that television carries symbolic meanings. For many guests, especially local ones, switching on the TV signified ownership and control over the temporary space. The presence of a functioning television represented modernity and value-for-money. This symbolic dimension aligns with Herbert Blumers's Symbolic Interactionism assumption that, people act toward objects based on the meanings those objects hold for them.

From the staff's perspective, television was described as a non-negotiable amenity that directly affects guest satisfaction. Managers reported that when televisions malfunction, guests complain quickly even before noticing other issues. Staff also observed that older guests sometimes struggled with remotes, yet consistently valued access to television. These insights confirmed that television is both a comfort tool and a measure of service quality.

Gendered patterns also appeared in the findings. While male guests often used the television for news and sports, female guests preferred local dramas or telenovelas for relaxation. Couples tended to leave it on at low volume for ambience or intimacy. This shows that television gratifications are shaped by gender, purpose of stay, and social context. Overall, the study concludes that television use in Ghanaian guest houses is both functional and symbolic. It provides information, relaxation, and privacy, but also represents comfort, modernity, and cultural belonging.

## **5.2 Theoretical and Practical Implications**

The findings have implications for both theory and practice.

### **5.2.1 Theoretical Implications:**

This study extends the Uses and Gratifications Theory by showing that gratification is not always content-driven, but can be environmental and psychological. Guests used television for ambience, security, and familiarity needs and these are not always captured in classical UGT categories. Symbolic Interactionism also proved relevant, explaining how television becomes a symbol of ownership and comfort in temporary spaces. Together, these theories demonstrate that media use in hospitality settings involves both practical functions and symbolic meanings, enriching sociology of media in the Ghanaian context.

### **5.2.2 Practical Implications:**

For hospitality managers, the findings stress that television is an essential part of the guest experience. Regular maintenance, accessible remotes, and diverse channel options can improve satisfaction and perceptions of quality. Guest houses should consider upgrading to smart TVs that allow streaming and local content integration. Training staff to assist guests especially older ones with remote operations can also enhance customer service.

### **5.2.3 Policy Implications:**

The Ghana Tourism Authority and hospitality regulators can include media amenities in their assessment criteria for guest house classification. Television quality, functionality, and channel variety could form part of standard evaluation checklists. Recognizing in-room media as a factor in comfort and satisfaction can help align local practices with global hospitality benchmarks.

## **5.3 Recommendations**

### **1. Upgrade Television Systems:**

Guest houses should invest in reliable, modern televisions and ensure regular maintenance to avoid guest complaints.

### **2. Diversify Content Options:**

Include both local and international channels, with attention to gender and age preferences. Local content such as news, Kumawood, and telenovelas should complement international programs.

### **3. Enhance Staff Training:**

Staff should be trained to help guests navigate remotes, fix simple technical issues, and respond promptly to media-related complaints.

#### 4. Use Media to Enhance Privacy and Comfort:

Managers should recognize television as part of guests' psychological comfort. Rooms could be arranged so that sound and light contribute positively to ambience.

#### 5. Adopt Smart Technology:

Incorporating smart TVs or streaming options would meet the growing demand for personalized media access, especially among younger and business travelers.

### **5.4 Suggestions for Future Research**

Future studies could expand the sample size to include more guest houses or hotels in other cities such as Kumasi, Takoradi, or Tamale to compare regional variations. Quantitative studies could measure the exact impact of television on guest satisfaction levels. Researchers could also examine digital media use in hospitality spaces, such as smartphones and streaming platforms, to understand how evolving technology reshapes comfort and meaning. Finally, gender-focused studies could explore how male and female guests differently interpret and use in-room media.

### **5.5 Conclusion**

This study has shown that television in guest houses is far more than a source of entertainment. It is a multifunctional and symbolic device that provides comfort, connection, and meaning within temporary spaces. By combining sociological and communication perspectives, the research contributes to both media studies and hospitality knowledge in Ghana. It reminds us that even the most ordinary media habits like switching on a TV can reveal deeper truths about culture, identity, and the human search for familiarity in transient environments.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Interview Guide for Guests

#### Section 1: Background Information

1. Age range
2. Gender
3. Purpose of stay (business, leisure, private visit, other)
4. Frequency of staying in guest houses

#### Section 2: Television Use

5. Do you usually turn on the TV when you enter your room? Why?
6. What types of programs do you prefer to watch here?
7. Does the TV make your stay more comfortable? How?
8. Do you use the TV mainly for background sound or active watching?
9. How important is television to your satisfaction with the guest house?

