

**MANAGERS' APPLICATION OF USER GENERATED CONTENT IN
HOSPITALITY SERVICE EXPERIENCE ENHANCEMENT AMONG 3-5-STAR
HOTELS IN KENYA**

BY

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DECLARATION

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to beloved parents Mr. Moses Odiwuor and Mrs. Saline Odiwuor, my sisters: Marolyne, Janet, Joyce, and Eunice. You have given me a priceless support through my educational journey. I also dedicate this work to my beloved fiancé, Anastasiah Masolo. You have given me emotional and moral support all through.

ABSTRACT

Hospitality service experience (HSE) is a complex phenomenon involving customers' subjectivity making it challenging for managers to manage HSE effectively, yet it is a key concept in hospitality industry, just like services, particularly in luxury hotels. It is, however, believed that the application of user-generated content (UGC) can play a key role in the effective management of the HSEs, as it has taken up the entirety of customers' expectations, perceptions, and evaluations of hospitality services. Ninety percent millennials generate content online which is trusted by fifty percent of customers. Despite this, most literature have focused on customer-centric factors with regard to UGC application negating managerial perspectives on UGC application and their influence on HSE enhancement. The main objective of this study was investigating managers' application of UGC in HSE enhancement among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya. Specific objectives were assessing the extent of a managers' application of UGC, assess managers' perception of HSE, and determining influence of managerial monitoring of UGC and managerial response to UGC on HSE enhancement. Guided by the social impact, service recovery and affect theories, the study adopted a quantitative approach and survey design. The population entailed 441 general, guest relations, and marketing managers from 147 3-5-star hotels in Kenya. Multistage sampling (cluster, proportionate, simple random sampling) was used to select a sample of 252 hotel managers and data was collected using self-administered questionnaires. The first and second objectives were assessed through mean ranking and standard deviation. Multiple linear regression analysis was used to analyse the third and fourth objectives. The results indicate that hotel managers primarily apply UGC to a large extent by checking the number of unfavourable sentiments ($M=4.523$) and checking positive content generated by customers about their hotels ($M=4.958$). In their responses, hotel managers express happiness for a guest's satisfaction and express regrets for dissatisfaction experienced by previous customers ($M=5.006$). They also show appreciation in their responses, apologize for service gaps and failures, invite customers back to their hotels, and promise future corrections of experienced shortfalls. Moreover, hotel managers consider the following variables as important: feelings ($M=5.606$), behaviour ($M=5.473$), judgement ($M=5.388$), perception of service ($M=5.236$), and customers' emotions after service ($M=5.152$). Others include taking responsibility for customer complaints, environmental context, and cultural background of service provision as important. Finally, managerial monitoring and response to UGC significantly influence HSE enhancement by 50.9%. Managerial monitoring and response to UGC influence HSE with β values of 0.221 and 0.216, respectively. The study findings inform hotel managers of how their application of UGC in their hotels will improve the HSE. Most importantly, the study implies that managers should leverage UGC to enhance the HSE, thus boosting competitive advantage, customer satisfaction, and loyalty.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYM

UGC	-	User Generated Content
CGM	-	Customer Generated Media
CGC	-	Customer Generated Content
SPSS	-	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
AAAA	-	Acknowledgement, Account, Action, Affect
HSE	-	Hospitality Service Experience
eWOM	-	Electronic Word of Mouth
TRA	-	Tourism Regulatory Authority
ANOVA	-	Analysis of Variance

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

User Generated Content (UGC)- Content from experiences published on the web in texts, images, or videos by end-users of products or services spread and used by other people for information.

UGC monitoring - Checking content from experiences published on the web in texts, images, or videos by end-users of products or services.

UGC response - Giving feedback to UGC textually by accounting, acknowledging, taking action or showing affection to experiences posted on the web.

Managers' application of UGC- Monitoring and responding to UGC by managers.

Hospitality Service Experience - (HSE)-The cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses from guests in a hospitality establishment after a service encounter.

Customer - A hotel guest or creator of the content generated on the internet based on the hotels' guest amenities, service experiences and other hotel offerings

Guest - A prospect or person who visits a hotel to seek for service or product provision and has the option of creating content on the internet as UGC.

Classified hotels - Hotels that have been rated based on Tourism Regulatory Authority standard criteria of rating hotels in Kenya.

Hotel - An establishment providing meals, accommodation, and other services for travelers, tourists and other people who are away from their homes.

Manager - A hotel staff charged with the responsibility of overseeing the operations of a hotel or functional area within a hotel including monitoring and responding to UGC, for example, general, marketing or guest relations manager.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Chapter one comprises a background information of User Generated Content (UGC), Managers' application of UGC, and Hospitality Service Experience (HSE). Further, the chapter comprises the objectives, hypothesis, research questions, and statement of the problem, significance, assumptions, limitations, and the conceptual framework of the study.

Technology has played an evolutionary role in contemporary marketing, fuelling digital marketing in different industries, such as the hospitality industry. The availability of digital marketing promotes the hospitality industry market globally through establishing an online presence. The industry gets its online presence through online bookings, travel sites, hotel websites, and social media, among other platforms. Hotels provide information on the web through these platforms to capture the global market. In turn, the hotel information attracts customers, who issue personal opinions and previous experiences during their stay at the hotels on social media; to produce, take part or share information about the respective hotels. In this phenomenon, the customers provide lots of explicit information about the hotels' services, amenities, and experiences. The customers also share their information with these hotels on social media, travel sites, and hotel websites. All this information generated by the customer on the web is UGC. They include reviews, blogs, videos, and comments, to mention a few. UGC is the fastest-growing online channel of information customers use to share tourism experiences. The information spreads to an invisible global audience, including prospective customers, thus influencing the customers' behavioural intentions.

1.1.1 User-Generated Content

UGC can be traced back to the development of the web in the 2000s. The web developed progressively from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0. Web 1.0 was a read-only platform, and the website information was the only link between web users (Aghaei, Nematbakhsh, & Farsani, 2012). Web users could strictly read web content without interacting with one another. Web 2.0, a development of Web 1.0, by contrast, encourages the website users' interactivity through the generation of content on the internet (Lugmayr & Dal Zotto, 2015; Xie, Zhang, Zhang, Singh, & Lee, 2016; Ye, Gu, & Chen, 2010; Chen, Ye, & Zhu, 2019) for example reviews, comments, and

blogs. In this case, web users are the primary link to more information created and accessed by other web users. UGC is the result of the concept of Web 2.0, an evolution of Web 1.0. UGC has since spurred researchers to delve into understanding its impact on the hospitality industry. Authors have described UGC as the fastest and richest online channel of information for sharing tourism experiences (Wang, Chan, & Pan, 2015; Lu & Stepchenkova, 2015).

Earlier, UGC was minimally recognised; later, it drew researchers' attention after the 2004 Web 2.0 Summit by Tim O'Reilly, which inspired the concept of Web 2.0 (O'Reilly, 2009). This concept entailed user-to-user interaction on the web; an interaction that would further draw researchers' attention, especially in travel (Gurung & Goswami, 2017; Marine-Roig & Anton, 2015) and journalism (García Avilés, 2018; Palomo, Teruel, & Blanco-Castilla, 2019) industries. Web-users in hospitality have ever since gained wielding power on the web, influencing other web users' behaviour who entail prospective, previous, and in-house guests in hotels. Scholars, far and wide, have conducted analyses of online reviews to provide feasible, influential, and responsive marketing strategies based on UGC in social media (Park, Ok & Chae, 2018; Calheiros, Moro & Rita, 2017). These authors communicate in one voice that UGC can be a useful source of data for managers, marketers, and scholars to obtain a clear picture of customer experiences due to the target market's subjectivity (Baek, Choe, & Ok, 2020) and to make critical decisions pertaining to the HSE prior to the guests' arrival. On the contrary, managers are surmised to not recognise the meaningfulness of UGC especially in the management of HSE.

Hotel managers tend to lack an understanding of the importance of using UGC to enhance the service experience (Basky & Frame, 2009). UGC comprises customers' reactions after a service experience, such as service failures, service gaps, service evaluations, dissatisfaction, compliments, and critics. Managers' neglect is clearly notable in how prospective hotel customers easily access user-generated content on social media, travel sites and utilise it in decision making most probably before the managers access or utilize the same information. On the contrary, hotel managers ought to access UGC earlier than the prospective customers to monitor, respond and improve the HSE in the hotel. Nevertheless, customers acquire predispositions from previously posted service experiences, previous customers' reactions; therefore, influencing their behavioural intentions among other parameters. Most notably, exposure to UGC influences customers' attitudes, satisfaction, and perception (Demba, Chiliya,

Chuchu, & Ndoro, 2019; Tsiakali, 2018; Bahtar& Muda, 2016; Zhang, Ye, Law, & Li, 2010; Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009). Hotel guests continue to post UGC despite managers' neglect of the content that already exists in the online space. In fact, as of 2017, Trip advisor recorded a substantial amount of user reviews summing to over 500 million, with a trend of 290 reviews per minute daily (TripAdvisor, 2017). A recent study by Ipsos Media CT and Crowdtap, Millennials are highly influenced by UGC. The research indicates 50% more trust in UGC than traditional media. Besides, 90% of Millennials have posted either an experience or a product on social media. According to these statistics, prospective customers can view and effectively utilize this user-generated content, however the extent to which managers can use the same UGC is hardly documented. Customers may perceive the specific hotel review they come across based on the (Trip Advisor Member, October 2020) UGC.

Meanwhile, scholars regard UGC as the fastest and richest online channel of information for sharing tourism experiences (Wang, Chan & Pan, 2015; Baek et al., 2020; Lu &Stepchnkova, 2015). With this alarming trend, hotel managers are only surmised to understand the importance of these tonnes of user-generated content, with no verifiable evidence of the same. Yet, prospective guests gain their predispositions from the existing reviews before booking a hotel. These predispositions might lead to the customer developing a good or bad perception. Emphatically, UGC has notably been proven to influence the satisfaction and behavioural intentions of customers in several studies (For example, Demba, Chiliya, Chuchu, & Ndoro, 2019; Tsiakali, 2018; Bahtar, & Muda, 2016; Zhang, Ye, Law, & Li, 2010; Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009), with minimal attention to managers' application of UGC. Earlier studies documented minimal managers' application of UGC. They alluded that manager had little knowledge of the application of UGC in monitoring and response. For instance, Barsky and Frame (2016) cited a 2009 Market Metrix and Trip advisor survey, indicating that 85% of hotels do not have guidelines for monitoring or responding to UGC. Only 4% respond to negative reviews; at the same time, research indicates that only one response is notable out of every five reviews. While the survey attempts to bring out the extent of UGC application among the managers, it was carried out thirteen years ago. Several studies have therefore been conducted in the same area, with none addressing the extent to which managers apply UGC among hotels, thus leaving the area neglected with no reliable knowledge of the extent of application of UGC among managers amidst the increasing digitization in the industry. Recent studies discuss the

frameworks and models on how managers respond to UGC, and correlations with various variables (For example, Burgess, Sellitto, Cox, and Buultjens, 2015; Sparks & Bradley, 2017; Deng, Lee & Xie, 2021; Babic Rosario et al. 2016; Abalaesei& Sandu, 2015). Nonetheless, studies have failed to sufficiently address the managerial aspect of UGC usage; and this study is cognisant of the wielding power of customers in UGC creation and access. At this point, assessing the extent to which managers apply UGC was deemed necessary. Notwithstanding, the study sought to delve into the neglected managerial application of UGC and, therefore, aimed to assess the extent to which managers apply UGC among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya where this study area is largely neglected.

There is barely a standard definition of UGC. Authors have defined UGC in various ways. Weilin and Svetlana (2015) described it as creative content published on websites without a direct link to any benefit. In the words of Chanchaichujit, Holmes, Dickinson, and Ramkissoon (2018), UGC is content initiated, created, circulated online, and used by the end-user. It aims to educate people and share information about services, brands, personalities, and products, among others (Blackshaw & Nazzaro, 2004). This study considerably employed Blackshaw and Nazzaro's definition. They articulate the author of UGC and regard it as a reaction from various experiences to other customers online to share and educate them. Agreeably, UGC entails reviews, blogs, videos, images, and other textual content. Researchers have attempted to conceptualise UGC application in different fashions based on the definitions.

Burgess et al. (2015) conceptualised the application of UGC into proactive and reactive strategies. The proactive (promotion) aspect of UGC comprised discounts, value addition, and new offerings relative to the posted UGC. In contrast, the reactive or response strategy constituted UGC monitoring, response, and improvement of offerings. This study adopted the reactive aspect of Burgess et al.'s study and neglected the proactive aspect. The study too this approach because managers' application of UGC is inclined towards the reactive aspect rather than the proactive aspect of the conceptualization. On the other hand, Barsky and Frame (2009) recommend the managers' application of UGC in monitoring, response, and action based on the appropriate guidelines. According to Deng et al. (2021), managers responded to reviews by acknowledgement, accountancy, affection, or action. They measured managers' UGC response through the response volume, review and response length, acknowledgement, accountancy,

action, and positive and negative affection. In a meta-analytic review, Babić Rosario, Sotgiu, De Valck, and Bijmolt (2016) affirm two significant UGC measures: volume and valence. Although they deduce other UGC measures, including variance and composite valence volume, this study adopted a reactive UGC application approach. It conceptualised UGC application into monitoring and response with considerations such as (Burgess et al., 2015; Barsky & Frame, 2009; Deng et al., 2021 and Babić Rosario et al., 2015).

