EFFECT OF SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES, GUEST TRAVEL PREFERENCES AND ATTRIBUTES ON HOTEL BRAND IDENTITY IN LIFESTYLE HOTELS IN NAIROBI COUNTY, KENYA

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Hospitality and Tourism Management of Murang'a University of Technology

August, 2024

DECLARATION

Student Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is my original work and to the best of my knowledge has never been presented for a degree awarded in this or any other university. I understand what plagiarism is and I am aware of the University's policy in this regard. I understand that any false claim in respect of this work shall result in disciplinary action in accordance with the University Anti-Plagiarism Policy.

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Supervisors' Approval

The undersigned certify that they have read and hereby recommended for acceptance of Murang'a University of Technology thesis entitled **"Effect of Sustainability Practices, Guest Travel Preferences and Attributes on Hotel Brand Identity in Lifestyle Hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya".**

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this doctorate thesis to my dear wife Lydia and to my lovely daughter's, Stacey, Sylvia and Joan

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Many people played crucial roles in helping me prepare and put together this thesis. Firstly, I extend my sincere gratitude to my supervisors, Dr. Isabella Mapelu and Dr. Antoneta Njeri Kariru of the Department of Hospitality Management at Muranga University of Technology, Kenya, for their invaluable guidance and mentorship, which enabled me to navigate and complete this thesis successfully. I am also indebted to my colleagues and faculty members in the Department of Hospitality Management for their support throughout the entire PhD program. I wish to acknowledge the contributions of my reviewers; whose valuable input was instrumental in developing and completing this thesis.

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ABSTRACT

The adoption of sustainability practices in city hotels has become a trend driven by the need to mitigate the environmental footprint, comply with regulations, and cater to the increasing demand for sustainable products. Lifestyle hotels adopt sustainability practices to differentiate themselves from traditional hotel brands and enhance brand identity. However, the effectiveness of sustainability practices in contributing to a hotel's sustainability objectives and how guests perceive them remains a topic of debate. This study focused on lifestyle hotels in Nairobi County. The study assessed the influence of sustainability practices on brand identity and guest travel preferences. It analyzed how travel preferences affect brand identity and explored the mediating role of travel preferences in the relationship between sustainability practices and brand identity. Additionally, it examined the moderating impact of guest attributes, such as generational cohort, length of stay, and repeat visit, on the relationship between sustainability practices and brand identity. The study hinged on the Triple Bottom Line (TBL), Environmental Attitude Behavior (EAB), Brand Identity Prism (BIP), and Generational cohort's theories to define the variables and their relationships. The research adopted a mixed-method approach and explanatory sequential mixed method design to collect data using questionnaires from a random sample of hotel 205 guests in 35 city hotels and a semi-structured interview guide to collect data from 19 managers in lifestyle hotels. The study relied on descriptive statistics to profile the respondents and structural equation modeling to develop measurement models for the study variables and estimated structural models of the relationships between the study variables. The results of the structural models were used to test the research hypothesis. Thematic analysis was used to analyze patterns in experiences and perceptions of the hotel managers on sustainability practices, and brand identity. The study showed that implementing hotel sustainability practices (HSPs) positively affected brand image ($\beta_2 = 0.92$, $t = 3.11$, $p < 0.05$). It also found that HSPs positively impacted guests' travel preferences ($\beta_1 = 0.87$, $t = 6.30$, $p < 0.001$), indicating alignment with pro-environmental and hedonic preferences in lifestyle hotels. However, no evidence suggested a relationship between guests' travel preferences and brand identity ($\beta = -0.03$, $t = -0.11$, $p = 0.91ns$), indicating that guests' experiences at the hotel shaped brand evaluation more than pre-consumption dispositions. Similarly, travel preferences did not mediate the HSP-brand identity relationship ($B = -0.03, p = 0.96ns$). Long and short stays both moderated this relationship, with long stays strengthening the influence of HSP on brand identity. Repeat visits also moderated this influence, with heightened impact on brand identity for repeat visitors. Generational cohort generally did not significantly moderate the HSP-brand identity relationship, but Millennials showed a notably stronger response in the relationship between HSP and brand identity compared to other cohorts. Research findings contribute to the body of knowledge on the theoretical relationship between HSP, travel preference and brand identity in lifestyle hotels, an emerging niche segment. Hoteliers can rely on the results of the study to prioritize environmental and social sustainable practice to positively impact on the hotel's sustainability brand image, promote loyalty, increase repeat visit and target millennials as a market segment for lifestyle hotels. The study recommends future research to investigate the relationship between pre-consumption guests' attitudes, encompassing environmental and hedonic predispositions, and post-consumption outcomes, particularly brand identity formation within the emerging lifestyle hotel niche market.

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LIST OF SCIENTIFIC SYMBOLS

Symbol	Description
R^2	Adjusted Coefficient of Determination
χ^2	Chi-square Statistic
cr	Critical ratio
α	Cronbach's alpha
df	Degree of freedom
λ	Factor Loading
$F_{(0)}$	F-Statistic
e	Margin of Error
$\overline{x}$	Mean
χ^2/**df**	Normed Chi-Square
ns	Not significant
H_0	Null Hypothesis
N	Population
p	Probability Value
n	Sample Size
SD	Standard Deviation
SE	Standard Error
β	Standardized Regression Weight
$t_{(0)}$	t-Statistic
B	Unstandardized Regression Weight
Z	Z-Score

ACRONYMS AND BBREVIATIONS

ANOVA: Analysis of Variance

AVE: Average Variance Extracted

BIP: Brand Identity Prism

CFA: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

CFI: Comparative Fit Index

CO_2: Carbon Dioxide

COVID-19: Coronavirus Disease 2019

CR: Composite Reliability

CR: Critical Ratio

CSR: Corporate Social responsibility

CV: Convergent Validity

DV: Dependent Variable

DV: Discriminant Validity

EAB: Environmental Attitude-Behaviour theory

EFA: Exploratory Factor Analysis

EMPs: Environmental Management Practices

ESMMD: Explanatory Sequential Mixed Method Design

FMCG: First Moving Consumer Goods

GBI: Green Brand Image

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

GFI: Goodness of Fit Index

GSTC: Global Sustainable Tourism Council

GT: Green Trust

GTP: Guests' Travel Preferences

HBI: Hotel Brand Identity

HR: Human Resources

HSPs: Hotel Sustainability Practices

IT: Information Technology

IV: Independent Variable

KII: Key Informant Interviews

KNBS: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics

Ksh:	Kenya Shillings
LED:	Light Emitting Diode
LOS:	Length Of Stay
MICE:	Meeting, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions
MMR:	Mixed Method Research
MoT&W:	Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife
NACOSTI:	National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation
NFI:	Normed Fit Index
NGOs:	Non-Governmental Organizations
PBC:	Perceived Behavioral Control
PLS-SEM:	Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling
RMSEA:	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
SEM:	Structural Equation Modelling
S-O-R:	Stimulus-Organism-Response
SPSS:	Statistical Package for Social Scientists
SPSS:	Statistical Package for Social Scientists
AMOS:	Analysis of Moment Structures
TBL:	Triple-Bottom-Line
TLI:	Tucker-Levis Index
TRA:	Tourism Regulatory Authority
TRI:	Tourism Research Institute
UNWTO:	United Nations World Tourism Organization
USD:	United States Dollar
VBN:	Value-Belief-Norm theory
WOM:	Word-of-Mouth
WTP:	Willingness to Pay
WTTC:	World Tourism and Travel Council

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Environmental Sustainability Practices: Actions undertaken by organizations to reduce their ecological footprint, conserve natural resources, and minimize harm to the environment in their operations and activities.

Generational Cohort: Individuals who are born during a specific period and share certain cultural, social, and historical experiences. As a result, the individuals have homogenous preferences, attitudes, and values.

Guest Travel Preferences: The inclinations and choices made by guests regarding travel-related activities and experiences, influenced by their attitudes towards environmental concerns and sustainable practices.

Hotel Green practices: Environmentally friendly initiatives and sustainable actions implemented by hotels to minimize their environmental impact and promote eco-friendly operations.

Hotel Sustainability Practices: Actions by hotels to reduce their negative impact on the environment, society, and the economy while ensuring the long-term viability of their business.

Length of Stay: The duration of time a guest spends residing in the hotel's accommodations during a single visit or reservation.

Lifestyle Brand Identity: The unique image, personality, values, and characteristics that a hotel conveys to appeal to the lifestyle aspirations of the guests.

Lifestyle Hotel: A hotel that offers a unique and personalized guest experience that caters to a specific lifestyle or personality of the guest which sets it apart from traditional hotels

Measurement Model: A model that specifies the relationships between latent variables and their observed indicators or manifest variables. It describes how the latent variables are measured by observable variables and provides information about the reliability and validity of the measurement instruments used in the mode.

Repeat visit: A situation where a guest returns to stay at a hotel for another visit after having stayed there previously on at least one occasion

Social Sustainability Practices: Initiatives implemented by organizations to foster positive social impacts, including promoting equity, community engagement, employee welfare, and cultural diversity, while operating sustainably and responsibly.

Structural Equation Model: A statistical technique to test and estimate relationships among variables that combines factor analysis and regression analysis to examine complex relationships between observed variables and latent constructs, allowing assessment of causal pathways in hypothesized models using empirical data.

Structural Model: A model that represents the hypothesized relationships between latent variables and observed variables in a statistical model and defines how latent variables influence each other and how they, in turn, affect observed variables. The structural model allows testing of theoretical hypotheses about the underlying structure of a phenomenon.

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

This chapter introduces the study, offering background information and detailing the problem statement, objectives, and hypotheses. The chapter covers the study's scope, limitations, significance, and assumptions before concluding with a description of the conceptual framework.

The hotel industry is a significant driver of the global economy, playing a crucial role in generating employment, income, and investment opportunities (González-De-la-Rosa, Armas-Cruz, Dorta-Afonso, & García-Rodríguez 2023; Khan, Hassan, Fahad, & Naushad, 2020). As an integral part of the tourism sector, it fosters job creation in a range of positions, including hospitality and support services. This sector also serves as a major source of foreign exchange for numerous countries, thereby promoting economic growth and development. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) reports that tourism contributed 7.6% to the global GDP in 2022, underscoring its substantial economic influence. Additionally, the hotel sector attracts considerable investments in areas such as infrastructure, real estate, and ancillary services, further stimulating economic activity (UNWTO, 2023).

However, the hotel industry collectively consumes significant resource quantities and produces large amounts of waste (Verma and Chadra, 2016; Ristova, 2020). For example, in a five-star hotel, the average energy consumption per guest per night is around 130 Mega Joules, and daily water usage per guest varies between 170 and 440 liters. Ning, Yim and Khuntia (2021) report that a guest in most star-rated hotels generates an average 0.9kg of waste per day. These quantities are significantly higher than for a resident household (Ristova, 2020).

The hotel sector is a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions and climate change. Energy consumption for heating, cooling, and lighting, water usage, waste generation, and guest transportation all contribute to the industry's carbon footprint. The sector accounts for approximately 1% of global carbon emissions (Sustainable

Hospitality Alliance, n.d.), and this figure is projected to rise with increasing tourism. Addressing the hotel industry's environmental impact is crucial for mitigating climate change and ensuring the sector's long-term sustainability.

Hoteliers appreciate the extent of the ecological impacts of their operations and are adopting mitigation measures in the form of sustainability practices to minimize their environmental footprint while enhancing visitor experiences (Ristova, 2020). Hotel Sustainability Practices (HSPs) refer to interventions implemented by hotels to mitigate their environmental impacts (Moise et al., 2020). The literature and practice highlight various categories of HSPs. Environmental strategies focus on resource conservation, pollution abatement, environmentally sensitive architectural design, recycling, eco-sensitive purchasing, and waste management (Yu, Li & Jai, 2017). Social sustainability practices involve employee empowerment, community involvement, corporate governance, and fostering good supplier relations (Pereira et al., 2021). Conversely, economic sustainability pertains to hotel cost control, income growth, profitability, and practices aimed at expanding market share (Pereira et al., 2021).

However, the hotel industry has mainly focused on the more noticeable environmental sustainability practices, often referred to as "green practices," such as energy, water, and waste management programs. This emphasis contrasts with the less visible social sustainability initiatives that address the hotel's relationships with its internal and external stakeholders. This discrepancy has been criticized as "greenwashing" (Abdou, Hassan & El Dief, 2020).

Nevertheless, an emerging trend is evident whereby leading international hotel brands are placing greater emphasis on their commitment to the host community by integrating social sustainability concerns into their strategic plans (Abdou et al., 2020). For example, Marriott International, a prominent global hotel group boasting 30 brands and nearly 8,700 properties across 139 countries, attributes their success to their social sustainability strategy, which promotes diversity, equity, and inclusivity (Marriot Hotels, 2024). Conversely, social sustainability programs present an

opportunity for smaller independent unit hotels with limited capacity to implement large-scale social sustainability initiatives.

The preference among guests for eco-friendly products has become a compelling driver for hotels to embrace sustainability practices (Zdravković & Peković, 2020). Research indicates that consumers are increasingly aware of the ecological, social, and economic consequences of their purchasing decisions (Molina-Azorín et al., 2009). This consumer segment forms a niche market that ardently supports sustainability principles, translating environmental concern into pro-environmental behavior reflected in lifestyle choices (Tan & Yeap, 2012). Many urban hotel guests increasingly align with this perspective, prompting them to adopt sustainable practices to cater to this emerging market segment (Chan, 2013). At the same time, research shows a positive relationship between hotel guest preferences and the implementation of sustainability practices by hotels (Jones, Hillier, & Comfort, 2014). Nonetheless, limited evidence exists on whether hotel sustainability practices influence the travel preferences of hotel guests, especially in urban settings.

In addition to adopting various sustainability practices, forward-thinking hoteliers have evolved a concept of "a lifestyle hotel" to differentiate their hotel products from the standardized product traditionally offered by large international hotel chains (Hans & Lee, 2021). According to Hans and Lee (2021), lifestyle hotels are places where guests indulge in experiences that match their individual lifestyle preferences. The unique selling proposition of a Lifestyle hotel is a personalized experience tailor-made to a guest's lifestyle (Jones, Day & Quadri-Felitti, 2013; Kosar, 2014) and its competitive advantage is its identity as a differentiated brand.

Guest preferences for lifestyle hotels reflect a contemporary shift towards experiential travel and personalized experiences. Lifestyle hotels are characterized by their unique design, immersive atmosphere, and emphasis on social engagement, catering to guests seeking authenticity and individualized experiences (Inversini & Masiero, 2014). One key aspect driving the popularity of lifestyle hotels is the desire for a sense of connection and community, where guests can interact with like-minded individuals and explore local culture (Inversini & Masiero, 2014). These hotels often feature

vibrant communal spaces, such as co-working areas, art installations, and social events, fostering a dynamic and sociable environment (Volo, 2017).

Lifestyle hotels and boutique hotels differ primarily in their conceptual focus and scale. Lifestyle hotels emphasize a comprehensive, modern experience often tailored to specific demographics, integrating design, technology, and personalized services to reflect the guests' lifestyle preferences (Stern, 2018). In contrast, boutique hotels are typically smaller, with a strong emphasis on unique, personalized decor and a distinctive local character, focusing more on individualistic charm and local culture (Harris & Ezeh, 2008). Both types aim to offer unique experiences but differ in their scale and thematic emphasis.

Lifestyle hotels prioritize wellness and holistic experiences, aligning with the growing wellness tourism trend (Lengkeek, 2019). Guests seek amenities such as fitness centers, yoga classes, and healthy dining options to maintain their well-being while traveling (Lengkeek, 2019). Additionally, sustainability is increasingly important to guests, and lifestyle hotels often incorporate eco-friendly practices and initiatives, resonating with environmentally conscious travelers (Kim & Jogaratnam, 2018).
Technology significantly contributes to enriching guest experiences in lifestyle hotels. Features like mobile check-in/out, keyless room entry, and personalized mobile concierge services are tailored to meet the preferences of contemporary travelers who are adept with technology (Kim & Jogaratnam, 2018).

Guest preferences for lifestyle hotels are driven by a desire for authentic experiences, social engagement, wellness amenities, sustainability, and technological convenience. These preferences underscore the evolving landscape of hospitality, where guests seek more than just accommodation but memorable and enriching experiences tailored to their individual lifestyles

The hotel brand identity encompasses visual, emotional, and cultural attributes that differentiate a product or service from competitors (Ramesh & Parthiban, 2020; Simoes, Pinto & Pinho, 2021). Casado-Belmonte, Pastor-Fernandez, and Alonso-Almeida (2021) affirm that a strong brand can lead to recognition, loyalty, and

customer trust. Lifestyle hotels distinguish themselves with unique architecture, ergonomic interior design, technology, personalized service, and modern ambiance (Hans & Lee, 2021). With sustainability being increasingly important to travelers, there is a debate whether lifestyle hotels can differentiate themselves further by adopting sustainable practices to target environmentally conscious guests. Some studies suggest that a green brand image can enhance customer loyalty through brand love, green trust, and environmental satisfaction (Lee, Kim & Chen, 2021).

Scholars rely on the Brand Identity Prism theory, developed by Kapferer (2008), to measure brand identity through six key parameters: physique, personality, culture, self-image, reflection, and relationship. Physique refers to the brand's physical attributes and visual identity. Personality captures the brand's human traits and character. Culture encompasses the brand's values and ethos. Self-image represents the brand’s internal self-perception. Reflection describes how the brand presents itself to consumers. Relationship illustrates the emotional connection between the brand and its customers. Together, these parameters provide a comprehensive framework for understanding and assessing brand identity (Kapferer, 2008).

1.1.1 The Tourism and Hospitality Industry in Kenya

Kenya's Vision 2030 recognizes the tourism sector as a key catalyst for the nation's economic progress, job creation, income generation, and the advancement of other industries. According to the World Tourism and Travel Council (WTTC) in 2021, Kenya's tourism industry contributed Ksh 591.7 billion to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), representing 5% of the total value added (WTTC, 2023). This represents a 35% increase from the previous year. International tourists spent Ksh 67.1 billion in the same year, accounting for 22% of the country’s total export earnings, while domestic tourists contributed Ksh 331.5 billion. The industry supports 1.42 million jobs, which is approximately 8% of total employment in Kenya (WTTC, 2023).

Kenya's tourism industry is primarily nature-based, with wildlife or safari tourism as the main tourist product (Akama, Maingi & Camargo, 2011). However, Kenya also offers other tourism products such as cultural tourism, beach tourism, and business tourism. According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), cultural

tourism had the highest number of domestic bed nights in 2019, while Nairobi city had the highest number of international bed nights due to business tourism activities. Beach tourism is also popular, with Kenya's Indian Ocean coastline offering sandy beaches and clear waters (KNBS, 2020).

In 2021, Kenya's tourism market was dominated by domestic tourists, accounting for 83% of total tourism expenditure in the country, according to the WTTC (2023). The leisure segment dominated the market, spending USD 2,206.6 million (61%), compared to the business segment which spent USD 1,429.8 million. The report indicates that 11% of Kenya's overseas visitors originated from Germany, 10% from the United States, 9% from the United Kingdom, 8% from Italy, and 7% from France. The primary regional sources for arrivals were Uganda (39%), Tanzania (14%), and Rwanda (6%). (WTTC, 2023).

The hotel sector in Kenya is an essential part of the tourism industry, contributing significantly to the country's integration into the global economy through tourism exports. (Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife (MoT&W) (2020). Between 2014 and 2019, the hotel sector's contribution to GDP increased by 46%, outpacing all other sectors of the economy (MoT&W, 2020). Nonetheless, the COVID-19 pandemic led to a temporary downturn in the industry, resulting in a 62% decrease in the hotel sector's contribution to the GDP in the second quarter of 2020 (KNBS, 2020). Nevertheless, the hotel sector is gradually recovering, thanks to a rise in international tourist arrivals and domestic tourism, which have increased hotel occupancy rates (Tourism Research Institute [TRI], 2021).

Hotels in Kenya are increasingly embracing sustainable practices in response to evolving consumer preferences, industry standards, and government regulations. This trend has attracted scholarly interest, as evidenced by research conducted by Omune et al. (2021), which investigated environmental management practices (EMPs) in Kenyan hotels, specifically targeting energy preservation, water administration, and waste minimization. The research highlights a tendency among hotels to prioritize EMPs that incur minimal or no additional costs, such as monitoring energy consumption, optimizing water usage, and implementing waste segregation protocols.

However, initiatives requiring significant investments, like adopting renewable energy sources and composting organic waste, are less commonly adopted. Interestingly, measures perceived to impact guest comfort, including towel reuse programs and reducing lift operations, are among the least implemented strategies. The study suggests governmental support through subsidies for costly EMPs and emphasizes the importance of educating both guests and staff on environmental issues. Ultimately, it underscores the need for hotels to strike a balance between environmental sustainability and economic viability in their operational decisions.

1.1.2 The Hotel Sector in Nairobi

Nairobi has a vibrant hotel sector that caters to business and leisure travelers. According to TRI (2021), Nairobi City County had approximately 18,000 hotel beds in 2019, with an increasing number of internationally branded hotels such as Marriott, Hilton, and Radisson Blu. The city has a range of star-rated hotels, with a mix of luxury and budget options, and recorded an overall occupancy rate of 24% in 2020 (TRI, 2021). Like in the rest of the country, Nairobi's hotel sector was significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the occupancy rates have shown a steady increase, with a rise to 36% in May 2021 (TRI, 2021).

Similar to the situation in other major cities worldwide, Nairobi's hotel industry is recuperating from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, hotels in Nairobi face unique challenges resulting in low bed occupancy, reduced revenues, and staff layoffs. The industry faces challenges, such as high operating costs, inconsistent power supply, and stiff competition (TRI, 2021). However, the industry is adopting new trends such as eco-friendly practices, technology to enhance customer experience, and flexible rates and packages to cater to changing customer preferences. The prospects for the industry are positive, with projected growth in domestic and international tourism in the coming years (TRI, 2021).

The accommodation sector in Nairobi is dynamic, with emerging trends reshaping both the demand and supply of accommodation. A prominent trend is the rising preference for experiential and lifestyle-focused accommodations, influenced by millennials and Generation Z travelers who demand distinctive and immersive

experiences (Inversini & Masiero, 2014). This has led to the rise of boutique and lifestyle hotels offering personalized services and authentic local experiences (Volo, 2017). Furthermore, there is an increasing focus on sustainable and environmentally friendly products, as travelers prioritize accommodation options that are mindful of the environment (Kim & Jogaratnam, 2018). On the supply side, the hotel sector in Nairobi is witnessing expansion and diversification, with new entrants introducing innovative concepts and designs to cater to evolving consumer preferences (Kim & Jogaratnam, 2018). Observers opine that the Nairobi hotel sector has a promising future, with opportunities for growth and innovation driven by shifting consumer demands and preferences.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Hotel guests are becoming more conscious of the environmental consequences associated with their travel behaviors, leading to an escalating desire for experiences that are environmentally sustainable (Robin et al., 2016; Soni, Hussain & Kareem, 2022). In response, leading global hotel brands are adopting various environmental, social, and economic initiatives to enhance their sustainability profiles and cultivate a favorable brand identity (Haobin et al., 2021). Hoteliers recognize that establishing a positive brand identity centered on sustainability credentials can bolster guest satisfaction, foster loyalty, and differentiate their establishments from competitors, thereby enhancing their competitive advantage (Chen et al., 2022). As a result, a pivotal challenge facing hotel managers is how to proficiently utilize and enhance sustainable practices to foster a favorable brand identity. They must make informed decisions about which practices to prioritize in their sustainability strategies to establish a stronger brand identity rooted in sustainability principles.

According to Sone et al. (2022), the existing literature acknowledges the potential positive relationship between Hotel Sustainability Practices (HSPs) and hotel brand identity, a notable gap exists in understanding which specific sustainability practices significantly contribute to crafting a distinct brand identity tailored to the preferences of different guest types. This gap impedes hotel managers from effectively selecting and prioritizing HSPs that align with guest preferences, thereby hindering their ability

to enhance brand image and competitiveness in the market. Addressing this gap is essential for hotel managers to strategically align their sustainability efforts with guest preferences, ultimately enhancing their brand image and maintaining competitiveness in the dynamic hospitality industry landscape.

Proactive hotels are strategically differentiating themselves from standardized experiences offered by large international hotel chains by offering unique and personalized guest experiences tailored to specific guests' lifestyles and personality preferences (Sining, 2021). These hotels – named "lifestyle hotels" aim to appeal to a distinct market segment through stylish design-led architecture, intimate size, and high levels of personalized service, complemented by high-quality, high-tech in-room facilities (Liu et al., 2018). To augment their personalized guest experiences and reflect guest personalities and travel preferences, lifestyle hotels are increasingly adopting sustainability practices (Kleinrichert, Ergul, Johnson & Uydaci, 2012). Nevertheless, hotel managers are unsure about the degree to which sustainable practices align with the travel preferences of lifestyle guests, and whether these preferences influence the correlation between implemented sustainability measures and the desired brand identity of lifestyle hotels. Existing literature fails to elucidate how guests' preferences mediate the relationship between sustainable practices and guest perceptions of the hotel brand. Consequently, lifestyle hotels seeking to establish themselves in the niche market remain uncertain about the viability of implementing HSPs to cultivate a favorable brand identity among lifestyle hotel guests.

Tourism scholars have demonstrated difference in travel choices, motivations, information search behavior, willingness to pay, use of technology, travel preferences among tourists of different generational cohorts (Liu et al., 2018). Recognizing the significance of lifestyle preferences among Generation Y, lifestyle hotels are aiming to offer accommodation experiences that resonate with the tastes of this demographic (Liu et al., 2018). However, managers of these hotels lack sufficient information regarding the effectiveness of their product development efforts, including whether the incorporation of sustainability practices aligns with and meets the preferences of Generation Y consumers. Additionally, hoteliers remain uncertain about how familiarity and exposure to sustainability practices during the length of stay and repeat

visits impact the intended brand identity. A comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of sustainability practices in contributing to a favorable brand identity among different generational cohorts and guest types, including first-time and repeat visitors and long and short-staying guests, can inform the prioritization of sustainable practices for lifestyle hotels seeking to differentiate themselves in the evolving lifestyle niche market.

The existing literature acknowledges a positive relationship between Hotel Sustainability Practices (HSPs) and brand identity but lacks clarity on which specific sustainability practices most significantly contribute to a distinct brand identity tailored to diverse guest preferences (Soni et al., 2022). This gap prevents hotel managers from effectively selecting and prioritizing HSPs that align with guest preferences, thereby impeding efforts to enhance brand image and market competitiveness. Addressing this methodological gap is crucial for enabling hotel managers to strategically align sustainability efforts with guest preferences, thereby improving brand identity and maintaining a competitive edge in the hospitality industry.

While lifestyle hotels aim to enhance brand identity through sustainability practices, there is insufficient understanding of how guests' travel preferences mediate the relationship between these practices and brand perceptions (Kleinrichert et al., 2012). The literature does not sufficiently address how different generational cohorts, such as Generation Y, respond to sustainability practices, nor how familiarity with these practices during various lengths of stay influences brand identity (Liu et al., 2018). This theoretical gap underscores the need for research to clarify how sustainability practices align with guest preferences across different demographics and stay durations, guiding lifestyle hotels in effectively crafting their brand identity.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 General Objective

To investigate how sustainability practices implemented by lifestyle hotels in Nairobi affect the hotels' brand identity. Furthermore, the study aimed to analyze the mediating

effect of guests' travel preferences and the moderating impact of guests' generational cohorts, duration of stay, and frequency of visits on the relationship between sustainability practices and brand identity.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

i. Examine the impact of hotel sustainability practices on the brand identity of lifestyle hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya.
ii. Determine the influence of hotel sustainability practices on guests' travel preferences in lifestyle hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya.
iii. Examine the effect of hotel guests' travel preferences on the brand identity of lifestyle hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya.
iv. Establish the mediating effect of hotel guests' travel preferences in the relationship between sustainability practices and brand identity of lifestyle hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya.
v. Establish the moderating effect of hotel guests' attributes on the relationship between sustainability practices and brand identity of lifestyle hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya.

1.4 Research Hypotheses

H_{01}: Hotel sustainability practices have no significant influence on the brand identity of lifestyle hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya.

H_{02}: Hotel sustainability practices have no significant influence on guests' travel preferences in lifestyle hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya.

H_{03}: Guests' travel preferences have no significant influence on brand identity in lifestyle hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya.

H_{04}: Guests' travel preferences do not mediate the relationship between the sustainability practices and brand identity in lifestyle hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya.

H_{05}: Hotel guests' attributes do not moderate the relationship between the sustainability practices and brand identity in lifestyle hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The research outcomes add to the expanding body of knowledge regarding the impact of HSPs on the brand identity of lifestyle hotels, which represent an emerging niche segment. The study achieves this by incorporating social and economic sustainability practices, which previous studies had not sufficiently considered.

The research findings provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of various social and environmental practices adopted by lifestyle hotels in shaping a favorable brand identity. Hotel managers can employ this evidence to develop and execute effective sustainability strategies that positively impact the hotel's brand identity, bolster customer loyalty, and enhance their hotel's competitive edge.

The research findings contribute to the design of policy and regulations for the hotel industry in developing countries by refining the measurement and inclusion of sustainability considerations in performance reporting by hospitality firms.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study targeted guests at lifestyle hotels in Nairobi County and excluded hotels in the greater Nairobi Metropolitan area, which includes parts of the neighboring Kajiado, Machakos, and Kiambu counties. The research focused on eliciting views from baby boomers, Generation X, millennials, and Generation Z guests who had stayed in lifestyle hotels in Nairobi regarding the environmental and social sustainability initiatives implemented by the hotels and their perceptions of the hotel’s brand identity. The study also obtained perspectives from hotel managers in lifestyle hotels on the HPS implemented by their units and their hotels’ brand identity profile. Data collection for the research took place during the peak tourism season between July and September 20The study focused on exploring the impact of hotel sustainability practices (HSP) on the brand identity of lifestyle hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya. Data collection involved a comprehensive approach, including a survey of hotel guests using a structured questionnaire administered by enumerators. This method ensured a systematic collection of quantitative data on guest perceptions and experiences. Additionally, key informant interviews with hotel managers provided

qualitative insights into managerial perspectives on sustainability practices and their influence on brand identity.

Data analysis was conducted using a combination of statistical methods to ensure a robust examination of the research questions. Quantitative data were analyzed with descriptive statistics and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to assess the relationships between HSP, travel preferences, and brand identity. This approach allowed for an in-depth understanding of how these variables interact and affect one another. Qualitative data from the interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key themes and patterns in managerial perspectives, providing contextual depth to the findings.

The study operationalized its variables through a well-defined framework. The latent variables, including hotel sustainability practices (HSP), travel preferences, and hotel brand identity, were measured using indicators derived from existing literature and relevant theoretical frameworks. This operationalization ensured that the variables were appropriately defined and measured, contributing to the reliability and validity of the study's findings.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

The explanatory sequential mixed-method design of the study restricted data collection to a single time point, which implies that the results did not encompass dynamics that might arise from shifts in the profiles of hotel guests and changes in hotel managers' perceptions over time.

The study relied on convenience sampling to recruit a sample of accessible and knowledgeable hotel managers to obtain data on the performance of lifestyle hotels. The use of a non-probability sampling technique may constrain the generalizability of the research findings. The study mitigated this limitation by incorporating feedback from qualified, knowledgeable and experienced managers who provide insights into the study subject matter. At the same time, the study argues that the results will provide insights into performance relevant to hotels in contexts akin to the study.

The study's geographic scope was confined to observations within Nairobi city. It focused solely on the city and excluded the broader metropolitan area due to the concentration of classified hotels within the County. This limitation may restrict the applicability of the findings to lifestyle hotels in different geographical and cultural settings. However, the study offers innovative empirical evidence from a market that has received limited research attention.

The study was limited by the lack of a clear definition of lifestyle hotels, which are not well-defined in the hotel industry. The current hotel classification system primarily uses star ratings, as adopted by the Tourism Regulatory Authority (TRA). To address this limitation, the study focused on classified hotels—specifically 3- to 5-star rated hotels in Nairobi—to represent lifestyle hotels.

The study delimited its scope to include only the perspectives of hotel guests who had stayed overnight, excluding those visiting solely for dining purposes. This decision was made to focus on guests who could offer insights based on their direct experience with the hotel's sustainable practices during their accommodation. By excluding non-resident visitors, who might have limited exposure to the hotel's overall product and sustainability initiatives, the study aimed to ensure a more robust and relevant analysis of guest perceptions and experiences.

The study limited its scope to gather perspectives solely from hotel managers, excluding input from other hotel staff. This decision was based on the belief that hotel managers, given their experience and leadership roles within the establishments, would offer valuable insights into the hotels' sustainability practices and branding objectives.

The study encountered limitations in accessing guest data due to hotel policies on data protection and corporate communication procedures. These constraints hindered the researchers' ability to achieve a sufficient survey sample size, resulting in a smaller population. Consequently, the findings may lack generalizability and could be biased toward certain demographics or behaviors, potentially affecting the validity and reliability of the conclusions. To mitigate this limitation, the study ensured that the

sample size was comparable to similar studies and that the number of observations met the necessary thresholds for structural equation modeling, given the number of variables.

1.8 Assumptions of the Study

The study assumed that the respondents have sufficient knowledge about the research subject and provided unbiased responses with minimal errors.

The research assumed that at least 50% of hotel guests in Nairobi visited lifestyle hotels. The sample size was deemed adequate for the complexity of the analysis, ensuring that the findings accurately represented the population. The use of a sufficient sample size guaranteed that the results were statistically significant.

The model used in the study was well-specified and included all relevant variables. This premise was necessary to ensure the analysis was comprehensive and considered all the key factors that affects the research subject. The study assumed that the model accounted for all the relevant variables and their interactions to provide accurate results.

The study further assumed that the variables used in the study were exogenous and endogenous as appropriate. This assumption was crucial to ensure that the indicators of the exogenous variables in the measurement model effectively and accurately represent the latent variables in the study. Additionally, it ensured that the endogenous variables in the structural model adequately elucidated the relationships between the variables within the structural equation modeling (SEM) framework.

Regarding the data structure for structural equation modeling (SEM), the study assumed that the observed variables followed a multivariate normal distribution. This assumption was crucial for SEM as it ensured that the parameter estimates were unbiased and the standard errors were accurate. Violations of multivariate normality could lead to distorted model estimates and incorrect statistical inferences (Byrne, 2016). To fulfill this assumption, the study conducted tests of multivariate normality and assessed the adequacy of the data distribution. Additionally, the study assumed

linearity in the relationships between variables. Linearity suggests that alterations in one variable correspond with proportional adjustments in another variable (Kline, 2016). To confirm this assumption, the study assessed the linearity of the relationships between variables.

1.9 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1.1 depicts the study's conceptual framework and shows the relationships between the study variables.

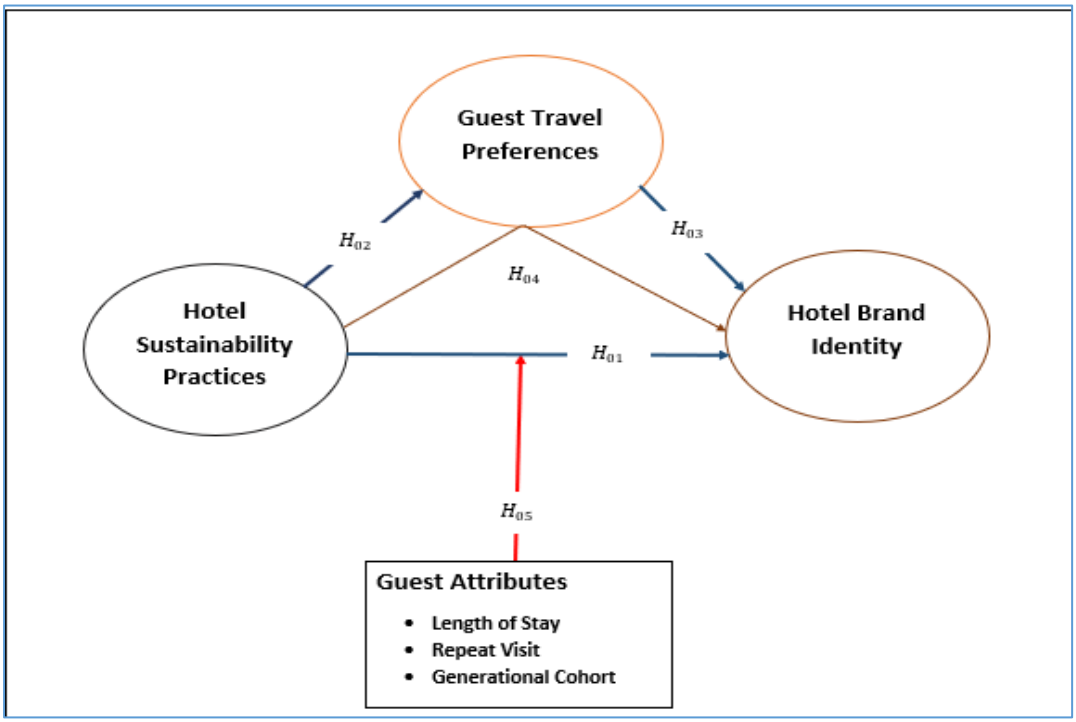


Figure 1. 1 Conceptual Framework – Influence of Hotels Sustainability Practices on Hotel Brand Identity

Source: Cohen (2018); Kapferer (2012); Liu, Li, and Kim (2017); Liu, Wang, Chiu, and Chen (2018); Majeed et al. (2022).

Figure 1.1 illustrates the exogenous independent variable, Hotel Sustainability Practices (HSPs), operationalized into environmental sustainability practices such as the use of plastic containers, utilization of refillable soap dispensers, and incorporation of eco-friendly toiletries. Additionally, it encompasses social sustainability practices,

including the integration of local materials in the lifestyle hotel's interior décor, inclusion of local foods in the hotel’s menu, and support for local businesses.