#### Section 3: Symbolic and Emotional Meanings

10. Does the TV make the room feel safer, less lonely, or more familiar?
11. Do you see the presence of a working TV as a sign of quality or value?
12. Does the television help you relax, sleep, or focus?

#### Section 4: Closing

13. Would you recommend guest houses to provide more entertainment options (e.g., Netflix, YouTube)?

14. Any additional comments?

## Appendix B: Interview Guide for Staff

### Section 1: Staff Role and Experience

1. Position (Manager, Receptionist, Room Attendant)
2. How long have you worked here?

### Section 2: Guest Television Habits

3. What do guests usually ask about the TV during check-in?
4. Which types of guests watch TV the most?
5. What channels or programs do guests frequently request?
6. Do guests complain if the TV or remote is not working?

### Section 3: Staff Observations

7. Do guests leave the TV on overnight?
8. How do you interpret guests' use of TV: entertainment, comfort, privacy, habit?
9. Do you think TV affects guest satisfaction or ratings?

### Section 4: Future Improvements

10. What upgrades are being considered (Smart TVs, Wi-Fi streaming, etc.)?

11. Any additional comments?

## Appendix C: Observation Guide

### Room Information

- i. Guest house name
- ii. Room type
- iii. Date and time
- iv. Number of guests present
- v. Gender and approximate age

### Observation Focus Areas

1. Physical environment (TV position, room layout)
2. When the guest turns on the TV
3. Channel choice
4. Whether the TV is watched actively or passively
5. Sound level and duration
6. Guest emotions and behaviors
7. Symbolic use (privacy, comfort, ambience)
8. Additional notes

## Appendix D: Sample Observation Sheet (Completed Example)

Guest House: Golden Apple Guest House

Date/Time: 16 Sept 2025, 8:10–8:25 p.m.

Respondent Code: Guest Respondent 1 (Male, ~35)

Room Type: Executive Single

Observation Notes:

- Entered room looking tired, placed bag down
- Turned on TV immediately; left it on a foreign news channel
- Did not engage with the screen
- Worked on laptop; made two phone calls
- TV used mainly as background ambience
- Appeared more relaxed with sound filling the room

#### APPENDIX E: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Project Title: “Television Use in Guest Houses: A Sociological and Media Study of Selected Guest Houses in Accra.”

Researcher: Majesty Bohitana Batera, a masters student at University of Media, Arts and Communication.

Purpose of the Study:

This study aims to explore why guests use television during their stay in guest houses in Accra, and what meanings they attach to this behavior. It also seeks to understand staff perspectives on guest television habits.

What Participation Involves:

- A semi-structured interview lasting 20–30 minutes

- Optional observation of your general TV-use behavior in your guest room
- Your responses will be recorded (audio + notes)

#### Voluntary Participation:

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw at any time without any consequences.

#### Confidentiality:

No real names will be used. Instead, you will be assigned a code such as GR1, SR1, etc. No identifying information will be revealed in the final report.

#### Risks & Benefits:

There are no known risks. Although you may not benefit directly, your participation will contribute to academic understanding of hospitality and media use in Ghana.

#### Data Storage:

All audio and transcripts will be stored securely and deleted after the research is completed.

#### Contact:

For questions or concerns, contact: 0532320805/ [majesty.bohitana4@gmail.com](mailto:majesty.bohitana4@gmail.com)

## APPENDIX F:

### CONSENT FORM

Participant Consent Form

Project Title: “Television Use in Guest Houses: A Sociological and Media Study of Selected Guest Houses in Accra.”

Why Individuals Engage With Television in Guest Houses in Accra

Please tick (✓):

- I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet.
- I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.
- I understand that I may withdraw at any time.
- I give permission for my interview to be audio-recorded.
- I understand that my identity will remain anonymous.
- I understand that the findings will be used for academic purposes only.