1.1.2 Hospitality Service Experience (HSE)

The experience economy is the root of service experience. This claim aligns with service experience researchers who have regarded the experience economy as the service experience's genesis. For instance, Pine and Gilmore (1999) explain how mothers transition from making birthday cakes on their own to spending more money on hiring a company to provide this full-service experience. In the experience economy, mothers would spend more money and, in exchange, get a specialized service experience. Among the pioneers of the experience economy is Walt Disney, according to Pine and Gilmore (1999).

In the hospitality industry, service experiences have gained importance, just like food, beverage, and accommodation provision, due to the increased number of hotels offering the same product and the power of the internet. Service experience has become an essential consideration in acquiring hospitality products. On the other hand, the internet is the greatest force of commoditization ever invented (Pine, 2017). The internet, in this case, predisposes the guest to previous HSEs before the guest accesses the hotel (Vasconcelos, Barichello, Lezana, Forcellini, Ferreira, & Miguel, 2015). Predispositions are critical in informing prospective guests about a hotel's service and product offerings before their visit. As such, customers have been said to gain a clear picture of what to expect when they visit a given hotel. That includes the positive and negative images as posted on the internet. Therefore, hotel managers are caught off guard by a UGC-informed customer who has an already formed perception of the hotel through predispositions. While customers continue to post new content and gather more from the internet, managers have been surmised to lack knowledge of customers' expectations.

Furthermore, the managers are misguided on what the customer finds important in a service experience. Studies (E.g., Cetin & Walls, 2016) have supported similar claims. The study indicates that managers and customers have a disparity in what they both find important between

experience, memorable experience, and unique experience. Therefore, the study recommends a service gap approach to identify possible gaps between customers' and managers' perceptions of in-service experiences. In a recent study, Lahouel and Montargot (2020) note a significant gap in how managers managed experiences and the appropriate touch points children (as customers) found important in their experiences. While there is notably an existing gap in managers' and customers' perception of service experiences, the findings in Cetin and Walls (2016) are not generalizable because of a low sample size and the purposive sampling technique, which might leave important samples out. On the other hand, Lahouel and Montargot (2020) focused their study on children as hotel customers in five-star hotels while this study's unit of analysis was hotel managers. This study will employ multistage sampling (stratified, proportionate sampling), which is representative and allows for generalizability. Moreover, there is insufficient information on how managers perceive HSEs, especially in 3–5-star hotels in the Kenyan context. Previous studies have not adequately addressed what managers consider important when designing service experiences. Service experience provision requires a deep understanding of what encompasses a service experience. Therefore, managers require a good understanding of the service experience, which is continually posted as UGC, to deliver the experience as required. Following the need to develop a clear understanding of the service experience, several studies (e.g., Bonnin, 2006; Oh, Fiore & Jeoung, 2007; Wong, 2013; Pareigis, Edvardsson, & Enquist, 2011) have been conducted after the emergence of the experience economy.

Hotel managers' ability to understand the HSE's nature is critical to enhancing the experience. The HSE is a complex phenomenon in that it is subjective and involves cognition, affection, and behaviour that a customer exhibits before, during or after service delivery (Vasconcelos et al., 2015). Hotel managers continuously attempt to provide their customers with a unique and memorable experience in their hotels. They purportedly use various physical surroundings and social interactions (Cetin & Walls, 2016) to provide an excellent customer experience. Physical surroundings comprise the ambience, design, amenities, and artefacts. At the same time, social interaction includes staff's attitude, professionalism, and attentiveness. It is expected that these cues would enable hotel managers to give the expected experience. Instead, Cetin and Walls find a disparity between the managers' and guests' perceptions of service experience in their study. In another study conducted in Nairobi, Kiange (2011) reveals another disparity in managers' perception of service delivery. Service delivery is a component of service experience, according

to Manhas and Tukamushaba (2015). Other components of service experience include service quality, quality of staff and amenities, hotel ambience, quality of aesthetics, and experience quality. Service experience comprises the entirety of guest evaluations after service interactions in a hotel (Baek et al., 2020). There is a massive difference in hotel managers' understanding of HSE. Despite this, very little progress has been made in finding a holistic managers' perception of the HSE. This study, therefore, sought to fill the knowledge gap by assessing a holistic managers' perception of HSE among 3–5-star hotels in Kenya.

Researchers have not agreed on the definition of service experience. According to (Vasconcelos et al.2015), it entails various factors. They include attributes of involved players, nature of service, rendering of the service, social, cultural, and environmental contexts. Manhas and Tukamushaba (2015) either define service experience by focusing on the subjectivity of customers' reactions and feelings when consuming or using a service. Chen and Chen (2010) define service experience as the result of consumption and use of a service, manifested by subjective sensations and reactions. HSE pertains to customers' cognitive, affective, and behavioural aspects during and after service delivery. Chang and Horng (2010) alluded that it is an internally operated phenomenon lived through and built on before, during, and after service delivery. Admittedly, Pareigis, Echeverri, and Edvardsson (2012) allude that service experience entails the cognitive, behavioural, and affective concepts. This study adopted a psychological interplay of service experience. It categorised service experience into cognitive, affective, and behavioural responses (Pareigis et al. 2012; Vasconcelos et al. 2015) from customers after a service encounter. The HSE involves the cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses from guests in a hospitality establishment after a service encounter.

Various authors have measured service experience differently. Pine and Gilmore (1999) proposed aesthetics, entertainment, escapism, and education as dimensions of service experience in conceptualising 'experience economy.' These dimensions do not apply to hotels in terms of operationalisation. They fail to articulate the behavioural aspects of service experience. In attempts to operationalise service experience in resort hotels, recognition and escapism, peace of mind and relaxation, hedonics, and involvement are adopted (Ali et al. 2014). This approach again neglects the result of the service's behavioural aspects. Ali et al.'s dimensions are only reflected during the delivery of service. In this context, this study acknowledged Vasconcelos et

al. (2015) perspective, which factors service experience into predispositions, interactions, and reactions. Therefore, they measure customer needs, preconceived images, the service setting, social interaction between employees and customers, infrastructure, nature of the operation, emotions, moods, perceptions of value, and intentions.

1.1.3 Managers' Application of User-Generated Content and Hospitality Service Experience

UGC research in the hospitality industry mainly addresses matters to do with customer satisfaction, service quality, service failures, service recoveries, and customer behaviour (Perez-Aranda, Vallespín & Molinillo, 2018). For example, Presi, Saridakis, and Hartmans (2014) show that a dissatisfied customer's UGC behavior is vengeance in most cases. This dissatisfaction majorly arises from a poor-quality service from the service providers. At the same time, managerial response to UGC is an attempt at service recovery after a service failure, where it increases the chance for intent to stay and repeat clientele (Avant, 2013). In another study, reciprocation of tarnished hotel image due to UGC is possible through managerial responses, as Yoo and Gretzel (2008) argue. Besides, a hotel's star rating in trip advisor proved to increase by 15%, and 0.235 star ratings after a managerial response, as Ye et al. (2010) and Xie et al. (2016) reveal, respectively. The increase in rating depicts a rise in customer satisfaction among the customers of the hotels.

Researchers (e.g., Burgess et al., 2015; Babić Rosario et al., 2016; Stangl & Regler, 2016) have increasingly recommended monitoring UGC valence. Chan and Guillet (2011) argue that a lack of UGC monitoring and response risks a hotel's future business loss. Therefore, it is considered, that managerial monitoring and response to UGC might influence HSE enhancement. This study determined the influence of managers' application of UGC on service experience enhancement among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya.

Service experience is a vital factor in ultimate customer satisfaction. Apart from the service performance of a hotel, other factors influence the service experience. Grove and Fisk (1997) delineate that customer significantly affect other customers' service experience in their study. Policies, management domination, and infrastructure may also influence the experience in a destination, according to a more recent study by Gopalan and Narayan (2010). They term these factors as peculiar. Patrício, Fisk, and Falcão e Cunha (2008) also identified factors that impact

service experiences in an organisation, such as employed technologies, customer literacy, and company staff.

UGC is influential and impactful due to its informative nature. Its influence and impact arising from the explicit nature generated from actually experienced service. Most tourists use UGC as a potential source of information (Perez -Aranda et al., 2015). For example, Millennial tourists trust UGC 50% more than traditional media as per Ipsos Media and Crowdtap study in 2014. Evidence has also shown that customers trust UGC more easily than official marketing information. At the same time, UGC has been used in service recovery (Avant, 2013). It also influences customers' behavioural intentions (Perez-Aranda, 2018), customer satisfaction and perception (Bravo, Martinez, & Pina, 2019), customer consideration (Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009), and travel decisions (O'Connor, 2011; Baka, 2016; Lu & Stepchenkova, 2012).

1.2 Statement of the problem

Service experience has been recognised as one of the key provisions by hospitality establishments just like provision of food, beverage and other related services. As a result, most hoteliers are keen on providing memorable experience through management of HSEs. Moreover, the commoditization of services is increasingly taking centre stage as luxury hotels sprout in various places in the hotel business. Customers, from their accessibility to UGC, often bring with them different expectations which ends up shaping their HSE making it even more challenging for hotel managers to effectively manage these experiences in the appropriate time. Notably, according to various consumer surveys, 90% of millennials post their experiences online which are more trusted by 50% of customers.

The challenge of the management of HSE is compounded by the fact that it ascribes to the cognitions, affections, and behaviours that hotel customers exhibit before, during and after service delivery. Key to this is the predispositions that shape the customers' expectations even before consuming hospitality products and services. Notably, advances in technology has provided alternatives through which potential customers can predispose themselves through user-generated content (UGC). In fact, its believed that application of UGC can play a key role in effective management of the HSEs, as it has taken up the entirety of customers' expectations, perceptions, and evaluations of hospitality services. Most importantly, hotels have high control

of the interactions with guests when they visit the hotels, that is before they post their service experiences to the internet again.

Despite this, most literature have focused on customer-centric factors with regard to UGC application, negating managerial perspectives on UGC application such as UGC monitoring and UGC response, and their influence on HSE enhancement. Further, given customers brings with them different expectations which shape their experiences thereby compounding the challenges in effective management of these experiences, hotel managers need to understand well in advance their customers' service experience expectations. This calls for understanding managers perception of HSE. Moreover, very little information, if any, is available with a focus on the extent to which manager apply UGC, their perception of HSE and the influence of monitoring or responding on HSE enhancement.

1.3 Objectives of the study

1.3.1 General Objective

To investigate managers' application of UGC in hospitality service experience enhancement among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya.

1.3.2 Specific objectives

- i. To assess the extent to which managers apply user-generated content (monitoring and response) among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya.
- ii. To assess managers' perception of hospitality service experience among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya
- iii. To determine the influence of managerial monitoring of UGC on hospitality service experience enhancement among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya
- iv. To determine the influence of managers' response to UGC on hospitality service experience enhancement among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions were used to address objectives one and two:

- i. What is the extent to which managers apply user-generated content among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya?

- ii. What is the managers' perception of hospitality service experience among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya?

1.5 Hypothesis

To address objectives three and four, the following hypotheses guided the study:

- i. Managers' monitoring of UGC does not significantly influence hospitality service experience enhancement among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya
- ii. Managers' response to UGC does not significantly influence hospitality service experience enhancement among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya.

1.6 Significance of the study

Hotel managers may use this study to leverage UGC to enhance the HSE, hence achieving guest satisfaction, loyalty, and competitive advantage. The study is useful for scholars as they understand how managers apply user-generated content. It also shows its influence on the enhancement of the HSE among 3-5-star hotels. Most importantly, the theory of change comprises how managers can use UGC to improve HSE with regard to the proposed concepts in monitoring, response, and service experience dimensions. The expected end product is an enhanced service experience, understanding the managers' perceptions of service experience, customer satisfaction, loyalty, and competitive advantage.

1.7 Conceptual framework

Different concepts and constructs guide the conceptual framework. The independent variable (managers' application of UGC) composes two concepts; monitoring and response. The dependent variable (HSE) is multidimensional; cognitive, affective, and behavioural. The independent variable hypothetically influences the dependent variable.

A triple-A typology (Sparks & Bradely, 2017) modified by Deng et al. (2021) guides the constructs under managerial response. Their typology highly depends on the service recovery theory and affect theory. They operationalise managerial response into acknowledgement, accountancy, affect, and action. This study adopted their typology in operationalising the concept of managerial response.

In operationalisation of managerial monitoring of UGC, this study adopts Babić Rosario et al. (2015) metric factors of eWOM. They include volume and valence. Researchers have widely

used these constructs to operationalise UGC online activity by managers and customers (e.g., Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009; Abălăesei& Sandu, 2015).