In Figure 1.1 the endogenous variable (dependent variable) is a latent variable capturing hotel brand identity. It is operationalized as guests' perceptions of whether the hotel brand reflects their lifestyle choices, fosters guest loyalty, and portrays an inclusive culture that encourages diversity.

The conceptual model depicts hotel guests’ travel preferences as a mediating latent variable. It is operationalized by three indicators: guests’ sensitivity towards the environmental impacts of their travel activities, preference for exploring new foods, and desire for luxury accommodation.

Moderating variables within the framework consist of the length of stay, quantified as a continuous variable representing the number of nights spent at the hotel; repeat visitation, a binary variable where 1 denotes a repeat visitor and 0 indicates otherwise; and guests' generational cohort, encompassing baby boomers, Generation X, Millennials/Generation Y, and Generation Z.

The conceptual framework (Figure 1) depicts the direct impacts of HSPs on brand identity, HSPs on guests' travel preferences, and guests' travel preferences on brand identity. Furthermore, the framework proposes the mediating influence of guests' travel preferences on the association between HSPs and brand identity. Additionally, it delineates the moderating effects of guests' length of stay, repeat visits, and generational cohorts on the relationships among HSPs, guests' travel preferences, and brand identity.

1.10 Contributions of the Thesis

The research offers new insights into how length of stay (LOS), repeat visits, and guest generational cohorts affect the relationship between hotel sustainability practices (HSP), guest travel preferences, and brand identity in city lifestyle hotels. This study enhances our understanding of how these variables interact to shape guests'

perceptions and highlights the importance of familiarity and demographic factors in brand identity formation.

The study elucidates the relative impact of hotel sustainability practices (HSP) on brand identity in lifestyle hotels and facilitates the prioritization of these practices. It provides a nuanced understanding of how different sustainability measures influence brand identity, allowing hotels to focus on the most effective practices for enhancing their brand perception and aligning with guest expectations.

The research provides new empirical evidence on the mediating role of guests' travel preferences in the relationship between hotel sustainability practices (HSP) and brand image. By examining how these preferences influence the connection between HSP and brand perception, the study enhances our understanding of this dynamic. Additionally, it contributes valuable insights into how different generational cohorts interact with adopted HSPs within the city-lifestyle hotel segment, highlighting variations in guest preferences across diverse age groups. This comprehensive analysis helps illuminate the complex interplay between sustainability practices and brand identity, offering practical implications for targeting and engaging various guest demographics.

The study elucidates the situational nature of how guests' familiarity and exposure to sustainability practices—during their length of stay and repeat visits—moderate the process of brand identity building. This insight highlights that the impact of sustainability practices on brand identity is influenced by the extent of guests' interaction with these practices over time, emphasizing the importance of ongoing engagement in shaping brand perception.

1.11 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter one is an introduction of the study subject. It consisted of background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives and hypotheses of the study and significance of the study. Additionally, the chapter provided the scope of the study, limitations of the study, assumptions of the study, conceptual framework as well as the contribution of the study.

In the second chapter a review of literature was presented. To start with, theoretical review where various theories like triple bottom line, environmental attitude behaviour, the brand identity prism as well as generational cohort theory were explored. Then under empirical review was also done to give the review of the various variables analysed in this study. These reviews are also analysed under knowledge gap to support the lines of inquiry of the study. Lastly, the chapter presented a summary of the literature review.

Chapter three described the research methodology. In the first section the research paradigm and philosophical assumptions were presented, then research design, study area, target population and sampling framework were presented in the subsequent sections as well as research variables. In addition, other sections in the chapter sections described data collection tools and procedure, data analysis and presentation, study's ethical considerations and the chapter summary.

In chapter four, results of the study were presented and discussed. The section starts by giving the response rate of the respondents, then it discusses the preliminary data analysis and then descriptive analysis of the study variables was presented. Structural equation modelling and hypotheses testing was presented in the last section the chapter before presenting the chapter summary.

Lastly, chapter five presented the summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study. The sections outlined major findings, their implications for theory and practice, and the various recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the concepts and theories underpinning the study and evaluates empirical literature on the relationship between HSPs, guest travel preference, and hotel brand identity. It explores literature on the role of travel preferences as a mediator and guest trip characteristic and generational cohort as a moderator in this relationship between hotel sustainability practices and hotel brand identity.

2.2 Theoretical review

2.2.1 Triple Bottom Line Theory

The study employed the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) theory to investigate the relationship between HSPs and sustainability performance in lifestyle hotels. This theory, introduced by John Elkington in 1994, advocates for reporting financial, social, and environmental performance, with "profit, people, and planet" identified as the three "bottom lines" for a business. In the hospitality sector, according to the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) theory, a hotel's environmental sustainability initiatives can influence its profitability by cutting costs through efficient resource utilization and diminishing its environmental impact. In addition, sustainability practices in a hotel can positively influence social performance by improving employee and host community welfare. (Kılıç & Kılıç, 2017; Tapper, Font & Schwartz, 2013). Figure 2.1 depicts the TBL theory in the context of tourism:

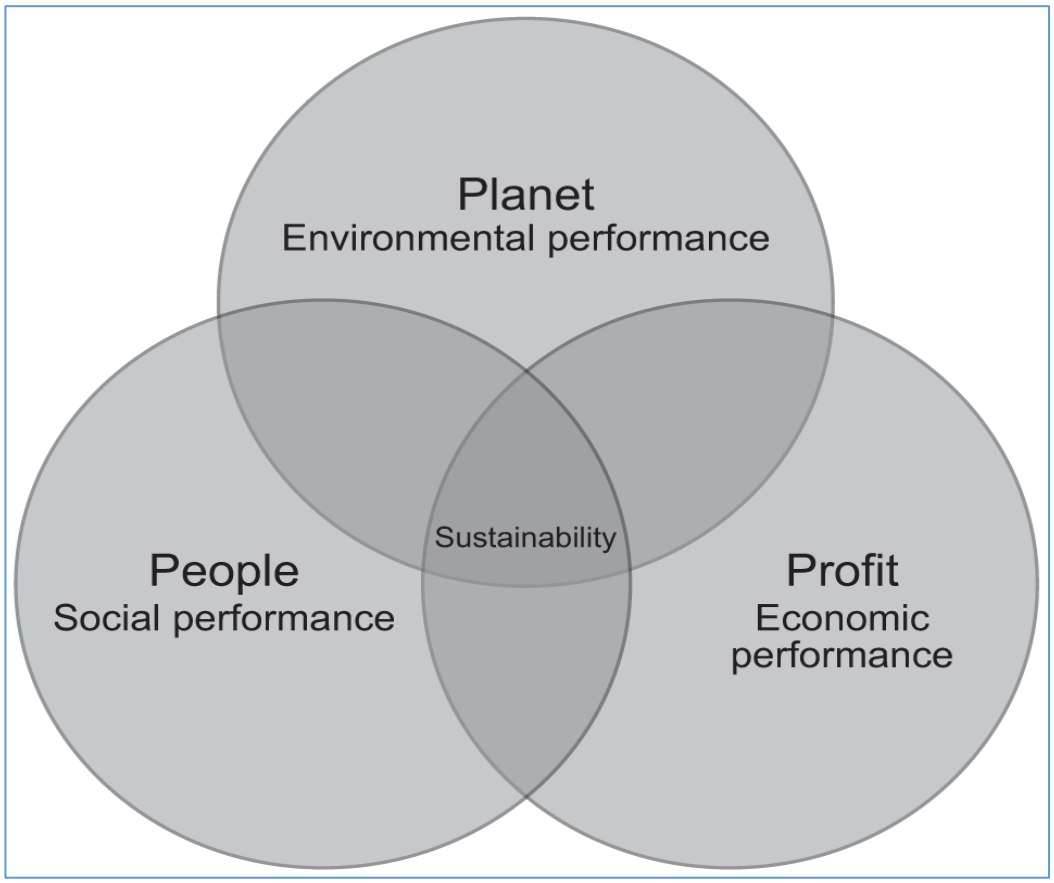


Figure 2. 1 Elkington's Triple Bottom line theory

Source Kılıç and Kılıç, (2017); Tapper et al. (2013)

Figure 2.1 depicts Elkington's TBL theory which emphasizes the three pillars of sustainability: people, planet, and profits. In the hotel sector, this framework guides businesses to consider social, environmental, and economic impacts simultaneously. "People" entails fostering inclusive workplaces, supporting local communities, and ensuring guests' well-being, reflecting corporate social responsibility efforts (Rezvani et al., 2017). The "Planet" aspect emphasizes reducing environmental impacts through the adoption of eco-friendly measures like energy conservation, waste reduction, and water management (Kim et al., 2017). Finally, "profits" involve maintaining financial viability while aligning with sustainability goals, promoting long-term success and competitiveness (Ghaderi et al., 2017). Incorporating all three aspects allows hotels to achieve sustainable development by balancing social, environmental, and economic considerations (Singal, 2013).

Beyond the Triple Bottom Line (TBL), the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) framework offers another comprehensive approach to sustainability in the hotel sector (GSTC, 2008). While GSTC provides specific criteria for sustainable tourism operations, TBL's broader focus on economic, social, and environmental performance has gained wider popularity. TBL's simplicity, comprehensiveness, and adaptability to various organizational contexts make it a versatile framework for integrating sustainability into core business strategies. It also aligns with the growing stakeholder demand for corporate social responsibility and ethical practices (Elkington, 1998).

Advocates of TBL theory assert its holistic approach to business performance assessment by considering the three sustainability dimensions and encouraging non-financial indicators reporting on impacts on people and the environment (Gomes, Melo & Lima, 2021; Wilaiporn & Techakesari, 2021). Nonetheless, critics like Feng and Wu (2021) argue that the framework is simplistic, failing to account for the complex interactions between sustainability's three dimensions.

The TBL theory provided a framework for the study to identify sustainability practices and performance indicators across environmental, social, and economic dimensions. This approach enabled the study to address a limitation in previous research (e.g., Booyens, Visser, & Du Plessis, 2021; Kularatne et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2017) where the focus was predominantly on easily quantifiable financial indicators, by offering a structure that also considers the social and environmental dimensions of sustainability. The Triple Bottom Line (TBL) framework has proven highly beneficial in promoting sustainability within the hotel and tourism sector. Muñoz-Pascual et al. (2019) highlight its relevance by emphasizing its role in enhancing sustainable product innovation performance, particularly within Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The TBL approach enables businesses to consider economic, environmental, and social factors simultaneously, aligning with the multifaceted nature of the hospitality industry. Kealy (2019) suggests that TBL sustainability reporting can enhance tangibility, providing a structured method for hotels and tourism businesses to assess and communicate their sustainability efforts comprehensively. Do (2020) advocates for integrating sustainability into strategic management, indicating the TBL

framework as a valuable tool for gaining competitive advantage in the industry. Overall, the TBL framework serves as a practical guide for hotels and tourism businesses to holistically address sustainability concerns, fostering long-term viability and resilience in the sector.

2.2.2 Environmental Attitude Behavior Theory

The Environmental Attitude-Behavior theory (EAB) suggests that guests' travel preferences can be classified into two main categories: environmental attitude-based preferences and hedonic preferences. This theory has been examined by numerous researchers in the realms of environmental psychology and consumer behavior. Ajzen (1991), renowned for his contributions to the Theory of Planned Behavior, expanded the development of the EAB theory by offering a comprehensive framework that includes attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Additionally, Kaiser, Wolfing, and Fuhrer (1999) conducted research on environmental attitudes and behaviors, particularly focusing on pro-environmental behavior and sustainability. Furthermore, Stern (2000) studied the relationship between attitudes and behaviors regarding environmental issues.

The basic tenet of the EAB theory is that hotel guests can be classified into two broad categories depending on their travel attitudes: travelers who prioritize environmentally friendly practices and destinations. These travelers may seek out accommodations with green certifications, participate in eco-friendly activities, and prefer destinations known for their sustainability initiatives. This group values experiences that align with their environmental beliefs and is willing to make sacrifices in comfort or luxury for the sake of reducing their environmental impact (Kaiser et al., 1999).

On the other hand, hedonic preferences are driven by the desire for pleasure, relaxation, and enjoyment during travel. Travelers with hedonic preferences prioritize comfort, luxury, and indulgence in their travel experiences. They may choose accommodations based on amenities, entertainment options, and the overall atmosphere rather than environmental considerations (Stern, 2000).

Behavior theories like the EAB theory offer valuable insights into understanding consumer, tourist, and guest preferences regarding environmental issues. These theories posit that individuals' environmental attitudes, shaped by factors such as worldview, place attachment, social capital, and daily residential experiences, influence their behaviors towards the environment (Wynveen et al., 2014; Cho & Kang, 2017; Bonnes et al., 2011). For example, Wynveen et al. (2014) discovered that individuals who feel a strong emotional connection to a marine environment are more conscious of environmental impacts and tend to demonstrate behaviors that support the environment.

Similarly, Cho and Kang (2017) emphasize the role of social connections in influencing environmental behaviors, suggesting that people with robust social networks may be more inclined to adopt sustainable practices. Bonnes et al. (2011) explore the mixed attitudes toward urban green spaces, highlighting the complex interplay between environmental values and everyday experiences in shaping preferences for green areas. In summary, behavior theories like EAB offer a framework for comprehending the intricate relationship between attitudes and behaviors related to environmental issues among consumers, tourists, and guests.
The present study relied on the EAB theory to conceptualize hotel guest travel preferences, distinguishing between lifestyle hotel guests with strong preferences for green accommodation experiences and guests primarily driven by the pursuit of luxury, comfort, and personal indulgence.

2.2.3 The Brand Identity Prism Theory

Jean-Noël Kapferer (1976) proposed the Brand Identity Prism (BIP) theory to help companies build and manage their brand identity. Kapferer (1986) proposed that brand identity comprises six components: physique, personality, culture, relationship, reflection, and self-image, which collectively assist brands in establishing a cohesive brand image. Figure 2.2 illustrates the Brand Identity Prism (BIP) framework for a hotel conceptualized by Kapferer (1986).

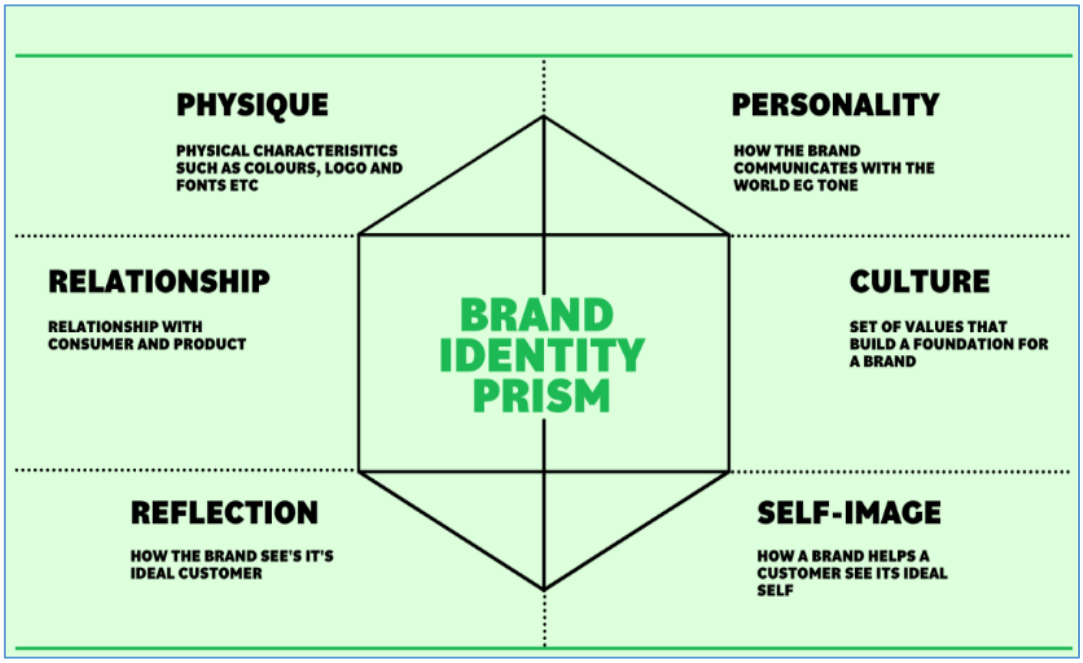


Figure 2. 2 Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism Framework

Source: Kapferer (1986)

Figure 2.2 illustrates Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism Framework tailored for a lifestyle hotel. Physique represents the tangible aspects of the hotel, such as its architecture, design, and amenities, reflecting the hotel's visual identity and physical environment (Gupta & Purohit, 2015). Relationship embodies the interactions between the hotel and its guests, emphasizing personalized service, hospitality, and customer engagement strategies (Kim et al., 2017), while Reflection refers to the values, beliefs, and aspirations conveyed by the hotel brand, encompassing its mission, sustainability initiatives, and cultural influences (Hsu et al., 2016). Personality encompasses the hotel's distinctive characteristics and brand voice, shaping its tone, style, and communication strategies (Berezan & Susskind, 2016), while Culture highlights the hotel's heritage, traditions, and local influences, celebrating its unique identity and sense of place (Eid & El-Gohary, 2015). Self-image relates to the emotional connection and identity alignment between the hotel and its target audience, influencing guests' perceptions and brand loyalty (Kapferer, 2012).

Following Kapferer (1986), recent research in the hospitality industry provides evidence that hotels can enhance their sustainability profile and to build a brand identity. The literature suggests that a hotel can leverage its environmental architectural design as a physical cue of its sustainability brand, attracting guests with a preference for green accommodation experiences (Chen, Chan & Huang, 2022; Wang, Li, Zhang, & Li, 2021; Yang & Tang, 2021).

The literature suggest that a lifestyle hotel can capitalize on its sustainability initiatives, such as waste reduction and energy efficiency, to mirror guests' values towards sustainable consumption and healthy living. By aligning its operations with eco-friendly practices, the hotel can cater to and reinforce the personal and environmental ethos of guests who prefer eco-conscious lifestyles (Xess, Bhargave, & Kumar, 2021).

Xess et al. (2021) also demonstrate that a hotel's commitment to sustainability can significantly enhance guest loyalty by aligning with their environmental values. The authors argue that when a hotel visibly integrates eco-friendly technologies and practices, it not only fosters a positive attitude among guests but also strengthens their commitment to the brand, thereby incentivizing repeat business. As per the authors, this congruence with guests' ecological consciousness may result in a readiness to pay a premium for environmentally conscious accommodations (Xess et al., 2021).

Fujimoto, Azmat, and Subramaniam (2016) advance the view that hotels can leverage sustainability to promote inclusivity and diversity by adopting practices that reflect and respect the culture and values of local communities. This perspective is supported by Kohon (2018), who argues that such initiatives can help shape a brand identity resonating with inclusivity, as guests increasingly seek out brands mirroring their social values. Sustainability efforts in this realm can transform a hotel's brand into a symbol of social responsibility and ethical engagement.

The study applied the BIP theory to conceptualize and operationalize the brand identity of lifestyle hotels. Kapferer (2012) affirms the framework's versatility, comprehensive nature, and suitability for diverse hotel segments, such as lifestyle

hotels. Additionally, the model's emphasis on understanding customer preferences in the development of brand identity was important.

2.2.4 The Generational Cohort Theory

In 1923, German sociologist Karl Mannheim proposed the Generational cohort theory. This theory suggests that historical events and cultural changes create unique generations with distinct worldviews and perspectives. It posits that events and social trends during formative years shape people's values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. William Strauss and Neil Howe refined the theory in 1991. Today, it is utilized in various disciplines, including marketing, to segment consumers. Marketers acknowledge four generational groups: Baby boomers, born between 1946 and 1964; Generation X, born between 1965 and 1980; Millennials/Generation Y, born between 1981 and 1996; and Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012 (Parker & Horst, 2021). Figure 2.3 visually represents these generational cohorts

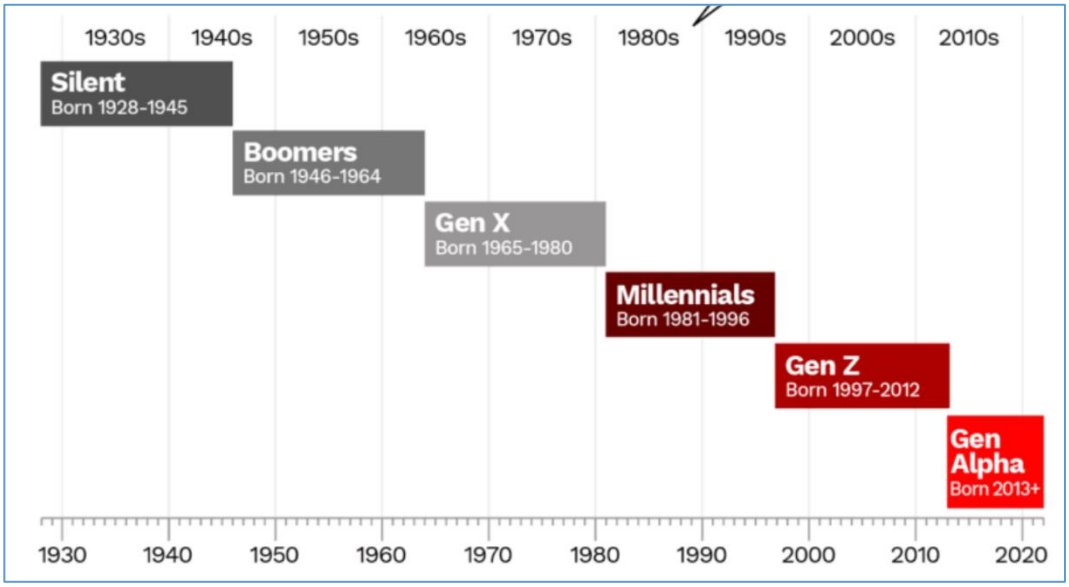


Figure 2. 3 Mannheim Generational Cohort Theory

Source: Adopted from Parker & Horst, 2021

Figure 2.3 depicts the age cohorts as per Mannheim's Generational Cohort Theory. This theory categorizes individuals into groups based on their birth years and shared experiences, shaping their values, beliefs, and behaviors over time (Mannheim, 1952).

Baby Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964, were influenced by post-war optimism, economic affluence, and cultural revolutions, which instilled values such as individualism and consumerism (Mikkonen & Raphael, 2015). Generation X, born between 1965 and 1980, encountered economic volatility, technological progress, and evolving family dynamics, nurturing qualities like independence, skepticism, and adaptability (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Millennials, born between 1981 and 1996, came of age in the digital era marked by globalization, diversity, and technological advancements, shaping their values of collaboration, social responsibility, and work-life balance (Pew Research Center, 2010). Generation Z, born after 1997, are digital natives influenced by technology, social media, and environmental concerns, leading to traits such as digital fluency, social consciousness, and entrepreneurial spirit (Seemiller & Grace, 2016).

Researchers in the hospitality field have utilized the generational theory to investigate differences in hotel guests' perceptions and motivations. Chen et al. (2019) applied the framework to explore the impact of guests' generational cohort on hotels' green practices, loyalty, and satisfaction in Taiwanese hotels. Similarly, Zhou et al. (2021) investigated how the generational cohorts of hotel guests influence the connection between sustainability practices and performance.

The Generational Cohort Framework has been immensely valuable for segmenting hotel guests, assisting hoteliers in comprehending and addressing the varied needs and preferences of different age groups. Kukoyi et al. (2016) underscore the importance of this method, emphasizing how guests from different generations exhibit unique characteristics and expectations. For instance, Baloglu and Bai (2023) demonstrate how personalization initiatives tailored to specific generational cohorts can foster relational bonds with luxury hotel guests, thereby enhancing guest satisfaction and loyalty. Similarly, Kamenidou et al. (2019) focus on Generation Y, noting their unique preferences for hotel satisfaction, which may include factors like technology integration and social experiences. The literature indicates that by employing the Generational Cohort Framework, hoteliers can customize their marketing strategies, services, and amenities to align with the preferences and values of various generational

segments. This approach ultimately enhances guest satisfaction and encourages repeat business.

The current study adopted the generational theory to operationalize heterogeneities in the values, belief and attitude of lifestyle hotel guests and study whether the generational cohorts moderate the relationships between HSPs, lifestyle hotel brand identity, and sustainability performance in the context of Nairobi hotels.

2.3 Empirical Review

2.3.1 The Influence of Hotel Suitability Practices on Brand Identity

Yadav, Dokania, and Pathak (2016) conducted a mixed-methods study in India to investigate the influence of sustainability practices on the corporate image of hotels. Their research revealed that hotels implementing sustainable practices had a more favorable image compared to those that did not. Guests perceived such hotels as more environmentally and socially responsible and of higher quality standards. The authors suggest that customers prefer hotels that adopt sustainability practices, and highlight the benefits of sustainability practices in enhancing the corporate image in the hospitality sector. However, it's important to note that the findings of the study might not be universally applicable to other geographical areas or particular hotel segments. Lee, Hwang and Choi (2017) investigated the relationship between restaurants' green practices and brand equity formation. The study relied on an online survey that targeted restaurant customers in South Korea and analyzed the data using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Lee et al. (2017) found that adopting green practices in restaurants led to higher levels of brand equity mediated by customer satisfaction and trust. However, the online survey's potential for self-selection bias among sustainability enthusiasts was noted as a limitation. Additionally, Lee et al. (2017) focused only on environmental sustainability practices and ignored social and economic dimensions. The present study rectified this by conducting on-site guest sampling and broadened the investigation to include social and economic sustainability practices.

In a more recent study, Chen et al. (2022) explored the impact of sustainability practices on the lifestyle brand identity of hotels. The study utilized a mixed-methods approach, which included a survey of hotel guests and content analysis of hotel websites. The findings demonstrated that HSPs had a positive impact on the lifestyle brand identity of hotels. The authors concluded that hotels that had adopted sustainable practices possessed a more distinct and recognizable brand identity compared to those that had not. Specifically, guests perceived sustainable hotels as more innovative, unique, and authentic. Chen et al. (2022) provided new empirical evidence on the benefits of HSPs in enhancing lifestyle brand identity within a specific geographic region (Taiwan).

Lee et al. (2022) investigated the impact of hotels' environmental sustainability efforts on brand identity among eco-conscious travelers. Their survey of travelers focused on sustainable travel preferences revealed that guests who perceived hotels as committed to eco-friendly practices, such as water and energy conservation, associated the brand with positive qualities like responsibility and innovation. Consequently, this perception resulted in heightened brand loyalty and positive word-of-mouth referrals (Lee et al., 2022).

In a recent study conducted by Adeyemi and Ayodeji (2023), attention was directed towards the African hotel sector. Their research delved into the impact of addressing guests' cultural sensitivities on brand perception. Surveys were administered to both local and international guests staying in African hotels. The results indicated that guests valued hotels that integrated local design motifs, served culturally relevant cuisine, and trained staff to accommodate diverse guest preferences. This cultural awareness cultivated a sense of respect and empathy, contributing to a favorable brand image for the hotels (Adeyemi & Ayodeji, 2023).

Drawing upon previous research, the current study explores the impact of HSPs on the brand identity of urban hotels in a developing nation. The findings from Yadav, Dokania, and Pathak (2016) and Chen et al. (2022) are particularly relevant, as they highlight the positive influence of sustainability practices on hotel image and brand identity. Yadav et al. underscore the improved corporate image associated with

sustainability, while Chen et al. provide evidence of enhanced lifestyle brand identity through sustainable practices. Lee, Hwang, and Choi (2017) and Lee et al. (2022) offer insights into the role of sustainability in brand equity and loyalty, although their focus on environmental aspects and potential biases limits their applicability. Adeyemi and Ayodeji (2023) enrich the context by emphasizing the importance of cultural sensitivity in brand perception, which complements the study's investigation of guest travel preferences.

2.3.2 The Influence of Hotel Sustainable Practices on Hotel Guests Travel Preference

Li and Wang (2018) conceptualize Guest travel preferences as the specific desires, needs, and expectations of travelers when choosing accommodations, activities, and services during their journeys. These preferences encompass various factors such as location, amenities, pricing, sustainability initiatives, and cultural experiences that influence individuals' decisions while planning and experiencing their travels.

The EAB theory distinguishes between environmental predisposition or ecocentric preference, where the guest's preference is predominantly driven by environmental considerations. This leads the guest to value experiences that align with their environmental beliefs and express willingness to make sacrifices in comfort or luxury for the sake of reducing their environmental impact (Kaiser et al., 1999). On the other hand, Stern (2000) recognizes hedonic preferences, in which the guest is motivated by the search for personal comfort and luxury.

Empirical findings indicate that individuals' ecological and environmental concerns are shaped by a complex interplay of various factors. Some research highlights individuals' experiences as a significant contributor to their environmental consciousness (Nisbet et al., 2009). For example, feelings of affinity, interest, and positive encounters with nature have been identified as predictors of environmentally protective behaviors (Nisbet et al., 2009).

According to Berezan, Millar, and Rehaab (2014), hotels previously pursued environmental initiatives mainly due to government regulations and the aim of

conserving resources like waste, energy, and water. However, hotels now acknowledge that guests anticipate eco-friendly features in hotels. Recent research has revealed that specific green features enhance overall guest satisfaction and reinforce their environmental consciousness. For example, using clean and renewable energy sources in a hotel is perceived positively by customers, leading to increased satisfaction levels and enhancing the hotel's competitive edge (Berezan et al., 2014). Han, Lee, Trang, and Kim (2018) explored how HSP influences guests' environmental attitudes, particularly focusing on their intention to engage in green hotel practices and loyalty. Their research specifically investigated guests' perceptions regarding water conservation and waste reduction initiatives, discovering that these efforts heightened both hedonic and utilitarian values. Surveying 289 participants in Vietnam, the study revealed that HSPs substantially bolstered pro-environmental intentions, with the value derived from staying in green hotels acting as a mediator.

Han et al. (2018) presented a conceptual model to clarify guests' environmentally friendly decision-making processes in green hotels, an area characterized by limited scholarly exploration of customer participation and loyalty intentions. However, it solely focused on environmental sustainability, particularly water and waste management, posing a limitation. Additionally, its sample was purposively selected, possibly biasing results towards participants with pro-environmental attitudes. The present study addressed this limitation by broadening the scope to include social sustainability practices and employing a probability sampling method for survey recruitment.

In a separate study focused on elucidating the formation of hotel guests' attitudinal loyalty, Han, Yu, Lee, and Kim (2019) devised a theoretical framework integrating guests' evaluations of hotel performance in eco-friendly practices (such as recycling and waste reduction, water conservation, and energy efficiency) and loyalty, utilizing a chain stages theory. Findings from structural analysis revealed that guests' assessments of hotel performance in resource conservation exerted a substantial influence on the formation of their attitudinal loyalty.

Research by Xess et al. (2021) demonstrated that hotels' commitment to sustainability can significantly enhance guest loyalty by aligning with their environmental values. The study found that when hotels visibly integrate eco-friendly technologies and practices, it fosters a positive attitude among guests and strengthens their commitment to the brand, incentivizing repeat business. Furthermore, Xess et al. (2021) argue that this alignment with guests' ecological awareness can lead to a willingness to pay more for environmentally responsible accommodations.

From the literature reviewed, it's clear that HSPs have emerged as a crucial factor influencing consumer attitudes and actions (Olya et al., 2020). Olya et al. (2020) also observe an increase in research exploring the impact of sustainability on consumer behavior. However, they caution that most of these studies have primarily concentrated on "consumer satisfaction" and "loyalty," which are commonly acknowledged as the primary attitudinal and behavioral aspects of sustainability. The authors suggest that this emphasis is understandable, as consumer satisfaction and loyalty are key indicators of a company's effectiveness in delivering products and services.

The present study diverged from the aforementioned literature trend by investigating the impact of HSPs on hotel guest preferences, encompassing attitudes ranging from ecocentric perspectives to anthropocentric views emphasizing hedonic preferences. Unlike Li and Wang (2018), who defined travel preferences broadly, this study delves into how HSPs influence these preferences and subsequently affect brand identity. While Berezan et al. (2014) and Han et al. (2018) highlight the positive impact of green practices on guest satisfaction and loyalty, the current study expands this focus to include both environmental and social sustainability dimensions. Han et al. (2019) and Xess et al. (2021) underscore the importance of aligning hotel practices with guest values for loyalty, but this study further examines how these practices mediate travel preferences and brand identity perceptions. Thus, the current research broadens the scope by integrating a range of sustainability practices and their nuanced effects on brand identity.

2.3.3 The Influence of Hotel Guest Travel Preferences on Hotel Brand Identity

González-Rodríguez, Díaz-Fernández, and Font (2020) explored the impact of guests' environmental concerns, perceptions of HSPs, and environmentally friendly hotel images on customers' willingness to pay a premium for staying at eco-friendly hotels. They gathered data through a survey of 454 customers staying at environmentally conscious hotels in Spain and utilized a SEM approach to analyze the connections between the variables under study. The study's results suggest that customers' environmental concerns have a more significant influence on their willingness to pay (WTP) a premium than their perceptions of the hotels' environmental practices.

Drawing on prior research by Fu et al. (2014), Kucukusta et al. (2013), and Martínez and del Bosque (2013), González-Rodríguez et al. (2020) posit that environmentally friendly practices positively influence a firm's image and reputation, fostering customer trust and identification. This, in turn, enhances satisfaction and loyalty. However, González-Rodríguez et al. (2020) highlight a research gap regarding the direct link between environmental attitudes and outcome variables like brand identity. They stress that this gap hampers understanding of how consumers' environmental concerns impact the significance attributed to environmental practices.

While acknowledging that consumers form attitudes based on their preferences and subsequent behaviors, González-Rodríguez et al. (2020) did not explore the connection between hotel guests' environmental attitudes and their perception of hotel brand identity. However, the authors contribute significantly by recognizing guests' preferences through the Value-Belief-Norm theory (VBN). This theory suggests that individuals hold beliefs and concerns about environmental consequences for themselves, others, or the planet.

This study aimed to bridge this theoretical gap by examining how hotel guests' travel preferences influence their perception of hotel brand identity. However, it diverged from González-Rodríguez et al. (2020) by utilizing the Environmental Attitude-Behavior (EAB) theory to conceptualize guests' travel preferences, as an alternative to the Value based norm (VBN) framework.

The gap in empirical evidence regarding the relationship between environmental attitudes, conceptualized in this study as hotel guests' travel preferences, and outcomes such as pre- and post-purchase behaviors like positive hotel image evaluation, is highlighted by Line and Hanks (2015). Line and Hanks (2015) propose that while numerous consumers advocate for hotels to embrace environmentally friendly practices, there is a growing body of evidence suggesting that such advocacy does not consistently translate into the actual purchase of sustainable products.

In a study conducted using a large internet-based sample (n = 1105) from Amazon Mechanical Turk, Line and Hanks (2015) examined this issue by developing an integrated framework to study the relationships between tourists' luxury beliefs, environmental beliefs, and behavioral outcomes such as WTP for green hotels, attitudes towards green hotels, and intention to revisit a green hotel. Importantly, the researchers aimed to establish the role of destination image as a moderator of the relationships proposed in their model. Their results reveal structural differences in the relationships between tourists' environmental attitudes and behavioral outcome variables. Specifically, their findings support the conclusion that luxury predisposition does not significantly influence attitudes towards green hotels in rural destinations compared to urban areas, where the moderating influence was significant. The researchers used location in urban and rural areas as proxies for destination image.
While Line and Hanks' (2015) research offers valuable insights into how image perception affects the link between consumer preferences and post-consumption outcomes, it fails to consider the direct relationship between consumer attitudes and their perceptions of destination or product image.

The present study fills these gaps by directly investigating the influence of hotel guest travel preferences on hotel brand identity, addressing the research void highlighted by González-Rodríguez, Díaz-Fernández, and Font (2020). While their study emphasized the impact of environmental concerns on willingness to pay a premium, it did not explore how these concerns translate into brand identity perceptions. By utilizing the Environmental Attitude-Behavior (EAB) theory, this study broadens the conceptual framework to include both environmental and hedonic preferences, bridging the gap left by González-Rodríguez et al. (2020) in linking environmental attitudes to brand

identity. Additionally, while Line and Hanks (2015) investigated the role of destination image and luxury predisposition, their study did not directly assess how consumer attitudes affect perceptions of brand identity. This research extends their findings by examining the direct relationship between travel preferences and brand identity in the context of lifestyle hotels.

2.3.4 The Mediating Influence of Hotel Guest Travel Preference on the Relationship between HSPs and Hotel Brand Identity

Majeed et al. (2022) investigated the impact of green marketing strategies, including Eco-labeling, green packaging and branding, and green product pricing, on customers' green product purchases from hypermarkets and online platforms in Pakistan. With a sample size of 450 individuals, they explored how green brand image and customers' environmental attitudes mediate the relationship between green marketing efforts and green purchase intentions. Based on SEM findings, Majeed et al. (2022) confirm that green marketing significantly influences customers' intentions to buy environmentally friendly products. They establish that green brand image and customer environmental attitudes mediate this relationship. The researchers attribute the mediation to increasing consumer awareness of environmental issues, indicating a shift in purchasing habits towards supporting environmental conservation. This study extends these findings from consumer products markets to explore how guests' travel preferences mediate the link between HSPs and perceptions of hotel brand identity in lifestyle hotels.

Recent research has delved into the mediating function of consumer attitudes, such as green trust, in linking sustainability practices like corporate social responsibility (CSR) to behavioral intentions within industrial commodities markets. For instance, Nguyen-Viet, Tran, and Ngo (2024) explored the interplay between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), green brand image (GBI), green trust (GT), and behavioral intentions (including word-of-mouth intention, willingness to pay, and purchase intention) in Vietnam's industrial and marine coatings sector. Green Trust, as defined by the researchers, denotes the confidence or reliance placed on a brand, product, or service due to its perceived environmental performance and credibility.

Using data from 332 stakeholders in the Vietnamese coating industry, Nguyen-Viet et al. (2024) employed SEM analysis to explore relationships. They found that GT and CSR positively impact word-of-mouth, willingness-to-pay, and green purchase intentions, highlighting trust and sustainability commitment as key drivers. Furthermore, they revealed GT's mediation between green purchase intentions and GBI, as well as between CSR and green purchase intentions. These results stress the importance of integrating CSR, GT, and GBI into business strategies. Their findings prompted the examination of sustainable practices in the emerging lifestyle hotels segment, the focus of this study.