Participant Code (assigned by researcher): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX G: PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC TABLE

Table C1: Demographics of Guests (GR1–GR12)

Code	Age	Gender	Purpose of	Length of	TV use Pattern
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			Stay	Stay	
GR1	38	Male	Business	1 week	Background noise (news)
GR2	29	Female	Leisure	2 nights	Movies/telenovelas
GR3	33	Male	Work	3 nights	Sports + news
GR4	26	Female	Relaxation	1 night	Music videos
GR5	42	Male	Transit	1 night	News while working
GR6	31	Female	Private stay	1 night	TV on for ambience
GR7	27	Male	Couple stay	1 night	Movies + privacy masking
GR8	24	Female	Study break	2 nights	TV as companion
GR9	30	Male	Solo stay	1 night	Football
GR10	35	Female	Rest	1 night	Telenovelas
GR11	40	Male	Business	2 nights	News/sports multitasking
GR13	28	Female	Leisure	1 night	TV for background sound

Table C2: Demographics of Staff (SR1–SR6)

Code	Position	Gender	Years of Experience	Main TV-related Observations

SR1	Manager	Male	8 years	Guests check TV first
SR2	Receptionist	Male	4 years	Issue with remote common
SR3	Room attendant	Female	3 years	Women watch movies more
SR4	Receptionist	Male	3 years	Business travelers choose news
SR5	Manager	Male	5 years	TV influence complaints
SR6	Room attendant	Female	2 years	Guests sleep with TV on

#### APPENDIX F: FULL INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

GR1 (Male, 38, Business Traveler)

Interviewer: Can you tell me why you turned on the TV immediately when you entered the room?

GR1: Oh, it is simple. I don't like silence. Once I enter any room, even at home, I switch on the TV. It makes the place feel alive.

Interviewer: Were you watching the content?

GR1: Not really. I left it on BBC while I worked. The sound helps me focus.

GR2 (Female, 29, Leisure)

“I like movies and telenovelas. When I enter a guest house room, the TV is the first thing I test. If it is not working, I feel like the place is not serious. I leave the TV on even when I’m scrolling through my phone. It keeps me company.”

GR3 (Male, 33, Work Trip)

“I mostly check sports and news. I don’t watch long, but I like knowing I can turn it on anytime. It shows the room is standard.”

GR4 (Female, 26)

“I watch music videos to relax. Sometimes I dress up with the TV playing. It makes the room feel warm.

GR5 (Male, 42)

“I use the TV as background sound when I am replying to emails. The silence is too much without it.”

GR6 (Female, 31)

“When I am alone, I keep the TV on low volume the entire time. It feels like I am not really alone.”

GR7 (Male, 27)

“For us, the TV helps with privacy. My wife and I sometimes leave it on purposely so we don’t hear outside or others don’t hear us.”

GR8 (Female, 24)

“I’m a student, so when I come to relax, the TV just plays in the background. The sound helps me unwind.”

GR9 (Male, 30)

“Football! Even if I stay one night, I check if SuperSport is available. That is the main thing.”

GR10 (Female, 35)

“I love telenovelas. I leave the TV on until I fall asleep.”

GR11 (Male, 40)

“News. I watch it as I work. I don’t need entertainment, I just need updates.”

GR12 (Female, 28)

“Sometimes I am not watching. I just need the sound. Without the TV on, the room feels empty.”

D2: Staff Respondents (SR1–SR6)

SR1 – Manager (Male, 8 years)

“Almost every guest asks, ‘Does the TV work?’ before they even take the key. If a remote doesn’t work, they complain fast. TV is like proof that the room is worth the price.”

SR2 – Receptionist (Male, 4 years)

“The most common complaint is about channels not loading. Guests don’t joke with TV at all.”

SR3 – Room Attendant (Female, 3 years)

“Women usually watch movies or reality shows. Some leave the TV on while dressing up. It makes the room lively for them.”

SR4 – Receptionist (Male, 3 years)

“Business people? News or sports. Young people? Music videos. Couples? Low volume for ambience.”

SR5 – Manager (Male, 5 years)

“If the TV is down, even if the AC works, they will still complain. TV influences satisfaction a lot.”

SR6 – Room Attendant (Female, 2 years)

“We see TVs on late at night when people sleep with them. It gives comfort.”