The study constructs in the dependent variable were conceptualised in (Vasconcelos et al. 2015) meta-analysis of service experience. Their framework has three concepts (cognitive, affective, and behavioural) and three respective constructs (predispositions, interactions, and reactions).

1.8 Conceptual Framework

Independent variable

Managers' application of UGC

Dependent variable

Hospitality service experience

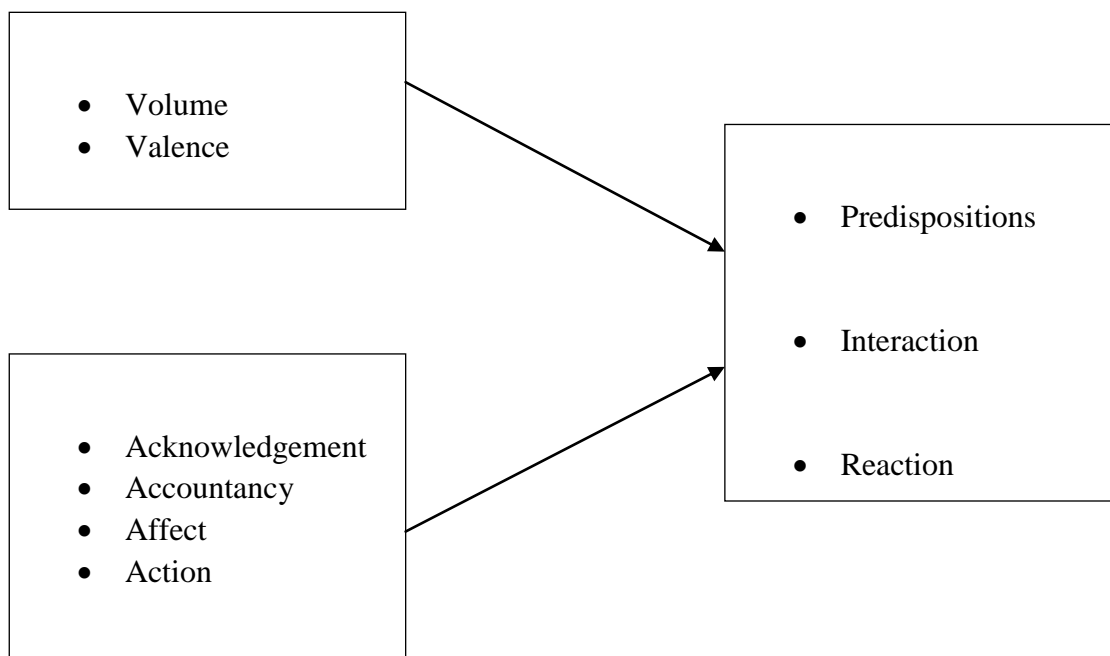


Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework (Conceptualised by the author with consideration of Babic Rosario et al., 2015; Deng et al., 2021; Vasconcelos et al. 2015)

1.9 Assumptions of the study

This study assumed that samples were homogeneous since all samples had a standard or similar position in every hotel. The samples' absolute accuracy was not essential because hotels might have varying organisational structures, but the samples perform the desired role.

1.10 Limitations of the study

The research was limited to hotels that recorded an online presence, considering UGC is content posted online, hence not generalisable to all hotels. The researcher ensured a representative coverage of 3-5-star hotels through sampling.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter two: Literature review comprises the conversation on UGC and HSE. The conversation details what previously conducted studies have documented as pertains UGC and HSE. This includes the conceptual review (variables studied), methodological review(the research methodology used to conduct similar studies), empirical review(findings, conclusions, recommendations),theoretical review (theories), and shortcomings in the previous studies.

2.1 User Generated Content (UGC)

UGC research has gained traction over the past years. Researchers have universally agreed that it is content generated by users on the web but differed in the reasons for the generation of the content. For example, Blackshaw and Nazzaro (2004) stated that consumers create UGC to educate and share information ranging from experiences with services, brands, personalities, and products. They also indicate that the consumers are the initiators, users, and spreaders of the content. The generated information is availed and exposed to other users who can access the same website at any time, for various reasons, from education to information. Williams, van der Wiele, van Iwaarden, and Eldridge (2010) merely describe it as a modern word of mouth. Lu and Stepchenkova (2015) describe it as the content published online without the need to gain any interest. This ideology is against the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1985), which postulates that human behaviour is, in most cases, objective. UGC is therefore objective as different authors have indicated the customer's motive while authoring the content despite the difference in the reasons for the creation of the content. Customers share positive experiences to encourage other customers and negative experiences to warn other customers of a facility (Ghazi, 2017; Avant, 2013). It is agreeable that UGC entails content created by end-users or consumers (Chanchaichujit et al., 2018; Lu &Stepchenkova, 2015; Blackshaw & Nazzaro, 2004). While this study submitted to the widely agreed authorship of UGC, it regarded UGC as content from experiences published on the web in texts, images, or videos by end-users of products or services spread and used by other people for information.

UGC application has been used previously by authors in research, with varying meanings. They have conducted varying literary works that refer to the 'application of UGC' in different disciplines. First, in an analysis of CGM application in public relations, Feng and Li (2009)

implied UGC usage in multicultural public relations practice. Other authors used terms like ‘adoption’ to mean using UGC, for example, travel information (Zhang, Ito, Wu, & Li, 2017; Chung, Han, & Koo, 2015), customers’ motivation for intention to purchase (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010), customer behaviour learning (Gefen & Pavlou, 2012), improvement of product search (Wang et al., 2018), assessment of value (Suseno, Laurell, & Sick, 2018). Also, Del Chiappa, Lorenzo Romero, and Alarcon-del-Amo (2018) used UGC application, referring to a computerised program. Such computerised programs include tourism-based social networking sites and photo or video-sharing software. Therefore, UGC application has previously been researched, however, in varying contexts. This study used UGC application to mean the use of content generated by customers on the internet for the sole purpose of improving HSE.

According to existing literature, most researchers have focused on the consumers’ application of UGC in their studies, leaving managerial utilisation an under-researched area. Hotel managers can effectively leverage UGC because they have a better view of the organisation’s vision, mission and goals. Nevertheless, there is very scant literature documented regarding managers’ utilisation of UGC (Burgess et al. 2015). Managers can fix service failures and stimulate service recovery processes (Ford, Sturman, & Heaton, 2011) depending on the best approach to satisfy customers’ expectations. They can achieve service recovery and fix service failure through training employees on the best ways to satisfy guests’ needs based on the guests’ expectations as posted on UGC. However, managers will hardly fulfill these improvements without a good understanding of what customers need and expect from the hotel as far as service experience is concerned. This study used the managers’ application of UGC to imply monitoring and responding to UGC to manage and improve the HSE in hotels. Furthermore, the improvement of HSE depends on whether managers understand what HSE entails. This way, the enhancement of the HSE will be effective.

2.2 Hospitality Service Experience

Service experience is complex and has highly drawn researchers’ attention. Scholars far and wide have made multiple attempts to provide an understanding of service experiences, for instance, researchers in the health sector (Maidin, Sidin, Rivai, & Safar, 2019), transport sector (Olsson, Friman, Pareigis & Edvardsson, 2012), and hospitality sector (Bravo et al. 2019; Mohsin & Lengler, 2015) with no agreeable definition. HSE is a vital factor in customer satisfaction. It is

a phenomenon that brings together different players (Heinonen & Stradvik, 2011), including customers, service provider representatives, and other social experience networks. Service experience is based on subjective service evaluation (Luoh & Tsaour, 2011). It is an internally operated phenomenon (Chang & Horng, 2010; Manhas & Tukamushaba, 2015). A series of service encounters (Voorhees et al., 2017), nurtured before, during, and after the actual service delivery. It entails subjective reactions and feelings (Manhas & Tukamushaba, 2015; Jaakkola, Helkkula, & Aarikka-Stenroos, 2015), cognitive and affective (Olsson et al. 2012); Pareigis et al. 2012), and behavioural (Pareigis et al. 2012) responses from customers. These definitions are insufficient in their capacities. For example, in Olsson et al.'s definition, one might object to the lack of the service encounter's behavioral characteristic. However, this study adopted Pareigis et al. (2012) definition, which emphasizes the behavioural, cognitive, and affective response concepts of service experience since it is internally operated and causes behavioral responses in a customer.

Researchers conceptualised service experience differently (Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Ali et al., 2015). In the transport sector, service experience has been measured using the Satisfaction with Travel Scale (STS), which comprised a cognitive and affective dimension. The cognitive dimension comprises service quality, while the affective dimension comprises positive activation and deactivation (boredom, enthusiasm, relaxation, and stress) (Olsson et al. 2012). In another study by Manhas and Tukamushaba (2015) service experience was measured using service quality, service delivery, hotel ambience, quality of staff and amenities, experience quality and quality of aesthetics as the primary metrics. Comparatively, service experience has also been conceptualised based on the core service, employee service, and service scape (Bravo et al., 2019). In their meta-analytic review, Vasconcelos et al. (2015) concluded that service experience has three dimensions: predispositions, interactions, and reactions inclined on a cognitive, affective and behavioral pillars, respectively. Predispositions are customers' inclinations. These are the customers' preconceived images from previous experiences and other customer needs. The interaction is also termed as transformational and is the most controllable by hotels and involves the service process with employees and the service system. The interactions define the moment of truth. On the other hand, reactions are outputs and include emotions, feelings, and intentions after service delivery. Vasconcelos et al. used these dimensions to define and elaborate on the concept of service experience, arguing that service organisations have not

established control over predispositions and reactions. These dimensions familiarise the study concepts used in this study and therefore, the study adopted Vasconcelos et al.'s conceptualization.

2.3 Theoretical Review

Various theories have been used in various studies to explain customers participation in online review sites and their adoption of UGC. For example, Babic Rosario et al.'s (2016) was guided by **Bibb Latané's social impact theory** and the herding behavior of customers. They argued that the reliance on the volume of peer generated information in customer decision making is guided by people tending to follow the behavior of others in avoidance of risks in an environment. While this theory explains the customers adoption of UGC, it did not suit this study as this study focused on managers' application of UGC. Deng et al. (2021) adopted the service recovery and affect theories in developing the AAAA (Acknowledgement, Account, Action, Affect) typology. The service recovery theory by Valerie Zeithaml, A. Parasuraman, and Leonard Berrystates that if a customer had a bad experience and received an effective and prompt response to their issues, the customer will be more loyal than a customer whose never had a bad experience at all in the same facility. On the other hand, the affect theory by Silvan Tomkins, William James and Antonio Damasio focuses on feelings and emotions as core motives of human behavior and that people tend to maximize positive feelings while minimizing negative feelings. The service recovery and affect theories attempt to explain the study; however, it does not entirely explain all the study concepts adapted in this study. Moreover, the AAAA typology has hardly been tested in any study. This study adopted the AAAA typology guided by the service recovery and affect theories.

This study adopted an 'AAAA' UGC response framework by Deng et al. (2021), an advancement of a triple 'A' typology in Sparks and Bradely (2017). Sparks and Bradely devise the triple 'A' typology to demonstrate how managers respond to negative customer reviews. It comprises acknowledgement, account, and action. Deng et al. modify this typology by adding the concept of affect with reference to the affect and service recovery theories. The 'AAAA' framework was used to conceptualise the independent variable of this study since it reveals how managers apply UGC from a responsive perspective. The affect construct is important because this study involved service experience which is a subjective phenomenon comprised of an affective dimension.

2.4 Managers' Monitoring of UGC and Hospitality Service Experience Enhancement

Hotel managers need detailed information about customers' journeys to manage HSEs effectively. The information in this context, referred to as user-generated content, comprises service experiences posted online as reviews, comments, videos, and photos, thus, a rich information source (Williams et al., 2010; Smyth, Wu & Greene, 2010; Alcázar, Piñero, & de Maya, 2014; Pattison, Venter & Chuchu, 2016; Demba et al., 2019). Customers recently depend on UGC to get a prior experience of experiential goods, for example, services. On this platform, customers post their previous experiences on various travel sites, review sites and social media. As a result, much explicit information about hotels is readily available as UGC, thus influencing other customers differently. This information can be helpful in managing HSEs in hotels.

Customers have been found to apply UGC before visiting a hotel to inform their behavioral intentions. In their article, Cheek, Ferguson & Tanner (2013) argue that local and international social media sites receive millions of posts. This argument is supported by Trip Advisor (2017), which records over 500 million reviews daily, potentially giving information about the hotel style and amenities, service, value, cleanliness, and price, among others. Moreover, Ipsos Media CT and Crowdtap noted that 1% of Millennials trust a brand through an advertisement. Most importantly, Cheek et al. (2013) investigated the importance of embedding a social media plan in organizational strategies. The researchers also assessed the impact of developing a social media plan on small and medium enterprises. They concluded that small and medium-sized enterprises' social media plans should have a customer-centric focus and involve everyone in an organization. Notably, the article shows the importance of organizations' involvement in social media through strategy alignment. However, it only surmises with no compelling data to support the importance of incorporating social media plans and organizational strategies. This study used hotel managers as the primary informers and unit of analysis to assess the managers' application (monitoring and responding) of UGC and determine the influence of the application on the HSE.