In a recent study in the tourism industry, Godovykh, Fyall, and Baker (2024) explored the impact of sustainability badges (eco-labels) and awareness of sustainable practices on tourists' attitudes and behavioral intentions using an experimental approach. They randomly assigned guests, previously using a hotel booking platform, to four scenarios with manipulated presence of sustainability badges and awareness of sustainable practices on the website. The study involved 537 participants from the United States who had booked hotel rooms via www.booking.com in the past year through Amazon Mechanical Turk. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), moderation, and mediation analyses were applied to address the research questions.

The Godovykh et al. (024), study's findings offered empirical support for the notion that having a sustainability badge could positively impact guests' attitudes toward a hotel and their intentions to book a similar establishment. Notably, the research investigated the mediating role of attitudes in the link between the presence of a sustainability badge and booking intentions. The mediation analysis results suggested that, when accounting for attitudes, the presence of sustainability badges no longer significantly influenced booking intentions ($B = 0.05$; $p = 0.29$ns). However, both the impact of sustainability badge presence on attitudes ($B = 0.42$; $p < 0.05$) and the effect of attitudes on booking intentions ($B = 0.87$; $p < 0.05$) remained significant. Thus, the authors concluded that guests' attitudes fully mediated the association between sustainability badge presence and booking intentions.

Kim and Chan (2022) investigated the relationship between hotel sustainability practices and brand image, introducing perceived value as a mediator. Perceived value reflects guests' appreciation for sustainability efforts, aligning with the concept of travel preference influencing the impact of these practices. Their findings indicate that positive experiences with sustainability practices enhance perceived value, thus strengthening the hotel's brand image (Kim & Chan, 2022). However, this study does not directly address travel preference as a mediator, revealing a research gap. Future studies could explore how specific travel preferences (e.g., eco-conscious travelers) mediate the relationship between hotel sustainability practices and brand image.

Godovykh et al.'s (2024) research adds to the literature by highlighting the mediating function of guests' psychographic attributes in linking sustainability practices to outcome variables like booking intentions. However, their study centered on guests' attitudes toward the hotel rather than their environmental attitudes.

This study addressed this omission by presenting empirical evidence of how guests' travel preferences, indicative of their environmental attitudes, mediate the link between HSP and guests' perception of the hotel's brand identity, an outcome of their stay. Majeed et al. (2022) highlighted the mediating role of environmental attitudes and green brand image in the relationship between green marketing and purchase intentions, which parallels the current study’s exploration of how travel preferences mediate the impact of HSP on brand identity. Similarly, Nguyen-Viet et al. (2024) emphasized the importance of green trust as a mediator between CSR and behavioral intentions, offering insights into the broader concept of mediation in sustainability contexts. Godovykh, Fyall, and Baker (2024) found that attitudes mediate the impact of sustainability badges on booking intentions, underscoring the relevance of guest attitudes in influencing behavior. Kim and Chan (2022) explored perceived value as a mediator but did not directly examine travel preferences. This study builds on these findings by focusing specifically on travel preferences as a mediator, offering a nuanced understanding of how sustainability practices influence brand identity through guests’ preferences.

2.3.5 The Moderating Influence of Hotel Guests Attributes on the Relationship between HSPs and Hotel Brand Identity

Ben-Haobin, Huiyue, Peng, and Fong (2021) examined how the length of stay (LOS) affects the relationships between hotel servicescape, customer mindfulness, and brand experience. Brand experience encompasses responses to brand-related stimuli, while servicescape refers to service design and delivery. Customer mindfulness involves focused awareness of the present. They proposed a model where servicescape boosts mindfulness, thus enhancing brand experience, with LOS moderating these links. Survey data from guests in 3 to 5-star hotels in Guangding Province, China, supported a mediation effect: perceived servicescape influenced brand experience through customer mindfulness. Furthermore, longer guest stays negatively moderated the mindfulness-brand experience relationship.

Ben-Haobin et al. (2021) advanced the idea that the influence of exogenous variables, such as servicescape or hotel sustainability practices, on an outcome variable may be contingent on other factors related to the guest's trip characteristics. They investigated LOS as a moderating variable. The researchers posit that in hotels, the customer's brand experience, initially influenced by mindfulness, may diminish over time due to other factors gaining more influence. Their discovery that the LOS negatively moderated the link between mindfulness and brand experience supports this assertion. Previous research has provided empirical support for the direct correlation between LOS and consumer post-purchase behavior. For instance, Kim and Han (2023) utilized linear regression analyses to explore LOS's influence on customer satisfaction, examining online reviews of London hotels. Their study revealed a negative correlation between LOS and customer satisfaction. Additionally, they noted this negative association to be more significant in high-end hotels compared to low-end ones.

Kim and Han (2023) attribute their findings to a potential trade-off between extended stays and customer satisfaction, suggesting that the negative link between LOS and satisfaction may stem from service satiation. Inspired by Ben-Haobin et al.'s (2021) research and insights from Kim and Han (2023), this study explores how LOS

moderates the relationship between HSP, guests' travel preferences, and hotel brand identity within the lifestyle hotel context.

Liu, Li, and Kim (2017) investigated the theoretical connections between tourists' perceptions of destination image, satisfaction, and future behavioral intentions in a Chinese study. Their research involved surveying 513 tourists from mainland China who visited Macau, employing a field intercept method to gather data from inbound tourists at public locations. They utilized structural equation modeling (SEM) to model the theoretical relationships between respondents' perceptions of destination image, travel satisfaction, behavioral intentions, and various travel and demographic characteristics.

The analysis confirmed that the impact of perceived image on satisfaction was more pronounced for first-time visitors compared to repeat visitors. Liu et al. (2017) attribute this to repeat visitors' prior experience with the destination, suggesting that they may have already formed expectations. They argue that the perceptions of repeat visitors may not influence their satisfaction to the same degree as for first-time visitors, who have less prior knowledge. Consequently, Liu et al. (2017) concluded that enhancing the perceived destination image is pivotal for shaping future behavioral intentions, especially among first-time visitors.

Liu et al.'s (2017) conclusions contrast with those of an earlier study by Tosun, Dedeoğlu, and Fyall (2015), who explored the moderating effect of past experience on the relationship between destination service quality, affective image, and revisit intention for international tourists in Turkey. Tosun et al. (2015) collected survey responses from 536 international visitors in Turkey and conducted multiple group SEM analyses for first-time and repeat visitors. Their results revealed that perceptions related to the actual services significantly influenced the destination's affective image. Crucially, they found that perceptions of accommodation-based service quality and affective image were stronger determinants of revisit intention for repeat visitors compared to first-time visitors.

The disparity in results concerning how repeat visitors moderate the relationship between external factors and outcomes in tourism indicates that this moderating effect varies depending on local conditions. This variability prompted the current study to explore how repeat visits may moderate outcomes in the context of lifestyle hotels, particularly in a developing country.

Ban, Kim, Sheehan, and Prideaux (2022) explored how prior visits moderate the influence of service quality and perceived value on ecolodge guests' behavioral intentions. They aimed to assess whether distinguishing between first-time and repeat visitors could serve as a segmentation criterion for ecolodge guests, benefiting hotel managers. Their analysis showed that prior visits moderate the link between perceived value and customer satisfaction. Notably, among repeat guests, perceived value had a reduced impact on satisfaction and intentions to revisit or recommend an ecolodge. However, service quality remained a significant predictor of satisfaction for both first-time and repeat visitors. Consequently, Ban et al. (2022) suggested that strategies to increase repeat visits for ecolodges should prioritize non-monetary aspects of the accommodation experience.

Chen and Tung (2014) delved into the determinants of revisit intentions for hotels implementing eco-friendly practices, employing the Theory of Planned Behavior. While not directly addressing brand image, revisit intentions serve as indicators of favorable brand perception. Their findings demonstrated that Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC), reflecting guests' confidence in selecting a green hotel, and subjective norms, indicating social pressure for environmental consciousness, significantly influence revisit intentions (Chen & Tung, 2014). Chen et al.'s (2014) study offers valuable insights into guest perceptions of sustainability and its connection to revisit intentions. However, a research gap exists regarding how prior visits moderate the impact of sustainability practices on brand image. Future investigations could explore how guest familiarity, cultivated through repeat visits, interacts with their perception of a hotel's sustainability efforts. This exploration could elucidate whether repeat guests become more receptive to such practices, potentially enhancing the hotel's brand identity.

Wang, Wang, Xue, Wang, and Li (2018) investigated how Millennials moderate the relationship between green image and consumer word-of-mouth (WOM) intentions in the Chinese green hotel industry, using the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework. They proposed that Millennials, who are highly environmentally conscious, would notably influence word-of-mouth. Surveying 324 respondents, the researchers affirmed that the green image of green hotels strongly impacts consumer satisfaction, and that satisfaction significantly influences green trust. Wang et al (2018), they observed that consumer satisfaction and trust positively correlate with their intention to recommend green hotels. Crucially, Millennials had significant moderating effects on all pathways in their model.

Wang et al. (2018) notably divided their sample into two groups, under 40 (Millennials) and 40 and above (non-Millennials), to analyze Millennials' moderating impact. However, this overlooked the moderating influence of other generational cohorts. To address this gap, our study investigates the moderating influence of all four generational cohorts.

Moise, Gil-Saura, and Ruiz-Molina (2020) explored the relationship between value co-creation and guest trust, satisfaction, and loyalty in green hotels, considering potential moderating effects of trip purpose and generational cohort. They surveyed 309 Spanish hotel guests and analyzed the data using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The study found that guest participation in value co-creation positively impacts trust, satisfaction, and loyalty. Both trust and satisfaction were positively associated with customer loyalty. Additionally, the study identified age as a moderator in some relationships, such as trust-loyalty and satisfaction-loyalty.

Moise et al. (2020) suggested that the importance of relational factors like trust and loyalty might vary across generational cohorts. While all cohorts may eventually become loyal guests, the drivers of their loyalty could differ. Their findings supported this notion, showing that the impact of value co-creation on guest satisfaction was significant for Generations Z, Y, and Baby Boomers. However, the association between value co-creation, trust, and satisfaction with loyalty was notable only for Generation X and Baby Boomers. They concluded that age moderation is evident in

the links between guest trust and loyalty, and guest satisfaction and loyalty, with older guests exhibiting stronger associations, particularly Baby Boomers and Generation X.. Oh et al. (2020) examined how generational cohorts moderate the link between perceived corporate social responsibility (CSR) and hotel brand image. Although CSR encompasses diverse initiatives beyond sustainability, environmental efforts often feature prominently. The study revealed that Millennials and Generation Z assign greater significance to CSR in evaluating a hotel's brand image compared to older generations (Oh et al., 2020). This underscores the moderating influence of generational cohort, emphasizing the need to tailor sustainability practices to resonate with different age groups.

While Oh et al.'s (2020) research provides insights into generational disparities in CSR perception for brand image, it prompts further investigation specifically focused on sustainability practices. Subsequent studies could delve into how various generations perceive specific sustainability initiatives and their impact on brand image. For instance, exploring how Millennials and Gen Z react to practices like water conservation or local sourcing compared to older generations could yield valuable insights for hotels seeking to enhance their brand identity across age demographics.
A study by Zhou et al. (2021) contributed to the existing literature by examining the moderating influence of hotel guest generational cohorts and the mediating role of lifestyle brand identity on the relationship between hotel sustainability practices and hotel sustainability performance in lifestyle hotels. The study considered Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z cohorts. However, the study has some weaknesses. Firstly, it drew the sample from a single country, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other cultural contexts or geographic regions. Secondly, the study did not examine the impact of specific sustainability practices on sustainability performance, which could provide insights for hotel managers and policymakers.

To address these weaknesses, the present study investigated the moderating influence of generational cohorts on the relationships between HSP, pre-consumption hotel guests' environmental attitudes (travel preferences), and post-consumption guests' evaluation of the hotel brand identity in a developing country tourism market. Ben-

Haobin et al. (2021) demonstrated how stay duration influences the relationship between servicescape and brand experience, revealing that LOS moderates guest perceptions over time. This insight informs our examination of how travel preferences impact brand identity throughout different lengths of stay. Kim and Han (2023) found a negative correlation between LOS and customer satisfaction, suggesting that extended stays can affect overall perceptions, which is relevant for exploring how travel preferences might interact with HSP and brand identity.

Liu et al. (2017) and Tosun et al. (2015) provided contrasting views on the moderating effect of repeat visits on satisfaction and revisit intentions, indicating that the impact of guest familiarity can vary by context. This study extends these findings by considering how generational cohorts further moderate these relationships, offering a nuanced view of how different visitor groups interact with sustainability practices and brand identity. Ban et al. (2022) and Chen and Tung (2014) highlighted the influence of past visits and sustainability practices on guest satisfaction and brand perception, but did not address generational differences, which this study aims to explore.

Wang et al. (2018) and Moise et al. (2020) examined generational impacts on sustainability and value co-creation, providing foundational insights into how different age groups perceive and respond to green practices. Oh et al. (2020) further explored generational differences in CSR perceptions, revealing that Millennials and Gen Z place greater importance on CSR in brand evaluation. This study builds on these findings by investigating how generational cohorts moderate the relationships between HSP, travel preferences, and brand identity in a developing country context, addressing gaps in understanding how specific generational attitudes and behaviors influence brand perception. Lastly, Zhou et al. (2021) focused on generational cohorts and lifestyle brand identity but did not consider specific sustainability practices or broader cultural contexts, which the present study seeks to address by incorporating diverse generational perspectives and contextual factors.

2.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter review the various related literature to this study. The chapter started by presenting the theoretical review, where related theories like Triple bottom line, Environmental attitude behavior, the brand identity prism as well as the generational cohort theories were extensively explored. Thereafter, empirical review was done to explore the various variables related to this study, for instance, the influence of hotel suitability practices on brand identity, the influence of hotel sustainable practices on hotel guests travel preference, the mediating influence of hotel guest travel preference on the relationship between HSPS and hotel brand identity and moderating influence of hotel guests' attributes on the relationship between HSPS and hotel brand identity.

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter delineates the methodology of the study, encompassing the research design, study location, target demographic, and sampling methods. It proceeds to detail the research tools, procedures for data collection, and the subsequent data analysis. Lastly, ethical considerations are deliberated upon.

3.2 Research Philosophy

Mackenzie and Knipe (2021) define research philosophy as the assumptions, beliefs, and values that guide scientific inquiry. A researcher's philosophical orientation influences the choice of research methods, the type of data collected, how the data is analyzed, and results interpreted. Neuman (2014) adds that the researcher's worldview determines how their beliefs transform into knowledge, generalizations, and theories. Two primary philosophical perspectives dominate Western scientific inquiry: positivism and interpretivism, also known as anti-positivism. Positivism holds that social reality consists of objectively verifiable facts that can be measured using value-free metrics. Researchers employing this approach use statistics to test causal theories and generate knowledge through replication (Neuman, 2014). On the other hand, interpretivist philosophy emphasizes the subjective nature of reality, highlighting the importance of understanding how individuals construct meanings and interpretations of the world. It departs from anti-positivist views, holding that social reality is constructed through individual experiences, interactions and interpretations. Lowry, Hall, and Williams (2018) recommend that researchers engage with subjects in a way that allows their subjective interpretations to be heard and considered.

While the positivist philosophy tends to favor the use of quantitative data and statistical analysis to test hypotheses, the interpretivist philosophy relies on qualitative data to capture the subjective views, experiences, and interpretations of research participants. The interpretivist school of thought prioritizes the exploration of social phenomena through an in-depth analysis of participants' experiences, meanings, and

interpretations, rather than seeking to establish universal laws or objective facts (Lowry, et al., 2018; Neuman, 2014).

Tourism research has traditional favored the positivist philosophy and quantitative methods (Lowry et al., 2018). However, scholars are now combining qualitative and quantitative methods in Mixed Method Research (MMR) to gain the benefits of both approaches. (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2016). According to Lowry et al. (2018), the MMR is associated with research philosophies like pragmatism, transformative –emancipation, and critical realism. The pragmatism philosophy does not share the focus on objectivity or the emphasis on subjectivity but argues for combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. In Creswell and Plano Clark's (2011) opinion, pragmatism uses empiricism to determine workable qualitative and quantitative methods that work to answer the research questions and test hypotheses.

The current research sought to understand the complex relationship between HSP, guests travel preference and brand identity in Nairobi's lifestyle hotels. The study relied on pragmatism philosophy as it allowed for a more flexible and adaptable approach that drew on the advantages of qualitative and quantitative data methods.
Veal (2017) notes that pragmatism originated in philosophy during the early twentieth century. The research philosophy suggests that valid knowledge should not solely rely on theoretical or logical rigor but should also consider real-world experience and practical utility in solving real-world issues. In the social sciences, pragmatism has evolved into a research approach that is not inherently aligned with either the post-positivist or interpretive paradigms. Instead, it may incorporate elements of both paradigms at different stages of the research process (Veal, 2017).

Tourism researchers have highlighted several advantages of pragmatism: Firstly, it allows researchers to adopt a flexible approach by combining elements of both positivist and interpretivist paradigms, thus accommodating diverse research needs and questions (Veal, 2017). Secondly, pragmatism emphasizes the practical application of research findings, ensuring that outcomes are relevant and useful for addressing real-world issues faced by the tourism industry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017).

This emphasis on pragmatic applicability elevates the influence of research on shaping tourism policies and industry methodologies. Furthermore, pragmatism prompts researchers to interact with stakeholders and integrate their viewpoints, culminating in more holistic and actionable understandings of tourism phenomena (Jafari & Aaser, 1988). Overall, pragmatism fosters a balanced and pragmatic approach to tourism research, enhancing its relevance, applicability, and effectiveness in addressing contemporary challenges and opportunities in the field.

For example, the current project involved a survey of hotel guests who provide quantified data to test hypotheses on the relationships between the variables, while qualitative data provided an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. This approach provided a holistic understanding of the complex relationships between HSP, guest travel preferences and brand identity in Nairobi's lifestyle hotels.

3.3 Research Design

The study utilized the Mixed Methods Research (MMR) approach, following the framework delineated by Creswell and Creswell (2018), which involves collecting qualitative and quantitative data to investigate research questions or test hypotheses. This approach was deemed suitable for the study as it leverages the advantages of both qualitative and quantitative research methods while mitigating their respective shortcomings. Methodologically, it was considered an effective tactic for obtaining a thorough comprehension of the research problem and questions, enabling researchers to clarify quantitative results through qualitative follow-up data collection and analysis, as advocated by Creswell and Creswell (2018).

The study employed the Explanatory Sequential Mixed Method Design (ESMMD), a form of MMR that involves a two-phase data collection approach. Initially, quantitative data was collected, analyzed, and used to guide the subsequent qualitative phase. This design aimed to use qualitative data to offer deeper insights into the initial quantitative results. Figure 3.1 depicts a schematic representation of the research design utilized in the study.

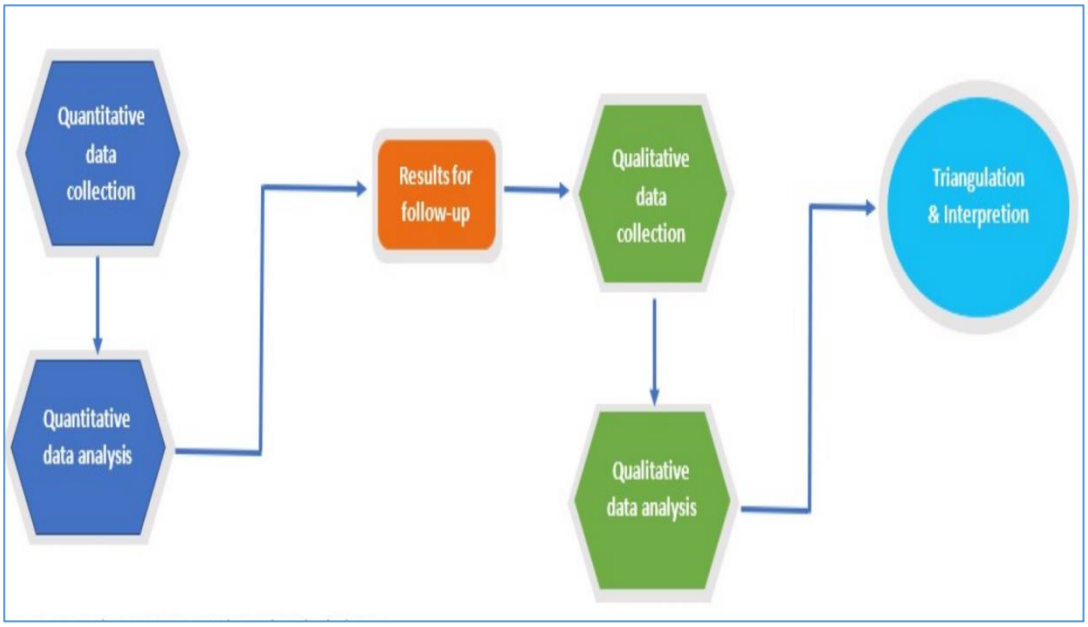


Figure 3. 1 The Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Research Design

Source: Adapted from Aramo-Immonen (2013)

Figure 3.1 illustrates the research design utilized in the study. Initially, the first phase involved gathering quantitative data through a survey conducted among guests at lifestyle hotels in Nairobi. Subsequently, the survey data underwent summarization and analysis using statistical techniques to address the research hypotheses. The outcomes of this quantitative analysis then guided the design of the qualitative phase of the research.

In the second phase, qualitative data was gathered from key informants, including managerial staff from selected hotels, using purposive sampling. This data aimed to offer deeper insights into the sustainable practices implemented by these hotels and their impact on hotel brand identity.

In line with Creswell and Creswell's (2018) methodology, the findings from qualitative data analysis were triangulated with those from quantitative analysis. This comprehensive approach allowed for a thorough examination of the direct, mediated, and moderated relationships between HSPs, guest travel preferences, and hotel brand identity within the context of Nairobi's lifestyle hotels.

Mixed-method research has gained traction in tourism studies as it provides a comprehensive approach to unraveling complex phenomena in the field. Mariani and Baggio (2020) underscore its importance in network analysis within tourism and hospitality research, where qualitative and quantitative data merge to offer profound insights into industry networks. An exemplary application is the explanatory sequential design, demonstrated by Sahaf and Fazili (2024). This method begins with quantitative data collection to establish trends, followed by qualitative inquiry to delve deeper into the findings. For instance, Sahaf and Fazili (2024) explore customer-based destination brand equity's role in addressing service failures in tourist ecosystems. They employ an explanatory sequential mixed-method design to quantify brand equity's impact on forgiveness behavior and qualitatively explore underlying mechanisms.

Similarly, Mason et al. (2010) advocate for mixed methods, especially in exploratory research, where qualitative insights inform subsequent quantitative investigations. Overall, mixed-method research, particularly the explanatory sequential approach, yields valuable insights and a holistic understanding of intricate tourism phenomena by amalgamating qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

3.4 Study Area

The study was conducted within Nairobi City County, Kenya. Nairobi serves as the country's primary administrative, economic, and cultural hub and ranks among Africa's largest and fastest-growing cities (Mundia, 2017). Positioned approximately at 1.28°S latitude and 36.82°E longitude, Nairobi spans an area of around 696 square kilometers. Appendix A provides a map of Nairobi County. The choice of Nairobi as the study area was driven by its pivotal role in Kenya's tourism sector as a gateway to major tourist attractions. Nairobi serves as a convenient entry point for both local and international tourists, boasting a well-established hotel infrastructure. As of 2019, Nairobi accounted for 12% of Kenya's hotels, 29% of available rooms, and 27% of available beds. According to the KNBS, there are 36 classified hotels in Nairobi (KNBS, 2022).

3.5 Target Population

According to Veal (2018), a research population comprises both human and inanimate units of analysis within a study. In the quantitative phase of research, lifestyle hotel guests were identified as the primary unit of analysis. The literature acknowledges lifestyle hotel guests as a unique subset within the wider hospitality sector, known for their specific preferences and anticipations. These guests pursue tailored and immersive experiences that resonate with their lifestyles, values, and interests. They are often drawn to hotels that offer unconventional amenities, such as wellness programs, local cultural experiences, and sustainable practices (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Lifestyle hotel guests value authenticity, seeking out accommodations that reflect the local culture and community (Kim et al., 2019). They prioritize convenience and flexibility, preferring hotels located in vibrant urban areas or scenic destinations that offer a blend of leisure, work, and social activities (Thompson & Schoenbachler, 2007). Furthermore, lifestyle hotel guests are tech-savvy and digitally connected, expecting seamless online booking experiences, personalized services, and social media-worthy moments during their stay (Sigala, 2017).

Scholars argue that there is no universally accepted definition of "lifestyle experience" across industry, academia, and consumer perspectives. While the hotel industry might have its own interpretation of what constitutes a "lifestyle" hotel, consumers may have differing views, leading to confusion and a lack of clarity. Notably, some hotels that align with existing definitions of lifestyle hotels are not categorized as such (Li, Kandampully, Liu & Bujisic, 2021). Consequently, this study focused on classified hotels in Nairobi as the target population. The KNBS (2022) reports that Nairobi County has 36 classified hotels. According to KNBS statistics, between 2019 and 2021, an average of 669,620 hotel beds were occupied annually in Nairobi (KNBS, 2022). The study assumed that approximately 50% of these annual guests stayed in classified hotels. Based on the average number of beds occupied during this period, the estimated target population for the study is approximately 340,000. In the absence of precise data differentiating between classified and non-classified hotels visits, it is reasonable to estimate that a significant portion of the total guest population frequents classified establishments.

In the qualitative phase, the study engaged managers from all 36 hotels as key informants (N = 36). These managers were chosen for their expertise, extensive experience, and hands-on knowledge about sustainability practices implemented by their respective hotels.

3.6 Sampling Strategy

3.6.1 Sample Size

Determining the sample size relies on the desired level of accuracy and confidence. The current study relied on Cochran's equation to compute the sample size for hotel guests (equation 1):

$$n_0 = \frac{Z^2 pq}{e^2} \quad \text{(eqn. 1)}$$

Where:

n_0 = Sample size
p = Population proportion (50%)
q = $1 - p$
e = Margin of error (± 0.05)
Z = 1.96 (from Z tables)

If the population size is known and the desired level of confidence is set at 95% ($Z = 1.96$ for 95% confidence level) and margin of error set at ± 5%, the proportion of the population with the desired characteristics, i.e., lifestyle hotel guests is assumed to be 50%, substituting into equation 1 yielded a sample size equal to 384 lifestyle hotel guests for the quantitative phase of the study:

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{0.05^2} = 384.16$$

For the qualitative segment of the research, the aim was to conduct interviews with a manager from each of the categorized hotels included in the study (N = 36).

3.6.2 Sampling Techniques

The research utilized simple random sampling to select guests for the survey. Following the approach suggested by Kim et al. (2021), a list of all classified hotels in Nairobi was compiled based on the research inclusion criteria, which included all classified hotels. A list of the 36 classified hotels in Nairobi County was obtained from the Tourism Regulatory Authority (TRA) website, which provides a comprehensive directory of all classified and licensed hotels, including Class A Tourism Facilities. This list also encompasses other categories of accommodation such as villas, homestays, guesthouses, shared accommodations, and clubs. For the purposes of this study, only classified hotels were included. At each selected hotel, guests were approached at the checkout desk after completing at least one night's stay. To ensure randomness, every second guest in line at the checkout was invited to participate in the survey. This approach aimed to capture a diverse cross-section of hotel guests based on stay duration and demographics, helping to obtain a representative sample and minimize bias in guest selection. The sampling process ensured equal and known opportunities for participation, promoted sample representativeness, and facilitated the generalizability of the research findings (Pajo, 2017). The survey was administered using an enumerator-assisted method, where trained enumerators facilitated the completion of the questionnaires.

Because of the limited number of classified hotels in the city, the research sought to conduct interviews with all willing managers from the classified hotels for the key informant interviews. Senior and line managers from operational departments such as front office, food and beverage service, housekeeping, human resources, and administration were targeted for their knowledge, expertise, and involvement in frontline hotel activities, including the implementation of sustainability practices. This census method was ideal because it ensured comprehensive coverage of the target population, allowing for a deeper understanding of the sustainable tourism practices implemented by these hotels. Additionally, it minimized sampling error and increased the reliability and validity of the data collected (Pajo, 2017).

3.7 Research Variables

The study employed Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), a widely utilized method in psychology, sociology, and business research. SEM facilitates the operationalization of observed latent variables and the examination of relationships between them. It delineates between endogenous and exogenous variables, integrating measurement and structural models to analyze their interrelationships (Hancock & Harring, 2020).

3.7.1 Independent Variables

In SEM, according to Hancock and Harring (2020), an independent variable (IV) is characterized as an exogenous factor unaffected by other variables within the model. In the study, the independent variables represent unobserved or latent constructs that were inferred from observed indicators.

The study proposed an independent latent variable to measure guests' perception of adequacy of implementation of Hotel Sustainability Practices (HSPs). The study measured this variable using guests' ratings of the adequacy of environmental and social sustainability initiatives. The ecological initiatives included water conservation technology, renewable energy sources, and green architectural design. The research operationalized social sustainability using guests' views on community engagement, employee well-being, and inclusivity practices. (Cohen, 2018; Driml & Thomsen, 2013; Gossling, Scott & Hall, 2013).

3.7.2 Dependent Variable

According to Hancock and Harring (2020), a Dependent Variable (DV) in SEM is an endogenous factor influenced by other variables within the model. In the study, Hotel Brand Identity (HBI) was the dependent variables represent unobserved or latent constructs that were inferred from observed indicators of hotel brand dimensions.

In the study, HBI was a latent endogenous variable whose values were affected by the guests' perception of the HSPs. Following Kapferer (2012), the study used six indicators to operationalize brand identity: self-image, reflection, physique, relationship, culture, and personality. These indicators reflected the guests'

perceptions on whether the hotel brand has a unique physical presence in terms of the architectural footprint that is distinctive, a personality that reflects a genuine commitment to the environment and society, is aligned to the guests' lifestyle choices, portrays the guest's self-image in terms of environmental aspirations, enders to the guest's loyalty and portrays an inclusive culture that promotes diversity.

3.7.3 Mediating Variable

Hancock and Harring (2020) characterize a mediating variable as one that elucidates the connection between an independent variable (IV) and a dependent variable (DV). It functions along the causal pathway between the IV and DV, conveying the impact of the IV to the DV. In the study, hotel guests travel preference was a mediating variable which operated along the causal path between HSPs (IV) and HBI (DV).

The mediating variable, Guests' Travel Preferences (GTP), was represented as a latent variable in the study, reflecting guests' attitudes towards the environment and hedonic preferences, aligning with the EAB theory. This construct comprised indicators such as guests' inclination towards new experiences, awareness of environmental impacts, preference for luxury accommodations, interest in trying new foods, inclination towards destinations with sentimental value, and desire for opportunities to meet new people.

3.7.4 Moderating Variables

Hancock and Harring (2020) define a moderating variable as a factor that impacts the intensity or direction of the relationship between independent variables (IVs) and dependent variables (DVs) in a SEM. This variable changes the effect of the IV on the DV under specific conditions, suggesting that the correlation between the two variables depends on the level of the moderating variable. In the study, moderating variables included hotel guest generational cohorts, identified by the respondents' year of birth. The research centered on four demographic groups: Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials (or Generation Y), and Generation Z (Liu, Wang, Chiu & Chen, 2018; Parker & Horst, 2021). The second moderating variable was Length of Stay (LOS) at the hotel, measured as a continuous variable, and guest repeat visit

operationalized as a dichotomous categorical variable where 1= repeat visit and 0 = otherwise. Table 3.1 displays the study variables and their indicators.

Table 3.1 Study Variables and Hypothesized Relationships

No.	Variable	Dimensions	Indicators
	Independent Variable		
1.0	**Hotel Sustainability Practices** Cohen (2018); Driml and Thomsen, (2013); Gossling, Scott and Hall (2013)	Environmental sustainability Practices Social sustainability Practices	• Use of refillable soap/toiletries dispensers • Ecofriendly toiletries • Elimination of single use items • Support to local business • Use of local material in interior décor • Inclusion of local foods in menu
	Dependent Variable		
2.0	**Brand Identity** Kapferer (2012)	Physique Personality Reflection Self-image Relationship Culture	• Hotels green architecture make it appealing • Hotel is genuinely committed to sustainability • Hotels environmental efforts reflect my personal lifestyle • Staying in the hotel made me feel that I am positively impacting environment and society • The HSPs makes me loyal to the hotel • The HSPs encourage diversity and inclusivity

No.	Variable	Dimensions	Indicators
	Mediating Variable		
3.0	**Hotel Guests Travel preferences**	Environmental attitude	• Conscious of environmental impacts • Destination of sentimental value • Meeting new people
		Hedonic predisposition	• New experiences • Tying new foods • Enjoy luxury accommodation
	Moderating Variables		
4.0	**Length of Stay**	Number of nights slept	• Nights
5.0	**Repeat visit**	Categorical variable	• Repeat visit = 1 • Otherwise = 0
6.0	**Generational Cohort** Liu et al (2018). Parker & Horst (2021)	Baby Boomers	• Year of birth: 1946 -1964
		Millennials/ Generation X	• Year of birth: 1965 -1980
		Generation Y	• Year of birth: 1981 -1996
		Generation Z	• Year of birth: 1997 -2012

3.8 Research Instruments

The research employed a questionnaire collect primary quantitative data from lifestyle hotel guests. A questionnaire was chosen as the data collection instrument for this study because it efficiently captures quantitative data on guests' perceptions of the adequacy of hotel sustainability practices, travel preferences, and views on hotel brand identity. Questionnaires allow for the systematic collection of responses from a large sample size, facilitating statistical analysis and providing insights into patterns and trends (Bryman, 2016). They also enable the standardization of questions, which

ensures consistency in the data collected and improves the reliability of the results. This method is particularly suited for gathering measurable data on specific aspects of guest experience and perception.

The guest questionnaire encompassed various facets of guests' experiences at the hotel. It commenced with an introduction and an informed consent section. Preliminary questions recorded the date and time of the survey. Demographic variables, such as generational cohort, educational qualifications, occupational details, and income levels, were also gathered. Furthermore, the questionnaire assessed guests' travel preferences. Additionally, it incorporated inquiries regarding guests' perceptions of the hotel's brand identity and their assessments of the adequacy of the hotel's sustainability services (Refer to Appendix B).

The study gathered qualitative data from hotel managers using an interview guide. The guide, which included open-ended questions, began with an introduction and informed consent section. It was organized into thematic areas and covered various aspects such as the managers' profiles (education, responsibilities, department, and industry experience), hotel firmographics (size, number of restaurants, ownership, and market segment), and views on brand positioning (personalized services, effectiveness, and incorporation of local culture). Additionally, it addressed perceptions of sustainability practices, including actions to reduce environmental footprints, technological innovations, and social sustainability measures. Finally, the guide queried managers on hotel performance aspects such as profitability, community engagement, environmental impacts, market share, guest satisfaction, employee satisfaction, and brand visibility (Appendix C).

3.9 Data Collection

Following Moise et al. (2021), the data collection process was systematically designed to ensure accuracy and a high response rate. Trained enumerators were employed to administer the questionnaires to guests during their check-out process. This approach involved several steps: (1) Preparation**:** Enumerators were trained thoroughly on the questionnaire's content, data collection procedures, and interaction protocols. (2) Deployment**:** Enumerators were stationed at the hotel check-out areas to approach

departing guests. (3) Administration**:** They provided clear instructions on completing the questionnaire, answered any queries, and ensured guests understood the importance of their responses. (4) Collection**:** Completed questionnaires were collected immediately to minimize data loss and ensure completeness. This method not only enhanced the accuracy of responses but also promoted a higher response rate by engaging with guests directly at a convenient time.

assistants familiarized themselves with the semi-structured interview guide and the specific objectives of the study. (2) Scheduling**:** Appointments were arranged with hotel managers at various city hotels to ensure their availability and willingness to participate. (3) Conducting Interviews**:** Research assistants conducted on-site interviews using the semi-structured guide, allowing for in-depth exploration of responses while maintaining consistency across interviews. (4) Recording**:** Each interview, lasting 25-30 minutes, was recorded using handheld voice recorders to capture accurate and comprehensive data. (5) Post-Interview**:** Recordings were promptly transcribed and reviewed to ensure data integrity and completeness. This method ensured thorough and reliable qualitative data collection from hotel managers, contributing valuable insights into the study.

3.10 Validity and Reliability

3.10.1 Pretesting and Piloting

The research conducted a pilot study to identify flaws in the survey instruments regarding the operationalization of variables, clarity of language in the questionnaire items, and feasibility of the data collection instruments (Pajo, 2017). Following Ferketich, Philips, and Verran (1993), the study used 10% of the sample of guests (n = 38) and hotel managers (n = 4) as a sub sample to pre-test the research questionnaire and semi-structured interview guide. The pre-test was conducted at four (4) representative lifestyle hotels in Nairobi. Guests and managers in the pilot hotel were not included in the study sample.

3.10.2 Validity

According to Pajo (2017), validity refers to the accuracy of a data collection tool in measuring variables. Face validity, a type of content validity, relates to whether a measurement instrument appears to measure what it is to measure based on its surface appearance. University faculty experts evaluated the questionnaire and interview guide to ensure their relevance to the research objectives and their adequacy in measuring study constructs. The pre-testing phase also included assessing the clarity and appropriateness of questionnaire items and interview questions.

Creswell and Creswell (2017) describe construct validity as the degree to which questionnaire items and interview questions capture the essential aspects of the construct being studied. Pajo (2017) defines content validity as the extent to which a research tool encompasses all facets of the research construct. To ensure the questionnaire accurately measures multi-dimensional constructs like HSP, brand identity, and guest travel preference, the instrument design incorporated relevant literature and theories to operationalize the constructs using multiple indicators.

Creswell and Creswell (2017) define Convergent Validity (CV) as the degree to which different measures of the same construct are positively related. The research computed three indices to assess the convergent validity of the measurement models. Following Artuğer, Çetinsöz, and Kılıç (2013), the study evaluated the competence of the measurement model using factor loading, considering a factor loading of 0.50 or higher as acceptable for CV. Additionally, the study assessed Average Variance Extracted (AVE), deeming an AVE of 0.50 or higher acceptable, and Composite Reliability (CR), considering a CR of 0.70 or higher satisfactory.

Pajo (2017) defines Discriminant Validity (DV) as the extent to which a measurement instrument distinguishes between unrelated constructs. The study examined the correlation between different constructs measured by the questionnaires to assess the DV of questionnaire items. Following Raza and Khan (2021), the study relied on the Fornell-Larcker criterion to assess DV of the measurement scales of the latent constructs.

In the qualitative aspect of the study, validity is linked to credibility and transferability, two key aspects of trustworthiness proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Credibility concerns the accuracy and truthfulness of research findings, while transferability refers to the extent to which the findings can be applied in different contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure credibility, the study followed Lincoln and Guba's (1985) approach by employing triangulation. This entailed data triangulation, where qualitative data from key informant interviews (KIIs) were used to confirm or support the results obtained from quantitative analysis. Theoretical triangulation was also employed, drawing from multiple theories to conceptualize research constructs. Additionally, interdisciplinary triangulation incorporated perspectives from various disciplines such as economics, psychology, and development studies found in the reviewed literature.

To enhance the transferability of qualitative research findings, comprehensive descriptions of the research context, participants, and data collection methods were provided, as recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Additionally, the research provided rich and thick descriptions of the phenomena under study to allow readers to assess the relevance of the findings to their own contexts. Data triangulation, involving the use of multiple data sources or methods also enhanced transferability by providing a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)

3.10.3 Reliability

According to Babbie (2015), a reliable instrument obtains similar measurements of a variable repeatedly. Bebbie (2015) notes that design issues may hinder the reliability of a questionnaire. The study eliminated sources of design biases at the pretesting stage by incorporating feedback and piloting the instrument on a sub-sample of the participants to enhance its reliability. The research used Cronbach's alpha (α) to assess reliability. A threshold of $0.7 \leq \alpha < 0.8$ was deemed acceptable (Lavrakas, 2008).
For the qualitative component of the study, reliability is associated with dependability and confirmability of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability is concerned with whether the results are consistent or reproducible and confirmability

relates to the extent to which the researchers bias influenced the findings, i.e., the objectivity of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The research employed peer debriefing, presenting findings in seminars to prevent bias and ensure confirmability. Additionally, the qualitative study's dependability was ensured by offering detailed descriptions of data collection and analysis processes for future reference (de Ruyter & Scholl, 1998). To enhance instrument validity during KIIs, research assistants recorded interviews with handheld devices, minimizing transcription errors, and used follow-up questions to clarify responses and gather additional data.

3.11 Data Analysis

3.11.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

The initial quantitative data analysis encompassed editing, coding, and data entry processes. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentage frequencies, cumulative percentage frequencies, means, standard deviations, and standard errors, were computed for questionnaire items pertaining to the demographics and trip characteristics of hotel guests, enabling respondent profiling. Likert-scale questions underwent descriptive statistical analysis, including percentage frequencies, means, and standard deviations, to derive measures of central tendency and variability. At the same time, statistical techniques such as Student’s t-tests and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were employed to compare means across categorical variables.

The Likert scale questionnaire items pertaining to hotel guests' travel preferences, perceptions of the adequacy of HSPs, and perceptions of hotel brand identity were summarized using percentage frequencies, means, and standard deviations. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted using principal component analysis with orthogonal rotation to reduce the indicators of hotel guests' travel preferences into their dimensions. Factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 were extracted, and the internal consistency of the extracted factors was assessed by examining the factor loadings of the indicators, percentage of variance explained, and Cronbach's alpha (α

> 0.70) (Chen, Huang, & Cheng, 2009). Indices of Hotel Guest Travel preference were computed for the extracted factors using means and standard deviations.

Hotel sustainability practices were classified a priori based on the TBL framework into two dimensions: environmental practices and economic practices, with social sustainability practices being considered separately. The internal consistency of the HSP dimensions was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. Subsequently, indices for the dimensions were computed in terms of scale means and standard deviations.

The research employed a two-stage procedure in the SEM approach. The first stage involved developing measurement models for the study variables using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). This analysis assessed the unidimensionality of the measurement scales for HSP, guests' travel preferences, and brand identity by examining their validity and reliability. Following the methodology of Thai and Nguyen (2022), the study evaluated the reliability of the measurement scale using factor loading ($\lambda > 0.60$), Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha > 0.70$), and composite reliability (CR > 0.60). Validity was assessed using average variance extracted (AVE > 0.36) and the Fornell and Larcker (1981) test. The measurement model's fit was evaluated against conventional model fit indices: Normed chi-square (χ^2/df < 3), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI > 0.90), Comparative Fit Index (CFI > 0.95), Normed Fit Index (NFI > 0.90), Tucker-Levis Index (TLI > 0.95), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA < 0.05) (Ham & Han, 2013; Raza & Khan, 2021).

In the second stage, the study followed Moise et al. (2020) to estimate structural models using maximum likelihood equations in SPSS AMOS. Alnawas and Altarifi (2016) highlight the benefits of SEM, emphasizing its ability to estimate all path coefficients and individual item loadings simultaneously, thereby preventing biased and inconsistent parameter estimates. Model diagnostics included assessing collinearity among constructs and evaluating the goodness of fit statistics of the model against established model fit indices: Normed chi-square (χ^2/df < 3), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI > 0.90), Comparative Fit Index (CFI > 0.95), Normed Fit Index (NFI > 0.90), Tucker-Levis Index (TLI > 0.95), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA < 0.05) (Ham & Han, 2013; Raza & Khan, 2021).

The study examined the hypotheses concerning the direct relationship between the independent variable (IV) and dependent variable (DV) by analyzing unstandardized regression weights (B), standardized regression weights (β), critical ratios (CR), and p-values ($p < 0.05$) to assess the direction and significance of these relationships (Sarstedt et al., 2021).

The hypothesis test for the mediation effect of guests' travel preferences on the relationship between HSPs and hotel brand identity involved estimating a structural model using syntax-based estimands in SPSS AMOS, utilizing the bootstrap technique for significance at the 95% confidence level to identify indirect effects. The significance of estimated unstandardized regression estimates (B) for the mediated relationship between HSPs and hotel brand identity via guests' travel preferences were examined at conventional levels of significance ($p < 0.05$). The goodness-of-fit statistics, including the normed chi-square ($\chi^2/df < 3$), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI > 0.90), Comparative Fit Index (CFI > 0.95), Normed Fit Index (NFI > 0.90), Tucker-Levis Index (TLI > 0.95), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA < 0.05) for the model, were examined (Ham & Han, 2013; Raza & Khan, 2021).

Hypothesis testing for the moderating influence of LOS on the relationships between HSPs, guests' travel preferences, and hotel brand identity employed a mixed structural model. This model comprised latent variables and interaction terms generated from mean-centered scores for both the HSP scale and LOS. Conversely, the moderation effects of repeat visits and generational cohort on these relationships were tested using multi-group analysis with sub-samples of the moderating variables. Additionally, the goodness-of-fit indices, including the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI > 0.90), Comparative Fit Index (CFI > 0.95), Normed Fit Index (NFI > 0.90), Tucker-Levis Index (TLI > 0.95), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA < 0.05), were examined for each model (Ham & Han, 2013; Raza & Khan, 2021). The findings from the quantitative analysis were showcased through tables, graphs, and charts. SPSS AMOS and Microsoft Excel software were employed for data analysis purposes. Table 3.2 provides a summary of the analysis protocol adopted to test the hypotheses.

Table 3.2 Summary of Data Analysis Methods and Hypotheses Testing.

Research Objective	Hypothesis	Path model	Analytical Technique	Statistic
1. To evaluate the influence of sustainability practices on the brand identity	H_{01}: Hotel sustainability practices have no significant influence on the brand identity of lifestyle hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya	HSPs → Brand Identity	Path analysis using maximum likelihood method	• Structural path coefficients (β_i); • $t-statistics$ • Significance of the path coefficient ($p-value$) • Variance in the endogenous variable explained by its exogenous predictor (R^2).
2. To evaluate the influence of HSP on guests travel preference	H_{02}: Hotel sustainability practices have no significant influence on travel preferences for lifestyle hotel guests in Nairobi County, Kenya	HSP → Travel preference		

3.	To assess the influence of travel preference on the hotel brand identity	H_{03}: Travel preferences for lifestyle hotel guests in Nairobi County, Kenya have no significant influence on hotel's brand identity	HSPs → Brand Identity		
4.	To ascertain the mediating role of travel preference in the relationship between the sustainability practices and hotel brand identity	H_{04}: Travel preferences for lifestyle hotel guests does not mediate the relationship between the sustainability practices and the brand identity of lifestyle hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya	HSPs → trave preference → hotel brand identity and HSPs → Brand identity	Mediation analysis (Examining the direct, indirect, total effect and computing the mediation proportion)	• Structural path coefficients (β_i); • $t-statistics$ • Significance of the path coefficient ($p-value$) • Goodness of fit index (comparative fit index (CFI).

5. Explore the moderating effect of hotel guests' attributes on the relationship between sustainability practices and the brand identity of lifestyle hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya	H_{05}: Hotel guests' attributes do not moderate the relationship between the sustainability practices and the brand identity of lifestyle hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya	HSPs $*$ Gen. Cohort → brand identity HSPs $*$ LOS → brand identity HSPs $*$ repeat visit → brand identity And HSPs → Brand identity	Moderation Analysis (Main effect, Interaction effect and Conditional effect)	• Structural path coefficients (β_i); • $t-statistics$ • Significance of the path coefficient ($p-value$) • CFI.

3.11.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

In the qualitative component, the analysis begun by transcribing the data collected through the open-ended questions in the semi-structured interviews and coding it before analyzing it with a thematic analysis approach to identify the themes that emerged from the data. The study utilized Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework, which involves a systematic approach to identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data. This method comprises six steps: becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, identifying themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. This iterative approach allowed the researcher to immerse themselves in the data, identify key concepts or patterns, and organize them into coherent themes that capture the essence of the data set.

The qualitative data analysis results were presented in narrative form, supported by the participants' verbatim quotes. The thematic analysis approach used in this study is consistent with previous studies that have used this approach to analyze qualitative data in the hospitality industry (Lee & Yoon, 2018; Mohd Suki & Suki, 2018). The research used NVivo ver12, a software program used for mixed-methods research to carry out the qualitative data analysis.

3.12 Ethical Considerations

The study followed established ethical guidelines in social science research, emphasizing the importance of treating individuals as subjects, participants, and beneficiaries of research outcomes (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Neuman (2014) advises researchers to not only secure participants' consent to take part in the study but also to ensure their informed consent. In line with Neuman's recommendations, both survey participants and key informants were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their data before engaging in interviews. Informants and respondents had the freedom to withdraw from the data collection process at any point.

Upon review by the University's Research Ethics Board and approval for data collection, the researcher obtained the requisite authorization to conduct the study in

the country from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) as per the Science Technology and Innovation Act 2013.

The researcher adhered to the duty of making impartial observations, analyzing data according to statistical principles, and reporting results with objectivity and precision. All procedures for managing, summarizing, and querying the data were thoroughly documented. The study disseminated its findings to directly engaged stakeholders through seminar presentations, research publications, and a thesis.

The study prioritized ethical considerations throughout its design and implementation. Several ethical principles were carefully upheld.

(i) **Informed Consent:** Each survey participant and interviewee received comprehensive information detailing the study's objectives, data collection methods, potential risks and benefits of participation, and their right to withdraw at any stage. Verbal consent was obtained before commencing the survey, ensuring voluntary participation and acknowledgment of their rights.

(ii) **Confidentiality and Anonymity:** All data was anonymized, removing any personally identifiable information. Data was securely stored and accessed only by authorized personnel, ensuring participant confidentiality, and protecting their privacy.

(iii) **Minimizing Harm:** Survey and interview questions were meticulously formulated to prevent causing distress or discomfort. Participants in the questionnaire survey and key informants had the option to skip any questions they found uncomfortable. Research assistants were trained to provide support or refer participants to suitable resources if required.

(iv) **Respect for Participants:** All survey participants and interviewees were treated with respect and courtesy. Their opinions and perspectives were valued and acknowledged. The researcher assistants maintained a non-judgmental attitude and avoided imposing personal biases during data collection.

(v) **Transparency and Accountability:** The study design, data collection procedures, and ethical considerations were documented and could be made available to participants and stakeholders upon request. The researcher

remained open to feedback and was ready to address any concerns about ethical conduct.

(vi) **Cultural Sensitivity:** The survey and interviews were designed and implemented with sensitivity to the cultural context of the Kenyan tourism sector. Research assistants who included hospitality and tourism students who had knowledge and understood the local tourism context were involved in administration of the research instrument to ensure cultural appropriateness and understanding. Researcher and research assistant avoided imposing biases or assumptions on the survey participants and key informants.

(vii) **Long term Impacts**: The study acknowledges the importance of long-term impact beyond immediate research outcomes. Integral to this commitment is the dissemination of research findings through various channels, ensuring accessibility to stakeholders and participants alike. Publication in academic journals and presentation at seminars or conferences will facilitate widespread dissemination, reaching both academic and industry audiences. Additionally, the thesis resulting from this study will be made available to participants and stakeholders, providing a comprehensive overview of the research process and findings. Through these key approaches, the study aims to foster ongoing dialogue, knowledge exchange, and informed decision-making within the community and industry impacted by the research.

3.13 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the research methodology. It covered research philosophy that the guided the study, research design used to analyze the study hypothesis. The chapter also covered the study area, target population, sampling strategy, sample size, Sampling Techniques used as well as the research variables both independent variables, dependent variable and mediating variable. research instruments, data collection, validity and reliability, pretesting and piloting, validity, reliability, data analysis was discussed in this chapter, ethical considerations as was presented explored in this chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the outcomes of both the quantitative and qualitative analyses conducted on the primary data gathered during the study. The section commences by reporting the questionnaire and interview response rates, then proceeds to profile the questionnaire respondents and key informants by their demographics. Following this, the hotels' profiles are provided, followed by a discussion of guests' trip characteristics. Subsequently, the study variables are discussed, and the results of the SEM, including measurement and structural models, are presented. The following sections of this chapter present the results of hypothesis testing, aligning with the study's objectives.

4.2 Response Rates

4.2.1 Survey Questionnaire Response Rate

The research utilized a questionnaire to collect primary data from guests staying at the selected hotels. Out of the 385 guests approached across 35 hotels, 205 agreed to partake in the survey and completed the questionnaire in its entirety. This translates to a 53% response rate for the questionnaire and represents guest perspectives from 70% (n = 35) of the targeted hotels. The response rate is comparable to other studies where in-person survey of hotel guest was conducted in hotel lobbies or common areas during check-out where rates of between 50%-80% were attained (Chen & Chang, 2020; Smith & Johnson, 2019).

A study in Kenya aimed to gauge visitor perceptions of sustainable practices in the hospitality sector and assess if the needs of environmentally conscious guests were fulfilled. Masau and Prideaux (2003) surveyed 400 guests across hotels in Mombasa, Nairobi, and Masai Mara, key tourism spots. They gathered 237 valid responses, achieving a 59% response rate from a randomly selected sample.

Omune, Kambona, Wadongo, and Wekesa (2021) conducted research aiming to identify environmental management practices embraced by hotels in Kenya. Employing a cross-sectional census survey approach, they gathered data via structured questionnaires sent electronically to managers of 70 hotels categorized as three-to-five-star establishments. Forty-two hotels completed the questionnaire, yielding a response rate of 60%, considered adequate for the study's objectives.

In a study to investigate the influence of strategic initiatives such as staff orientation, management contracting, customer engagement, and technology integration on the operational performance of star-rated hotels in Nairobi and Mombasa, Lawrence (2017) intended to survey 158 hotel managers. However, the study received only 85 completed questionnaires, indicating a response rate of 53%, akin to the response rate observed in the present study.

Gachuru, Senaji, and Gichunge (2022) utilized survey responses from 249 individuals, comprising managerial personnel from Nairobi hotels, out of an intended sample of 450 managers representing four and five-star hotels across Kenya. Their research delved into the impact of local demographic perceptions on the operational effectiveness of rated hotels in Kenya, employing a descriptive methodology. The study achieved a survey participation rate of 55%, aligning closely with the response rate observed in the present study.

Table 4.1 depicts the number of completed and usable questionnaires per hotel classification.

Table 4.1 Number of Completed and Usable Questionnaires

S/No	Star Rating	Frequency (n)	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	3-Star	97	47	47
2	4-Star	59	29	76
3	5-Star	49	24	100
	Total	**205**	**100.0**	

Source: Survey Data, 2023; TRA website, 2023

The sample size in this study (n = 205) aligns with those observed in prior research utilizing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). For instance, Merli et al. (2019) conducted a survey of hotel guests, gathering data from 325 questionnaires to investigate consumer perceptions of green practices in an eco-labeled hotel in Spain. Merli et al. (2019) propose a guideline suggesting that for SEM, the minimum sample size should exceed ten times the largest number of structural paths directed at a specific latent construct. Considering that the current study's largest number of indicators for a single construct is 19 for hotel sustainable practices, the sample size surpasses this recommended threshold of n > 190.

4.2.2 Key Informant Interview Response Rate

Responses to the interview questions were recorded using a hand-held recording device and subsequently transcribed verbatim into text. The transcribed word files were uploaded into Nvivo Version 12 for subsequent qualitative analysis. A total of n=19 key informants participated, resulting in a response rate of 54%, from the sample of 35 hotels that participated in the study.

4.3 Preliminary Data Analysis

4.3.1 Data Preparation and Screening

The process of preparing quantitative data obtained from the survey of hotel guests, following Neuman (2014), involved several steps. Initially, a codebook was developed to guide the entry of data into an Excel spreadsheet. Next, the data underwent a

cleaning process employing the contingency cleaning method to detect and address any coding or entry errors. This method involved cross-classifying the variables and scrutinizing the outcomes for inconsistencies. Following the cleaning process, the data was transferred to SPSS for additional analysis.

In SPSS, the data screening procedure began with the identification and handling of missing items. The SEM procedure favors a complete dataset with no missing items. There were no questionnaires with more than 10% missing responses, which would have rendered them incomplete and unusable. However, missing items were identified for some questionnaire items (variables). Following Neuman (2014), questionnaire items with less than 1% missing items were imputed using the series medians, particularly for Likert scale response items.

Following the imputation, the screening continued by examining the dataset for unengaged responses. Unengaged responses were identified by calculating the row-wise standard deviation across the ten variables for each respondent. A low standard deviation ($SD < 0.5$) suggested minimal variability in responses, indicating a tendency for respondents to consistently choose one item across all questions, especially for Likert scale items. No questionnaire responses exhibited low engagement. Additionally, a visual inspection was employed to identify "bee-liners" – respondents consistently providing the same value for all questions. No bee-liners were identified. Appendix D presents descriptive statistics for the screened and cleaned-up data from n=205 observations used in the study.

According to best practices in qualitative research (Smith & Jones, 2019), a comprehensive data cleaning process is imperative prior to coding qualitative data in NVivo. The process begun with the transcription of qualitative data, converting audio recordings into text format. Following transcription, the text was reviewed to ensure completeness and accuracy of the data, and that all pertinent information was captured without errors or omissions.

To safeguard participant confidentiality, any identifying information, such as names or specific locations, was anonymized. Subsequently, the data underwent systematic

organization and formatting, adhering to consistent conventions for file naming, section labeling, and overall data structure to facilitate efficient navigation within NVivo. This structured organization enabled the researcher to swiftly locate and access specific data segments during coding and analysis. Furthermore, redundant or irrelevant information is eliminated to streamline the dataset and maintain focus on pertinent content. The cleaned-up qualitative data was then coded using thematic coding. Appendix D presents a summary of the initial code extracted from the qualitative data (n =19)

4.3.2 Hotel Guests' Demographic Profile

The survey required respondents to indicate their age by selecting from four age groups ranging from 18 to 24 years to between 57 and 75 years. Participants were requested to indicate their highest level of education attained and their occupation from a selection of eight career categories. The data analysis utilized frequency counts to summarize the respondents' demographics based on these three attributes. Table 4.2 presents the respondents' demographic profile.

Table 4.2 Hotel Guests Demographic Profile

Demographic Attribute	Level	Frequency	Percentage Frequency	Cumulative Percentage Frequency
Age	18 – 24 years	55	26.96	26.96
	25 – 40 years	58	28.43	55.39
	41 – 56 years	49	24.02	79.41
	57 – 75 years	42	20.59	100.00
Educational Qualification	High School Diploma or equivalent	40	19.70	19.70
	College Diploma	41	20.20	39.90
	Bachelor's Degree	33	16.26	56.16
	Master's Degree	56	27.59	83.74
	PhD or Equivalent	33	16.26	100.00
Occupation	Health /Medical	24	11.76	11.76
	Information Technology	26	12.75	24.51
	Technology/Engineering	32	15.69	40.20
	Education	19	9.31	49.51
	Arts/Entertainment	27	13.24	62.75
	Business/Finance	47	23.04	85.78
	Sports	13	6.37	92.16
	Others	16	7.84	100.00

4.3.2.1 Guests' Generational Cohorts

The study employed generational theory to categorize age sets, suggesting that individuals from the same generation share significant experiences shaping their worldviews. As per Cangelosi (2020), Baby boomers were born between 1946-1964, Generation X between 1965-1980, Millennials/Generation Y between 1981-1996, and Generation Z between 1997-2012. Various researchers, including Fietkiewicz, Lins,

Baran, and Stock (2016), have proposed different definitions and birth years for generational cohorts.

The current study defines "Baby Boomers" as guests aged above 57, having experienced post-World War II economic growth and significant 1960s social changes. Generation X, spanning from 41 to 56 years old, experienced significant events such as the conclusion of the Cold War and the emergence of personal computing. Millennials, also known as Generation Y, aged between 25 to 40 years old, represent a cohort shaped by the advent of the internet and evolving workplace structures. Lastly, young adults aged 18-24 in Generation Z share experiences of rapid technological development, globalization, and social media. This definition aligns with the United States Bureau of the Census classification used by Robinson (2018). The findings presented in Table 4.2 indicate that the largest portion of respondents (28%, n = 58) falls within the middle age bracket of 24 to 40 years, classified as Millennials. Generation Z follows closely behind at 27%, while the baby boomers constitute the smallest segment of the cohort (21%, n = 42). This distribution implies that the study sample effectively represents various generational cohorts. The current findings align with previous research centered on lifestyle hotels. For instance, Sining (2021) examined 115 guests across 19 cities in China, predominantly from the middle-aged category (41-50 years). However, this study broadens the scope by encompassing perceptions from a wider age spectrum among tourists. Similarly, Liu et al. (2018) targeted a relatively youthful demographic, focusing on individuals born between 1981 and 2000. This parallels the current study, where a significant proportion of participants fell within the age range of 24 to 40 years.

4.3.2.2 Hotel Guests' Educational Qualification and Professions

The results in table 4.2 shows that a significant proportion of hotel guests who participated in the survey held a master's degree (28%), and 60% (*n* = 122) possessed a university degree, ranging from bachelor's to PhD qualifications. Furthermore, the findings reveal that a majority (23%) were employed in the business and finance sectors (*n* = 47). Other professions, including information technology (IT) (13%, *n* = 26), Arts/Entertainment (13%, *n* = 27), and Engineering/Technology (16%, *n* = 32),

were notably represented. Only 6% of respondents were in the sporting industry (*n* = 13). The "other" category encompassed professions like Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and public sector employment, constituting 8% (*n* = 16).

In terms of education and professional occupation, the outcomes of the present study mirror those observed in the sample examined by Sining (2021). In both studies, a considerable proportion of respondents possessed higher educational qualifications and consisted of individuals occupying managerial and professional positions. Furthermore, Liu et al. (2018) noted a diverse array of professional roles among lifestyle hotel guests, highlighting the presence of professional technicians, business executives, students, and government officials, a pattern consistent with the observations in the present study.

4.3.3 Hotel Guests' Trip Characteristics

4.3.3.1 Purpose of Visit

The study sought to profile hotel guests by their trip characteristics. Respondents were required to indicate their purpose of visit and hotel stay from a selection of eight options. The analysis computed descriptive statistics to profile the guests by their trip characteristics. Figure 4.1 charts the guests' purpose of visit.

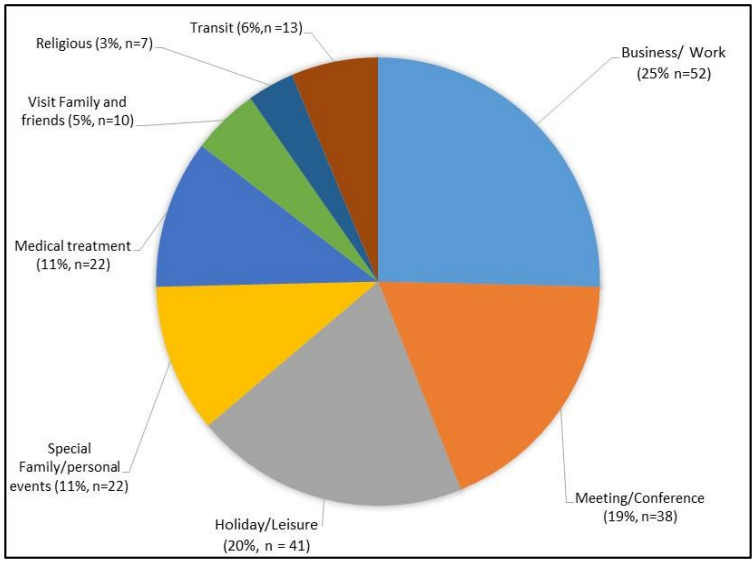


Figure 4. 1 Guest Profile by Purpose of Visit

The results in Figure 4.1 suggest that the majority (44%, *n* = 90) of guests were visiting for business, work-related purposes, and meetings/conferences, highlighting the significance of the business and meetings market segment for city hotels. Additionally, Nairobi hotels played a crucial role for guests on leisure/holiday purposes (20%, *n* = 41), serving as the beginning and/or endpoint for the country's international tourists, particularly those engaging in wildlife-based tourism.

Personal reasons, including medical treatment, personal events, and visiting friends and family, were also important, collectively accounting for 26% of the responses. Nairobi, as a key regional transport hub for international travel in East Africa, is reflected in the 6% of respondents who indicated transit as their purpose of visit and stay at the hotel.

4.3.3.2 Repeat Visits and Length of Stay

The study considered whether the guests were on an initial or repeat visit. The guests were also requested to specify the duration of their current stay at the hotel. Majority of the guests (56%, n = 115) were repeat visitors. The number of nights spent at the hotel ranged from 0 to 36 nights ($\bar{x} = 5.00, SD = 5.44$). On average, repeat visitors spent slightly more nights ($\bar{x} = 4.90, SD = 5.43$) compared to first-time guests who spent ($\bar{x} = 4.74, SD = 4.67$) nights. However, there was no significant difference in the LOS between repeat and first-time visitors ($t_{(199)} = 0.22, p = 0.83ns$).

These results suggest that while repeat visitors tended to spend slightly more nights at the hotels than first-time visitors, this difference was not statistically significant. However, the findings indicate that a significant portion of hotel guests were repeat visitors, suggesting that they are likely well-acquainted with the hotel's sustainability initiatives from previous experiences. Empirical evidence supports the relationship between LOS and guest familiarity with the hotel. For instance, Kim and Han (2022) propose a direct association between LOS and guest familiarity, suggesting that longer stays increase guests' familiarity levels with the hotel. This suggests that guests who have longer stays and are repeat visitors tend to be more cognizant of the hotel's sustainability initiatives in contrast to those visiting for the first time.

The study sought to compare LOS for the guests by purpose of visit and travelling party characteristics. Table 4.3 presents descriptive statistic for LOS for the guest by their purpose of visit.

Table 4.3 Descriptive statistics; number of nights spent at the hotels by purpose of visit

		Number of Nights		
Purpose of Visits	**n**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Std. Error**
Business/ Work	52	4.52	2.87	0.40
Meeting/Conference	38	5.82	6.19	1.00
Holiday/Leisure	41	5.22	3.86	0.60
Special family/personal events	22	3.55	2.11	0.45
Medical treatment	22	2.95	2.15	0.46
Visit family and friends	10	3.90	3.31	1.05
Religious	7	4.71	4.07	1.54
Transit	13	3.62	3.25	0.90
Total	**205**	4.55	3.91	0.27

The findings in Table 4.3 reveal variations in the LOS based on the purpose of visit. Guests attending meetings/conferences spent approximately a working week at the hotels ($\bar{x} = 5.82, SD = 6.19$), while those visiting for medical purposes (n = 22) had the shortest stay ($\bar{x} = 2.95, SD = 7.15$). However, a one-way ANOVA to test for a significant difference in average length of stay by purpose of visit indicated no such difference ($F_{(7)} = 1.65, p = 0.12ns$). This suggests that, on average, the length of stay does not significantly vary based on the purpose of the visit. The results support the inference that, while there are variations in individual categories, the overall LOS does not differ significantly depending on the purpose of the visit, reinforcing the notion that city hotels cater to diverse guest needs with comparable accommodation durations.

Then the analysis compared LOS for guests travelling alone (36%, n = 74), accompanied by family and friends (31%, n = 63) and those accompanied by workmates (33%, n = 68). Table 4.4 presents descriptive statistics of the comparison.

Table 4.4 Descriptive statistics; number of nights spent at the hotels by travelling party characteristics

	Number of Nights			
Travelling Party Characteristics	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Std. Error**
Travelling alone	74	4.91	3.28	0.38
Accompanied by family/friend	63	4.32	3.71	0.47
Accompanied by colleagues	68	4.37	4.67	0.57
Total	**205**	**4.55**	**3.91**	**0.27**

Source: Research Data, 2024

The tabulated results (table 4.4) provide insights into the LOS at the city hotels based on different traveling party characteristics. Guests traveling alone had the highest mean LOS ($\bar{x} = 4.91, SD = 3.28$) indicating relatively consistent lengths of stay within this group. On the other hand, guests accompanied by family or friends and those with colleagues show slightly lower mean LOS values of $\bar{x} = 4.32, SD = 3.71$) and $\bar{x} = 4.37, SD = 4.67$) nights, respectively. The larger standard deviations in the two groups suggest greater variability in the lengths of stay within these groups.

ANOVA findings assessing the relationship between LOS and traveling party characteristics indicate no statistically significant variance in the mean LOS across the three types of traveling parties ($F_{(2)}$ = 0.49, p = 0.61ns). These outcomes affirm that there's no notable difference in the average LOS among guests traveling solo, with family or friends, or with colleagues. Thus, it suggests that the sampled hotels generally accommodate various types of traveling groups with similar durations of stay.

Previous studies have addressed LOS at both destination and facility scales, yet existing literature lacks consensus on determinants of visitors' LOS. Oklevik et al (2021), in a review spanning 2007 to 2021 across diverse geographical contexts, found a multitude of determinants influencing LOS, leading to complexity in identifying universal factors. However, in a Norwegian study with a large dataset (n = 5,300), LOS was linked to visitor age, spending, nature-based interest, origin, and travel model (Oklevik et al., 2021). Similar to our study, no significant association between LOS and repeat visitation or gender was found. Conversely, Santos et al (2015, Brazil) demonstrated LOS dependence on travel purpose, accommodation type, gender, age, party size, first-time visits, and expenditures. The literature underscores the complex nature of LOS determinants, emphasizing the need for context-specific analyses.

4.3.4 Hotel Guests' Travel Preferences

The research explored guests' travel preferences by asking survey participants to rate their agreement with 14 statements related to travel preferences. A five-point Likert scale was used, ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5), to gauge respondents' opinions. The subsequent analysis utilized descriptive statistics to profile hotel guests based on their travel preferences. Table 4.5 presents summary statistics derived from the analysis.

Table 4.5 Summary Statistics- Guests' Travel Preferences

		Proportion (%) of total						
Travel Preferences	**N**	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
New experiences	202	8.91	9.41	11.88	13.86	55.94	3.99	1.37
Lively social opportunities	205	9.76	11.71	9.27	16.10	53.17	3.91	1.40
Like to pamper myself	203	7.39	11.33	17.24	16.75	47.29	3.85	1.32
Conscious of environmental impacts	204	12.75	10.78	10.78	15.20	50.49	3.80	1.47
Enjoy luxury accommodation	205	8.78	12.20	17.56	15.12	46.34	3.78	1.37
Enjoy new destinations	205	12.68	11.71	12.68	16.59	46.34	3.72	1.46
Participate in new activities	205	13.66	8.29	16.59	20.49	40.98	3.67	1.43
Sensitive to local cultures	204	12.25	13.24	13.73	17.16	43.63	3.67	1.45
Trying new foods	205	13.66	12.20	14.15	14.15	45.85	3.66	1.49
Meeting new people	205	14.15	11.71	14.15	15.12	44.88	3.65	1.49
Destinations of sentimental value	205	15.61	12.68	10.24	26.34	35.12	3.53	1.47
Offer wellness facilities	205	13.66	15.12	18.05	17.07	36.10	3.47	1.45
Destinations of historic value	205	13.17	12.20	21.95	20.49	32.20	3.46	1.39
Participate in physical activities	205	21.46	8.29	14.63	20.00	35.61	3.40	1.55

The results in table 4.5 indicate that, overall, a majority of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that all 14 aspects of the trip were interesting to them during their travels (ranging from 70% to 56%). On average, respondents expressed interest in 11 out of the 14 aspects of the trip ($\bar{x} = 3.99, SD = 1.37 - \bar{x} = 3.53, SD = 1.47$), with exceptions for three items: availability of wellness facilities ($\bar{x} = 3.47, SD = 1.45$), the destination's historic value ($\bar{x} = 3.45, SD = 1.39$), and opportunities to participate in physical activities ($\bar{x} = 3.40, SD = 1.55$), to which they were indifferent. The results suggest that the search for new experiences, lively social opportunities, and the need to enjoy personalized treatment or be pampered were the most important interests for the guests in the study's sample.

The results compare with findings by Johnson and Smith (2020) who found similar trends regarding hotel guests' preferences for personalized experiences and social opportunities. Additionally, a study by Lee et al. (2018) observed a high level of interest among hotel guests in unique experiences and personalized services, aligning with the emphasis on new experiences and personalized treatment identified in the current study. However, contrary to the current findings, Lee et al. (2018) reported a greater interest in wellness facilities among their sample of hotel guests, indicating potential variations in preferences across different demographic groups or hotel contexts.

4.3.4.1 Dimensions of Hotel Guests Travel Preferences

Next, the 14 travel preference indicators were condensed into their latent dimensions and compiled into an index of guests' travel preferences. The original 14 items underwent factor analysis for this purpose. The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) employed principal components analysis with orthogonal rotation (varimax) to reduce the indicators into latent dimensions reflecting underlying factors.

Following the removal of four indicators - "like to pamper myself," "participate in new activities," “new experiences” and "destinations of historic value" due to lower communalities (< 0.30), cross-loading, or poor fit to the factor solutions, factor loadings above 0.50 were retained for subsequent analysis.

The results of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test for data adequacy in factor analysis (0.82) confirmed the suitability of the data, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.60 (Kaiser, 1974). Also, Bartlett's test of sphericity yielded a statistically significant result ($\chi^2_{(66)}$ = 623.19, p < .001), indicating that the correlation matrix was not an identity matrix, affirming the appropriateness of the data for factor analysis. Figure 4.2 depicts a scree plot of the extracted factors following the EFA.

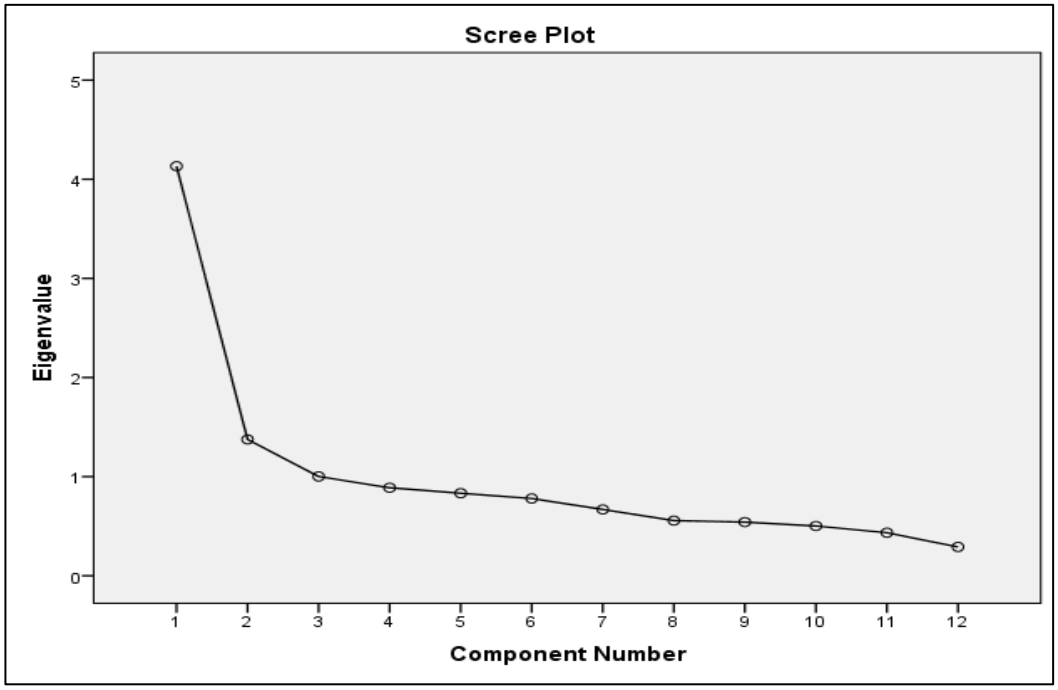


Figure 4. 2 Scree plot of the extracted factors- indicator of guests' travel preferences

Figure 4.2 reveals that the extracted three-factor solution had eigenvalues greater than 1. Cumulatively, these three factors, or dimensions, explained 54% of the variance, with eigenvalues ranging from 4.13 to 1.00. Specifically, Factor 1 accounted for 34% of the variance, while Factor 2 and Factor 3 explained 11% and 8% of the variance, respectively.