Narangajavana, Fiol, Tena, Artola, and García's (2017) study was conducted in Spain. The study examined the motivation of UGC to obtain tourist information and the effect on tourists' expectations. Their findings indicate that customers trusted UGC to shape their expectations about a place according to the user-generated content. The researchers used structural equation

modeling (SEM) to analyze multiple indicators. Narangajavana et al. (2017) is one study that focuses on the relationship between UGC and customer-centric factors of hotel choice and patronage. However, the study remains silent on managers' usage or motivation to use UGC. This study focused on the managerial perspective of UGC application and its relationship with enhancing the HSE.

Alcázar et al.'s (2014) identified the impact of UGC on the affective and cognitive dimensions of a destination image. The study comprised 164 participants and used multiple regression analysis. Findings indicated that UGC affected the image of a tourist destination. Their study raises enrollment biasness because of the use of incentives when recruiting participants. Notably, tourists' application of UGC affects the image of a tourist destination. However, the management application of UGC and its effect on the customers' HSE is not captured despite the importance of managing the experience at the destination.

Demba et al. (2019) used structural equation modelling to analyze data from 330 participants when conducting a study to show the importance of UGC in creating relationships and sales with customers. Their findings reveal a positive relationship between UGC application by customers and brand trust and purchase intention. Considering the subjectivity of UGC, the researchers recommend that hotel managers engage with customers online to understand the factors linked to brand trust and purchase intention. Demba et al. (2019) and Narangajavana et al. (2017) dwell on customer choice factors of UGC application. This study addressed the management perspective of UGC applications and how managers' applications influence the HSE.

Nair and Radhakrishnan (2019) conducted a conceptual study in the United Arab Emirates to compare eWOM and traditional word of mouth, describing eWOM importance and influence on consumer decision-making. The study primarily depended on already existing information documented by other researchers. Nair and Radhakrishnan's study highlighted essential parameters relevant to eWOM, including its usage, potential, and comprehension. However, the study overlooks managerial usage of eWOM despite being cognizant of the potential and comprehension of eWOM. Moreover, it also neglects the fast-changing dynamics of eWOM. This study was cognizant of UGC usage by the management. It looked at its influence on the HSE noting the commoditization of service in the hospitality industry. Most importantly, this study involved hotel managers as the critical informers of the study.

Ladhari and Michaud (2015) examined the effect of UGC on customers' hotel choices. The study focused on how UGC on Facebook influenced booking intentions, trust, perception, and attitude towards a hotel. The primary unit of analysis of the experimental study was 800 university students. The study findings indicated the existence of an influence between UGC on Facebook and customers booking intentions, trust, perception, and attitude towards a hotel. Furthermore, internet users' trust in UGC has a moderating effect on the relationship. Ladhari and Michaud (2015) study majors on the precursors of HSEs; however, it remains silent on the effect of UGC on HSE. Besides, their study inclines on UGC generated on Facebook. This study adopted a holistic approach and sought to test the null hypothesis that managers' application of UGC does not influence HSE enhancement among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya.

In another study, Ait-Bakrim, Attouch, Guerreiro, and Perez-Aranda, (2019) found that high category hotels used review sites more than lower category hotels in the Moroccan context. The study sample comprised 48 hotel managers who were randomly selected and data analyzed - using correlational analysis. Their study is not generalizable due to the small sample size and focuses on the Moroccan market. This study included a higher sample size of 164 hotel managers from high-end hotels and focused on the Kenyan market. Nonetheless, this study borrows the concept of review site usage among high-end hotels in the Kenyan context.

Babic Rosario et al. (2016) conducted a meta-analysis of 96 studies from 40 platforms covering 26 categories. The meta-analytic review showed that eWOM volume had a strong effect on sales than the eWOM valence. Babic Rosario et al.'s study did not discuss service experience as a variable in eWOM. This study borrowed Babic Rosario's conceptualization of UGC monitoring, which comprised UGC valence and volume. Nonetheless, Babic Rosario et al.'s study was focused on sales as a correlational variable, thus warranting this study to determine the UGC's influence on HSE using multiple regression analysis.

Smyth et al. (2010) conducted their research in Ireland. Their results show an increased rating among Irish hotels following a Trip Advisor effect in an experimental study. The study was based on 30000 reviews on Trip Advisor. They attribute this improvement to an increased hotel manager's awareness of UGC on Trip Advisor. Smyth et al.'s study made assumptions about whether managers effectively applied UGC to warrant the increased rating. While their study

hints at managers' application of UGC, it is handy to show the extent of managers' application of UGC (monitoring and response) in the Kenyan hotel industry.

A recent exploratory study on a Brazilian chain of hostels, interviewing owners and hostel managers regarding customer feedback and customer satisfaction surveys, showed the acquisition of a competitive edge, improved service, and marketing performance (Queiroz Falcão et al. 2018) as accompanying benefits of checking and using the feedback for improvement of the organization. Queiroz Falcão et al. support the study's significance in boosting competitive advantage.

Arguably, authors have stated that professionals lack knowledge of managing UGC successfully (e.g., Barsky & Frame, 2009; Burgess et al., 2015; Babić Rosario et al., 2016). More important, though, is that prior studies have extensively deepened the knowledge base on consumer application of UGC. Several corroborate the positive relationship with factors around hotel choice; however, there is a scarcity of studies investigating the managerial application of UGC. Existing studies do not indicate how and intensity managers monitor UGC and its influence on the HSE. For example, the methodology employed in studies such as AitBakrim et al. (2019) gave non-representative data; others differed on the findings; others only dwelled on customer-centric factors with none shading light on managers' application of UGC and how it influences HSE. Therefore, these discrepancies warranted this study to assess managerial monitoring of UGC and its influence on HSE among 3-5-star hotels in the Kenyan context. UGC is resourceful in showing service failures, stimulation of service recovery, customer satisfaction, loyalty, and a hotel's competitive advantage. As a result, hotels are expected to enhance their service by applying UGC, as displeased customers would mostly share their experiences with a vast audience.

2.5 Managers' perception of Hospitality Service Experience

Service experience is crucial to the success of a hotel business like other hospitality products such as food, beverages, and accommodation. However, its complexity makes it difficult for hotel managers to manage it effectively. Moreover, high end hotels are believed to be keen on providing memorable experiences compared to low-end hotels (Cetin & Walls, 2016). Service experience is the result of different service deliveries interpreted subjectively by customers. Studies have been conducted to understand what service experience entails and its importance in

the hospitality sector. Also, studies have attempted to explain how customers and managers perceive most if not all of its components individually, with no study giving evidence of a holistic service experience perception among hotel managers.

According to Vasconcelos et al. (2015) and Pareigis et al. (2012), Service experience comprises three concepts. These concepts include cognitive, affective, and behavioural concepts. In this context, the cognitive concept comprises a customer's preconceived knowledge, thoughts, wishes, needs, or beliefs concerning a hotel's attributes. The affective concept comprises the customer's feelings concerning a hotel's service encounter or interaction (Alcázar et al., 2014; Tan, Muskat & Johns, 2019; Vasconcelos et al., 2015). The feelings include interaction with the company staff, the technology employed, the service duration, and the nature of the operation. The behavioural concept comprises the emotions, behaviours, intentions, feelings, and learnings that arise from converting resources used during the interaction. These behavioural factors arise from predispositions (Vasconcelos et al., 2015). The three dimensions loop to form subjective service experiences, which may be managed effectively if well understood by hotel managers.

Managers' perception of service experience originates from understanding a customer's needs and expectations, as Lacle (2013) deduced. Lacle's study focused on managers' perception of service quality in their management process. Their findings showed managers to have inconsistent perceptions of service quality across different contexts. The study adopted a qualitative approach. While Lacle's study focused on managers' perception, it overlooked other components of service experience, focusing on service quality which is an antecedent of service experience. The current study adopted a holistic approach to how managers perceived the HSE among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya. Notably, Manhas and Tukamushaba (2015) state that service experience comprises service quality, service delivery, staff and amenities, hotel ambience, quality of aesthetics, and experience.

The managers' role is to craft and improve service according to their understanding of customers' expectations in service quality, service delivery, quality of staff and amenities, hotel ambience, quality of aesthetics, and experience quality (Manhas & Tukamushaba, 2015). Their study was conducted among four-star hotels in India. The study's primary objective was to understand customer expectations and essential factors that improve the service experience when the guest is staying in a hotel. The study findings were based on data collected from individual

customers and hotel managers using structured questionnaires. The results show a disparity between guest expectations and the actual experiences. As a result, there is a need to improve customers experience in the hospitality industry. Besides Manhas and Tukamushab's study in India, their study is mainly inclined towards the customer as the experience focus. Therefore, this study examined how managers perceived HSE among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya, with service as the primary focus.

Cetin and Walls (2016) conducted a study to explore guests' and managers' hospitality experiences through a qualitative study approach. Turkey-based thirty-three luxury hotels and fourteen hospitality managers were interviewed to determine factors that affect customer experiences. The findings indicate that hotel managers consider the physical environment as necessary. In contrast, guests consider the physical environment and social surroundings as necessary. Cetin and Walls's study is not generalizable since Turkey is a developed country while Kenya is a developing nation. This study was conducted in Kenya using a quantitative approach, with managers as the primary informers.

Kiange(2011) did a study to assess the gaps in service quality based on managers' perceptions and customer expectations in 5-star hotels in Nairobi. The research findings were documented based on data collected from forty managers and eighty guests through questionnaires. Findings indicate that managers understand customers' expectations regarding service quality; however, there is a disparity in service delivery. While Kiange (2011) states that managers understand service quality concerning customer expectations, Lacle (2013) found managers to have an inconsistent perception of service quality. Furthermore, the two studies only discuss one component of service experience, leaving out other critical components such as quality of staff, amenities, and aesthetics, to mention a few. This study was holistic since it looked at all the components of the HSE. Moreover, it sought to achieve consistent results based on a holistic approach to the HSE.

In a recent study, Lahouel and Montargot (2020) note a significant gap in how managers managed experiences and the appropriate touch points children (as customers) found important in their experiences. The study's primary aim was to explore the management of service encounters and strategic experiential modules in achieving a lasting experience for children. The study adopted a qualitative approach with thirty-five 5-star hotel managers were interviewed to

inform the study. This study adopts a quantitative approach. Its key informants were three hotel managers: the general manager, front office/ guest relations manager and the marketing manager.

Research findings (E.g., Cetin & Walls, 2016; Manhas & Tukamushaba, 2015; Kiange, 2011) showed inconsistent results on hotel managers' understanding of the aspects that guests find necessary among some of the service experience components (Cetin & Walls, 2016). For example, studies (such as Manahas and Tukamushaba, 2016) document that managers find the physical surrounding important, while Kiange (2011) found managers to have a high perception of service quality. Furthermore, various studies are cognizant of the disparity between managers' perception of service quality, delivery and experience. However, they have utilized varied methodologies unique to the current study. Moreover, managers are expected to manage the HSE of guests regardless of the disparities in perceptions. Previous studies also fall short of the sample sizes used. For example, Cetin and Walls (2016), whose study finding was based on 14 hotel managers despite focusing on customers as the experience focus. These shortfalls warranted this study to conduct a holistic assessment of managers' perception of HSE among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya. Hotel managers can utilise user-generated content containing customers' expectations through the controllable interaction dimension to enhance the HSE. This utilisation will market ideal customer needs, reduce histories of low service quality, and remould negative images.

2.6 Managers' UGC Response and Hospitality Service Experience Enhancement

Scholars have widely acknowledged the relevance of managerial UGC response as a substantive factor in several parameters, with slight variation and no evidence of its effect on HSE. These parameters include service recovery, customer satisfaction, perception, and customers' review behaviour, to mention a few. This argument is supported in the ongoing scholarly conversation on managerial response to UGC.

In an article, Lanz, Fischhof and Lee (2010) discussed how hotels embraced social media where some hotels noticed decreased negative comments after customer engagement via Trip Advisor. Others like the HK Hotels in New York shifted their attention from a one-on-one conversation with guests to Trip Advisor comments, where even the politest guest who would hardly share their issues commented explicitly. Hotels practically engage with customers online in various

ways, for example, through taking action to improve the hotel's physical environment or social interaction with guests based on the comments posted online. The article informs this study, and the service experience enhancement concept is borrowed and researched in the Kenyan context. Most importantly, the article only gives practical examples as applied in various Western hotels that primarily comprise developed countries.

A recent study by Wang and Chaudhry (2018) investigated the effect of managers' public response to online reviews on popular travel websites on subsequent reviews. The findings show that managers' responses significantly influence subsequent customer opinions, indicating that managers' response to reviews positively affects subsequent reviews. The study used textual and multiple regression analysis to analyse the data from Trip Advisor. Wang and Chaudhry's study informs this study on the positive influence of managers' responses on subsequent reviews. However, their study is silent on whether the positive comments arise from an increased service experience or the availability of managers' responses on Trip Advisor. This current study sought to bridge the gap in the influence of managerial response to UGC on HSE. Furthermore, Wang and Chaudhry's (2018) findings are biased toward the North American and European regions, which are developed, while this study focused on the Kenyan market.