The analysis subsequently conducted a reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha coefficient to test the internal consistency of each factor derived from the factor analysis. Researchers typically consider a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.5 or 0.6 as indicating modest reliability, which is deemed sufficient for social science research (Chen, Huang & Cheng, 2009). Table 4.6 details the results of EFA including the guest

preference dimensions, factor loading, communalities, eigenvalues, explained variance and Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

Table 4.6 Factor Analysis Guests' Travel Preferences

Travel Preferences	Factor Loadings	Communalities	Eigen values	% Explained variance	Cronbach's alpha
Factor 1 (Social and Environmental Consciousness)			4.13	34.431	0.67
Lively social opportunities	0.69	0.57			
Conscious of environmental Impacts	0.68	0.53			
Enjoy new destinations	0.67	0.50			
Enjoy luxury accommodation	0.51	0.38			
Factor 2 (Cultural and Culinary Exploration)			1.38	11.460	0.75
Destinations of sentimental value	0.76	0.62			

Sensitive to local cultures	0.71	0.67			
Trying new foods	0.57	0.62			
Meeting new people	0.52	0.48			
Factor 3 (Wellness and Physical Activities)			1.00	8.344	0.59
Participate in physical activities	0.83	0.69			
Offer wellness facilities	0.60	0.62			
Total				**54.23**	**0.81**

Source: Research Data, 2024

Table 4.6 displays the three latent variables extracted by the EFA for lifestyle hotel guests' preferences in Nairobi city. Factor 1 was appropriately labeled "Social and Environmental Consciousness." This latent variable encompassed preferences for lively social opportunities during the visit and stay at the hotel, environmental consciousness, enjoyment of new/novel destinations, and preference for a luxury hotel experience. High factor loadings (ranging from 0.69 to 0.51) for these elements of the hotel experience indicated a strong association with the overarching theme of social and environmental consciousness as a motivation for lifestyle hotel guests, and the latent variable had a satisfactory Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.67$) that was indicative of acceptable internal consistency.

The second factor was appropriately labeled "cultural and social exploration." It included preference for destinations with sentimental value, sensitivity to local cultures, need to try new foods and meet new people. High factor loading values (0.76

to 0.52) indicated a strong association with the theme of social and cultural exploration which returned a Cronbach's alpha high (α = 0.75) suggesting excellent internal consistency.

The third dimension included guests' preferences for hotels that offer wellness facilities such as a gym and health club, as well as opportunities to engage in physical activities like recreational sports. The two indicators loaded significantly on the latent variable named 'Wellness and Physical Activities' (0.83 and 0.60) and a Cronbach's alpha implying acceptable internal consistency (α = 0.59).

4.3.4.2 Hotel Guests Travel Preferences Indices

Using the scales designed to measure the latent variable representing hotel guests' travel preferences, the study computed indices to measure preferences for Social and Environmental Consciousness, Cultural and Culinary Exploration, and Wellness and Physical Activities among the guests (n = 205). The computed indices suggested that, on average, the guests agreed that social and environmental consciousness ($\bar{x}$ = 3.80, SD = 1.01) and cultural and culinary exploration ($\bar{x}$ = 3.63, SD = 1.11) were considerations in their travel preference. However, the guests were indifferent to wellness and physical activities as considerations for their travel preference ($\bar{x}$ = 3.43, SD = 1.27).

The computed indices provided insights into the relative preferences of hotel guests in Nairobi city. On average, guests exhibit a notable inclination towards social and environmental consciousness and cultural and culinary exploration, indicating a strong consideration for experiences aligned with social and environmental values, as well as cultural and culinary aspects during their stay. However, the apparent indifference towards wellness and physical activities implied that, on average, guests have prioritized facilities or activities related to health and physical well-being when choosing a hotel. The findings indicated that hotel establishments in Nairobi have the opportunity to improve their services by prioritizing aspects such as social responsibility, cultural discovery, and gastronomic adventures to better resonate with their guests' preferences. This strategic alignment could potentially result in heightened levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty.

4.3.5 Hotel Guests' Perceptions of the Adequacy of Sustainability Practices

The research collected primary quantitative data concerning hotel guests' views on the sustainability measures adopted by the hotels. Participants were asked to assess the adequacy of observed practices during their current stay using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 represented "extremely inadequate," 5 represented "extremely adequate," and 3 indicated neutrality. A set of 19 practices, derived from existing literature, was presented for evaluation. Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize the guests' perceptions, with a summary of the ratings presented in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 Guests' Perceptions of the Adequacy of Sustainability Practices Implemented by Hotels in Nairobi

Hotel Sustainability Practice	N	Adequacy rating % of total					Mean	SD
		Extremely Inadequate	Inadequate	Neutral	Adequate	Extremely Adequate		
Use of refillable soap/toiletries dispensers	205	5.85	11.22	14.15	17.07	51.71	3.98	1.28
Inclusion of local foods in menu	205	10.24	9.27	12.68	18.05	49.76	3.88	1.38
Environmental architectural	205	9.76	9.27	14.15	27.32	39.51	3.78	1.32
Waste separation	205	7.32	9.27	22.44	21.95	39.02	3.76	1.26

Use of energy conservation Technology	204	8.33	11.27	18.63	20.59	41.18	3.75	1.32
Ecofriendly toiletries	204	9.80	10.78	12.75	28.43	38.24	3.75	1.33
Use of energy efficient room appliances	205	8.29	11.22	20.00	20.49	40.00	3.73	1.31
Use of local material in interior décor	205	10.24	11.22	13.66	25.37	39.51	3.73	1.36
Elimination of single use items	205	13.17	8.78	13.66	21.95	42.44	3.72	1.42
Easy disability access	204	11.76	9.31	18.63	20.59	39.71	3.67	1.38
Support to local business	202	10.89	11.39	17.82	19.80	40.10	3.67	1.38

Enhanced employee health & safety	205	10.73	11.71	18.05	21.46	38.05	3.64	1.37
Use of water conservation	204	10.29	12.25	21.08	19.61	36.76	3.60	1.36
Technology								
Use LED lighting in public areas	205	10.24	13.66	20.00	24.88	31.22	3.53	1.33
Use of recyclable paper products	204	12.75	13.24	17.16	22.06	34.80	3.53	1.41
Use of renewable energy	205	12.68	13.17	19.02	20.98	34.15	3.51	1.40
Guest participation	205	13.66	15.12	20.00	19.51	31.71	3.40	1.42

in community activities								
Employee recognition	204	14.71	16.67	21.08	22.55	25.00	3.26	1.39
Opportunities for guest-community interactions	205	13.17	20.00	23.41	17.07	26.34	3.23	1.38

The findings presented in Table 4.7 indicate that, on the whole, hotel guests rated all sustainability practices observed during their stay as adequate ($\bar{x}$ = 3.98, SD = 1.28 - $\bar{x}$ = 3.51, SD = 1.40). However, three specific practices—guest involvement in community activities, acknowledgment of employees, and chances for guest-community interactions—received neutral ratings ($\bar{x}$ = 3.40, SD = 1.42 - $\bar{x}$ = 3.23, SD = 1.38), suggesting a level of indifference regarding how hotels were addressing these aspects and indicating room for enhancement in these areas.

The results suggest that the majority of survey participants opined that all sustainability practices were extremely well-implemented by the hotels (56% - 26%), attesting to the extensive adoption of sustainability practices by city lifestyle hotels. Conversely, most guests believed that hotels inadequately or extremely inadequately offered opportunities for them to interact with the community (57%, *n* = 116) and recognize employees (53%, *n* = 109).

In general, according to the sample, the three most adequately implemented sustainability practices were the use of refillable soap/toiletries dispensers ($\bar{x}$ = 3.98, *SD* = 1.28), inclusion of local foods in the menus ($\bar{x}$ = 3.88, *SD* = 1.38), and incorporation of environmental architectural designs ($\bar{x}$ = 3.78, *SD* = 1.32).

Previous studies have explored guest satisfaction with various sustainable hotel practices. Berezan, Millar, and Raab (2014) investigated preferences for ten practices, including energy and water conservation, local procurement, recycling, and reusable dispensers, in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. Surveying 303 guests at boutique-style 3- and 4-star hotels, the study utilized a 7-point Likert scale. Results indicated high satisfaction (80%) with practices such as recycling policy, green product procurement, and local supplier engagement ($\bar{x} = 6.23, SD = 1.57 - \bar{x} = 5.81, SD = 1.75$). Somewhat lower satisfaction was observed for dispenser use ($\bar{x} = 5.52, SD = 1.92$) and linen reuse encouragement ($\bar{x} = 5.33, SD = 1.97$). Despite cultural differences between Nairobi and Mexico, both the current study and Berezan et al.'s (2014) Mexican study confirm that hotels in both locations have successfully implemented waste management, energy and water conservation, and sustainable procurement practices, satisfying their guests. This supports the conclusion that there is a global

trend toward sustainability in the hospitality industry. This trend indicates that hotels, regardless of cultural context, recognize the importance of implementing environmentally friendly practices to meet guest expectations.

In a more recent comparable study surveying guest perceptions of sustainability practices in a Spanish coastal hotel, Merli et al. (2019) noted diverse green initiatives: bio-architectural design, green energy usage, energy-efficient appliances, waste separation, guest education on environmental practices, eco-friendly cleaning, food sourcing for low environmental impact menus, electric vehicle use, and environmental workshops. The study examined guests' assessments of the hotel's ten environmental features, such as sourcing low environmental impact menus, using electric vehicles, and conducting environmental workshops. Guests rated these attributes using a 7-point Likert scale, where "1" indicated poor performance and "7" excellent performance. The findings revealed that, in general, guests gave high ratings to the hotel's green initiatives ($\bar{x} = 6.34, SD = 1.02 - \bar{x} = 5.79, SD = 1.18,\ n = 325$), indicating a favorable perception of the hotel's sustainability endeavors.

The findings suggesting a high prevalence of HSPs in Nairobi hotels also corroborate the observations made by Gitobu and Njoroge (2015) in a study conducted in Mombasa hotels. The researchers posited that most tourist accommodation establishments in Mombasa, Kenya, were adopting a variety of 'green practices' (another term for HSP) as a strategic move to distinguish themselves from competitors. The Mombasa hotels aimed to reduce operational costs linked to waste disposal and material usage, and were relying on these green practices as a marketing strategy to appeal to an emerging niche of environmentally conscious consumers.

In summary, the findings presented in table 4.7 highlight an overall favorable view of sustainability practices among hotel guests, pinpointing areas like community engagement and employee recognition that warrant specific attention for improvement. Notably, the identification of the top three sustainability practices—utilization of refillable soap/toiletries dispensers, integration of local foods in menus, and implementation of environmental architectural designs—provides valuable guidance for hotel management aiming to bolster their sustainability endeavors in line with guest preferences. These outcomes underscore the ongoing necessity for aligning

hotel practices with guest expectations, ultimately fostering a more sustainable and guest-centric hospitality sector.

4.3.5.1 Classification of Hotel Sustainability Practices

The study used the TBL theory to categorize HSPs into the three dimensions of sustainability: environmental, economic, and social practices. Table 4.8 outlines the classification of the 19 considered practices into broad categories based on the TBL framework.

Table 4.8 Classification of Hotel Sustainable Practices

TBL Dimensions	Classification	Mean	SD	Cronbach's alpha	Scale Mean	Scale SD
Environmental	**Waste Management Practices**			0.71	3.74	0.91
	Use of refillable soap/toiletries dispensers	3.98	1.28			
	Waste Separation	3.76	1.26			
	Elimination of single use items	3.72	1.42			
	Use of Recyclable paper products	3.53	1.41			
	Ecofriendly Toiletries	3.75	1.33			

	Resource Management Practices			0.72	3.62	0.91
	Use of water conservation Technology	3.60	1.36			
	Use of energy efficient room appliances	3.73	1.31			
	Use of Energy Conservation Technology	3.75	1.32			
	Use LED lighting in public areas	3.53	1.33			
	Use of Renewable Energy	3.51	1.40			
Economic	**Local Engagement Practices**			0.68	3.75	1.07
	Support to local business	3.67	1.38			
	Inclusion of local foods in menu	3.88	1.38			
	Use of Local Material in Interior Décor	3.73	1.36			
Social	**Community and Guest**			0.59	3.44	0.85

Interaction Practices		
Easy Disability Access	3.67	1.38
Enhanced Employee Health & Safety	3.64	1.37
Guest Participation in community activities	3.40	1.42
Employee Recognition	3.26	1.39
Opportunities for Guest-Community Interactions	3.23	1.38

The HSPs were categorized to align with the three TBL dimensions (Table 4.8). The environmental dimension of sustainable practices was further subdivided into two groups corresponding to waste management practices ($\bar{x}$ =3.74, *SD* = 0.91) and resource management practices ($\bar{x}$ = 3.62, *SD* = 0.91). The social dimension encompasses practices that reflect the hotels' community and guest interaction efforts ($\bar{x}$ = 3.44, *SD* = 0.85). The economic component includes practices aimed at promoting beneficial local engagements ($\bar{x}$ = 3.75, *SD* = 1.07). Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the four groups ranged between α = 0.72 and α = 0.59, indicating satisfactory internal consistency and reliability of the scales measuring the HSPs.

The results presented in Table 4.8 reveal that, comparatively, guests evaluated the hotels' social sustainability as less adequate when compared to environmental and

economic sustainability. Notably, economic sustainability practices received the highest evaluations. The results suggest that according to the guests' perceptions, hotels seem to prioritize and perform better in economic and environmental sustainability practices compared to social sustainability practices. The finding suggests a potential gap in the attention and efforts hotels allocate to addressing social aspects of sustainability. This could impact the overall perception of hotels' commitment to holistic sustainability and community engagement. Rezapouraghdam et al. (2021) cautions that focus on environmental sustainability creates an inaccurate perception that sustainable tourism is a one-dimensional concept rather than a holistic approach that also includes economic concerns.

4.3.6 Guests' Perception of Hotel Brand Identity

The study gathered guests' opinions on the hotel brands in relation to their sustainability practices. Guests were requested to express their agreement or disagreement with six brand identity statements using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Data analysis utilized descriptive statistics to summarize responses on this questionnaire item. Table 4.9 displays the descriptive statistics reflecting guests' perceptions of the hotels' sustainability brand identity.

Table 4.9 Guests Perceptions on the Hotel's Brand Identity

Brand Dimension	N	Extent of Agreement as Proportion (%) of Total					Mean	Std. Deviation
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree		
1. HSPs encourage diversity and inclusivity	203	6.90	7.88	15.76	26.11	43.35	3.91	1.24
2. Hotel is genuinely committed to sustainability	205	6.34	11.22	20.00	18.54	43.90	3.82	1.28
3. Staying at the hotel means positive impacts to the environment	204	9.31	11.76	17.16	15.20	46.57	3.78	1.38
4. The HSPs make me loyal to the hotel	204	12.75	13.24	10.78	21.08	42.16	3.67	1.45
5. The HSPs reflect my lifestyle choices	204	8.33	12.25	23.04	17.65	38.73	3.66	1.32
6. Hotel's architecture differentiates it from others	205	11.71	12.20	18.05	18.54	39.51	3.62	1.41

The results in Table 4.9 suggest that the majority of respondents (43% – 40%) strongly agreed with the statements on the hotel's brand identity, sustainability practices, and lifestyle choices. On average, all respondents agreed with the statements ($\bar{x} = 3.91, SD = 1.24 - \bar{x} = 3.62, SD = 1.41$). However, a significant 42% (n = 86) of respondents strongly disagreed or were neutral about the hotel's architecture's ability to differentiate the hotel from others. On the other hand, close to 69% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the hotels' HSPs encourage diversity and inclusivity. The results reveal positive sentiments among respondents regarding all aspects of the hotel brand influenced by the HSPs.

The study utilized Kapferer's (1986) BIP theory to shape the lifestyle hotel's brand identity. According to the theory, brand identity encompasses six elements: physique, personality, culture, relationship, reflection, and self-image, fostering a coherent brand image (Kapferer, 2012). The six statements for respondent rating align with BIP theory's brand identity aspects. Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha = 0.76$) confirmed the reliability of the six-item scale for brand identity. On average, guests agreed with the 6 positive BIP statements about the hotel's brand identity ($\bar{x}$ =3.75, SD = 0.90).

The study compared means of the score for the brand identity scale between the four generational cohorts and between first time and repeat guests. Table 4.10 shows results of the comparison.

Table 4.10 Comparison of Means of Brand Identity by Generational Cohort and Repeat Visit

Visitor Category	Level	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Generational Cohort	Generation Z	55	3.86	0.97
	Millennials/Generation Y	58	3.88	0.91
	Generation X	49	3.72	0.80
	Baby Boomers	42	3.44	0.88
Type of visit	First time guests	85	3.71	0.89
	Repeat guests	115	3.77	0.92

The results in Table 4.10 indicate that, overall, baby boomers were neutral about the hotel's brand identity ($\bar{x} = 3.44, SD$ 0.88), while Millennials/Gen Y gave the highest brand identity scores ($\bar{x} = 3.88, SD$ 0.91). However, there was no evidence to suggest a statistically significant difference in brand identity perceptions across the four generational cohorts ($F_{(3,200)} = 2.40, p = .07ns$). While repeat guests tended to rate the hotels slightly higher than first-time visitors, this disparity did not reach statistical significance at the conventional α level of 0.05 ($t_{(198)} = -0.45, p = .65ns$).

4.3.7 Hotel Firmographic Profile

The key informants were tasked with providing details about their hotels, encompassing factors such as hotel size indicated by the number of rooms and beds, and ownership - whether the hotel operated independently, belonged to a chain, or functioned as a franchise. Additionally, the informants were questioned about their hotel's primary markets over the last 12 months. They were further prompted to share insights on the significance of various segments within their clientele base, including leisure, business, conferences/meetings, incentives, and exhibitions (MICE). Table 4.11 provides a summary of the hotel profiles:

Table 4.11 Hotel Profile

No.	Ownership	No. Rooms	No. Restaurants	Major Market
P01	Independent	110	2	Corporate (Business & MICE)
P02	Chain	167	2	Leisure
P03	Chain	167	2	Leisure
P04	Franchise	122	1	Corporate (Business & MICE)
P05	Chain	110	3	Corporate (Business & MICE)
P06	Franchise	175	1	Mix
P07	Chain	176	2	Corporate (Business & MICE)
P08	Independent	128	1	Corporate (Business & MICE)
P09	Independent	13	2	Leisure
P10	Chain	112	2	Corporate (Business & MICE)
P11	Independent	50	5	Leisure

P12	Chain	167	2	Leisure
P13	Chain	210	3	Leisure
P14	Franchise	171	1	Corporate (Business & MICE)
P15	Independent	117	1	Leisure
P16	Independent	148	5	Corporate (Business & MICE)
P17	Chain	167	3	Leisure
P18	Members Club	24	2	Leisure
P19	Chain	170	4	Corporate (Business & MICE)

The results presented in Table 4.11 reveals a diverse representation of city hotels in the Key Informant Interviews (KII). A significant majority, constituting 63% (n = 12), were affiliated either as franchises or chain hotels, while 32% operated independently. Furthermore, one hotel identified itself as a member's club.

In terms of size, most of the hotels were categorized as large, boasting more than 132 beds (SD = 53.88). Despite their size, the majority maintained a moderate number of restaurants, ranging from 1 to 5 ($\bar{x}$ = 2.32, SD = 1.25). This suggests a balance between hotel capacity and dining facilities.

The findings also highlight a balanced dependency among the represented hotels, with an equal number relying on corporate clientele for business, meetings, incentives, events, and conventional (MICE) activities (47%, n = 9), as well as catering to the domestic and international leisure tourist markets (47%, n = 9). This dual focus underscores the versatility and adaptability of the city hotels in catering to diverse customer segments.

In summary, the diversity in affiliations, size, and target markets among the city hotels interviewed enriches the overall understanding of the hotel industry landscape. This variation in characteristics reflects a dynamic and multifaceted environment in which the hotels operate, showcasing adaptability to different business models and customer preferences.

4.3.8 Hotel Managers Demographic Profile

The key informant interviews gathered demographic data from the hotel managers chosen for their expertise and extensive experience in the hospitality sector. Table 4.12 outlines the demographic characteristics of these hotel managers.

Table 4.12 Demographic Profile of the Key Informants

ID.	Education	Department	Responsibility	Experience (yrs.)
P01	Bachelor's Degree	Operations	Manager	21
P02	Bachelor's Degree	Administration	General Manager	30
P03	Bachelor's Degree	Human Resource	Manager	15
P04	Diploma	Front Office	Manager	13
P05	Bachelor's Degree	Operations	Manager	15
P06	Bachelor's Degree	Sales and Marketing	Director	25
P07	Diploma	Front Office	Manager	15
P08	Masters	Administration	General Manager	8
P09	Diploma	Front Office	Manager	7
P10	Bachelor's Degree	Administration	Manager	15
P11	Bachelor's Degree	Food and Beverage	Manager	17
P12	Bachelor's Degree	Human Resource	Manager	10
P13	Bachelor's Degree	Front Office	Operations	16
P14	Diploma	Administration	Manager	24
P15	Bachelor's Degree	Front Office	Manager	12
P16	Bachelor's Degree	Food and Beverage	Manager	16
P17	Masters	Administration	General Manager	10
P18	Bachelor's Degree	Administration	Resident Manager	12
P19	Masters	Human Resource	Director	14

The results in Table 4.12 indicate that all key informants held high positions of responsibility within their respective hotels, encompassing managerial, administrative, and operational roles in critical hotel departments such as Food and Beverage, Human Resources, Front Office, Sales and Marketing, and Administration. The informants' roles covered a spectrum of responsibilities, highlighting their comprehensive involvement in various aspects of hotel management. The informants had relevant training in the hospitality industry with post graduate, degree and diploma qualification in tourism and hospitality. The suitability of these key informants to provide feedback on sustainability practices adopted by their hotels appears to be highly appropriate. Their positions in managerial, administrative, and operational capacities suggest that they are likely to possess a holistic understanding of the hotel's functioning, including its sustainability practices. The diverse range of departments they represent ensures a well-rounded perspective on the hotel's overall sustainability initiatives.

Furthermore, the informants' extensive experience in the hotel industry adds credibility to their feedback. With an average of 15.53 years of experience (SD = 5.91) and a range from seven to 30 years, these individuals bring a wealth of knowledge and long-term perspective to the assessment of sustainability practices. The least experienced informant (P09), with seven years in the industry, still held a significant tenure, while the most experienced informant (P02) with 30 years provided valuable insights based on decades of experience.

Overall, the combination of high-ranking positions, educational qualification, diverse departmental representation, and substantial industry experience makes the key informants well-suited and reliable sources for evaluating sustainability practices within their respective hotels.

4.3.9 Managers' Perceptions of Hotel Sustainability Practices

The study gathered qualitative data by interviewing key informants, namely hotel managers, to capture their perspectives on the HSPs implemented in their respective hotels. During the interviews, managers were asked about the specific practices or actions their hotels had taken to minimize their environmental impact. They were also

queried about the technological or innovative measures adopted to enhance sustainability, social sustainability practices aimed at fostering positive community and guest impacts, and the Human Resource management strategies employed to bolster the hotel's sustainability profile. The study employed the reflexive thematic analysis procedure, as popularized by Braun and Clarke (2006), to code the transcribed KIIs. Figure 4.3 provides a summary of the themes that emerged from the informant interviews:

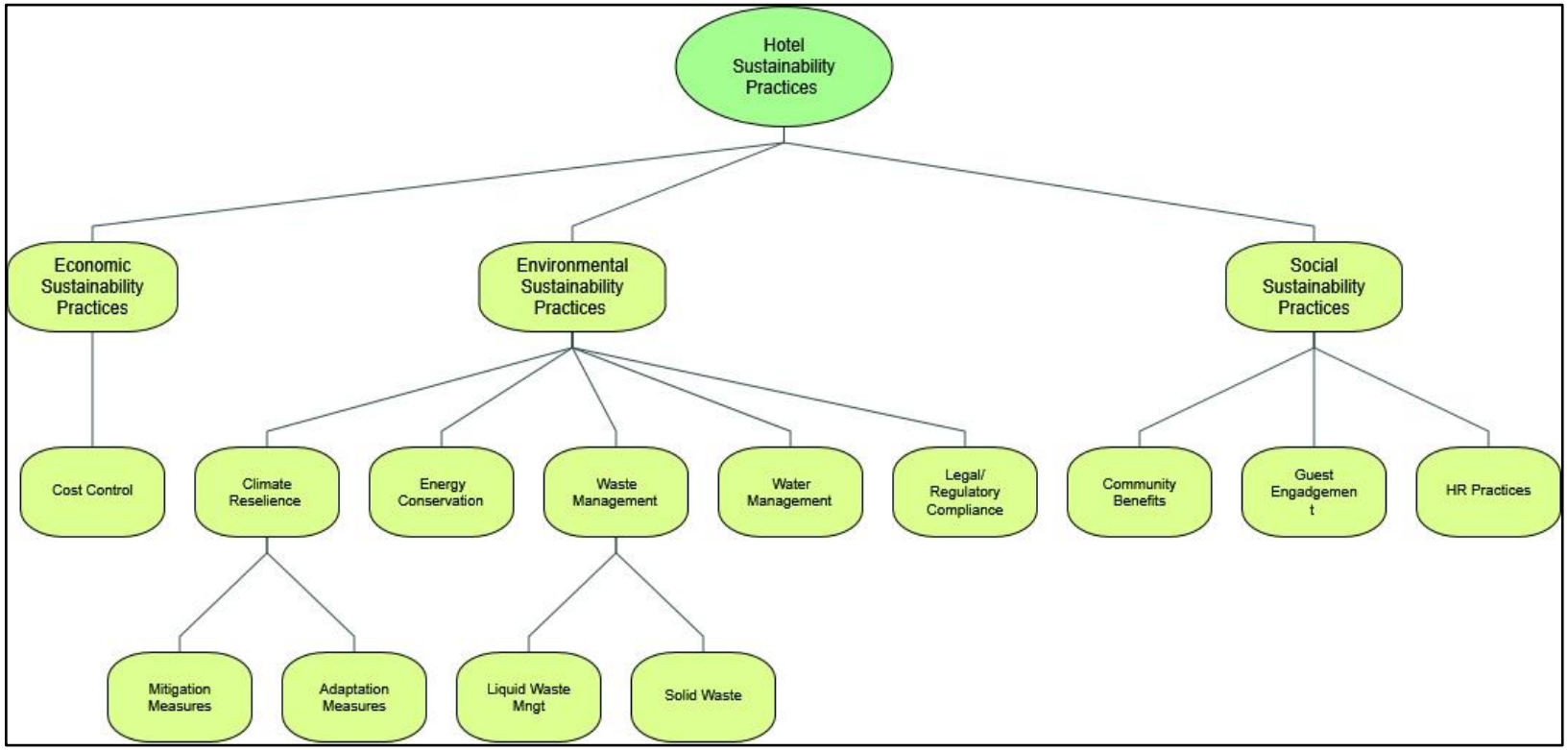


Figure 4.3 Hotel Managers' Perspectives of Hotel Sustainability Practices

Source: Hotels in Nairobi.

The majority of hotel managers (84%, *n* = 16) discussed a total of 52 references to the environmental sustainability practices adopted by their respective hotels, whereas economic sustainability practices related to cost-cutting measures were mentioned by the fewest number of hoteliers (11%, *n* = 2). A substantial number of informants (74%, *n* = 14) also highlighted social sustainability practices, providing 45 references related to community benefits, guest engagement, and HR practices.

4.3.9.1 Managers Perceptions of Environmental Sustainability Practices

The insights provided by the managers reflect a widespread adoption of environmental practices across the hotels. This corresponds with the quantitative analysis results, where guests perceived environmental practices—such as the utilization of refillable soap/toiletries dispensers, integration of environmentally conscious architectural designs, and social sustainability initiatives like featuring local foods in menus—as the most effectively implemented by the hotels.

Concerning environmental sustainability measures, the results of the qualitative analysis suggest that the hotels have implemented a variety of energy conservation measures, as uncovered in the key informant interviews. A majority of hotel managers (58%, n = 11) mentioned environmental sustainability practices, such as using differently-sized laundry machines to optimize power usage. Other energy-specific practices were highlighted, including the use of Light Emitting Diode (LED) lighting, the implementation of solar energy, and innovative approaches like key card-activated power in guest rooms. While a few informants explicitly mentioned economic sustainability practices, the economic motives behind the energy conservation practices of some hotels were implicit. The hotel managers specifically highlighted the use of energy-efficient equipment in kitchens and health clubs, demonstrating a focus on reducing operational costs. This inference is drawn from the following two excerpts:

> *"If you visit our restroom today, you'll notice that when unoccupied, the lights are off. However, upon opening the door, they automatically switch on. This approach is part of our eff orts to minimize energy consumption and manage costs effectively."* (‘P03’);

Another informant (P02) pointed out that:

> *"We are deeply committed to energy conservation, leading to a substantial reduction in our utility costs. This is a result of the measures we've implemented. This year, we conducted an energy audit on our utilities to identify areas where we could make improvements and enhance efficiency."* ('P02')

This discovery resonates with prior research exploring the drivers behind the integration of sustainable energy practices within tourism businesses, notably hotels. Previous studies indicate that alongside the mounting pressure on the tourism sector to curtail its carbon footprint and embrace eco-friendly energy sources (Pace, 2016), the financial incentive remains compelling as energy expenses constitute a substantial portion of hotel operational expenditures, ranking second only to labor costs. Estimates from studies indicate that energy-efficient practices can result in considerable cost savings, ranging between 10% and 15% of hotel operational costs. The actual savings depend on factors such as the hotel's size, maintenance practices, operating procedures, and type of equipment installed (Pace, 2016).

The quantitative results (Table 4.7) revealed that, according to guests, solid waste management practices, including the use of refillable soap/toiletries dispensers, waste separation, elimination of single-use items (especially plastics), and use of recyclable paper products, were adequately implemented by the hotels. Hotel managers also emphasized waste management practices as crucial measures to minimize their facilities' ecological footprint. Their comments affirmed that hotels have adopted practices such as using refillable soap dispensers in guest rooms, eliminating single-use plastics, and minimizing paper usage. One hotel prominently featured refillable shampoos, body wash, and conditioner in guest rooms, reducing the need for individually portioned items, as evidenced in the following quote:

> *"We have a reusable dispenser mounted on the wall. When guests need lotion, body wash, shampoo, or conditioner, they don't have to bring those small individual portions daily. Instead, specific dispensers for each are installed in the bathroom cubicle. This way, when a guest arrives and departs, the*

dispensers are refilled. We opt for refillable soap dispensers in guest rooms, avoiding the use of individual portions brought in daily or after each checkout. It's a sustainable approach to minimize waste and enhance guest convenience." (P010)

According to an informant (P012), another establishment was actively phasing out plastic bottled water, especially in guest areas, opting for more sustainable alternatives:

> *"We've embraced eco-friendly practices, particularly with our bottles. We're in the process of phasing them out. You may notice a water bottle on my desk, but in our rooms, we've initiated the transition, starting from guest areas. Most of our water is now served in glass bottles there. This is a gradual shift we're implementing, moving from the guest areas and extending slowly towards the employee sections. The aim is to steadily reduce our reliance on plastic bottled water throughout the entire establishment."* (P012)

Additionally, the hotels were involved in partnerships to facilitate plastic recycling efforts, contributing to the production of towels. These collective measures reflect a commitment to environmental responsibility, showcasing a reduction in plastic and paper usage throughout the hotels.

Hotels' adoption of green practices, particularly in waste management, aligns with the growing awareness among guests of sustainability and environmentally conscious consumption (Kim & Roseman, 2022). This trend has led to increased guest loyalty and preference for establishments embracing green initiatives. The outcomes of this study corroborate the observation made by Kim and Roseman (2022) that hotels are integrating essential green initiatives, such as substituting single-use plastic water containers with larger dispensers and phasing out plastic straws. These non-optional practices are anticipated to become more widespread as guests become increasingly attuned to environmental and sustainability efforts. The prevalence of such practices in Nairobi hotels, as highlighted by both hotel managers and guests in this study, underscores the significance of these measures. Notably, surveyed guests rated the use of refillable soap/toiletries dispensers as the most adequately implemented practice by hotels ($\bar{x}$ = 3.98, *SD* = 1.28).

4.3.9.2 Managers Perceptions of Social Sustainability Practices

Figure 4.4 summarizes managers' perceptions of social practices implemented by their respective hotels to enhance their sustainability profile.



Figure 4. 4 Hierarchical diagram Hotel managers' perceptions of social sustainability practices implemented by their hotels

The hierarchical diagram (Figure 4.9) suggests, according to the managers, that social sustainability initiatives adopted by the hotels predominantly included human resource practices (n = 12) and community involvement activities (n = 11).

To start, the hotel managers observed that the hotels had implemented various human resource management practices aimed at enhancing employee benefits and welfare to bolster their sustainability initiatives. One hotelier (P01) emphasized,

> *"So, employees are key to any successful organization. We have specific programs implemented regularly, where our staff undergo mental wellness sessions, providing them with tools for financial planning. Additionally, we offer considerable support to their families and extend*

assistance where needed. Therefore, we prioritize employee welfare, considering it a matter of great importance."

The citation underscores the importance of HR practices in fortifying the hotel's sustainability image. The findings of the present study echo those of prior research, which have consistently highlighted a widespread recognition among hotel managers of the importance and advantages associated with incorporating certain human resources practices into their sustainability framework, particularly within their corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. One such study by Cherapanukorn and Focken (2014) has linked CSR programs, which include corporate activities aimed at improving relationships with customers, employees, and host community, to enhancements in hotel performance. The study argues that this improvement can be observed in traditional profitability metrics as well as other performance indicators such as employee satisfaction, company reputation, and guest satisfaction.

Consistent with the global trends where many leading hotel brands like the Hilton, intercontinental and Marriot are integrating Human Resources (HR) practices into their social objectives (Cherapanukorn and Focken, 2014), Nairobi hotels are implementing diverse HR practices to enhance sustainability credentials. Specific programs include mental wellness initiatives, healthcare coverage for staff and their families, and collaborations with neighboring hospitals for regular medical checks and subsidized services. The emphasis on staff development is evident through programs offering growth opportunities via on-the-job training, short courses, and flexible work schedules to enable staff to pursue further professional training. Robust staff management systems, utilizing IT for data management and profiling, are implemented as part of sustainable HR practices. Inclusive recruitment policies targeting the local community and marginalized groups, offering paid attachment positions to students, and ensuring gender diversity across job categories were also cited. Hotels actively involve employees in environmental sustainability activities like tree planting and waste management. Additionally, reward systems are established to foster positive industrial relations, as highlighted in the excerpts:

"*There's a reward depending on if you get an employee of the month; if several people are selected, we sit down and decide who is the first one, and*

they will get rewarded in monetary ways by either doing something exceptional or being recognized several times" (P09).

"*Good remuneration includes service charge, medical cover based on your level, with the option to add dependents. Meals are provided while on duty, and staff transportation is available*" (P05).

The literature on sustainable tourism emphasizes achieving sustainability by advancing and strengthening three interdependent pillars: environmental protection, economic development, and social development (Suryawardani & Wiranatha, 2016). The authors suggest that hospitality establishments enhance local community welfare through CSR programs focusing on social sustainability practices. Qualitative analysis of guest perceptions in Nairobi hotels revealed guest indifference/neutrality regarding the implementation of programs like guest participation in community activities and opportunities for guest-community interactions. However, guests perceived hotel efforts to support local businesses, include local foods in menus, and use of locally sourced artifacts in hotel décor as adequate. These findings indicate that guests did not fully appreciate community welfare improvement programs during their short stay at the hotel (average length of stay was 4.55 days, *SD* = 3.91).

However, results of qualitative analysis of KII responses on social sustainability programs revels that the hotels had implemented a host of CSR programs that targeted community welfare. Figure 4.5 presents a word cloud of frequently used words that the managers used to describe their respective hotels community programs:



Figure 4. 5 Frequently used words in key informants' description of social sustainability programs implemented by the hotels

In Figure 4.5, the discussions among key informants regarding sustainability practices implemented by hotels to promote positive social impacts revolved around key concepts such as "foundation," "community," "home," "children," and "charitable.". The results reveal that hotels in Nairobi are actively advancing social sustainability through established foundations and charitable initiatives as integral components of their CSR programs. Examples include the hotels' active participation in community welfare activities through foundations, emphasizing improvement in education, support for the less fortunate, and partnerships with local organizations such as children's rescue centers for philanthropic endeavors like contributing items to children's homes in the wider Nairobi metropolitan area. Informants highlighted the

hotels' involvement in charitable sporting events and donation drives, providing opportunities for both guests and staff to directly contribute to their chosen charitable causes as can be noted from the following except:

> *"Currently, there is a planned visit to a children's home, where staff have contributed items—whether consumables, clothing, or any other items they deemed suitable to assist. Additionally, we actively participate in events such as the Standard Child Marathon, ensuring consistent representation from the hotel. In fact, I recently had the opportunity to be part of the team representing the hotel in the last marathon. This engagement in events aligns with our commitment to social responsibility, exemplifying our dedication to making positive contributions to the community"* (P013)

4.3.10 Hotel Manager's Perceptions of the Hotels' Brand Identity

The study gathered qualitative insights from hotel managers regarding their perspectives on the facets of the hotel's brand identity, as outlined in Kapferer's (1986) Brand Identity Prism theory. The interviews obtained feedback on the manager's perspectives on their hotel's initiatives to personalized guest experiences, cultural and heritage themes in service, health and wellness services, hotel's architectural design, décor and ambiance and culinary experience.

Aligning the perspectives gathered from the interviews with Kapferer's (1986) BIP theory, the dimension of "Physique" corresponds to the discussion on architectural design and ambiance. "Personality" is reflected in the conversation about personalized guest experiences, while "Culture" aligns with the incorporation of cultural and heritage themes. The dimension of "self-image" resonates with the discussion on health and wellness services, and "Reflection" connects with the conversation about relying on culinary experiences to create a distinctive brand identity for the hotel.

The study utilized a framework matrix to analyze themes reflecting the coded brand identity dimensions captured in the KIIs. Table 4.13 summarizes the results of the analysis.

Table 4.13 Framework Matrix: Hotel Managers Perceptions the Hotels' Brand Identity

	Branding Initiatives					
Participant	**Culinary**	**Health & Wellness**	**Culture & heritage**	**Personalization**	**Architecture & Design**	**Diversity & Inclusivity**
P01 Major Market = Corporate (Business & MICE) ownership = Independent	We take pride in our menu, which features a substantial selection of local dishes					
P03 Major Market = Leisure Ownership = Chain						The workforce primarily consists of individuals from the local community, providing

Participant	Branding Initiatives					
	Culinary	Health & Wellness	Culture & heritage	Personalization	Architecture & Design	Diversity & Inclusivity
						opportunities to residents. Despite this, the team is diverse, representing individuals from various regions across the country, ensuring a broad and inclusive composition.

Participant	Branding Initiatives					
	Culinary	**Health & Wellness**	**Culture & heritage**	**Personalization**	**Architecture & Design**	**Diversity & Inclusivity**
P06 Major Market = Mix Ownership = Franchise	To ensure a diverse culinary experience, we concentrate on providing a continental menu while maintaining a balance with local offerings. This approach caters to our global guests, who frequently travel and can				This is the first hotel I've encountered with beautiful architecture that maximizes space, offering a practical and highly efficient design	

Participant	Branding Initiatives					
	Culinary	**Health & Wellness**	**Culture & heritage**	**Personalization**	**Architecture & Design**	**Diversity & Inclusivity**
	relate to familiar international cuisine. Simultaneously, we incorporate local elements, allowing them to experience and identify with Kenyan cuisine when inquiring about our menu.					

Participant	Branding Initiatives					
	Culinary	**Health & Wellness**	**Culture & heritage**	**Personalization**	**Architecture & Design**	**Diversity & Inclusivity**
P07 Major Market = Corporate (Business & MICE) Ownership = Chain	We offer a variety of dishes each day, featuring specialties from different African countries.	Gym and Spa facilities, accompanied by a temperature-controlled swimming pool.	By ensuring we buy locally and support locals.			
P08 Major Market = Corporate (Business & MICE) Ownership = Independent	The restaurant operates as a pan-African establishment, utilizing ingredients sourced from	We have a spa and gym	As you can see, there's a lot of art and culture throughout the hotel. We have a lot of			The team embraces local influence, allowing each member to showcase their unique

Participant	Branding Initiatives					
	Culinary	**Health & Wellness**	**Culture & heritage**	**Personalization**	**Architecture & Design**	**Diversity & Inclusivity**
	across the entire continent.		art and culture.			background, whether based on region or other factors. The overall team composition reflects a diverse blend of nationalities, creating a melting pot of cultures and experiences

Participant	Branding Initiatives					
	Culinary	**Health & Wellness**	**Culture & heritage**	**Personalization**	**Architecture & Design**	**Diversity & Inclusivity**
P09 Major Market = Leisure Ownership = Independent	We include a touch of Danish influence and incorporate continental dishes to ensure there is something for everyone on our menu	We have a SPA coming up probably from next month, apart from that we have a swimming pool.	I would say the history of this place is tied to the Museum, which, although not local, represents a colonial aspect from a bygone era, and that's what we incorporate			

Participant	Branding Initiatives					
	Culinary	**Health & Wellness**	**Culture & heritage**	**Personalization**	**Architecture & Design**	**Diversity & Inclusivity**
			into our offerings			
P11 Major Market = Domestic Leisure Ownership = Independent	Our menu adheres to a four-star standard, encompassing a variety of cuisines such as Asian, African, and American. The selection varies based on	We offer spa and sauna facilities, along with a gym for our guests	We offer diverse menus aligned with various themes, occasionally featuring an all-African menu. While not extensive, we ensure	Customer care.		

Participant	Branding Initiatives					
	Culinary	**Health & Wellness**	**Culture & heritage**	**Personalization**	**Architecture & Design**	**Diversity & Inclusivity**
	the preferences of the guests currently staying with us.		there is always something special happening in our hotel			
P13 Major Market = Leisure Ownership = Chain	Our cuisine is designed to resonate with Kenyan tastes, featuring dishes like kuku wakupaka and samaki wakupaka in a	The gym is equipped for guests' wellness with workout facilities, a swimming pool, and the spa, which	We engage local performers for those in need of entertainment or performances.	We strive to gather comprehensive information about a guest's profile. For instance, if someone is on their	The property's architectural design and historical context are deeply rooted in British influence, evident in the	

Participant	Branding Initiatives					
	Culinary	**Health & Wellness**	**Culture & heritage**	**Personalization**	**Architecture & Design**	**Diversity & Inclusivity**
	Swahili style. Our menus reflect this connection, and we even have a themed event called Swahili Friday	serves a therapeutic role through massages and similar services		honeymoon, we proactively seek such details in advance to tailor our services accordingly and provide the appropriate courtesies.	physical structure and built environment, providing a distinctive British feel and taste throughout the premises.	
P14 Major Market = Corporate (Business & MICE)	The importance of offering healthy food options stems from the	Gym and Pool Facilities	Offering local crafts to guests as part of our menu options	welcome amenities/ recognition		

	Branding Initiatives					
Participant	**Culinary**	**Health & Wellness**	**Culture & heritage**	**Personalization**	**Architecture & Design**	**Diversity & Inclusivity**
Ownership = Franchise	demographics of our guests, considering factors such as age.					
P15 Major Market = Leisure Ownership = Independent		Beauty and Therapy Services, Fitness Center (Gym), Swimming Pool, Jogging Track				

	Branding Initiatives					
Participant	**Culinary**	**Health & Wellness**	**Culture & heritage**	**Personalization**	**Architecture & Design**	**Diversity & Inclusivity**
P16 Major Market = Corporate (Business & MICE) Ownership = Independent	The majority of our clientele is local, leading us to feature 60% local cuisine. Additionally, we include a touch of continental foods to cater to our international travelers	Gym and Spa, Kizomba Night, Yoga	We have themed nights (choma buffet); Provide local themed entertainment.	We offer unique private space for meetings.		

Participant	Branding Initiatives					
	Culinary	**Health & Wellness**	**Culture & heritage**	**Personalization**	**Architecture & Design**	**Diversity & Inclusivity**
P17 Major Market = International Leisure Ownership = Chain		Gym and jogging trucks.		We meet guests and discuss with them their requirements.	We are an eco-friendly hotel, specifically designed to prioritize conservation efforts	
P18 Major Market = Leisure Ownership = Members Club	In our food and beverage department, we have designated special days featuring specific cuisines. On	We do offer gym services spa that includes massages in different types facial treatments	For instance, in the food and beverage department we have special days we offer specific foods	We do offer extra services like room services laundry services and concierge.	The country club actively promotes Kenyan art, showcasing paintings in various areas such as	Last year, we reviewed our menu to ensure the incorporation of various cuisines, catering to

Participant	Branding Initiatives					
	Culinary	**Health & Wellness**	**Culture & heritage**	**Personalization**	**Architecture & Design**	**Diversity & Inclusivity**
	Wednesdays, we offer a selection of curry dishes As a members' club, we provide both fine dining and casual dining options. Additionally, during the day, we offer service in the garden	and hand and foot treatment and a nail bar.	on Wednesdays we offer curry foods		corridors, offices, living rooms, conference halls, and restrooms	diverse cultural preferences

Participant	Branding Initiatives					
	Culinary	**Health & Wellness**	**Culture & heritage**	**Personalization**	**Architecture & Design**	**Diversity & Inclusivity**
	and on the terraces					
P19 Major Market = Corporate (Business & MICE) Ownership = Chain	Our culinary experience is customized to meet the specific needs of our guests, and we conduct menu engineering every six			Our culinary experience is customized to meet the specific needs of our guests, and we conduct menu engineering every six months to ensure	Constructed in 1904, the hotel stands as a significant cultural and heritage site in the country. Its furnishings and design are also reflective of	We have a diversity and inclusive week every year; 75%of the managers in the hotel are women

Participant	Branding Initiatives					
	Culinary	**Health & Wellness**	**Culture & heritage**	**Personalization**	**Architecture & Design**	**Diversity & Inclusivity**
	months to ensure alignment with their preferences			alignment with their preferences	heritage elements.	

Source: Research Data, 2024

The analysis presented in Table 4.13 attests that hotels, irrespective of ownership or primary target market, have implemented a variety of practices aimed at enhancing their brand identity as sustainable establishments. In the realm of the brand's physical dimension, encompassing architectural design, décor, and ambiance, hotels distinguish themselves through various notable initiatives. These include a commitment to beautiful architecture that maximizes space and prioritizes practicality. Some establishments weave historical and cultural influences into their brand, showcasing colonial design elements or heritage-inspired furnishings. Others emphasize environmental sustainability, positioning themselves as eco-friendly with a dedicated focus on conservation. Certain hotels actively support local art by incorporating paintings across their premises, fostering a platform for Kenyan artists. Collectively, these initiatives contribute to a distinct and multifaceted brand identity shaped by architectural design, décor, and ambiance.

In the cultural and heritage dimension, aligning with the "culture" aspect of the BIP theory (Kapferer, 1986), the key informant said that their hotels strategically position themselves through branding initiatives. These encompass a commitment to supporting local communities by sourcing locally and actively participating in cultural activities. One hotel integrated art and cultural elements throughout its premises, creating an environment that encourages artistic expression. In another establishment, the incorporation of historical ties, such as a connection to a museum with colonial significance, contributed to a distinctive cultural narrative. Another hotel went a step further by promoting cultural experiences through diverse themed menus, special events like themed nights and entertainment, and dedicated days for specific cuisines. These initiatives collectively enrich the hotel's cultural and heritage identity.

The hotels emphasize cultural and culinary diversity in their menu offerings, incorporating local dishes and international cuisines. They celebrate African heritage, operating as a pan-African establishment with ingredients sourced continent-wide. Additionally, the mention of Swahili-style dishes and themed events like Swahili Friday reflected a commitment to cultural resonance. The integration of Danish influences and customization of the culinary experience further align with the

"Culture" dimension, ensuring a rich and diverse dining experience for guests that resonates with both local and global tastes.

The results presented in Table 4.13 confirm that the hotels have implemented a range of initiatives to personalize their service offerings for specific guest requirements. Alongside providing exemplary customer care, the findings highlight that hotel actively gather comprehensive guest profiles, particularly tailoring services for special occasions such as honeymoons. The hotels utilize welcome amenities and recognition, creating a unique and personalized service experience. Direct discussions with guests about their preferences emerged as a significant approach, allowing for customized service design and delivery. Additional services, including room and laundry services, were also identified as enhancing the overall guest experience. Furthermore, a distinctive culinary journey, meticulously curated and aligned with guest preferences through biannual menu engineering, underscored the brand's commitment to personalized service.

The findings validate the notion that hotels strategically offered health and wellness services, in harmony with guests' lifestyle preferences, thereby embodying the "self-image" aspect of the BIP theory. This dimension revolves around how consumers project themselves through the brand, influencing how they wish to be perceived and express their identity. Notable initiatives include gym and spa facilities with temperature-controlled swimming pool, offering a holistic wellness experience. The hotels extend their commitment to physical well-being through spa and sauna facilities, well-equipped gyms, and therapeutic services like massages. Additionally, the inclusion of beauty and therapy services, fitness centers, and jogging tracks aligns with the "self-image" aspect, collectively enriching the guest experience and reinforcing the brand identity.

In conclusion, focusing on the "Relationship" dimension of the BIP theory, the hotels underscore the significance of relationships within their workforce, highlighting inclusivity and diversity. The team's composition, encompassing individuals from the local community and diverse regions, underscores a broad and inclusive structure. Recognizing local influences and celebrating unique backgrounds align with the

"Relationship" dimension, fostering a harmonious work environment. Further commitment to diversity is demonstrated through initiatives like diversity and inclusive weeks, coupled with a substantial representation of women in managerial positions (75%). Overall, the hotels prioritize cultivating positive relationships within their diverse and inclusive teams.

Few studies have delved into the hotel brand identity concept from the supply-side perspective, often emphasizing the demand-driven tourist-perceived brand image. A notable exception is the study by Konecnik and Go (2008), focusing on destination managers' perspectives on destination brand identity, which underscores the scarcity of insights into the supply-side perspective. This gap in research may lead to an unbalanced understanding, resulting in misunderstandings and oversights concerning branding possibilities and limitations within the hotel industry. Recognizing the need for a comprehensive analysis from both demand and supply perspectives, the current study explored how hotels in Nairobi strategically position their brands through sustainability practices, aiming to differentiate themselves, attract guests, and enhance competitiveness in the city's hotel market. Perceptions from managers complement the views obtained from hotel guests in the demand-driven approach. These perspectives are then utilized to model the relationship between hotel sustainability practices, guests' travel preferences, and hotel brand identity in the subsequent analyses.

4.4 Structural Equation Model

4.4.1 Measurement Model

4.4.1.1 Reliability and Validity of Measurement Scales for Latent Variables

The study assessed the underlying structure of relationship between the latent variables and their indicators and proposed a viable measurement model. This involved conducting reliability and validity tests on a 19-item scale used to assess guests' perceptions of the adequacy of HSP. These practices were categorized into three dimensions - environmental, economic, and social practices, guided by the TBL theory (Elkington, 1994). Additionally, a 10-indicator scale, derived through exploratory factor analysis (EFA) from items proposed in the literature on lifestyle

hotel guests' travel preferences (e.g., Han & Lee, 2021; Liu et al., 2018), was subjected to reliability and validity testing. Similarly, a six-item scale measuring hotel brand identity, adopted from Kapferer's (1986) BIP theory, underwent reliability and validity assessment.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was utilized to evaluate the unidimensionality of the measurement items. Figure 4.6 illustrates the proposed measurement model specification derived from the CFA, depicting latent variables and standardized regression weights of indicator items. These weights serve as factor loadings, indicating relationships between observable indicators and latent variables.

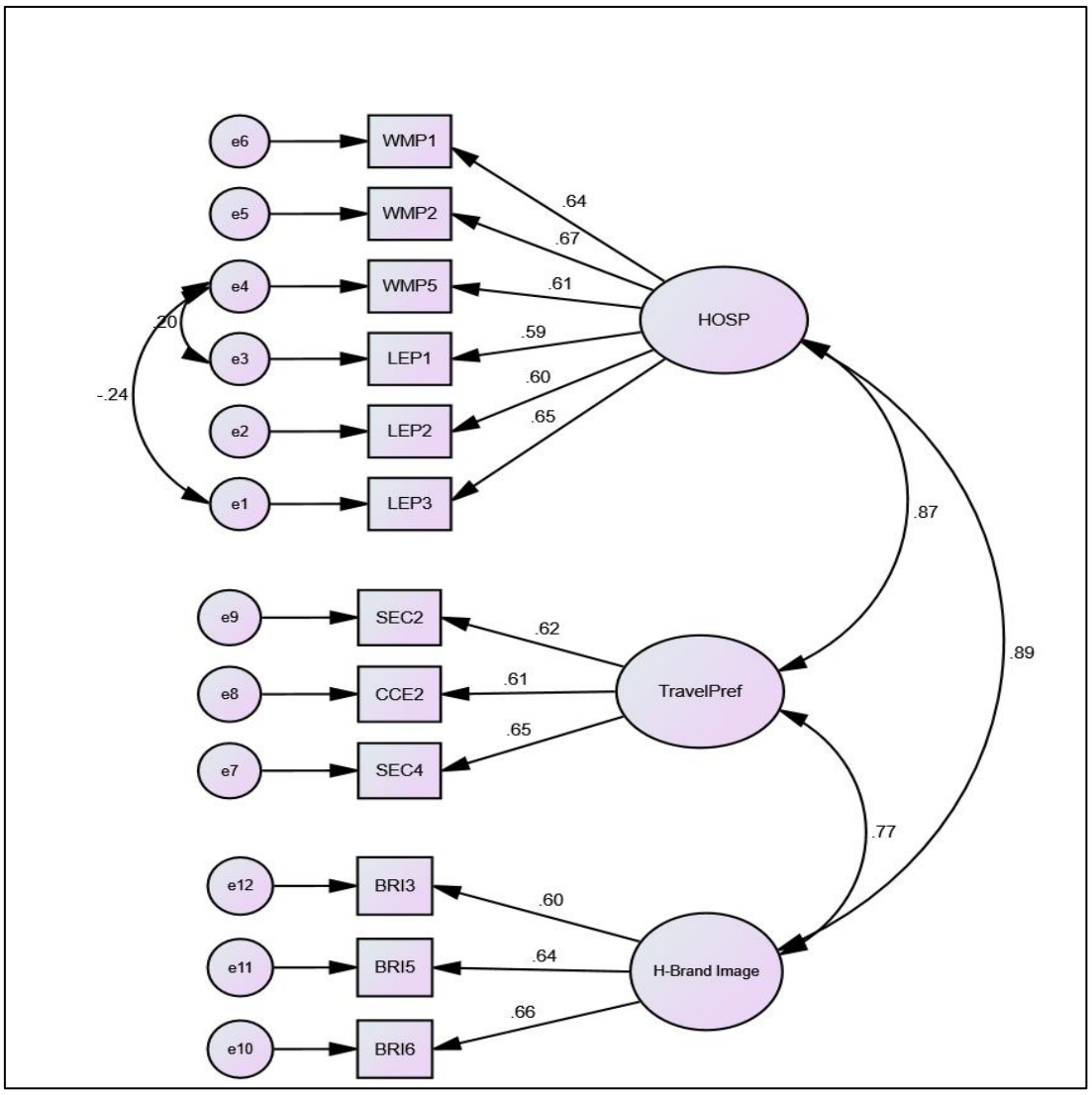


Figure 4. 6 Measurement Model – Hotel Sustainability Practices, Travel Preference and Hotel Brand Identity

The study conceptualized hotel sustainability practices, denoted as the latent variable HOSP in Figure 4.6, to encompass practices implemented by hotels aimed at diminishing their negative impact on the environment, society, and the economy, while concurrently ensuring the long-term viability of their businesses. In Figure 4.6, the indicators representing significant HSPs (Hotel Sustainability Practices) adopted by lifestyle hotels in Nairobi include the elimination of single-use plastic containers (WMP1, $\lambda = 0.64$), utilization of refillable soap dispensers (WMP2, $\lambda = 0.67$), incorporation of eco-friendly toiletries (WMP5, $\lambda = 0.61$), integration of local materials in the interior décor (LEP1, $\lambda = 0.59$), inclusion of local foods in the hotel's menu (LEP2, $\lambda = 0.60$), and support for local businesses (LEP3, $\lambda = 0.65$).

Simultaneously, the CFA (Figure 4.6) affirmed the satisfactory loading of three indicators related to lifestyle hotel guests' travel preferences. These indicators encompass guests' sensitivity to the environmental impacts of hotel enterprises (SEC2 $\lambda = 0.62$), guests' inclination to explore and try new foods (CCE2, $\lambda = 0.61$), and preference for indulging in luxury accommodation experiences (SEE4, $\lambda = 0.65$).

The indicators reflecting the travel preferences of lifestyle hotel guests resonate with Liu et al.'s (2018) depiction of these guests as individuals in pursuit of excitement, novelty, and spontaneity in their experiences. This encompasses culinary adventures, experimenting with new cuisines, themed musical events, avant-garde hotel room designs, and innovative high-tech amenities. Liu et al. (2018) also underscore the inclination towards hedonism among lifestyle hotel patrons, portraying it as a trend where guests derive multisensory, emotional, and imaginative gratification from luxurious accommodations, heightening their sense of arousal, perceived autonomy, and escapism. This trend corresponds to literature suggesting that many hotel consumers, including lifestyle hotel guests, exhibit preferences for environmental products, either through direct purchases or indirectly by participating in outdoor activities or supporting environmental causes.

The results in figure 4.6 also encompass three of the six indicators from Kapferer's (1986) BIP theory, identified as relevant for lifestyle hotel guests in the study area. These three indicators demonstrated satisfactory loadings on the latent variable

representing guests' perceptions of the brand identity. They include whether the hotel's environmental efforts reflect the guests' personal lifestyle choices (BRI3, $\lambda = 0.60$), if the hotel's sustainability practices foster guest loyalty (BRI5, $\lambda = 0.64$), and whether the hotel's sustainability practices promote diversity and inclusivity (BRI6, $\lambda = 0.66$).

The measurement model in AMOS (Figure 4.6) was evaluated for model fit using threshold values recommended in the literature of the normed chi-square (χ^2/df), goodness of fit index (GFI), comparative fit index (CFI), normed fit index (NFI), Tucker–Lewis index (TLI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) (Collier, 2020; Elzek, 2021). Table 4.14 presents results of the model fit assessment. The measurement model's data variables underwent examination for multivariate normality to assess adherence to SEM assumptions. Test results, detailed in Appendix E, revealed departure from multivariate normality. With a critical ratio (C.R) of 16.53 and a high kurtosis value of 42.32, substantial non-normality was evident. These findings suggest potential violation of multivariate normality assumptions, which could impact the accuracy and reliability of statistical analyses. Consequently, Bootstrapping was employed in the structural model, a resampling technique that repeatedly sampled from observed data with replacement. This method, not assuming normality, provided reliable estimates and confidence intervals for parameters.

Table 4.14 Summary of Model Fit Indices

Fit Index	Threshold	Model	Comment
Normed chi-square (x^2/df),	1 – 3	1.29	Acceptable fit
Goodness of fit index (GFI)	> 0.90	0.95	Excellent fit
Comparative fit index (CFI)	> 0.95	0.98	Excellent Fit
Normed fit Index (NFI)	> 0.90	0.92	Excellent Fit
Tucker – Lewis index (TLI)	> 0.95	0.97	Excellent Fit
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0.05 - 0.08	0.04	Excellent Fit

The results presented in Table 4.14 confirm that all values for the model fit indices are within the recommended ranges, indicating a favorable fit of the measurement model. Additionally, the reliability of the measurement model was evaluated through the scrutiny of factor loadings (λ) and calculation of Cronbach's alpha (α). The outcomes of this assessment are outlined in Table 4.15.

Table 4.15 Confirmatory factor analysis and Reliability Analysis

Construct	Factor Loading (λ)	*t*-value	*p*-value
Hotel Sustainability Practices (α = 0.79)			
Elimination of single-use plastic containers	0.64	**	
Utilization of refillable soap dispensers	0.67	7.92	< .001
Use of eco-friendly toiletries	0.61	7.15	< .001
Use of local materials in the interior décor	0.59	7.08	< .001
Inclusion of local foods in the hotel's menu	0.60	7.27	< .001
Support for local businesses	0.65	7.62	< .001
Hotel Guests Travel Preferences (α = 0.66)			
Sensitivity to the environmental impacts of hotel enterprises	0.61	6.91	< .001
Inclination to explore and try new foods	0.61	6.82	< .001
Indulging in luxury accommodation experiences	0.65	**	
Hotel Brand Identity (α = 0.66)			
Environmental efforts reflect the guests' personal lifestyle choices	0.6	6.97	< .001
Hotel's sustainability practices foster guest loyalty	0.64	7.33	< .001
Hotel's sustainability practices promote diversity and inclusivity	0.66	**	

** Terms constrained for identification purposes, α = Cronbach's alpha

The CFA results confirm that each indicator item sufficiently contributed to its corresponding construct ($\lambda = 0.59 - 0.67$), with all loadings significant at the 99% confidence level ($p > 0.001$). Furthermore, the outcomes confirm the scales' satisfactory reliability ($\alpha = 0.66 – 0.79$), as detailed in Table 4.15.

The study then evaluated the composite reliability (CR) and convergent validity of the latent constructs using Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The findings of this assessment are summarized in Table 4.16.

Table 4.16 Composite Reliability and Convergent Validity of the Latent Variables

Construct	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Hotel Guests Travel Preferences	0.66	0.39
Hotel Sustainability Practices	0.79	0.39
Hotel Brand Identity	0.67	0.40

The results displayed in Table 4.16 indicate the composite reliability (CR) and convergent validity of the latent constructs in the study. The composite reliability values for hotel guests travel Preferences, sustainability practices, and brand identity are 0.66, 0.79, and 0.67, respectively. These CR values surpass the conventional threshold of 0.6, suggesting robust internal consistency reliability for each construct.

Examining the AVE, the study observed values of 0.39, 0.39, and 0.40 for hotel guests travel preferences, sustainability practices, and hotel brand identity, respectively. These values meet or exceed the recommended threshold of 0.36, indicating acceptable convergent validity. Overall, the findings suggest that the measurement model exhibits satisfactory reliability and convergent validity, providing a solid foundation for subsequent analyses.

Discriminant validity was evaluated by comparing the square root of AVE for each construct with the correlation between that construct and other constructs, as per established methodologies (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Gerbing & Anderson, 1988; Hair et al., 1998). Table 4.17 presents the results of this analysis.

Table 4.17 Discriminant Validity - Squared Roots of AVE

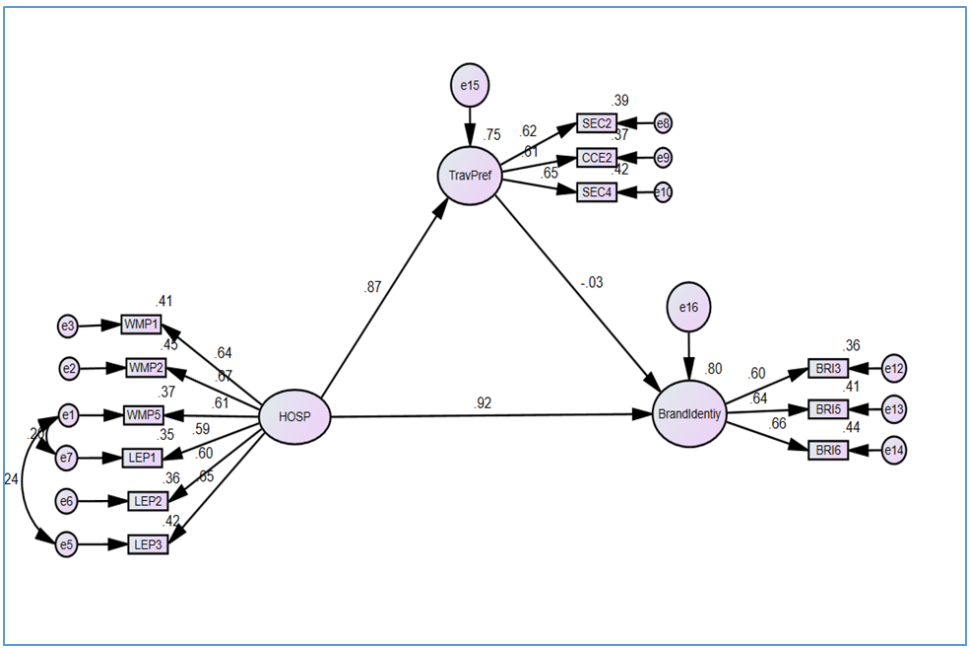
Construct	TP	HOSP	HBI
Hotel Guests Travel Preferences (TP)	**0.63**		
Hotel Sustainability Practices (HSPs)	0.88	**0.63**	
Hotel brand Identity (HBI)	0.77	0.89	**0.64**

Source: Research Data, 2024

AVE's square roots were tested to assess the validity of the variables. AVE's square roots shown in bold type along the diagonal in Table 4.17 should be greater than variables correlation (Hair et al., 2014). Table 4.17 illustrates that the AVE's square roots for all latent variables are smaller than the highest correlations with any other variables. This pattern underscores the distinctiveness of each latent variable, supporting the conclusion that the measurement model successfully demonstrates discriminant validity.

4.4.2 Structural Model

The study proceeded by employing a full structural equation model in AMOS to examine the relationships among HSPs, hotel guests' travel preferences, guests' length of stay, repeat visits, generational cohorts, and hotel brand identity. The primary objective was to test the research hypotheses regarding direct, indirect (mediation), and moderation effects within this comprehensive framework. This analytical approach allowed for a holistic exploration of the intricate connections between various factors, enabling a thorough investigation into the complex interplay of the variables. Figure 4.7 shows the full structural model estimate along with the model fit indices.



Model Fit: (χ^2/df) = 1.29, GFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.97, CFI = 0.98, and RMSEA = 0.04

Figure 4. 7 Full Structural Equation Model

Following Hair et al.'s (2010) guidelines, a well-fitting model is deemed acceptable if the normed chi-square value is < 5, and if the GFI indices, TLI, and CFI are > 0.90. Additionally, a model is considered adequate when the RMSEA falls between 0.05 and 0.08. The results in figure 4.7 show that fit indices for the model indicate a strong fit: (χ^2/df) = 1.29, GFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.97, CFI = 0.98, and RMSEA = 0.04.

The squared multiple correlation (R^2) for brand identity stood at 0.80, suggesting that 80% of the variance in guests' perceptions of brand identity could be accounted for by their assessments of the adequacy of hotel sustainable practices and their travel preferences. The following section outlines the findings of the SEM, estimated through maximum likelihood estimation.

4.5 The Influence of Hotels Sustainability Practices on Hotel Brand Identity

The study investigated the direct link between respondents' perceptions of the adequacy of hotel HSPs in city lifestyle hotels and hotels' brand identity. It formally

tested the null hypothesis, which posits that there is no significant relationship between the implementation of HSPs and the cultivation of brand identity:

$$H_{01}: \beta_{HSP \rightarrow HBI} = 0$$

Table 4.18 presents the results of the estimated SEM used to test the hypothesis.

Table 4.18 Structural Equation Model Standardized Regression Weights – Influence of Hotel Sustainability Practice on Travel Preferences and Hotel Brand Identity

Path/Relationship	Standardized Regression Weights (β)	cr	P - Value	Conclusion
Hotel Sustainability Practices => Travel Preferences	0.87	6.30	< 0.001	Reject Null
Hotel Sustainability Practices => Hotel Brand Identity	0.92	3.11	0.002	Reject Null
Travel Preference => Hotel Brand Identity	-0.03	-.11	0.91	Fail to reject null

The results in Table 4.18 confirm a positive and significant association between hotel guests' perceptions of the adequacy of HSPs implemented by the hotels and the perception of the hotel's brand identity ($\beta_2 = 0.92$, $t = 3.11$, $p < 0.05$). These findings provide sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis, indicating a significant relationship between HSPs and brand identity. This relationship pertains to the extent to which HSPs, such as plastic waste reduction, eco-friendly toiletries, local décor, inclusion of local foods, and support for local businesses, contribute to a brand that reflects guests' lifestyle choices, fosters loyalty, and promotes diversity and inclusivity.

The results of the study resonate with findings in existing literature concerning sustainability initiatives in the hotel industry, suggesting that embracing sustainability can positively impact the hotel's image, guest satisfaction, and subsequent consumer

behavior after their stay (Wang et al., 2019). While there is limited literature on the new lifestyle hotel segments, commentators propose that lifestyle hotels can differentiate themselves by adopting HSPs as a strategy to align with prospective customers' needs for brands that embody environmental consciousness as a lifestyle choice reflected in their consumption activities. Commenting on sustainability in the global hotel industry, Jones, Hiller, and Comfort (2012) observe that an ever-growing number of hotels now seek to emphasize and demonstrate their sustainability credentials to enhance their competitive advantage, build their brand, and differentiate themselves from competitors.

Research conducted in India surveyed 200 internet respondents to investigate how green marketing practices affect corporate image in the hospitality sector. The Indian study discovered that green initiatives have a significant impact on the hotel's corporate image, ultimately influencing consumers' intentions to visit the hotel (Yadav et al., 2016). These findings corroborate the findings from the current study, which highlight a positive influence of HSP on brand identity in lifestyle hotels in Nairobi.
A brand distinguished by robust environmental initiatives can bolster guest loyalty. Practices such as integrating local foods into the menu, utilizing regional materials in interior design, and supporting local enterprises align with a brand that champions inclusivity and diversity—qualities valued by lifestyle hotel patrons. This underscores the notion that sustainability measures not only uphold environmental stewardship but also profoundly influence hotels' overall perception and attractiveness to their guests. The findings from this study further underscore the intricate relationship between sustainability practices and the brand identity of lifestyle hotels. Notably, a leading hospitality news outlet observes the growing prominence of lifestyle hotels, highlighting their differentiation through environmentally conscious design and operations (Corrin, 2023). These hotels strategically align themselves with a brand that resonates with guests possessing heightened environmental awareness and concern. By prioritizing sustainability in both design and operations, they cater to a discerning clientele actively seeking eco-conscious products and experiences (Corrin, 2023).

4.6 The Influence of Hotels Sustainability Practices on Guests' Travel Preferences

The study examined the relationship between HPS implemented by the hotels and guests travel preferences and tested the null hypothesis that HSP had no significant influence on guests' travel preferences. Formally**:**

$$H_{02}: \beta_{HSP \rightarrow GTP} = 0$$

The results in Table 4.18 confirm a positive association between hotel guests' perceptions of the adequacy of HSPs implemented by the hotels and guests' travel preferences ($\beta_1 = 0.87$, $t = 6.30$, $p < 0.001$). These findings provide sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis, suggesting a significant direct relationship between HSPs and hotel guests' travel preferences.

The results suggest that the implementation of HSPs, such as eliminating single-use plastic containers, using refillable soap dispensers and eco-friendly toiletries, as well as practices like incorporating local materials in hotels' interior décor, featuring local foods in the hotel menu, and supporting local businesses, is positively associated with hotel guests' preferences. These preferences encompass sensitivity to the hotel's ecological footprint, a willingness to explore and try new foods, and an inclination toward indulging in a luxurious experience.

The observed positive association between the implementation of Hotel Sustainability Practices (HSPs) and hotel guests' preferences can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, heightened environmental awareness among consumers has led to an increased demand for eco-friendly and sustainable practices in various industries, including hospitality. By adopting measures such as eliminating single-use plastic containers and incorporating local materials and foods, hotels align themselves with the values of environmentally conscious guests, thereby enhancing their appeal. For example, a study conducted by Chang and Lee (2019) revealed that hotels that implemented eco-friendly initiatives, such as energy-efficient lighting and water conservation measures, saw a notable rise in customer satisfaction and loyalty. Additionally, the emphasis on local sourcing and support for local businesses not only contributes to environmental sustainability but also fosters a sense of community and cultural authenticity, which

resonates positively with guests seeking immersive travel experiences. Likewise, a study conducted by Smith et al. (2020) indicated that lifestyle hotels incorporating sustainability practices into their operations observed elevated levels of guest satisfaction and positive word-of-mouth referrals. These results highlight the significance of HSPs in meeting the preferences of environmentally conscious travelers while augmenting the overall guest experience.

The results provide evidence supporting the consensus among tourism researchers that an increasing number of hotels are incorporating green practices into their operations. This trend is driven by the goal of addressing environmental concerns expressed by guests, influencing their pro-environmental purchase decisions (Moise, Gil-Saura, & Ruiz Molina, 2021). Previous studies have identified HSPs such as ecological purchases (e.g., environmentally friendly cleaning products or food from local growers and producers) and measures to reduce waste emissions (e.g., rechargeable soap dispensers or recycling containers). These environmental initiatives are undertaken by hoteliers to cater to visitors' sensitivity to the hotel's ecological footprint (Moise et al., 2021). Certainly, extensive literature underscores the heightened sensitivity of city hotel guests to environmental concerns. They not only demonstrate a WTP premium prices for eco-friendly products and services but also show a preference for hotels that procure goods from environmentally committed businesses (Robin et al., 2016). This aligns with the findings of our study, which indicate a positive association between HSPs and guests' preferences, including sensitivity to the hotel's ecological footprint and pro-environmental choices. The acknowledgment of such preferences further underscores the importance for hotels to adopt environmentally conscious practices to meet the expectations of their environmentally-aware guests.

The study findings underscore the significance of certain hotel sustainability practices, particularly the utilization of refillable soap dispensers and eco-friendly toiletries, which align closely with guests' preferences for luxurious accommodations and their environmental sensitivity. Prior research has similarly highlighted the importance of toiletries in contributing to hotels' ecological footprint. For instance, a study on Taiwanese hotels reports that these establishments provide more than 4.2 million sets

of personal toiletry items to guests each year, primarily as disposable toothbrushes, toothpaste, and shower caps, incurring a cost of approximately USD 6.7 million (Chen, Huang, Zhang & Zhu, 2021).

As a result, HSP practices that target the reduction of resource use and waste production are likely to influence guests' travel preferences, especially within the eco-centric travel segment. Thus, the study's findings on the relationship between HSP and guests travel preferences aligns with the broader context established by previous studies, emphasizing the importance of environmentally conscious practices in hotels and their impact on guests' choices and preferences.

4.7 The Influence of Guests' Travel Preferences on Hotel Brand Identity

The study examined the relationship between guests' travel preference and hotel brand identity and tested the null hypothesis that travel preferences had no significant influence on guests' post-stay evaluation of brand identity. Formally**:**

$$H_{03}: \beta_{TGP \rightarrow HBI} = 0$$

The results in Table 4.18 suggest a negative association between guests' travel preferences and their evaluation of hotel's brand identity (β = -0.03, t = - 0.11, p = 0.91ns). These findings do not provide sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis, suggesting no significant relationship between guests' travel preferences and hotel brand identity.

The unexpected results indicating a lack of significant association between guests' pre-consumption travel preferences and their evaluation of a hotel's brand identity may stem from various factors. Firstly, it's possible that guests prioritize different aspects of their hotel experience when evaluating brand identity, placing less emphasis on pre-consumption travel preferences such as environmental sensitivity or culinary exploration. Research by Chen and Chang (2017) suggests that factors such as service quality, cleanliness, and price may have a more significant impact on guests' perceptions of brand identity than pre-travel preferences alone. Additionally, guests' perceptions of brand identity may be influenced by factors beyond their initial travel

preferences, such as their actual experience during their stay, interactions with hotel staff, and word-of-mouth recommendations from other guests.