Avant (2013) postulated that responding to reviews online is a reviving strategy for a hotel's marketing capability; it plays a vital role in the recovery of a hotel, regardless of the review's positivity or negativity. Notably, responding to negative reviews increases intent to stay, hotel image and guest return. The study might not be generalized as the participants with bias may choose themselves into the study sample because of self-administered online questionnaires. The current study tested the null hypothesis that managerial response to UGC does not influence HSE enhancement since Avant (2013) focused on the antecedents of HSE. Also, the data collection procedure comprised physical data collection using structured questionnaires.

Hotels that respond to UGC in the online space reclaim a marketing potential; therefore, current and prospective customers decide based on available UGC and the hotel's response to UGC (O'Connor, 2010). O'Connor's study involved 100 hotels in London, data collected on Trip Advisor and analysed using content analysis. The study informs the significance of the current study as it shows its importance in the conversation of UGC and its effect on hospitality. However, O'Connor's research is silent on the drive behind reclaiming market capability. The

current study inquired about the effect of managers' response on HSE, which the researcher considers a precursor to marketing potential. The hotel saves significant marketing costs while reclaiming the market, receiving high and repetitive clientele, high customer expenditure, and increased customer referrals, according to Seth (2012).

Deng et al.'s (2021) study was guided by the affect and service recovery theories to develop a framework that classified managers' responses to develop an "AAAA" framework comprising acknowledgement, affect, account, and action to enhance firm performance. The study involved 37896 managers' responses from 390 hotels in three cities in the United States. Sentiment analysis and topic modelling techniques were used to evaluate a response classification framework. The findings indicated that action and acknowledgement had a significant relationship with future review ratings. This study borrows the "AAAA" framework to measure managerial response to UGC. Most importantly, this study is different because it looks into the effect of managers' responses on HSE.

Perez-Aranda et al. (2018) conducted a study similar to Deng et al. (2021) to develop a measurement model for managers' responses to UGC. Perez-Aranda et al. surveyed 335 hotels using interviews and questionnaires, with hotel managers as the key informants, other practitioners and marketing experts. The study developed a 32-item UGC-Review scale comprising six constructs. The scale was found to demonstrate dimensionality and reliability. They used principal component analysis (PCA) and reliability tests. The proposed UGC-R model was considered unsuitable over the "AAAA" framework because it hardly addressed the valence of UGC. Furthermore, the model is aimed at improving a firm's marketing strategies. The current study primarily focused on enhancing the HSE.

In their article, Barsky and Frame (2009) stated that hotel managers are surmised to lack the knowledge of how to respond to UGC. The article focused on the best practices of handling online reviews, especially on Trip Advisor. The current study builds on the submission by Barsky and Frame, thus building on the managers' lack of know-how on UGC monitoring and response in recent years and its effect on the HSE.

Lui, Bartosiak, Piccoli and Sadhya (2018) studied the impact of managers' quality and quantity of utilization of online review site systems. Their findings show that the quantity of online reviews' usage positively impacted the hotel's competitive performance, primarily if the reviews

concerned extreme issues. While Lui et al. (2018) consider the quantity (how much) of review response as essential, their study contradicts Deng et al. (2021), who consider the “how” (quality) element of UGC response as necessary. This study sought to clarify whether the managers’ response helped enhance the HSE with the quality and quantity elements taken into consideration through valence, volume and response to UGC.

Existing studies, especially recent studies, show contrasting findings on managerial response to UGC. While some studies show hotel managers respond to UGC, others indicate dismal performance. In some cases, there is no managerial response completely. Furthermore, the managerial response has been found to have a positive relationship with variables such as a firm’s marketing strategies, future review ratings (Deng et al., 2021), hotel recovery (Avant, 2013), hotel online ranking and revenue (Xie, So & Wang, 2017), ultimate customer satisfaction (Deng et al., 2021), hotel performance enhancement (Lui et al., 2018), review behaviour (Barsky & Frame, 2009), positive valence, trustworthiness and favourable inference (Sparks, So & Bradley, 2016). Therefore, the current study was warranted to test the null hypothesis that managers’ UGC response does not influence the HSE.

Researchers widely acknowledge the effect of hotel managers’ response to UGC. In prior research, hotel managers’ response has positively affected various parameters. While studies have indicated a positive change in the different parameters after managerial UGC response, some studies note a dismal performance on the managerial UGC response, and others contradict one another. Categorically, there is no study addressing the extent of managerial UGC response among hotels in the Kenyan context. This study sought to address the gap in the extent of managers’ response to UGC and its influence on HSE enhancement among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya

2.7 Gaps in knowledge

Scholars and industry experts have described UGC as the fastest and richest online source of information for sharing tourism experiences. As a result, web users (customers) have continuously gained wielding power on the web, influencing other users’ behavior, including prospective, previous, and in-house hotel guests. While UGC can be a great information source for managers, marketers, and scholars to obtain a clear picture of customer experiences for critical decision-making, previous studies have hardly assessed the extent of managers' usage of

UGC. The studies have, instead, paid close attention to customer-centric UGC factors. Furthermore, a 2009 survey showed a minimal application of UGC among hotel managers. Several studies have been conducted on UGC over the last 13 years, with none showing the extent to which managers apply UGC among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya if any. The application of UGC is instrumental for managers to make important decisions about HSE improvement. The lack of UGC information makes managing service experiences in hotels difficult.

Previous studies have surmised that managers lack knowledge of customer expectations. Other studies have attempted to justify the disconnect between customers' and managers' understanding of service experience. The findings are hardly consistent. Nonetheless, the studies have methodological discrepancies such as low sample size, biased sample technique, and varying units of analysis. Moreover, there is inadequate information and no clear finding on managers' perception of HSEs among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya. A clear finding on hotel managers' understanding of service experience, posted as UGC, is critical for successfully deducing what guests find important in services and servicescape within the hotel context. On the contrary, there is barely a clear finding on managers' perception of HSE which this study sought to achieve.

Previous studies have shown the relationship and influence between UGC and customer satisfaction, hotel revenue, review valence, hotel rating, hotel image, service recovery, and failure. HSE is a precursor to most of the abovementioned factors. As a result, it was considered that UGC monitoring and response would influence HSE enhancement. Therefore, this study sought to test the null hypothesis that managers' monitoring and response to UGC do not significantly influence HSE enhancement among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section comprises the research approach, design, study area, population, sample size, sample techniques, data collection instrument, variable measurement, validity, reliability, data analysis methods, and ethical considerations of the study.

3.1 Research Approach and Design

This research adopted a quantitative research approach. A quantitative approach entails simplifying variables into a measurable set of ideas, examining their relationships, and using numbered data to make statistical inferences. A quantitative approach served well based on the researcher's philosophical underpinnings, which dictate a deterministic philosophy. A deterministic philosophy aims to establish the truth behind UGC usage by managers to enhance the HSE and arrive at a representative sample.

This study employed a survey design. It encompassed the collection of quantitative data from a sample using a questionnaire. These data were analysed descriptively and inferentially. A survey design suited this study due to the amount of time available, the need for representation of the findings through a sample, the quantitative nature of the study (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009; Creswell, 2018), determination of the possible relationship among the variables and the need to analyse data using descriptive and inferential statistics.

3.2 Study Area

This study was conducted on randomly selected 3-5-star hotels in Kenya. According to the Tourism Sector Performance report (2019), 73.9% of tourists visit Kenya for a holiday, therefore, Kenya was deemed suitable study area for the HSE. Besides, the tourism sector performance has grown due to various reasons, digital marketing being among them.

3.3 Population of the Study

The study population comprised top-level managers including general managers, guest/ customer relations managers, and marketing managers from three to five-star hotels in Kenya. This group of managers was considered because they are among the key players in the HSE management. Besides, these managers connect with customers in the online space by monitoring or responding to UGC.

According to the Tourism Regulatory Authority (2019), there are 147 three to five-star hotels in Kenya as shown in appendix 5. By considering at least three respondents from each hotel (general managers, guest/ customer relations managers, and marketing managers), the study population was estimated to be 441 hotel managers from Kenya's targeted hotels.

3-5-star hotels were considered luxury hotels, because they are most inclined to create experiences apart from the regular provision of products and services. This study also covered 3-5-star hotels because their customers tend to have high expectations and not only look for the mere provision of products and services but also seek experience from the service (Cetin & Walls, 2016). Several studies indicated that HSE reactions are posted online as UGC expressing dissatisfaction, service gaps, and failures and satisfaction.

3.4 Study Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

According to Thornhill et al. (2009), the minimum sample size was determined at a 95% confidence level and a $\pm 5\%$ margin of error, using a z score of 1.96. An estimated proportion of piloted responses expected was assumed at 50% of hotel managers' sample (Saunders et al. 2009; Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Therefore, the sample was determined as follows:

$$n = p\% * q\% * \left\{ \frac{z}{e\%} \right\}^2$$

$$n = 50\% \times 50\% \times \left\{ \frac{1.96}{5} \right\}^2 = 384.16$$

Where n is the minimum sample size required, p% is the proportion belonging to hotel managers, q% is the proportion not belonging to hotel managers, z is the z-value of the corresponding level of confidence, e% is the margin of error required.

$$n' = \frac{n}{1 + \left(\frac{n}{N} \right)}$$

$$n' = \frac{384.16}{1 + \left(\frac{384.16}{444} \right)} = 205.96$$

Therefore, the adjusted minimum sample size was 206 hotel managers. Where n' is the adjusted minimum sample size, n is the minimum sample size, N is the sample frame (Saunders et al. 2009).

The study employed a multistage sampling technique to represent the widely dispersed population (Saunders et al. 2009). The first stage comprised a stratified sampling technique based on discrete characteristics of the population according to Saunders et al., that is, administrative boundaries and star rating. Table 3.1 below shows classified hotel distribution based on administrative boundaries and star rating drawn from the list of classified hotels in Kenya (TRA, 2019) in appendix 5.

Table 3.1: Classified Hotel Distribution based on Administrative Boundaries and Star Rating Strata

Population Strata	3 star	4 star	5 star	Tot al
Nairobi	14	19	11	44
Kajiado	2	1	0	3
Machakos	1	1	0	2
Mombasa	8	5	1	14
Kwale	1	5	4	10
Kilifi	2	3	1	6
Taita	2	0	0	2
Narok	4	15	3	22
Nakuru	5	7	2	14
Kisumu	5	1	0	6
Embu	1	0	0	1
Meru	1	0	0	1
Laikipia	2	1	2	5
Nyeri	5	3	0	8
Isiolo	1	2	0	3
Samburu	0	2	0	2
Uasin Gishu	1	1	0	2
Elgeyo Marakwet	2	0	0	2
Total	57	66	24	147

The second stage entailed proportionate sampling such that each stratum representation comprised a relative proportion of strata to the whole population. The proportion was calculated using Dalen (1962) formula below. The last sampling stage was simple random sampling, which drew the required number of hotels from each stratum. Three hotel managers were drawn from each of the sampled hotels.

$$\text{Actual sample} = \frac{\text{Population Strata}}{\text{Estimated Population}} \times \text{Adjusted minimum sample size}$$

For example,

In the case of 3-star rated hotels in Nairobi, 14 is the population strata, 147 the estimated population and 206 managers, with an assumption that each hotel has all the three managers, the general manager, front office or guest relations manager and marketing manager. In order to get the number hotels to draw the required minimum sample size,

$$=206 \div 3$$

$$= 68.6667 \text{ hotels.}$$

Therefore, the minimum sample of hotels was 69, because hotels cannot be expressed in decimal, rather they are expressed in whole numbers.

To get the proportionate sample size of 3-star rated hotels in Nairobi, Dalen (1962) formula was used. Where,

$$\text{Actual Sample} = \frac{14}{147} \times 69 = 6.5714$$

Like hotels, humans cannot be expressed as fractions or decimals. Meaning, 6.5714 would be rounded off to a whole number, 7. The same computation was done to all the strata in the sample. Table 3.2 below shows the actual sample size that was used to draw respondents.

Table 3.2: Sampled Distribution of 3-5-star hotels in Kenya

Population Strata	3 star	4 star	5 star	Total
Nairobi	7	9	6	22
Kajiado	1	1	0	2
Machakos	1	1	0	2
Mombasa	4	3	1	8
Kwale	1	3	2	6
Kilifi	1	2	1	4
Taita	1	0	0	1
Narok	2	7	2	11
Nakuru	3	4	1	8
Kisumu	3	1	0	4
Embu	1	0	0	1
Meru	1	0	0	1
Laikipia	1	1	1	3
Nyeri	3	2	0	5
Isiolo	1	1	0	2
Samburu	0	1	0	1
Uasin Gishu	1	1	0	2
Elgeyo Marakwet	1	0	0	1
Total	33	37	14	84

The researcher collected data from 252 hotel managers derived from the actual sample size of hotels after consideration of 3 hotel managers per hotel as discussed above.