Furthermore, conflicting findings in the literature highlight the complexity of the relationship between travel preferences and brand identity evaluation. While some studies, such as those by Kim et al. (2018), support the notion that pre-consumption preferences influence brand perceptions, others, such as the study by Lee and Smith (2019), have found limited evidence of such associations. Overall, these unexpected results underscore the multifaceted nature of brand identity evaluation and the need for further research to explore the underlying factors driving guests' perceptions in the hospitality industry.

4.8 The Mediating Impact of Guests' Travel Preferences on The Influence of Hotel Sustainability Practices on Brand Identity

The study tested the null hypothesis that travel preference by city lifestyle hotel guests does not mediate the relationship between HSP implemented by the city hotels and the hotel's brand image. Formally:

$$H_{04}: \beta_{HSP \rightarrow TGP \rightarrow HBI} = 0$$

The analysis involved the evaluation of a comprehensive structural model, examining its fit to explore the indirect influence of HSP on Hotel Brand Identity through lifestyle hotel guests' travel preference. The investigation also controlled for the direct impact of the exogenous variable on the endogenous variable. The analytical approach employed a bootstrap technique, treating the study sample (n = 205) as a pseudo population. From this, 5000 random samples were drawn with replacement to determine the statistical significance of the indirect effect at the 95% confidence level (Collier, 2020). Figure 4.8 illustrates the conceptual path diagram depicting the tested mediation effect.

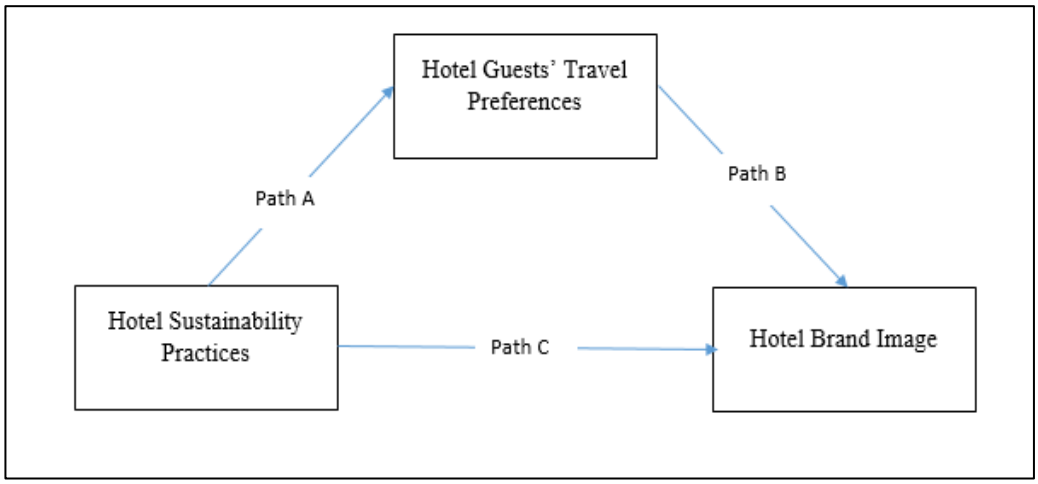


Figure 4. 8 Mediation Effect of guests travel preference on the influence of Hotel Sustainability Practices on Brand Identity

In Figure 4.8, Path A × Path B represents the hypothesized indirect relationship between guests' perception of the adequacy of HSPs implemented and their perspectives on the Hotel Brand Identity, mediated through guests' travel preferences. Path C signifies the direct relationship between the endogenous and exogenous variables. Table 4.19 presents results of the SEM estimated to examine the mediating impact of guests' travel preferences on the influence of HSP on Hotel Brand Identity.

Table 4.19 Direct and Indirect Influence of Hotel Sustainability Practices on Hotel Brand Identity

Path	Effect	Beta Coefficient (B)	Confidence Interval		P-value	Conclusion
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
HSP => Hotel Brand Identity	Direct Effect	0.91	0.21	2.48	0.03	Significant Direct Effect
HSP => Travel Preference => Hotel Brand Identity	Indirect Effect	- 0.03	-1.30	0.72	0.96	No mediation
Model Fit Indices:		χ^2/df) = 1.29, GFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.97, CFI = 0.98, and RMSEA = 0.04				

Model fit indices in table 4.19 confirm a strong model fit. The findings indicate an inverse indirect effect of HSP on hotel brand identity through travel preference, suggesting that a unit increase in respondents' rating of HSP adequacy corresponds to a 3% decline in their assessment of the hotel's brand image. This effect is observed alongside the direct, unmediated impact of HSP on brand identity. However, the results also reveal that the indirect effect of HSP on brand identity was not statistically significant at the 0.05 level ($B = -0.03, p = 0.96ns$). Furthermore, the bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval, with a lower bound of -1.30 and an upper bound of 0.72, indicates that the effect is not significantly different from zero. Consequently, based on these results, the study affirms that for the sample of hotel guests in Nairobi, lifestyle hotel guests' travel presence does not mediate the influence of HSP on hotel brand identity.

A literature search revealed a paucity of studies investigating the pathways between HSPs and hotel brand identity, specifically considering the mediating role of guests' heterogeneity in their travel preferences. The results of the current study provide new empirical evidence on the mediating influence of guests' sensitivity to environmental impacts of hotels, inclination to explore new culinary experiences, and preference for a luxury experience in the pathway between HSP and brand image.

The conclusion that lifestyle hotel guests' travel presence does not mediate the influence of HSPs on brand identity is specific to the sample of hotel guests in Nairobi. Hotel managers should consider the local context to determine whether the relationship between their HSPs and brand image is reinforced or weakened. For instance, Palacios-Florencio, del Junco, Castellanos-Verdugo, and Rosa-Díaz (2020) have provided evidence that the relationship between sustainability practices by hotels, such as corporate social responsibility, and hotel image can be mediated by trust. They argue that the presence of trust as a mediator between CSR and Image leads to increased guest loyalty and promotes a positive brand image. The researchers hasten to urge for more research on the relationship between sustainability practices and brand identity, particularly including the mediating effects of contingency factors.

4.9 Moderating Impact Guests Attributes on The Relationship Between Hotel Sustainability Practices, Travel Preferences and Hotel Brand Identity

The study investigated whether the impact of hotel sustainability practices on the brand identity of lifestyle hotels was influenced by three moderators: guests' LOS (measured as a continuous variable representing the number of nights), repeat visits (a categorical variable where 1 indicates a repeat guest and 0 indicates otherwise), and guests' generational cohorts (a categorical variable with four levels: Generation Z, Generation X, Generation Y, and Baby Boomers). A moderating variable affects the strength or direction of the relationship between the exogenous variable (HSP) and endogenous variable (brand image) (Haobin, Huiyue, Peng, & Fong, 2021). Figure 4.9 illustrates the conceptual path diagram depicting the moderating effects.

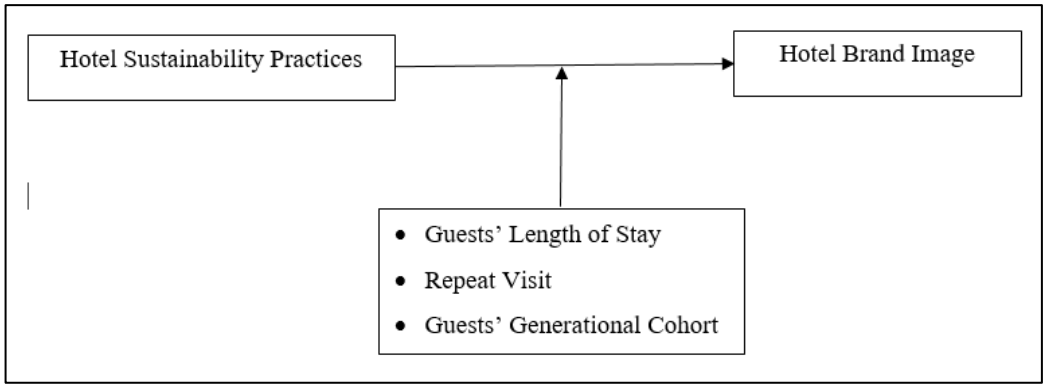


Figure 4. 9 Path diagram of the moderated influence of Guests' Length of Stay, Repeat Visit and Guests' Generational Cohort on the Relationship between Hotel Sustainability Practices and Hotel Brand Identity

4.9.1 The Moderating Impact of Length of Stay on the Influence of Hotel Sustainability Practices on Brand Identity

To test the null hypothesis that LOS does not moderate the influence of HSPs on hotel brand identity in Nairobi's lifestyle hotels, the analysis employed a comprehensive structural equation model. Formally:

$$H_{05a}: \beta_{HSP \times LOS \rightarrow HBI} = 0$$

This approach embraced a mixed model, encompassing both latent variables capturing guests' perception of the adequacy of HSPs adopted by hotels and their views on the hotel brand identity, along with composite variables operationalizing the interaction between HSP and length of stay. Following Collier (2020), the procedure involved computing the mean values of the variable (HSP) and moderating variable (LOS), mean centering these variables, and subsequently creating an interaction term by multiplying the mean-centered exogenous and moderating variables. Figure 4.10 illustrates the resulting mixed model.

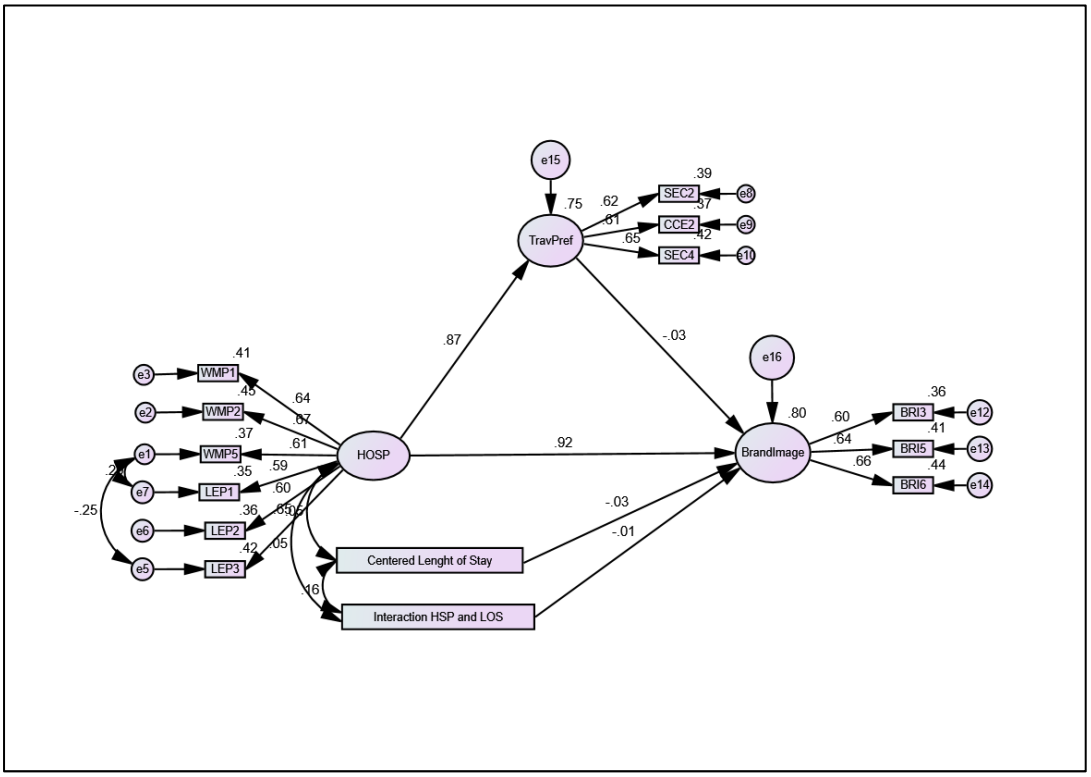


Figure 4. 10 Mixed Model Moderating Effect of LOS on the Influence of Hotel Sustainability Practices on Hotel Brand Identity

Figure 4.10 depicts the latent unobserved variables - HSP and brand image, along with all their indicators, as well as the composite variables (moderator LOS and the mean-centered interaction term) - incorporated into the mixed model. Table 4.20 shows the unstandardized regression weights from the mixed model estimation of the moderating influence of LOS on the relationship between hotel guests' perception of the adequacy of HSPs implemented by hotels and the perceptions of the hotel brand identity.

Table 4.20 Moderating impact of LOS in the Influence of Hotel Sustainability Practices on Hotel Brand Identity

Path	Effect	Beta Coefficient (B)	Confidence Interval		P-value	Conclusion
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
HSP => Hotel Brand Identity	Direct Effect	0.92	0.19	2.39	0.03	Significant
Centered LOS => Hotel Brand Identity	Direct Effect	- 0.03	-0.03	0.02	0.65	Not significant
Centered HSP × Centered LOS => Hotel Brand Identity	Moderation	0.01	-0.03	0.03	0.88	Not significant
Model Fit Indices:		χ^2/df) = 1.09, GFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.99, CFI = 0.99, and RMSEA = 0.02				

Model fit indices in table 4.20 confirm a strong model fit. The results further suggest that the length of stay had no statistically significant moderating impact on the influence of HSP on brand image in the sample of lifestyle hotels in Nairobi at the 0.05 level ($B_{HSP*LOS} = -0.01, t = -0.15, p = 0.88ns$). Furthermore, the results confirm a bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval, with a lower bound of -0.03 and an upper bound of 0.03 ($p = 0.85ns$), indicating that the effect is not significantly different from zero.

The results imply that it is likely that other factors other than length of stay may influence the customers evaluation of the hotel's brand identity. Indeed, other studies have shown that length of stay actual has a negative moderating influence of the relationship between brand identity and its covariates. For example, Haobin et al. (2021) conducted a study examining the relationship between hotel servicescape and brand identity. They explored how the length of stay (LOS) influences this relationship in 3–5-star hotels in Guangdong Province, China. Their findings revealed that LOS negatively moderates the connection between servicescape and brand experience among hotel customers. This suggests that factors like LOS can affect the impact of variables such as servicescape or hotel sustainability practices on guest perceptions. Their research suggests that customer brand experience, initially influenced by mindfulness, may diminish over time as other factors come into play. Their discovery that LOS negatively moderates the relationship between mindfulness and brand experience supports this notion.

In a separate investigation, Kim and Han (2023) examine the LOS as a predictor of consumer behavior after purchase in London hotels, analyzing online reviews for establishments in the city. Their regression analyses reveal a negative link between LOS and customer satisfaction, particularly notable in high-end hotels compared to their lower-tier counterparts. Their findings contribute to discussions about the trade-off between extended stays and indicators of customer satisfaction like brand recognition, suggesting that longer durations may not always align with heightened satisfaction levels.

In summary, the current study unveils a non-significant moderating effect of LOS on the relationship between HSP and brand image in the overall study sample. This finding contrasts with other studies that suggest a negative influence of LOS on brand-related factors, emphasizing the necessity of further exploration into the dynamics of LOS in lifestyle hotels. Consequently, the study delved deeper to analyze the moderating impact of LOS at low levels (short LOS) and LOS at high levels (long LOS) on the relationship between HSP and brand image. This approach aimed to uncover moderation patterns that were not apparent in the overall sample analysis.

The moderating impact of LOS was probed to uncover any effects at short and long LOS. Following Collier (2020), probing the moderator involved creating mean-centered values for short LOS by adding the standard deviation of LOS to its mean-centered values, thus computing a variable for short LOS. Conversely, a variable for long LOS was computed by subtracting the standard deviation from the mean-centered values of LOS. Subsequently, new interaction terms were generated as a product of mean centered HSP and the mean-centered values of short and long LOS. The mixed model method was then employed to explore how the relationship between the latent exogenous variable (HSP) and endogenous variable (Hotel Brand Identity) changed at short and long LOS. Figure 4.11 and 4.12 illustrate the mixed models to probe the moderating effect of short and long LOS.

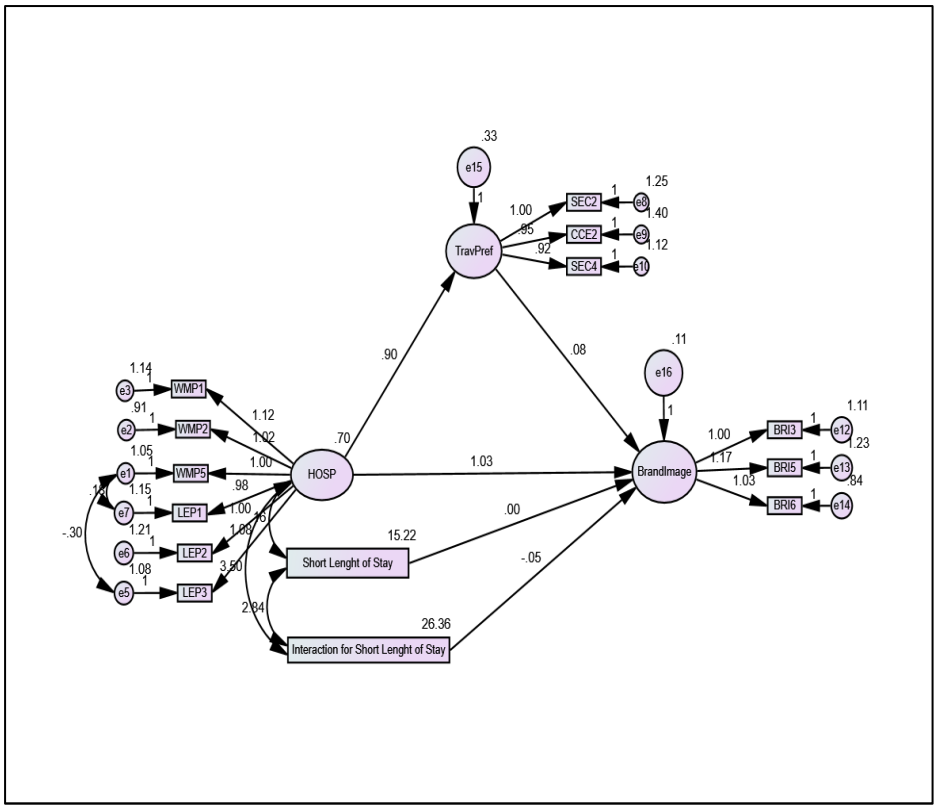


Figure 4. 11 Moderating Impact of Short LOS on the influence of Hotel Sustainability Practices on Hotel Brand Identity

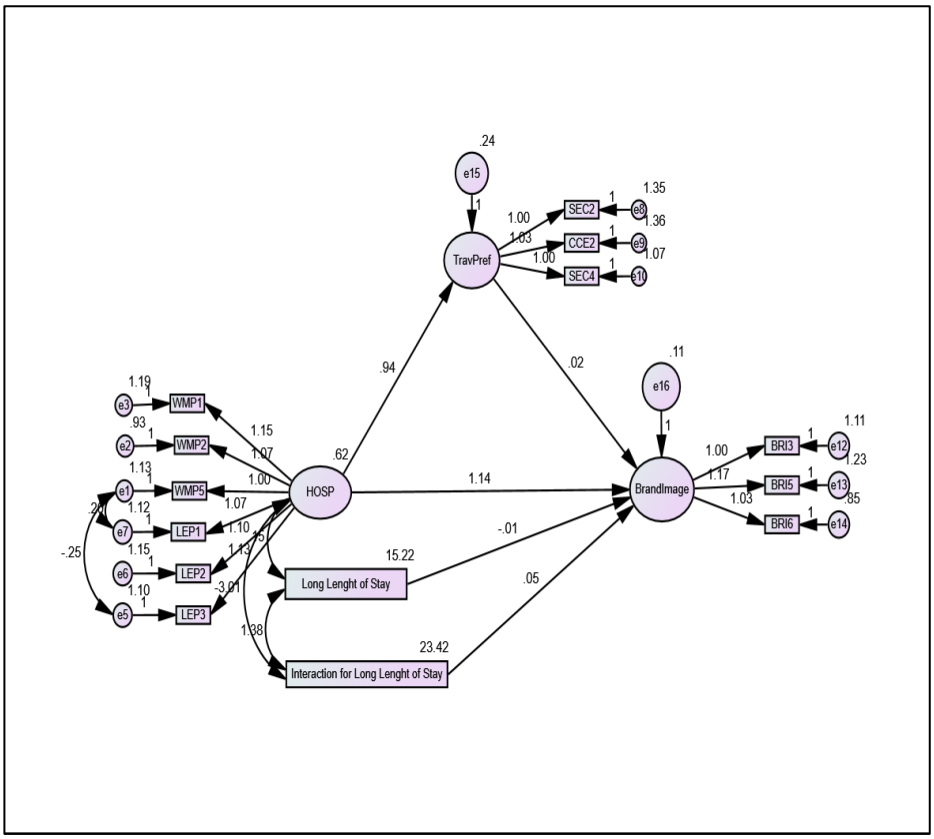


Figure 4. 12 Moderating Impact of long LOS on the influence of Hotel Sustainability Practices on Hotel Brand Identity

The findings of the mixed models (Figure 4.11 and 4.12) are summarized in Table 4.21, presenting the unstandardized regression weights obtained from the models.

Table 4.21 Unstandardized Regression Weights of Moderating Impact of Levels of LOS on the Influence of HSP and Hotel Brand Identity

Moderator level	Path	Unstandardized Regression Weights			
		B	SE	cr	P-Value
Average	HSP => Hotel Brand Identity	0.91	0.29	3.14	< 0.001
	HSP * LOS => Brand Image	0.00	0.02	-0.15	0.88
Short LOS	HSP => Hotel Brand Identity	1.03	0.27	3.85	<0.001
	HSP * Short LOS => Brand Image	-0.05	0.02	-2.27	0.02
Long LOS	HSP => Hotel Brand Identity	1.14	0.31	3.65	<0.001
	HSP * Long LOS => Brand Image	0.05	0.02	2.28	0.02
Model fit indices Short LOS	χ^2/df) = 1.27, GFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.97, CFI = 0.98, and RMSEA = 0.04				
Model fit Indices Long LOS	χ^2/df) = 1.17, GFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.97, CFI = 0.99, and RMSEA = 0.03				

The results in table 4.21 indicate that model fit indices for the two models were in the acceptable range. The results also confirm that both short and long levels of LOS significantly moderated the impact of HSP on Hotel Brand Identity in lifestyle hotels in Nairobi (B = -0.05, t = -2.27, p = 0.02) and (B = 0.05, t = -2.25, p = 0.02), respectively. This suggests that a unit increase in LOS for short-stay visitors corresponds to a 5% decline in their perception of the adequacy of brand identity. Conversely, for long-staying guests, a unit increase in LOS corresponds to a 5%

increase in their perception of the adequacy of the hotel's brand identity. The moderating impact of short LOS strengthens the influence of HSP on Hotel Brand Identity (B = 1.03 for short LOS compared to B = 0.91 for the entire sample). Similarly, the moderating impact of long LOS enhances the influence of HSP on Hotel Brand Identity (B = 1.14 for long LOS compared to B = 0.91 for the entire sample).

From the results, it can be concluded that while the overall sample did not exhibit a significant moderating effect of LOS on the relationship between HSP and Hotel Brand Identity, a different pattern emerges when considering short and long levels of LOS separately. Both short and long LOS significantly moderated the impact of HSP on brand image in the sampled lifestyle hotels in Nairobi. For short-stay visitors, an increase in LOS corresponds to a 5% decline in their perception of brand identity adequacy, indicating a negative impact. Conversely, for long-staying guests, an increase in LOS corresponds to a 5% increase in their perception of brand identity adequacy, indicating a positive impact. The moderating impact at short and long LOS levels strengthens the overall influence of HSP on Hotel Brand Identity compared to the influence observed in the entire sample.

4.9.2 The Moderating Impact of Repeat Visit on the Influence of Hotel Sustainability Practices on Brand Identity

To investigate the moderating effect of repeat visitation, operationalized as a dichotomous variable where 1 indicated repeat visit and 0 denoted first-time visit, on the relationship between guests' perceptions of adequacy of HSP and brand identity in lifestyle hotels, the analysis employed a comprehensive structural model and conducted a multi-group analysis. The study tested the null hypothesis that repeat visit has no significant moderating impact on the influence of HSP on hotel brand identity. Formally:

$$H_{05b}: \beta_{HSP \times RV \rightarrow HBI} = 0$$

The findings of the multi-group analysis for the mixed structural models with sub-samples of repeat and first-time guests are presented in Table 4.22.

Table 4.22 Moderating Impact of Repeat Visits on the Influence of Hotel Sustainability Practices on Brand Identity

	Unstandardized Regression Weights			
Model	**Estimate**	**S.E.**	**C.R.**	**P**
Baseline	0.91	0.29	3.11	< 0.001
Repeat Visitors	1.25	0.42	2.99	< 0.001
First Time Visitors	0.45	0.58	0.77	0.44
Model Fit Indices:	χ^2/df) = 1.34, GFI = 0.91, TLI = 0.94, CFI = 0.95, and RMSEA = 0.04			

The results in Table 4.22 reveal that, in the baseline model where no equality constraints were imposed, HSP significantly predicted brand identity in lifestyle hotels ($B = 0.91, t = 3.11, p < 0.001$). The subsequent analysis focused on sub-samples, with a distinct pattern emerging. For repeat visitors (n =119), there was a significantly stronger positive relationship between HSP and brand identity compared to the baseline model ($B = 1.25, t = 2.99, p < 0.001$). In contrast, first-time visitors (n = 86) exhibited a weaker positive relationship between HSP and brand identity ($B = 0.45, t = 0.77, p = 0.44ns$). Model fit indices in table 4.22 confirm a strong model fit.

The noteworthy difference in unstandardized regression weights for repeat visitors compared to first-time visitors suggests a moderating effect of repeat visitation on the relationship between HSP and brand identity. This suggests that repeat visitation enhances the positive relationship between HSP and brand identity, indicating that for guests with prior visits, the impact of sustainability practices on enhancing brand identity is more pronounced. In contrast, this effect is less evident for first-time visitors with no prior experience with the hotels.

The results highlight that repeat visits moderate the link between HSPs and brand identity, with a notably stronger positive influence observed among repeat visitors compared to first-time guests. This underscores the importance of prioritizing sustainability initiatives to enhance brand perception, particularly among guests who frequently return.

4.9.3 The Moderating Impact of Guests Generational Cohort on the Influence of Hotel Sustainability Practices on Brand Identity

The study proceeded to investigate the moderating effect of generational cohorts, a categorical variable encompassing Generation Z, X, Y, and Baby Boomers, on the relationship between guests' perception of adequacy of HSPs implemented and their views on the brand identity in lifestyle hotels using multi-group analysis. The null hypothesis that generational cohort had no significant moderation impact on the influence of HSP on brand identity was tested. Formally:

$$H_{05b}: \beta_{HSP \times GC \rightarrow HBI} = 0$$

The findings of the analysis with mixed structural models with sub-samples of hotel guests' generational cohorts are presented in Table 4.23.

Table 4.23 Moderating Impact of Generational Cohort on the influence of Hotel Sustainability Practices and Brand Identity

	Unstandardized Regression Weights			
Model	**Estimate**	**S.E.**	**C.R.**	**P**
Baseline	0.91	0.29	3.11	< 0.001
Generation Z	0.41	1.28	0.32	0.75
Generation X	0.03	0.31	0.10	0.92
Generation Y	1.19	0.71	1.68	0.09
Baby Boomers	-1.42	5.39	-0.26	0.79
Model Fit Indices:	χ^2/df) = 1.54, GFI = 0.82, TLI = 0.82, CFI = 0.87, and RMSEA = 0.05			

The results in table 4.23 suggest an acceptable model fit. From the results of the multi-group analysis the study observed differences in the unstandardized regression weight estimates for the influence of HSP on brand identity for each generational cohort compared to the baseline. Specifically, the results indicate that Generation Y exhibited a stronger positive influence (*B* = 1.19) compared to the baseline scenario. However, this effect was marginally significant (*p* = 0.09ns). On the other hand, Generations Z and X showed reduced impact, with estimates of *B* = 0.41 and *B* = 0.03, respectively, indicating weaker or non-significant relationships. Meanwhile, Baby Boomers exhibit a negative trend (*B* = -1.42), but the effect was also not statistically significant (p = 0.79ns).

The findings suggest that generational cohorts may moderate the influence of HSP on brand identity, as evidenced by differences in the unstandardized regression weights across cohorts compared to the baseline scenario. While Generation Y shows a stronger positive influence of HSP on brand identity, this effect is only marginally significant. Conversely, Generations Z, X, and Baby Boomers demonstrate weaker or non-significant relationships between HSP and brand identity. These results imply that the effectiveness of HSP in shaping brand identity may vary across different generational groups, but further research is needed to ascertain the significance of these relationships. Understanding and addressing the preferences and values of specific demographics in sustainability initiatives within the hospitality industry remain crucial for maximizing their impact.

The results suggest that Millennials (Generation Y) exhibited a notably stronger response to HSP's influence on brand identity compared to other generational cohorts. Millennials, born between 1981 and 1996, emerged during the digital era characterized by globalization, diversity, and technological advancement. These societal shifts have profoundly influenced their values and attitudes, fostering pro-environmental predispositions, social responsibility, and a focus on work-life balance that align with sustainability principles and the branding concept of lifestyle hotels. Consequently, within this demographic, sustainability practices had the most significant impact on the post-consumption evaluation of the lifestyle hotel's brand identity. This evaluation encompasses whether the brand reflects the guest’s personal lifestyle choices, fosters loyalty, and promotes diversity and inclusivity.

Comparable evidence is provided by Wang et al (2018) who examined the moderating role of Millennials in the relationship between green image and consumer word-of-mouth (WOM) intentions in the Chinese green hotel industry. The study established that consumer green satisfaction and trust positively correlate with their intention to recommend green hotels and observed that Millennials (aged under 40 years) exerted significant moderating effects on the relationships between green image and WOM intentions compared to older generations. The researchers attribute this to heightened awareness of environmental issues amongst the millennials.

The findings are consistent with prior research indicating that Millennials view themselves more as travelers than mere tourists. This demographic leans towards accommodations offering authentic experiences, willing to pay up to 10% more for holidays to support local communities and environmental conservation (Gan & Nuli, 2018). Millennials typically avoid mass tourism, favoring eco-friendly activities like ecotourism. They also prioritize learning opportunities in their travel experiences and seek authenticity in their destination choices.

4.10 Chapter Summary

Table 4.24 provides a summary of the results of the hypothesis tests.

Table 4.24 Summary of results of test of the Research hypotheses.

Research Hypothesis	Description	Regression Weight (Path Coefficient)	P-value	Comment
$H_{a1:}$	The influence of hotel sustainable practices on hotel brand identity	0.92	0.002	Supported
$H_{a2:}$	The influence of hotel sustainable practices on guest travel preference	0.87	< 0.001	Supported
$H_{a3:}$	The influence of guest travel preference on hotel brand identity	-0.03	0.91	Not-supported
$H_{a4:}$	Mediation Effect of guests travel preference on the influence of HSP on HBI	- 0.03	0.96	Not supported
$H_{a5a:}$	Moderating Impact of Levels of LOS on the Influence of HSP and HBI			
	Long LOS	0.05	0.02	Supported
	Short LOS	-0.05	0.02	Supported

Research Hypothesis	Description	Regression Weight (Path Coefficient)	P-value	Comment
$H_{a5b:}$	Moderating Impact of Repeat Visits on the Influence of HSP on HB I			
	Repeat Visitors	1.25	< 0.001	Supported
	First Time Visitors	0.45	0.44	Not supported
$H_{a5c:}$	Moderating impact of guests' generational cohort on the influence of HSP on HBI			
	Generation Z	0.41	0.75	Not supported
	Generation X	0.03	0.92	Not supported
	Generation Y	1.19	0.09	Not supported
	Baby Boomers	-1.42	0.79	Not supported

The results in Table 2.4 reveal a direct, statistically significant influence of hotel sustainability practices on guests' travel preferences, confirming the proposition that the adoption of sustainability practices by hotels is associated with guests' pro-environmental and hedonic predispositions toward accommodation options, as proposed by environmental attitude-behavior theory. These results provide evidence of the impact of a hotel's sustainability profile on guests' preferences, confirming that hotels with strong sustainability profiles are more likely to attract guests who value and seek out environmentally friendly and satisfying accommodations.

The results also support the research hypothesis that HPS influences the hotel's brand identity. The identity prism theory describes six dimensions of brand identity: physique, personality, culture, relationship, reflection, and self-image. However, the study identified and confirmed three dimensions of brand identity as particularly relevant for guests at Nairobi's lifestyle hotels: reflection (whether the brand aligns with the guest's lifestyle choices), relationship (whether the brand fosters guest loyalty), and culture (whether the brand promotes diversity and inclusivity).

On the other hand, the results do not support the direct influence of guest travel preferences on the formation of guests' perceptions of brand identity. While previous studies have provided evidence suggesting that guests' pre-stay predispositions, captured as travel preferences, affect their post-stay evaluation of hotel brand identity (Fu et al., 2014; González-Rodríguez et al., 2020; Kucukusta et al., 2013; Martínez & del Bosque, 2013), the evidence provided in this study does not support the view that guests' travel preferences influence hotel brand identity perceptions for Nairobi's lifestyle hotels. It may be plausible that factors such as service quality, cleanliness, and price have a more significant impact on guests' perceptions of brand identity than pre-travel preferences alone (Chen & Chang, 2017).

Similarly, the results also do not support the research hypothesis that guest travel preference mediates the influence of hotel sustainability on hotel brand identity, whereas a significant and positive relationship between hotel sustainability practices (HSP) and brand identity was demonstrated. This implies that while hotel sustainability practices positively impact brand identity, the role of guest travel preferences in mediating this relationship is minimal or non-existent in the context of Nairobi's lifestyle hotels. Therefore, other factors beyond travel preferences might be more influential in shaping the perceived brand identity of these hotels.

The hypothesis test results revealed a moderating influence of both short and long stays, as well as repeat visits, on the relationship between hotel sustainability practices (HSPs) and hotel brand identity. This suggests that guests' familiarity with the hotel, due to extended stays and repeat visits, impacts the extent to which sustainability practices influence their perceptions of brand identity. On the other hand, the evidence

does not support a significant difference in the extent to which HSPs influence guests' evaluation of brand identity across different generations, including Generation Z, Generation X, Generation Y, and Baby Boomers. This implies that the impact of sustainability practices on brand identity perception is consistent across age groups, suggesting that while the familiarity gained through prolonged or repeated stays affects brand perception, generational differences do not significantly alter how sustainability practices are valued in shaping brand identity. Consequently, hotels may focus on enhancing sustainability practices as a universal strategy to strengthen brand identity, regardless of the generational demographics of their guests.

Based on the results of the hypothesis tests, the study proposes a revised model illustrating the relationships between hotel sustainability practices, guest travel preferences, repeat visits, length of stay, and hotel brand identity. Figure 4.13 presents the updated conceptual framework-

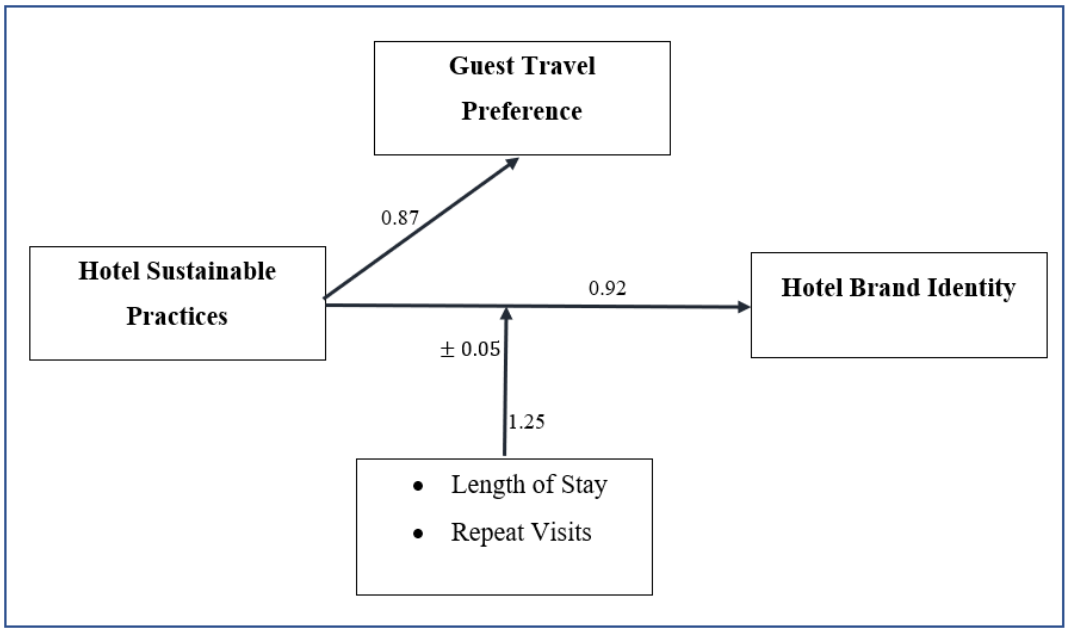


Figure 4. 13 Conceptual Framework- The Direct and Moderated Influence of Hotel Sustainability Practices on hotel Brand Identity for Lifestyle Hotels in Nairobi

CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

Chapter 5 presents an overview of the study's key findings and conclusions. It emphasizes the study's contribution to existing literature and offers recommendations for future research directions and practical applications within the tourism industry and policy making realms.

The study sought to explore how sustainable practices in lifestyle hotels affect their brand identity, considering guests' travel preferences as a potential mediator. It also examined how guests' characteristics, such as trip details and generational cohorts, might moderate these relationships. Here is an overview of the findings:

5.1.1 Influence of Hotel Sustainability Practices on Brand Identity

The study assessed perceptions of adequacy of sustainability practices implemented by lifestyle hotels and brand identity from the guests' and hotel managers perspectives: Findings from KIIs support the results of the guest survey, indicating a prevalence of HSPs adopted by the hotels. According to guests, hotels have adequately implemented environmental practices such as the use of refillable soap/toiletries dispensers and the incorporation of environmentally friendly architectural designs. Social sustainability measures, like the inclusion of local foods in the menu, were also reported as being well-implemented by the hotels from the guests' perspective.

Hotel managers emphasized the widespread adoption of energy resource management practices, including the utilization of energy-efficient equipment, LED lighting, solar power, and technologies such as key card-activated power in guest rooms. Additionally, hotel managers confirmed the prevalence of waste management practices, including the use of refillable soap dispensers in guest rooms, the elimination of single-use plastics, and the minimization of paper usage. Social sustainability practices implemented by most hotels included human resource management practices aimed at enhancing employee benefits and welfare, as well as

community engagement activities in their CSR programs. These activities included charitable initiatives, community welfare activities emphasizing improvements in education, support for the less fortunate, and partnerships with local organizations.

Regarding brand, guest survey results indicate positive sentiments among respondents across all dimensions of brand identity. This includes the hotel's commitment to the environment and society, alignment with guest lifestyle choices, enhancement of guests' self-image as environmentally conscious, encouragement of loyalty, and promotion of inclusivity and diversity. However, many respondents were not convinced of the hotel's ability to differentiate itself based on architectural design.

However, from the managers' perspective, hotels were implementing a variety of initiatives to distinguish their brand. These practices included ergonomic architecture, the incorporation of historical and cultural influences into the décor, such as colonial or heritage-inspired furnishings, and the use of local artifacts in interior design. Additionally, managers mentioned inclusivity practices comprising of sourcing supplies locally, participating in cultural activities, and promoting cultural experiences through themed menus. To align with guests' lifestyle preferences and self-image, managers emphasized the provision of health and wellness services as an important branding strategy. Notable initiatives in this regard included the provision of gym and spa facilities with a temperature-controlled swimming pool, offering guests a holistic wellness experience.

The research employed SEM to examine how sustainability practices implemented in lifestyle hotels affect brand identity. The measurement model identified several key practices as significant indicators of HSPs, including the elimination of single-use plastic containers, use of refillable soap dispensers, eco-friendly toiletries, incorporation of local materials in interior décor, inclusion of local foods in hotel menus, and support for local businesses. Additionally, the model confirmed that guests' perceptions of the hotel brand's alignment with lifestyle choices, its ability to foster loyalty, and its promotion of inclusivity and diversity are significant indicators of brand identity.

The findings from the structural model confirmed a positive and significant relationship between guests' perceptions of the adequacy of HSPs and the hotel's brand identity. These findings support the conclusion that hotels' adoption of HSPs contributes to a favorable brand image, guest satisfaction, and positive post-stay consumer behavior. Furthermore, the results suggest that lifestyle hotels can leverage their sustainability profile to distinguish themselves in the lifestyle niche market by portraying a brand that aligns with guests' lifestyle choices, fosters loyalty and promotes inclusivity.

5.1.2 Influence of Hotel Sustainability Practices on Guests Travel Preferences

The study relied on the EAB theory to classify guests' travel preferences into environmental attitude-based and hedonic predispositions. Survey results indicate that guests generally found most trip aspects interesting. However, they showed indifference towards wellness facilities, destinations' historic values, and physical activity opportunities. Preferences for novel experiences, lively social opportunities, and personalized treatment were highlighted as the most important interests.

The results of an exploratory factor analysis categorized guests' preferences into three groups aligned with the EAB framework: Social and Environmental Consciousness, Cultural and Culinary Exploration, and Wellness and Physical Activities. However, confirmatory factor analysis revealed a single latent variable for travel preferences, encompassing sensitivity to environmental impacts, inclination to try new foods, and preference for luxury accommodation. This confirms a continuum of guests' preferences from pro-environmental to hedonic predispositions.

The test of the significance of the path coefficient between HSPs and guests' travel preferences provided adequate evidence to reject the null hypothesis, indicating a significant direct relationship between hotel sustainability practices (HSPs) and guests' travel preferences. The findings affirm that the implementation of HSPs is positively associated with guests' pro-environmental and hedonic preferences in lifestyle hotels. This indicates that lifestyle hotels can utilize their sustainability initiatives to attract guests in this market segment.

5.1.3 Influence of Guests Travel Preferences on Hotel Brand Identity

The study investigated whether guests' travel preferences had a significant impact on their post-stay evaluation of the hotel brand identity across the reflection, relationship, and cultural dimensions of Kapferer's (1986) BIP theory. The hypothesis posited that guests' pre-existing preferences were likely to influence their evaluation of the hotel's brand identity after their stay.

However, the SEM path analysis results did not yield enough evidence to refute the null hypothesis, indicating a lack of significant relationship between guests' travel preferences and hotel brand identity. A possible explanation to this counter-intuitive results was that guests' perceptions of brand identity after the stay may have been influenced by factors beyond their initial travel preferences, such as their actual experience during their stay, interactions with hotel staff, and word-of-mouth recommendations from other guests.

This result underscores the complexity of guest perceptions and the multifaceted nature of brand identity formation, underscoring the necessity for further research to comprehensively explore these dynamics. The relationship between guests' preferences and brand identity remains an empirical question. While some studies support the notion that pre-consumption preferences influence brand perceptions, others have found limited evidence of such associations.

5.1.4 The Mediating Impact of Guests' Travel Preference on the Influence of HSP on Brand Identity

The study examined whether guests' travel preferences mediated the relationship between HSP and brand identity. This examination was guided by the hypothesis that guests' travel preferences act as an intermediary mechanism through which the influence of HSP on Brand Identity is transmitted.

The study uncovered an inverse indirect effect of HSP on hotel brand identity through travel preference but confirmed that the indirect effect was not statistically significant at the conventional level of significance. The evidence thus suggests no mediation

effect of guests' travel preference on the influence of HSP on brand identity. The study concluded that guest perceptions of brand identity may be influenced by a multitude of factors beyond their travel preferences, such as their actual experiences during their stay, interactions with hotel staff, and word-of-mouth recommendations from other guests. These factors may overshadow the influence of travel preferences as a mediator.

5.1.5 The Moderating Impact of Guests' Attributes on the Influence of HSP on Brand Identity

The study examined whether the strength and direction of the path coefficient between hotel sustainability practices (HSP) and brand identity were influenced by the length of stay (LOS) of guests at the hotel. LOS was measured as the number of nights spent at the hotel. The study found that the average length of stay did not significantly differ based on the purpose of the visit or whether guests were traveling alone, with family or friends, or with workmates.

The results of the mixed SEM analysis, which included an interaction term derived from the mean-centered values of length of stay (LOS) and hotel sustainability practices (HSP), indicated that the length of stay did not have a significant moderating effect on the influence of HSP on brand identity in lifestyle hotels.

The results suggest that factors other than LOS may influence customers' evaluation of the hotel's brand identity. Indeed, other studies have indicated that the length of stay can have a negative moderating influence on the relationship between brand identity and its covariates. This implies that extended stays at the hotel may lead to a decline in guests' evaluation of the brand's adequacy as they become more familiar with the hotel experience.

The study delved deeper to explore whether LOS moderated the impact of HSPs on brand identity for both short and long stays. The findings confirmed that both short and long LOS exerted a moderating effect on the influence of HSP on hotel brand identity. Interestingly, the results indicated that while both short and long stays strengthened the influence of HSP on brand identity, long stays had a more

pronounced effect than short stays. These findings diverge from previous research, which often suggests that an increase in LOS weakens the relationship between sustainability practices and post-consumption outcomes like satisfaction, intentions to recommend the hotel, or revisit. The results propose that as guests stay longer, they become more acquainted with subtle social sustainability practices implemented by hotels, such as human resources practices and CSR programs, potentially enhancing their appreciation of the hotel's sustainability image.

The study explored how repeat visits moderate the influence of hotel sustainability practices (HSP) on brand identity. The analysis indicated that many guests were repeat visitors familiar with the hotel and its sustainability profile. Existing literature presents varying perspectives on how familiarity and novelty affect the influence of hotel sustainability practices on post-stay outcomes such as satisfaction, word-of-mouth intentions, and brand identity.

The outcomes from the mixed structural models across sub-samples of repeat and first-time guests, revealed notable variations in the path coefficient linking HSP and brand image. This implies that familiarity with the hotel affects the impact of HSP on brand identity. The results indicate a stronger effect of HSP on brand identity among repeat visitors compared to first-time guests and the baseline model.

The results suggest that guest familiarity with the hotel enhances their overall experience and understanding of the hotel's sustainable practices. This, in turn, positively influences the formation of a favorable brand image among guests. Thus, the findings underscore the significant impact of guest loyalty in bolstering the hotel's sustainability reputation, thereby establishing a distinct competitive edge in the market.

The study examined whether guests' generational cohorts moderated the influence of hotel sustainability practices (HSP) on brand identity. This investigation was based on the idea that differences in attitudes, beliefs, and values across age groups could affect the strength of the relationship between HSP and brand identity. The analysis of guest demographics revealed a diverse representation across generational cohorts.

The results of the multi-group analysis on mixed structural models, segmented by age cohorts, revealed differences in the relationship between hotel sustainability practices (HSP) and brand identity across the sub-samples. However, these differences were not statistically significant, suggesting that generational cohorts did not significantly moderate the influence of HSP on brand identity.

Relative to other generational cohorts, Millennials (Generation Y) showed a notably stronger response to the influence of HSP on brand identity. Millennials, born between 1981 and 1996, are characterized by pro-environmental predispositions, social responsibility, and a focus on work-life balance, which align with sustainability principles and lifestyle hotel branding. Consequently, sustainability practices had a significant impact on Millennials' post-stay evaluation of brand identity, reflecting their personal lifestyle choices, fostering loyalty, and promoting diversity and inclusivity within this demographic.

5.2 Conclusion

The study's findings support the conclusion that hotel sustainability practices (HSPs) significantly enhance the brand identity of lifestyle hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya. The research demonstrated that key sustainability practices, such as eliminating single-use plastics, using refillable dispensers, and incorporating local materials, are crucial indicators of HSPs. These practices positively influence guests' perceptions of the hotel's brand alignment with their lifestyle choices, its ability to foster loyalty, and its promotion of inclusivity and diversity. The structural model confirmed a positive relationship between guests' perceptions of HSP adequacy and the hotel's brand identity, indicating that adopting sustainability practices contributes to a stronger brand image and higher guest satisfaction. Therefore, lifestyle hotels can effectively leverage their sustainability profiles to differentiate themselves in the market by aligning with guests' values and preferences, fostering loyalty, and promoting a brand identity that resonates with their target audience.

The study concludes that hotel sustainability practices (HSPs) significantly influence guests' travel preferences in lifestyle hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya. The exploratory

factor analysis identified three key preference categories aligned with the EAB framework: Social and Environmental Consciousness, Cultural and Culinary Exploration, and Wellness and Physical Activities. Confirmatory factor analysis further revealed a single latent variable for travel preferences, encompassing sensitivity to environmental impacts, a desire to try new foods, and a preference for luxury accommodation. This finding underscores a continuum of guests' preferences from pro-environmental to hedonic dispositions. The analysis demonstrated a significant direct relationship between HSPs and guests' travel preferences, indicating that the implementation of sustainability practices is positively associated with both pro-environmental and hedonic preferences. Consequently, lifestyle hotels can effectively leverage their sustainability initiatives to attract and cater to guests within this market segment, enhancing their appeal and competitiveness.

Regarding the influence of guests' travel preferences on the brand identity of lifestyle hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya, the study concludes that there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate a significant relationship between these preferences and post-stay evaluations of hotel brand identity. The hypothesis that guests' pre-existing travel preferences would impact their assessment of the hotel's brand identity across the reflection, relationship, and cultural dimensions of Kapferer’s BIP theory was not supported by the SEM path analysis results. This counter-intuitive finding suggests that factors beyond initial travel preferences, such as the overall stay experience, interactions with hotel staff, and external recommendations, may play a more substantial role in shaping brand identity perceptions. This highlights the complexity of guest perceptions and the multifaceted nature of brand identity formation, indicating the need for further research to explore these dynamics more comprehensively. While some studies suggest that pre-consumption preferences can influence brand perceptions, this study reveals limited evidence supporting such associations.

The study's findings support the conclusion that guests' travel preferences do not mediate the relationship between hotel sustainability practices (HSP) and brand identity in lifestyle hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya. Although the hypothesis

proposed that travel preferences would act as an intermediary mechanism in the influence of HSP on brand identity, the analysis revealed an inverse indirect effect of HSP on brand identity through travel preferences. However, this effect was not statistically significant. The evidence suggests that factors beyond travel preferences, such as the guests' overall stay experience, interactions with hotel staff, and word-of-mouth recommendations, may play a more substantial role in shaping brand identity perceptions. These elements could overshadow the role of travel preferences as a mediator in the relationship between HSP and brand identity.

In conclusion, the study reveals nuanced insights into the moderating effects of hotel guests' attributes on the relationship between sustainability practices and brand identity in lifestyle hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya. The results indicate that factors such as the length of stay (LOS) and guest familiarity, including repeat visits, significantly influence how sustainability practices impact brand identity. Contrary to previous research suggesting a weakening effect of longer stays, this study found that both short and long stays positively moderated the impact of sustainability practices on brand identity, with longer stays having a more pronounced effect. This suggests that extended exposure allows guests to better appreciate the hotel's subtle social sustainability practices.

Additionally, while generational cohorts showed variations in their response to sustainability practices, these differences were not statistically significant overall. However, Millennials demonstrated a stronger response to sustainability practices, reflecting their alignment with pro-environmental values and lifestyle choices. Overall, the study underscores the importance of guest familiarity and extended stays in enhancing the perceived sustainability image of lifestyle hotels, while highlighting the varied impacts of generational preferences on brand identity

5.3 Recommendations

Drawing from the research outcomes and recognizing its limitations, the study puts forward the subsequent recommendations for practical and policy implementation as well as for prospective scholarly investigation.

5.3.1 Implications for Practice by the Hotel Sector

1. Develop and Promote a Comprehensive Sustainability Program:

i. To leverage the positive impact of sustainability practices on brand identity, lifestyle hotel practitioners should develop and implement a comprehensive sustainability program. This program should focus on key practices such as eliminating single-use plastics, using refillable dispensers, and incorporating local materials.

ii. Hotels should actively communicate their sustainability efforts to guests through various channels, including marketing materials, on-site displays, and digital platforms. By clearly showcasing their commitment to sustainability and aligning their practices with guests' values, hotels can enhance their brand identity, foster greater guest loyalty, and differentiate themselves in the competitive market.1.

2. Tailor Sustainability Initiatives to Diverse Guest Preferences

i. Lifestyle hotels should tailor their sustainability initiatives to address both pro-environmental and hedonic preferences. This involves integrating sustainability practices that resonate with guests' values, such as promoting eco-friendly amenities and offering culturally rich experiences, while also catering to desires for luxury and unique culinary experiences.

3. Enhance Overall Guest Experience Beyond Preferences

i. Given the limited impact of guests' pre-existing travel preferences on brand identity, hoteliers should focus on enriching the overall guest experience to shape brand perceptions more effectively. This includes improving the quality of interactions with hotel staff, enhancing the physical and emotional aspects of the stay, and actively managing guest feedback.

4. Leverage Extended Stays and Repeat Visits to Enhance Sustainability Perception

i. Hotel managers should focus on leveraging extended stays and repeat visits to maximize the impact of sustainability practices on brand identity. Given that both short and long stays positively moderate the relationship between sustainability practices and brand identity, with longer stays having a more

pronounced effect, hotels should create opportunities for guests to experience and appreciate their sustainability initiatives more deeply.

5.3.2 Implications for Policy by Regulators of the Hotel Sector

1. **Establish and Enforce Standards for Hotel Sustainability Practices.**

i. Regulators should develop and implement comprehensive standards for sustainability practices in the hotel industry. These standards should include clear guidelines for key practices such as the elimination of single-use plastics, use of refillable dispensers, and incorporation of local materials.

ii. Provide incentives for hotels that exceed baseline sustainability requirements to further promote innovative and impactful practices. This approach will help align hotels with evolving guest values and expectations, strengthen market differentiation, and contribute to the overall sustainability goals of the industry

2. **Implement a Certification Program for Comprehensive Sustainability Practices**

i. Regulators should establish a comprehensive certification program for hotels that successfully integrate sustainability practices across various dimensions, including environmental, social, and cultural aspects. This program should recognize and reward hotels that not only adopt key sustainability measures like reducing single-use plastics and using local materials but also cater to a broad range of guest preferences, such as cultural and culinary experiences and wellness activities.

3. **Incentivize Holistic Sustainability Practices**

i. Policy makers should consider implementing incentive programs that reward hotels for integrating comprehensive sustainability practices beyond environmental measures. Given that guests' overall stay experience, including service quality and staff interactions, significantly impacts brand identity, incentives could be structured to encourage hotels to adopt and publicly commit to robust sustainability and service standards

5.3.3 Implications for Future Academic Research

1. Examine the Long-Term Impact of Sustainability Practices on Brand Identity

i. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies that investigate the long-term effects of hotel sustainability practices on brand identity and guest loyalty. While this study highlights the positive relationship between HSPs and brand identity, exploring how these effects evolve over time can provide deeper insights into the sustainability practices' sustained impact on guest perceptions and behavior

2. Investigate the Interaction Between Travel Preferences and Specific Sustainability Practices

i. Future research should delve into the specific interactions between different types of sustainability practices and various dimensions of guests' travel preferences. While this study establishes a significant relationship between HSPs and travel preferences, further investigation is needed to understand how particular sustainability initiatives (e.g., eco-friendly amenities, cultural integration, or wellness features) influence distinct aspects of travel preferences

ii. Future studies should assess the influence of high-performance sustainability (HPS) on hotel brand identity by expanding the study sample to include city lifestyle hotels across multiple cities. This broader geographical scope will provide a more comprehensive understanding of how HPS impacts brand identity in diverse urban contexts and contribute to more generalizable findings. Additionally, incorporating hotels from various regions can reveal regional differences and trends, offering deeper insights into the relationship between sustainability practices and brand perception across different cultural and economic settings.

3. Expand the Theoretical Framework and Methodological Approach to Explore Multi-Faceted Influences on Brand Identity

i. Future research should expand upon the theoretical framework used in this study by integrating additional constructs that may impact brand identity formation beyond pre-existing travel preferences. Theoretical models that

incorporate variables such as actual guest experiences, service quality, and post-stay interactions should be considered to provide a more comprehensive understanding of brand identity dynamics.

4. **Investigate the Differential Impacts of Guest Attributes on Sustainability Practices and Brand Identity Using Longitudinal and Cross-Generational Approaches.**
   i. Future research should employ longitudinal study designs to track how varying guest attributes, such as length of stay and repeat visits, influence the relationship between sustainability practices and brand identity over time. This approach will help capture changes in guest perceptions and preferences as they develop a deeper understanding of the hotel's sustainability practices.

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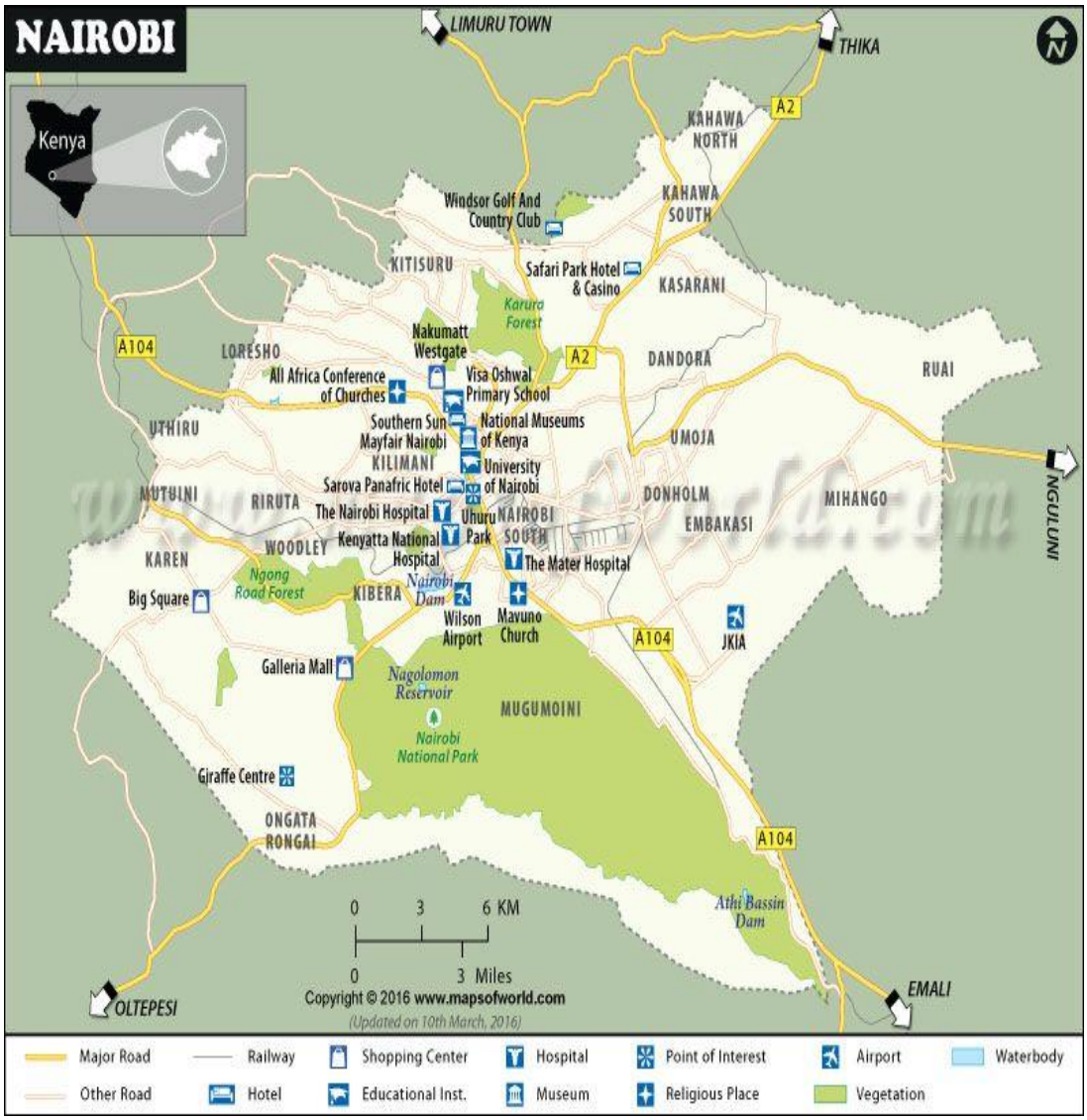
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Map of Nairobi County



Source: www.pinterest.com.

Appendix 2: Hotel Guests Questionnaire

Introduction and Informed Consent Form

Dear Sir/Madam

I am **John Musau**, a PhD candidate at the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Murang'a University of Technology. I am conducting research for my doctoral thesis titled "Sustainability Practices and Performance of Lifestyle Hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya." Your participation in this questionnaire is vital as it aims to gather your opinions on the sustainability practices implemented by hotels in Nairobi. The questionnaire will require approximately 30 minutes of your time, and I kindly ask that you respond to the questions as accurately as possible. Rest assured, all information provided will be kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes.

THANK YOU.

Informed Consent

	(Instructions: Kindly tick as appropriate)		
1.0	I consent to being interviewed for the study and authorize the use of my data, views, and opinions provided in this questionnaire for research purposes.	YES □	NO □

Hotel Details:

Name of Hotel

…….

Date:.....**Time**.....

SECTION A: TRIP CHARACTERISTICS

A1 What is your purpose of visit and stay at the hotel?

Business/ Work Meeting/Conference	◯	Medical treatment	◯
		Visit Family and friends	◯
Holiday/Leisure	◯	Religious	◯
Special Family/personal events	◯	Transit	◯

Other (Please specify) **……**

A2 How many nights did you stay at the hotel in the current visit?

(Indicate No. of Nights)----------

A3 Have you stayed at this hotel before or is this your first visit? (tick as appropriate)

This is my first visit at the hotel	◯	I have stayed at the hotel before	◯

A4 Are you travelling alone or you are accompanied with someone else?

Travelling alone	◯	I am accompanied by Family/Friend	◯
I am accompanied by colleagues/work mate(s)	◯	Other (Please specify)	……

SECTION B: YOUR DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

B1 Which of these categories based describes your age range?

18 – 24 years	◯	41 – 56 years	◯
25 – 40 years	◯	57 – 75 years	◯

B2 What is your highest level of education completed?

High School Diploma or equivalent	◯	Master's Degree	◯
College Diploma	◯	PhD or Equivalent	◯
Bachelor's Degree	◯		

B3 Which of these professions best describes your current occupation? (tick as appropriate)

Health /Medical Professional	◯	Arts/Entertainment	◯
Information Technology	◯	Business/Finance	◯
Technology/Engineering	◯	Sports	◯
Education	◯	Others (indicate)	…….

B4 Which of this best approximates your annual income (In USD)

Less than $25,000	◯	$ 76,000 -100,000	◯
$26,000 - $ 50,000	◯	More than 100,000	◯
$51,000 - $ 75,000	◯		

SECTION C: VIEWS ABOUT YOUR INTERESTS WHEN ON TRAVEL

C1 **By ticking the appropriate circle, indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements about your travel preference (1=Strongly disagree; 5 =Strongly agree)**

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree	
	1	2	3	4	5	**Statement**
1	○	○	○	○	○	I enjoy visiting new destinations that are off the beaten track
2	○	○	○	○	○	I like to participate in activities that are not typical of my everyday life
3	○	○	○	○	○	I like to try new foods when I travel
4	○	○	○	○	○	I look for new experiences in my travels
5	○	○	○	○	○	I like to pamper myself when I travel
6	○	○	○	○	○	I enjoy luxurious accommodation when I travel
7	○	○	○	○	○	I look out for facilities that offer wellness when I travel
8	○	○	○	○	○	I engage in physical activities when I travel
9	○	○	○	○	○	I visit destinations that have historic significance
10	○	○	○	○	○	I visit destinations that have sentimental significance
11	○	○	○	○	○	I enjoy meeting new people when I travel
12	○	○	○	○	○	I seek out for destinations that have lively social opportunities when I travel
13	○	○	○	○	○	I am conscious of my environmental impacts when I travel

14	○	○	○	○	○	I prefer accommodation facilities that are sensitive to the local environment when I travel

SECTION D: VIEWS ABOUT THE HOTEL'S SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES

D1 Please use the appropriate circle to indicate your rating of the adequacy of the following practices observed during your last hotel stay: [1= Extremely inadequate] [2= Inadequate] [3= neutral] [4= Very adequate] [5= Extremely adequate]

		Extremely Inadequate		Neutral		Extremely Adequate
	Sustainability Practices	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Use of water conservation technology	○	○	○	○	○
2.	Use of energy conservation technology	○	○	○	○	○
3.	Use of renewable energy	○	○	○	○	○
4.	Incorporation of environmental concern in the hotel's architectural design	○	○	○	○	○
5.	Use of local materials in the interior décor of the hotel	○	○	○	○	○
6.	Use of energy efficient room appliances (e.g., smart thermostat, Key-card entry)	○	○	○	○	○
7.	Use of LED lighting in public areas	○	○	○	○	○
8.	Waste separation into for recyclable and non-recyclable materials	○	○	○	○	○
9.	Elimination of single use items (e.g., plastic cups, cutlery, straws)	○	○	○	○	○

D1 Please use the appropriate circle to indicate your rating of the adequacy of the following practices observed during your last hotel stay: [1= Extremely inadequate] [2= Inadequate] [3= neutral] [4= Very adequate] [5= Extremely adequate]

		Extremely Inadequate		Neutral		Extremely Adequate
	Sustainability Practices	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Use of refillable for soap, shampoo and toiletries	○	○	○	○	○
11.	Locally sourced food items on the hotel's menu	○	○	○	○	○
12.	Recycled paper products in the hotel rooms	○	○	○	○	○
13.	Eco-friendly toiletries in the rooms	○	○	○	○	○
14.	Hotel support to local businesses	○	○	○	○	○
15.	Opportunities for guests' participation in community ecotourism activities	○	○	○	○	○
16.	Opportunity for guest to interact with local community and learn about local cultures and history	○	○	○	○	○
17.	Employee health and safety measures	○	○	○	○	○
18.	Employee recognition and reward program	○	○	○	○	○
19.	Diversity in the hotel staffing	○	○	○	○	○
20.	Accessibility for people living with disability	○	○	○	○	○

SECTION E: VIEWS ABOUT THE HOTEL'S BRAND

E1 **Please use the appropriate circle to indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement with the following statements regarding your perception of the hotel: [1= Strongly disagree] [2= Disagree] [3= Neutral] [4= Agree] [5= Strongly agree]**

		Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree
	Brand Dimension	1	2	3	4	5
1.	The hotel's green architecture makes it appealing compared to others (physique)	○	○	○	○	○
2.	The hotel portrays a genuine care/commitment to the environment and society (personality)	○	○	○	○	○
3.	The hotel's environmental efforts reflects my personal lifestyle choices (reflection)	○	○	○	○	○
6.	Staying at the hotel made me feel that I am positively impacting the environment and society (self-image)	○	○	○	○	○
7.	The hotel's sustainability practices make me loyal to the hotel (relationship)	○	○	○	○	○
8.	The hotel's sustainability practices encourage diversity and inclusivity (culture)	○	○	○	○	○

Section F: VIEWS ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE AT THE HOTEL

F1 **Would you consider staying at the hotel or similar hotel in the future?**

YES ◯ NO ◯

F2 **Based on the hotel's sustainability practices, would you recommend the hotel to others?**

YES ◯ NO ◯

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING

Appendix 3: Hotel Managers' Interview Guide

Introduction and Informed Consent Form

Dear Sir/Madam

I am John Musau, a PhD candidate at the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Murang'a University of Technology. I am conducting research for my doctoral thesis titled "Sustainability Practices and Performance of Lifestyle Hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya." Your participation in this questionnaire is vital as it aims to gather your opinions on the sustainability practices implemented by hotels in Nairobi. The questionnaire will require approximately 30 minutes of your time, and I kindly ask that you respond to the questions as accurately as possible. Rest assured, all information provided will be kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes.

THANK YOU.

Informed Consent

(Instructions: Kindly tick as appropriate)

1.0	I consent to being interviewed for the study and authorize the use of my data, views, and opinions provided in this questionnaire for research purposes.	YES □	NO □

Hotel Details:

Name of Hotel …….

Date:.....**Time**.....

.....

SECTION A: HOTEL MANAGER'S PROFILE

A 1	What is your highest level of education completed? ……..
A 2	What department/section do you currently work in at your hotel? ……..
A 3	What is your current level of responsibility at the hotel? ……..
A 4	What is your experience in the hotel industry, in years? ……..

SECTION B: THE HOTEL PROFILE

B1	What is the size of your hotel? By number of rooms …….. By number of restaurants ……..
B2	Is your hotel's independent owned, part of a chain or franchise? ……..
B3	In the past 12 months, what was the most important market source for visitors to your hotel? ……..
B4	Can you comment on the importance of the following market segments to your hotel?

Leisure/Holiday?

……..

……

……

……

Business/Conference/meetings and exhibitions

……

……..……

……

SECTION C: THE HOTEL'S LIFESTYLE BRAND POSITIONING

C1 What initiatives does your hotel undertake to personalize its service to the guests' requirements?

……

……..……

……

C2 How do you perceive the effectiveness of the personalized services your hotel offers to the guests?

……

……..……

……

C3 Could you describe how your hotel incorporates local cultural and heritage themes into its services?

……

……

……

……

C4 What health and wellness services does your hotel offer?

……

……

……

……

……
……

C5 Could you share your perspective on how your hotel's architectural design, décor, and ambiance contribute to setting it apart from other establishments in the industry?

……
……
……
……
……
……

C6 Could you provide your perspective on how your hotel's culinary experience resonates with your clientele?

……
……
……
……

C7 Could you offer your insights on how your hotel utilizes technology and innovation to enhance the guest experience?

……
……
……
……
……
……
……
……

C8 To what extent do you believe that sustainability practices contribute to shaping your hotel's brand identity?

……
……

……

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If yes explain how?

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If not explain why?

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……..

SECTION D: HOTEL SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES

D1 Could you elaborate on the specific practices or actions your hotel has undertaken to reduce its environmental footprint?

……

……

……

……

D3 Could you provide additional insights into the social sustainability practices that your hotel has implemented to foster positive impacts within the community and among guests?

……

……

……

……

……

……

D4	Can you offer more information about the HR management practices your hotel has embraced to strengthen its sustainability profile, particularly in terms of employee welfare and development? …… ……

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION

Appendix 4: Summary of Initial Codes for Qualitative Analysis

THEME 1: Hotel Branding Activities

Name	Description	Files	References
Brand Image – Culinary	How hotel's culinary experience resonates with clientele	13	16
Brand Image - Health Wellness	Health and wellness services offered	14	16
H&W Initiatives		10	10
Brand Image – HSP	Whether sustainability practices contribute to shaping the hotel's brand identity	7	13
Effectiveness of HSP		4	7
HSP Implemented		3	4
Sustainable Identity		1	2
Brand Image - incorporates local cultural and heritage	Hotel initiatives to incorporates local cultural and heritage in their product	13	19
Activities		10	12
Effectiveness of Personalization		3	3
Brand Image - Personalization	Hotel Initiatives to personalise their services to guests requirements	15	28
Children Packages		1	1
Effectiveness of Personalization	Effectiveness of personalization initiatives	10	10
Personalization Approaches		10	13

Name	Description	Files	References
Brand Image - Technology & Innovations	How the hotel utilizes technology and innovation to enhance the guest experience	14	20
Tech Innovations		11	16
Brand Image- architectural design, décor, and ambiance	How hotels use architectural design, décor, and ambiance to differentiate themselves	10	13
Architectural practices	Architectural practices adopted	5	5
How-HPS contribute to brand	How HSP contribute to brand identity	4	4
Diversity and Inclusivity	Brand image that fosters diversity and inclusivity	4	6
Loyalty		2	2

THEME 2: Hotel Sustainability Practices adopted

Name	Description	Files	References
Environmental Practices	Practice adopted to minimize ecological footprint	16	52
Climate Change	Climate smarty practices	11	17
Adaptation	Adaptation practices	9	11
Mitigation		3	6
Energy conservation	Energy saving practices	11	16
Liquid waste management	Liquid waste management practices	1	2
Regulation		2	2

Name	Description	Files	References
Solid Waste Management Practices	solid management practices	8	10
Water Management	Water management practices	5	5
Social	Social Sustainability Practices	14	45
Community Involvement		11	21
Guest Engagement		1	1
HR practices		12	21
Technology	Technological Innovations adopted for sustainability	2	3

THEME 3: Hotel manager's perception of sustainability performance

Name	Description	Files	References
Brand visibility	Influence of HSP on brand image	11	11
Employee Satisfaction	Performance on guest satisfaction	9	9
Environmental Impacts	Hotel Managers perceptions on impact of HSP on Ecological footprint	9	9
Guest Satisfaction	Performance on guest satisfaction	12	12
Market Share	Performance on Market share enhancement	11	11
Profitability	Hotel managers perception of Sustainability practices impacts on the bottom-line	12	13
Social	Hotel managers perceptions of HSPs impact on society	11	12

Source: Research Data, 2024

Appendix 5: Letter of Approval from BPS

MURANG'A UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

Office of the Director, Postgraduate Studies

E-mail: bps@mut.ac.ke
Website: www.mut.ac.ke

P.O. Box 75-10200
Murang'a, Kenya

Ref: MUT/ARP/PGS/19/2020 /VOL.1

Date: 7th November, 2023

Mr. John Musau (HT500/5734/2021)
School of Hospitality and Tourism Management,
Murang'a University of Technology,
P.O. Box 75-10,200
Murang'a.

Dear Mr. Musau,

RE: APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL AND SUPERVISORS.

I am pleased to inform you that the Directorate of Postgraduate Studies on 13th October, 2023 considered and approved your Doctoral research proposal entitled ***"The Effect of Sustainability Practices on Performance of Lifestyle Hotels in Nairobi City County, Kenya"*** and appointed the following as supervisors:

1. Dr. Isabella Mapelu - Murang'a University of Technology
2. Dr. Antoneta Njeri Kariru - Murang'a University of Technology

You may now proceed with your data collection subject to obtaining research permit from NACOSTI, if required. You should also begin consulting your supervisors and submit through them quarterly progress reports to the Director Postgraduate Studies through your CoD and School Dean. Progress Reports forms can be accessed in the Student Portal.

It is the policy and regulations of the University that you observe deadlines. The guidelines on Postgraduate supervision can be accessed in the post graduate Handbook.

Your responsibilities as a student will include, among others;

i. Maintain regular consultation with your supervisor(s), at least once a month
ii. Submit quarterly reports on time, through your supervisors, CoD, Dean and to the Director of Postgraduate Studies;
iii. Ensure quality work all through;

iv. Present your research findings at 2-3 seminars/conferences prior to thesis examination.

v. Publish two articles from your research findings in a refereed journal prior to thesis examination.

For any further clarification please contact the undersigned.

Yours Sincerely,

Prof. Geoffrey Muchiri, PhD
Director, Postgraduate Studies
GM/PIM

Copy to:
1. Registrar – Academics and Students Affairs
2. Dean, School of Hospitality and Tourism Management

APPENDIX 6: Research Permit from NACOSTI

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: **197752**

Date of Issue: **07/February/2024**

RESEARCH LICENSE



This is to Certify that Mr.. John Kiniu Musau of Murang'a University of Technology, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Nairobi on the topic: The Effect of Sustainability Practices on Performance of Lifestyle Hotels in Nairobi City County ,Kenya for the period ending : 07/February/2025.

License No: **NACOSTI/P/24/32825**

197752

Applicant Identification Number

Director General
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

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See overleaf for conditions

Appendix 7: Publications

This thesis has produced the following publications:

Musau, J., Mapelu, I., & Njeri, A. K. (2024). Sustainability Practices and Brand Identity in City Hotels: The Moderating Impact of Guests' Length of Stay. *African Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Management*, 3(1), 155-171.

Musau, J., Mapelu, I., & Njeri, A. K. (2024). Perspectives of Urban Hotel Managers and Guests on Environmental, Social, and Economic Sustainability Practices. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 8(3s), 1521-1538.