That is,

= 84 x 3

= 252 hotel managers

3.5 Data Collection Instrument

An Internet search of hotels that are applying UGC through any form of managerial response provided on the Trip Advisor official website was used to establish availability of UGC. Trip Advisor is the most used for UGC accessibility (Xiang, Du, Ma & Fan, 2017). The study employed self-administered questionnaires whereby the questionnaires were administered online and some delivered to hotel managers to respond.

The questionnaires were composed of close-ended matrix questions designed to collect the opinion, behaviour, and attributes (Saunders et al. 2009) of respondents addressing the study's specific objectives. Likert scales composed of numbers and their descriptions were used to rank or rate subjective and intangible aspects of the study (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003), for example, managers' perception of HSE, the extent of a managers' application of UGC. The adoption of a Likert scale will be instrumental in reducing the subjectivity of responses. A customary section, "other" (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003), were included to capture additional information to reduce the limitation of responses to the researcher's knowledge.

The scale was composed of 6 responses ranging from "large extent" to "not at all" to assess the extent of a managers' application of UGC. Where 1=not at all, 2=small extent, 3=quite a small extent, 4=some extent, 5=quite a large extent, 6=large extent. Very important to unimportant will be used to assess the managers' perception and HSE. 1=unimportant, 2=little importance, 3=moderately important, 4=neutral, 5=important, 6=Very important.

3.5.1 Potential Bias

The study may experience a selection bias especially among general managers. Simundic (2013) states that when a given sample becomes under-represented over another over represented sample, it is referred to as a selection bias. The number of general managers in the study could

potentially be bigger than the marketing and front office managers because of the difference in hotel sizes, organizational structures and roles. For example, in some hotels the marketing and front office managers do not handle guest comments in the travel and social sites. In other hotels, there may be no marketing or front office manager, and their duties taken by the general manager.

3.6 Measurement of Variables

Neuman (2007) categorises variable measurement into two processes that are conceptualisation and operationalisation. The abstract constructs of the variables are defined as conceptually and operationalised by linking them to measurement procedures or techniques. Managers' application of UGC comprises *monitoring* and *responding* to UGC as the main concepts. HSE, on the other hand, comprises *cognitive*, *affective*, and *behavioural* responses.

Managers' application of UGC was operationalised as follows, in the style of Babić Rosario et al. (2016), where monitoring comprised checking the volume and valence. *Volume* is the total amount of UGC elements posted by previous customers. *Valence* entails the positivity, negativity or neutrality of the content generated by previous customers.

Response was operationalised in the words of Deng et al. (2021). Response comprises the acknowledgement, accountancy, affection, or action taken towards UGC. *Acknowledgement* is defined as recognition from the hotel to the reviewer to provide feedback concerning the hotel. For example, apologies, appreciation, acceptance of responsibility, or disputing issues. *Account* entails a rationalisation given to a reviewer by the hotel in a contextual manner that would be understandable by the reviewer—for example, reframing, justification, or refusal. *Action* is defined as a step the hotel takes to address an identified problem in delivery. For example, it invites the reviewer to contact the hotel to scrutinise further, arrive at a consensus, revisit the hotel, contact financial compensation, promising future action, and invite back. *Affection* is the negative or positive emotions the responder expresses according to an underlying circumstance. Affect may either be positive or negative. These emotions can be regret, shame, embarrassment, worry, disappointment, happiness, contentment, excitement, and pleasure.

HSE was operationalised as follows, according to Vasconcelos et al. (2015): *cognitive* as predispositions entailing preconceived images from previous experience, customer needs, values, desires, wishes, tendencies, and customer provisions in social, cultural and environmental

contexts. *Affective* as interactions comprise various processes facilitated by the organisation in providing service such as physical contact occurring between the customers and service providers, the physical and technological environment during a service encounter. *Behavioural* response entails the reactions: behaviours, feelings, learnings, perception of value, image, and customer intentions concerning service. Behaviours lead to feelings, emotions, decisions, actions, and perceptions. In contrast, learnings lead to judgments about the organisational image, service quality, and value perception gained from a hotel experience.

3.7 Pilot testing

A pilot study entailed the involvement of research supervisors to achieve content validity. A minimum of 10 hotel managers (Fink, 2003, as cited by Saunders et al. 2009) is recommended for student questionnaires. The hotel managers were picked from Kisumu hotels due to the researcher's proximity to attain face validity. The hotel managers were asked about the clarity, ambiguity, omissions, and attractiveness of the questionnaire at large. Further, the data collection instrument was checked for reliability using person correlation coefficients.

3.8 Data Analysis

Data was coded, entered, and screened for errors, including incorrectly entered data, missing values, outliers, and normality. Exploratory Data Analysis (EDA) was conducted in SPSS using the following analysis methods: frequencies, descriptives, skewness and kurtosis, and box plots. Incorrectly entered data was assessed using frequency tables and referred back to the hard copies of the correction questionnaires. Missing values were assessed through the descriptives of all variables and addressed using the series mean method. Outliers were assessed using box plots. The normality of data was assessed using skewness and kurtosis.

Descriptive statistics from SPSS software such as means scores and standard deviations were used to assess the extent managers' application of UGC and managers' perception of HSE. To determine the influence of managers' UGC response, and monitoring on HSE enhancement, multiple regression analysis in SPSS software was used. Multiple regression analysis is used to determine whether a group of independent variables predicts a dependent variable (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). This prediction was made based on the regression model below:

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \varepsilon_i$$

Where,

Y is the dependent variable (hospitality service experience), β_1 is the coefficient of first predictor (monitoring) X_1 , β_2 is the coefficient of the second predictor (response) X_2 , ε_i is the difference between predicted and the observed value of Y for the i^{th} participant, X is an independent variable and α is the constant.

3.8.1 Reliability and validity of instrumentation

3.8.1.1 Reliability

A pilot study was conducted on hotel managers within Kisumu city hotels twice at different times for a test-retest reliability measure. Results from both tests were correlated with each other. A correlation of the scores in both tests showed a test of alternate form reliability. The reliability of data collection instruments was also tested using the internal consistency technique. Scores from a single test administered in a pilot study to a sample of respondents in hotels located in Kisumu were used. Cronbach’s Coefficient Alpha (Kuder-Richardson [K-R] 20 formula) was then computed to determine how the items correlate. A high coefficient of above 0.80 implied a high correlation of the items hence homogeneity of data (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Therefore, the data collection tool was reliable as shown in table 3.3 below.

Table 3.3: Reliability of the Data Collection Tool

		Pilot
	No. of Items	Cronbach Alpha
Monitoring	6	0.947
Response	14	0.883
HSE	25	0.926

3.8.1.2 Validity

Content validity entails the extent to which an instrument measures what it is expected to measure (Creswell, 2018). Content validity was achieved through an extant review of the literature. Construct validity measures the extent to which data obtained represents the theoretical concept (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Criterion-related validity is the ability of a measure to achieve correct predictions currently and in the future (Saunders et al. 2009).

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The researcher values authenticity, integrity, confidentiality, and privacy. The researcher sought approval and consent from relevant authorities. First the research underwent university approval

through Maseno Ethical Review Committee (MUERC), *the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI)* and later the hotel management to get consent for research in the Kenyan public spaces and data collection from the hotel managers through self-administered questionnaires.

During the collection of data, the researcher sought consent from participants while fully disclosing the true purpose of the study before letting them participate in the study. The researcher also built trust and the conveying of extent of expected disruption upon gaining access to the hotel facilities. The participants were involved as collaborators in the study to avoid the exploitation of the respondents. Moreover, the researcher asked only questions stated in the data collection tool to avoid the collection of harmful information (Creswell, 2018).

All perspectives of the study results are reported honestly, including the contrary findings to prevent taking sides and report of positive results only. The researcher protected the anonymity and privacy of the respondents by assigning number codes to questionnaires. Far from the data analysis, the researcher has given credits to work done by other authors through the APA referencing to avoid plagiarizing, falsifying evidence, authorship, findings, conclusions and data. The researcher will share copies of the report to the stakeholders and participants upon request. Lastly, the raw data and materials used for the study would be kept and not used for more than this research (Creswell, 2018).

3.9.1 Consenting Process

The researcher sought consent of participation in the study from respondents using an informed consent form. The respondents were not be pressured or coerced to take part in the study. The participants were briefed about the nature of the study including its purpose, all the participants involved, whether the study is sponsored, and the extent of progression of the study.

The participants were also informed about the type of data that the researcher required, how the data would have been collected, the amount of time required to collect the data, the target dates to undertake the research and taking part in the study. The implications of participating in the study and rights during the study communicated to the participants. Among the rights included the realization that the participation in the study is voluntary and that they can decline to answer a question or a set of questions in the data collection instrument. Also, the participants could withdraw from the study any time. The participants were also informed about the consequences

of participating in the study and most importantly be assured of data confidentiality and anonymity during and after the study.

The participants were informed about the use of the collected data and how it will be reported. This included the people that had access to the collected data, the dissemination of the results, the assurances of anonymity and confidentiality of participants in the present and in future.

3.9.2 Risks and Potential Benefits

This study sought to study humans and may have questions that may imply on the individual's psychology. Further to that, the study did not have any physical, economic, legal, or social risk to the participant and the organization based on the researcher's risk assessment. However, the study proposal was subject to review by Maseno University Ethics Review Committee. Therefore, participants were required to duly sign an informed consent containing all the risks in the study.

The researcher did not give any incentives to the respondents during collection of data. Respondents from the participating organizations may receive a summary of the study findings upon request and consent from the researcher and university.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Chapter four: Results and Discussion comprises the findings of the study and discussions. The chapter includes data screening, reliability, descriptive statistics for the first and second objective, and inferential statistics for the third and fourth objectives.

4.1 Data Screening

The study comprised 252 participants comprising general, marketing and guest relations managers. Two hundred and fifty-two questionnaires were given out to respondents, and 202 were received back. Among the 202 returned questionnaires, 37 were deemed unsuitable because the responses were not covering 50% of the questionnaire. They were marked as incomplete and therefore dropped. The response rate was 65.48%, with 165 questionnaires considered fit for data entry and analysis. The data had missing values which were replaced using the series mean method. The data was found to be normal, with the skewness statistics ranging between -1.950 and 1.321. The kurtosis statistic ranged between 2.981 and -1.999.

4.2 Reliability

A reliability test was conducted using the Cronbach alpha coefficients in SPSS to assess the internal consistency of the data. Six, fourteen and twenty-five items were measured to test the internal consistency of monitoring, response and HSE constructs. The three concepts had Cronbach coefficients of 0.944, 0.909 and 0.916, respectively. All the constructs were considered to have an internal consistency because the Cronbach alpha coefficients fall within the recommended range of 0.7 and 1. Therefore, the set of items in each construct is closely related to one another.

Table 4.1: Reliability Statistics of the Data Collection Instrument

		Main
	No. of Items	Cronbach Alpha
Monitoring	6	0.944
Response	14	0.909
HSE	25	0.916

4.3 Descriptive Statistics

4.3.1 Demographic distribution

The respondents comprised more males (53.9%) than females (46.1%). The data entailed an age distribution primarily 37 – 47-year-old managers representing 46.1% of the total respondents. The minor age group was respondents above 48 years, who formed 17.6% of the respondents. Among the sampled respondents, most managers had a Bachelor's degree education level (69.7%), and the least had a master's degree (12.7%).

The participants primarily comprised Guest Relations Managers (42.4%), followed by General Managers (38.2%), and the least were Marketing Managers (19.4%). Most participants had more than 11 years of experience in managerial positions (37.6%), 24.2% had 6 -8 years of experience, and the least had below two years of experience (1.2%). Most hotel managers were from four-star hotels (49.7%) and the least were from five-star hotels (21.2%). Three-star hotels were represented by 29.1% of the respondents.

Table 4.2: Demographic Distribution of the Respondents

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Gender	Male	89	53.9
	Female	76	46.1
	Total	165	100.0
Age group	28-37 yrs	60	36.4
	38-47 yrs	76	46.1
	Above 48 yrs	29	17.6
	Total	165	100.0
Education Level	Diploma	29	17.6
	Bachelor Degree	115	69.7
	Master Degree	21	12.7
	Total	165	100.0
Position in Hotel	General Manager	63	38.2
	Guest/Customer Relations Manager	70	42.4
	Marketing Manager	32	19.4
	Total	165	100.0
Years of Experience	Below 2 yrs	2	1.2
	3-5 yrs	32	19.4
	6-8 yrs	40	24.2
	9-11 yrs	29	17.6
	Above 11 yrs	62	37.6
	Total	165	100.0
Hotel Rating	3 star	48	29.1
	4 star	82	49.7
	5 star	35	21.2
	Total	165	100.0

4.4 Managers' application of User Generated Content among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya

The first objective on assessment of the extent of managers' application of UGC among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya was analyzed using mean scores as shown in Table 4.3. The cut-off mean was set at 3. Generally, the findings indicated that managers monitored the valence of UGC ($M=4.889$) to quite a large extent. Monitoring the valence comprised checking the positivity, negativity or neutrality of UGC. Affection followed closely ($M=4.471$) and included the expression of regrets, embarrassment or happiness in UGC responses. The account construct was the least applied ($M=3.467$) by hotel managers. It entailed the refusal, justification and clarification of

issues raised by customers in UGC. Managerial monitoring of UGC was measured using the volume and valence constructs. The valence (positivity, negativity, or neutrality) of UGC had a higher mean score ($M=4.889$), while volume had a lower mean score ($M=4.014$). Checking unfavourable sentiments generated by customers on the web about the hotel was ranked the highest in managerial monitoring ($M= 4.523, SD=1.584$). In contrast, checking the total number of previous contents generated by customers on the web ($M =3.622, SD = 1.439$) was the least ranked.

Checking the positivity, negativity, and neutrality of UGC was more prevalent than the volume (number of UGC generated). This finding contradicts BabicRosario et al. (2016), who found the volume construct to have a stronger impact. The difference in findings is attributed to the difference in the dependent variable. BabicRosario et al. looked into how eWOM affects sales. At the same time, this study was primarily focused on the HSE, which to a great extent, relies on the composition of the content that customers generate rather than the number of contents generated. The composition of UGC can either speak positivity or negativity or be neutral as far as the HSE is concerned. Managers' utilisation of UGC will purposely be to know the ideal customer needs, reduce histories of the low quality of service, and remould negative images. Further, monitoring of UGC should allow managers pinpoint service failures and make critical decisions based on the trends affecting the hotel in management of hospitality service experiences.

Table 4.3: Mean Ranking of the Extent to Which Managers Apply UGC Among 3-5-Star Hotels in Kenya (Monitoring)

	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valence				
Positive content generated by customers	1.00	6.00	4.958	1.454
Negative content generated by customers	1.00	6.00	4.927	1.516
Neutral content generated by customers	1.00	6.00	4.782	1.589
Mean			4.889	
Volume				
Number of unfavourable sentiments about my hotel generated by customers on the web	1.00	6.00	4.523	1.584
Number of favourable sentiments about my hotel generated by customers on the web	1.00	6.00	3.897	1.340
Total amount of previous customer content generated	1.00	6.00	3.622	1.439
Mean			4.014	

The managerial response was measured using the “AAAA” typology comprising Acknowledgement, Account, Action, and Affection. The results are shown in Table 4.4. The accounting construct had the lowest mean score ($M = 3.467$), while the affection construct had the highest mean score ($M = 4.471$).

In the accounting construct, there was a dismal performance in expressing refusal ($M = 2.049$, $SD = 1.258$) and justifying ($M = 3.897$, $SD = 1.572$) issues. Clarifying issues raised by previous customers had a comparatively higher mean score ($M = 4.455$, $SD = 1.520$).

By affection, expressing happiness for a guest's satisfaction ($M = 5.176$, $SD = 1.444$) was ranked highest. It was followed closely by expressing regrets for dissatisfaction experienced by previous customers ($M = 5.006$, $SD = 1.598$). The least ranked was expressing embarrassment for an experienced service gap or failure ($M = 3.230$, $SD = 1.296$).

The action construct comprised inviting back customers to their hotels ($M = 5.249$, $SD = 1.471$) which was ranked highest, followed by promising previous customers future corrections of experienced shortfalls ($M = 5.206$, $SD = 1.438$). The least ranked was assuring customers of financial compensation after service failures or gaps ($M = 2.078$, $SD = 1.116$).

In the acknowledgement, showing appreciation in responses was top-ranked ($M = 5.178$, $SD = 1.414$), followed by apologizing for service gaps and failures ($M = 4.979$, $SD = 1.596$). The least ranked was “response by disputing issues raised by previous customers” ($M = 2.317$, $SD = 1.351$).

The results show that hotel managers primarily responded to UGC by expressing: happiness for a guest's satisfaction, regrets for dissatisfaction experienced by previous customers, and embarrassment for experiencing a service gap or failure. Furthermore, the acknowledgement was ranked with the second highest mean score. It showed that managers respond by showing appreciation, apologizing for service gaps or failures, and disputing issues raised by previous customers. Most managers seem to know the huge UGC audience and the importance of responding to guests' posts on the internet. Managerial response informs other previous and prospective customers of how the hotel handled a particular service failure or gap—as a result, influencing the HSE through the cognitive dimension.

Account was ranked the least, showing that hotel managers hardly responded to UGC by expressing refusal or justifying issues raised by their previous customers. Nonetheless, managers

tend to give clarifications more than refusal or justification. While the customer is always right, there could be instances when the hotel barely has control of the type of experience that a customer receives. For example, a bad experience caused by a customer-to-customer relationship, mistakes from the travel agent, billing issues from the customer's bank during bill settlement, noise from nearby clubs, or periodic maintenance procedures. Therefore, the hotel managers may neglect or clarify their position on the situation or the action taken.

The study findings are similar to Sparks and Bradley's (2017), with slight variations. For example, in Sparks and Bradley's work, acknowledgement, account, and action are the most prevalent responses. This study finds account to be the least applied type of response compared to acknowledgement, affection, and action. The difference in findings may be managers' reservations to express refusal or justify issues raised by previous customers. Instead, managers express their happiness for a great service experience or regrets for dissatisfaction after a service experience.

The study findings also align with Chen et al. (2016). According to Chen et al., managers adopt three primary approaches when handling customer criticisms in eWOM. They publicly respond to positive and negative UGC, privately contact customers ($M = 4.502$, $SD = 1.774$) or take no response. In their responses, hotel managers have been found to dismally justify or express refusal to issues raised by previous customers. This finding is also supported by Chen et al. (2016).

Table 4.4: Mean Ranking of the Extent to Which Managers Apply UGC Among 3-5-Star Hotels in Kenya (Response)

	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Affection				
Express happiness for the satisfaction of a guest in my responses	1.00	6.00	5.176	1.444
Express regrets for dissatisfaction experienced by previous customers when responding	1.00	6.00	5.006	1.598
Express embarrassment for an experienced service gap or failure in my responses	1.00	6.00	3.230	1.296
Mean			4.471	
Acknowledgement				
Show appreciation in my responses to customer-generated information	1.00	6.00	5.176	1.414
Apologize for service gaps and failures in my responses	1.00	6.00	4.979	1.596
Accept responsibility in my responses to customer-generated content	1.00	6.00	4.743	1.550
Respond by disputing issues raised by previous customers	1.00	6.00	2.317	1.351
Mean			4.304	
Action				
Invite customers back to your hotel in my responses	1.00	6.00	5.249	1.471
Promise previous customers future corrections of experienced shortfalls in my responses	1.00	6.00	5.206	1.438
Ask customers to contact the hotel management for further assistance	1.00	6.00	4.502	1.774
Assure customers of financial compensation after service failures or gaps	1.00	6.00	2.078	1.116
Mean			4.259	
Account				
Clarify issues raised by previous customers	1.00	6.00	4.455	1.520
Justify issues that previous customers raise	1.00	6.00	3.897	1.572
Express refusal of issues raised by previous customers	1.00	6.00	2.049	1.258
Mean			3.467	

4.5 Managers' perception of hospitality service experience among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya

Mean scores and standard deviation were used to analyse the second objective on managers' perception of HSE among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya, as shown in Table 4.5. Managers' understanding of HSE is critical in its enhancement. Therefore, this objective's main purpose was to assess managers' understanding of HSE among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya.

Generally, the behavioural dimension had the highest mean score ($M=5.153$), followed closely by the affective dimension ($M=5.1406$), with the least mean score being the cognitive dimension ($M=4.655$). Hotel managers perceived the three dimensions of HSE as important. Comparatively, hotel managers perceived the behavioural dimension as an essential than the affective and cognitive dimensions in the HSE of customers. Therefore, based on the order of importance, hotel managers perceive the behavioural dimension is vital, followed by the affective dimension, and finally, the cognitive dimension.

In the behavioural dimension, the customer's feelings after a service encounter had the highest mean score ($M= 5.606, SD = 0.687$). Therefore, hotel managers viewed it as an important part of the HSE. The second most important element was customers' behaviour after a service encounter ($M= 5.473, SD = 0.894$). The customer's judgment about the hotel ($M= 5.388, SD = 1.016$) was ranked as the third most important element in the HSE. The customers' intentions after the service encounter ($M=4.587, SD = 1.391$) were less important than the customer's feelings and judgment about the HSE.

In the affective dimension, taking responsibility for the customer complaints ($M=5.600, SD = 0.613$) was perceived as the most important, followed by the standard of the hotel ($M=5.436, SD = 0.899$). The quality of contact between the employees and customers ($M=5.430, SD = 1.013$) and the duration of service ($M= 5.200, SD = 1.049$) were ranked third, and fourth were also considered highly ranked. The quality of contact between customers had the lowest mean score ($M=4.587, SD = 1.317$) in the affective dimension.

The cognitive dimension had the environmental context of service provision ranked the highest ($M=5.188, SD=1.004$). In contrast, the preconceived images on the web ($M=4.236, SD=1.444$) and customers' functional literacy had the lowest mean score ($M= 4.291, SD = 1.388$). Hotel managers perceived the environmental context of service provision as an important element in the HSE.

The behavioural dimension was ranked the highest because it is one of the remarkable ways to assess whether customers had a great experience or not. A holistic behavioural response can be seen after the service interaction. The reactive stage is when a customer may want to give a good or bad rating about a hotel. According to Ghazi (2017), guests post positive reviews for social

benefits and to help the hotel. Negative reviews are posted to warn customers and vent negative feelings. Posting reviews on the internet comes after a good or bad service experience. The service experience accounts for the customer’s feelings, behaviour, judgment, emotions, wishes, and intentions as far as the service experience is concerned.

The affective dimension, ranking second, was linked to aspects such as taking responsibility for customer complaints, hotel standards, quality of contact between employees and customers, and duration of service. Hotel managers considered these elements important, thus demonstrating a good understanding of the HSE. The finding drifts away from Cetin and Walls (2016). Their study indicates that hotel managers do not consider customer-employee contact and complaint handling important in the service experience, while guests view it as essential. However, Cetin and Walls align with the study findings of this study in aspects such as the service duration, which they state managers consider important.

Hotel managers considered most of the cognitive dimension elements as important. Among the most important factors were the environmental setting of service provision, customers’ social and cultural backgrounds, beliefs, previous experiences, technological skills, personal traits, functional literacy, and preconceived images from the web. These factors create a mental picture of a hotel even if someone has hardly made contact with the hotel. The disposition lets the company create an image in the customer’s mind informing them of the possible service experience. Predispositions have been previously found to influence service experience (Allred & Money, 2010; Ladhari, 2009). Managers may leverage UGC monitoring and response to deliberately influence the HSE’s cognitive elements. Experience engineering commences from achieving the perception in a customer’s mind by intentionally designing the specific perception. Experience engineering includes the deliberate and systematic designing of the contextual clues (humanics and mechanics), for example, appearance, décor, cleanliness, smell, location, and employees’ interpersonal qualities with customers (Carbone & Haeckel, 1994).

Table 4.5: Mean Ranking of Managers’ Perception of Hospitality Service Experience Among 3-5-Star Hotels in Kenya

	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Behavioural Dimension				
The feelings of customers after a service	3.00	6.00	5.606	.687

The behaviour of customers after a service	2.00	6.00	5.473	.894
The judgement of the customer about my hotel after service	3.00	6.00	5.388	1.016
Perception of service quality after service encounter	1.00	6.00	5.236	1.120
Emotions of the customer after the service encounter	2.00	6.00	5.152	1.091
The perception of value acquired from the service encounter	2.00	6.00	5.006	1.062
The wishes of the customers after the service	2.00	6.00	4.775	1.234
The intentions of the customers after the service encounter	1.00	6.00	4.587	1.391
Mean			5.153	
Affective Dimension				
Taking responsibility of the customer complains	3.00	6.00	5.600	.613
Standard of the hotel	2.00	6.00	5.436	.899
Quality of contact between employees and customers	2.00	6.00	5.430	1.013
Duration of service	2.00	6.00	5.200	1.049
Level of customer involvement with adopted technologies	2.00	6.00	4.867	.984
Available infrastructure as pertains to service provision	1.00	6.00	4.819	1.200
Quality of contact between customers	2.00	6.00	4.632	1.317
Mean			5.141	
Cognitive Dimension				
The environmental context of service provision	2.00	6.00	5.188	1.004
The cultural background of customers	2.00	6.00	5.061	1.119
The beliefs of the customer before service	1.00	6.00	4.891	1.254
The social background of customers	2.00	6.00	4.764	1.392
Previous experiences of other customers	2.00	6.00	4.696	1.306
The technological skills of the customer	1.00	6.00	4.608	1.378
The values of the customer	1.00	6.00	4.472	1.476
Personality traits of a customer	1.00	6.00	4.342	1.258
The functional literacy of the customer	2.00	6.00	4.290	1.388
Preconceived images on the web	1.00	6.00	4.236	1.444
Mean			4.655	

4.6 Managerial Monitoring and Response of UGC on Hospitality Service Experience Enhancement

4.6.1: Influence of Managerial Monitoring of UGC on Hospitality Service Experience Enhancement Among 3–5-Star Hotels in Kenya

The third objective, determining the influence of managerial monitoring of UGC on HSE enhancement among 3–5-star hotels in Kenya, was addressed using the following hypothesis:

H₁: Managers' monitoring of UGC does not significantly influence HSE enhancement among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya

A multiple linear regression analysis was performed to accept or reject the null hypothesis. The regression was intended to determine whether managerial monitoring influences the HSE. The model was considered fit because it was significant ($F(2, 162) = 83.838, p = .000$) as shown in Table 4.6.

The regression analysis model indicated that the predictors explained 50.9% of the variance (Table 4.7). Meaning 50.9% of the variance in the HSE is explained by the monitoring and response of UGC. The results show that monitoring ($\beta = 0.221, t = 4.992, p = .000$) significantly influences the HSE, thus, rejecting the null hypothesis.

For every unit of the monitoring variable, the HSE is predicted to increase by 0.221. This result means that as hotel managers apply user-generated content through monitoring UGC, the HSE is expected to increase. Every time hotel managers check the valence and volume of UGC; they can improve the HSE of their customers. The number of UGC posted on the internet gives hotel managers a clear picture of the number of satisfied or dissatisfied customers with whom the hotel may have established contacts within a specific period. Furthermore, hotel managers certainly have the opportunity to see how positive or negative their customers perceive their services and hotel in general. Through this information, hotel managers can improve or maintain their service experiences to suit their customers.

The study findings submit to recommendations made by various authors (Barsky & Frame, 2009; Hills & Cairncross, 2011; Burgess et al., 2015; Babić Rosario et al., 2016; Cheek et al., 2013; Stangl & Regler, 2016). These authors maintain that monitoring UGC can be instrumental in improving service offerings based on customers' expectations. Managers also check UGC valence to gain information about the reviewer's expectations and beliefs (Williams et al. 2010). This information is essential for the improvement of the HSE. More elaborately, hotel managers can look at the positive or negative content to craft the service experience according to the customer expectations, thus improving the service experience. Similarly, Queiroz Falcão et al. (2018) understand the benefits of checking UGC for business performance because the budget hospitality sector is known to attract millennials who consider social media a decision-making tool when choosing accommodation.

A positive relationship is found between a person's access to UGC and the cognitive dimension, which comprises the dispositions the person exposes to before experiencing service (Alcázar et

al., 2014). This study's findings align with Alcázar et al. by showing the positive relationship between UGC use and the cognitive dimension. However, a variation is notable in the affective dimension, where there is hardly a positive relationship in the access to UGC. The difference in findings is because Alcázar et al.'s study was focused on a customer-centric factor. In contrast, this study adopted a managerial approach. The managerial approach first showed that managers understand what customers find essential in the HSE.

4.6.2: Influence of Managerial Response of UGC on Hospitality Service Experience Enhancement Among 3–5-Star Hotels in Kenya

The fourth objective, determining the influence of managerial response of UGC on HSE enhancement among 3–5-star hotels in Kenya, was addressed using the following hypothesis:

H₂: Managers' response to UGC does not significantly influence HSE enhancement among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya.

Multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis. The regression explained that 50.9% of the variance and managerial response of UGC ($\beta = 0.216$, $t = 3.677$, $p = .000$) influenced HSE significantly. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The result means that for every one-unit increase in the response variable, the HSE is predicted to increase by 0.216. Therefore, managerial response to UGC influences the HSE.

The influence of managerial response to HSE is attributed to service failures, recovery, and gaps that customers experience before, during, and after the service experience. Other factors contributing to the positive influence of HSE include the high importance attached to customer behaviour, feelings, judgment, and emotions after a service encounter.

The findings are empirically consistent with Xie et al. (2016), which found that the managerial response positively influenced Trip Advisor ratings. The increase in the Trip Advisor ratings is attributed to service recovery and reinforcement of praises and compliments (Heinnig-Thurau et al. 2010). Similarly, managerial response to UGC has positively influenced the guest's intent to stay, guest return, and hotel image.

This study determines the influence of managerial response on HSE. Studies (Sparks & Bradley, 2016; Deng et al., 2021) that support the findings show managerial response's influence on hotel

revenue and future review ratings. Moreover, they note the difference between the response rate of low-rated hotels and top-rated hotels. Similar to the study findings, managerial response's account, action, and acknowledgement significantly influence the HSE. Good HSE is a precursor for increasing hotel revenues and future ratings.

Table 4.6: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	37.442	2	18.721	83.838	.000 ^b
Residual	36.175	162	0.223		
Total	73.617	164			

a. Dependent Variable: HSE

Table 4.7: Model Summary

Model Summary										
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					
					R Square Change	F Change	df 1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.713 ^a	0.509	0.503	0.473	0.509	83.838	2	162	0.000	

a. Predictors: (Constant), Response, Monitoring

Table 4.8: Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients			Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1 (Constant)	3.069	0.159		19.354	0.000	
Monitoring	0.221	0.044	0.435	4.992	0.000	
Response	0.216	0.059	0.321	3.677	0.000	

a. Dependent Variable: HSE

b. Predictors: (Constant), Response, Monitoring

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The primary goal of this study was to investigate the managers' application of UGC in HSE enhancement among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya. HSE, like other essential offerings in the hotel, such as food, beverage, and accommodation, has a critical role in satisfying guest needs in the hospitality and tourism industry. Therefore, a great HSE is vital in the hospitality and tourism industry. Hotel managers should craft the service experience based on the guest expectations, posted on the online platform as UGC.

5.1 Summary

The first study objective was to assess the extent to which managers apply user-generated content (monitoring and response) among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya. This objective was conceptualised into monitoring and response concepts. The study constructs under monitoring were valence and volume. At the same time, the response construct was measured using AAAA typology, which comprised account, acknowledgement, affection, and action. The data collected in relation to these constructs were analysed using descriptive statistics: maximum, minimum, standard deviations, and mean ranking. The results show that hotel managers were keener on the valence of UGC than the volume. Focusing on the volume, hotel managers check the number of unfavourable sentiments about their hotels to a large extent. In the valence, the managers check the positive content generated by customers to a larger extent than the negative content that customers generate. In their responses, hotel managers mostly showed affection by expressing happiness for a guest's satisfaction and expressing regrets for dissatisfaction experienced by previous customers. Most importantly, the hotel managers showed appreciation in their responses, apologized for service gaps and failures, invited customers back to their hotels, and promised future corrections of experienced shortfalls. On the other hand, the least ranked was the account construct. Furthermore, other low-ranking means were assuring customers of financial compensation after service failures or gaps and expressing refusal of issues raised by previous customers.

The second study objective was to assess managers' perception of HSE among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya. This objective was measured using three dimensions: cognitive, affective, and behavioural. The data collected based on the three dimensions of service experience were

analysed using descriptive statistics: minimum, maximum, mean ranking, and standard deviation. Generally, findings indicate that the behavioural dimension had the highest mean score, and the cognitive dimension had the least mean score. In the behavioural dimension hotel managers consider the feelings, behaviour, judgement, perception of service, and emotions of the customers after service as very important. The least ranked mean in the behavioural dimension was the customers' intentions after the service encounter. In the affective dimension, taking responsibility for customer complaints was ranked the highest. The least ranked was the quality of contact between customers. Lastly, in the cognitive dimension, the environmental context of service provision was ranked the highest in terms of importance. In contrast, preconceived images on the web were the least ranked.

The third and fourth objectives were to determine the influence of managerial monitoring of UGC on HSE enhancement among 3–5-star hotels in Kenya; and to determine the influence of managerial response of UGC on HSE enhancement among 3–5-star hotels in Kenya. These two objectives were analysed using multiple regression analysis to determine whether the independent variable predicted the dependent variable. Therefore, data collected in relation to the independent and dependent variables were used to compute composite scores for each concept in the regression model. The composite variables that made up the independent variable were regressed with the dependent variable. The results showed that managerial monitoring and response to UGC significantly influenced HSE enhancement among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya.

5.2 Conclusion

The application of UGC plays a key role in effective management of the HSE. Most studies have focused on customer-centric factors of UGC application negating managers' application of UGC, yet UGC has taken up the entirety of customers' expectations, perceptions, and evaluations of hospitality services thus making it challenging to manage HSE. While studies have shown that managers apply UGC, no study, if any, has addressed the extent to which hotel managers apply UGC, especially among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya. The first objective of this study aimed at assessing the extent to which managers apply user-generated content among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya. Findings indicate that hotel managers in high end hotels apply UGC to quite a large extent. Hotel managers primarily apply UGC by checking the number of unfavourable sentiments and checking positive content generated by customers about their hotels. In their

responses, hotel managers express happiness for a guest's satisfaction and express regrets for dissatisfaction experienced by previous customers. Moreover, hotel managers show appreciation in their responses, apologize for service gaps and failures, invite customers back to their hotels, and promise future corrections of experienced shortfalls.

While the first objective finds managers applying UGC to quite a large extent, there is still room for improvement. UGC is a replica of conventional guest comment cards, traditionally used to collect guest feedback. In the past, hotels collected guest feedback using guest comment cards that the hotel could issue to the guest during their stay. These cards were primarily accessible by the hotel staff, particularly management. UGC comes when the management, potential and in-house guests can view both the previous customer's generated content and a response from the hotel management. Such visibility makes it crucial for responsible hotel managers to monitor and respond amicably to UGC to influence hospitality service experiences, satisfaction, and reputation.

Customers bring different expectations that shape their experiences, thereby compounding the challenges in effective management of these experiences; hotel managers need to understand their customers' experience expectations well in advance. The second objective was to assess managers' perception of HSE among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya. The findings show that managers consider specific elements essential in managing HSEs. Such components include the feelings, behaviour, judgement, perception of service, customers' emotions after service, taking responsibility for customer complaints, environmental context, and cultural background of service provision. These elements are crucial in the management of the HSE. Therefore, hotel managers can effectively manage the HSE since they consider most aspects of the service experience important.

Managers' perception of HSE is essential in its improvement with regard to the customers' insights. Hotel managers were found to consider specific elements essential in the management of HSE. The improvement of HSE begins with understanding the cognitions of the customers. Customers' cognitions entail the predispositions gathered from different places, such as electronic word of mouth and UGC from online review sites. With such an understanding, hotel managers can, therefore, easily manipulate the moment of truth through the interactions in the hotel. Aligning these insights to the hotels' standards, goals, mission, and vision is essential to

ensure mutual gain from the customers' and hotels' perspectives. Managers' perception of the affective dimension is critical in enhancing the service interaction between the guest and the hotel staff. Further, A good understanding of the behavioral element of HSE is critical in assessing the impact of the service interaction between the guest and hotel staff, if not other components that inform the guest's experiences.

Past studies have shown UGC to have a relationship or influence with the hotel image, customer satisfaction, hotel rating, review valence, hotel revenue, service recovery and failure. HSE is a precursor to most of these factors; therefore, it was considered that UGC monitoring and response would influence HSE enhancement. The third and fourth objectives were to determine the influence of managerial monitoring and response to UGC on HSE enhancement among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya. The findings indicate that managerial monitoring and response to UGC significantly influence HSE enhancement among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya. Therefore, hotel managers can leverage UGC to improve the HSE in their hotels. That means they would know the customers' expectations, influence customer perception of a hotel and correct service gaps and failures. Therefore, managers need to attach considerable importance to the monitoring and response to UGC. According to the study findings, the application of UGC is crucial for the enhancement of hospitality service experience.

5.3 Recommendations for Further Studies

This study provides critical understanding on how managers apply UGC and how it can be useful in enhancing HSE among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya. Managers should deliberately monitor UGC to gain insights on customer satisfaction, dissatisfaction, service failures, or other hitches, if any. Monitoring UGC is comparable to reading the conventional guest comment cards. Frequent monitoring of UGC is also crucial as it informs managers on whether there are issues to be addressed through responses.

Managers responses ought to reflect the "AAAA" framework. In this framework, managers should account for any service misses, failures, or poor services. Besides, hotel managers should work collaboratively in responding to UGC, since UGC usually cut across the hotels' functional areas. The general, marketing, or guest relations managers might find it difficult explaining issues in the kitchen or other area they are hardly involved. While responding, hotel managers need to show affection, where necessary, acknowledge while elaborating to the customer, and

take action as needed. Giving response according to the AAAA framework is essential in the improvement of HSE.

While seeking to improve HSE, hotel managers need to constantly monitor and respond to UGC. According to the study findings, monitoring and responding to UGC is essential in the enhancement of HSE. Monitoring and responding to UGC allows managers to understand customers from a cognitive, affective and behavioural dimensions. This knowledge allows them effectively pinpoint the service touch points that help in the enhancement of hospitality service experience.

Further studies may be conducted in relation to the study limitations, findings and methodology. First, while the study was limited to hotels that record an online presence and high-end hotels, further studies may be conducted on low end hotels, more precisely starting from their extent of application of UGC and service experience enhancement. Low-end hotels may comprise one- and two-star hotels. Moreover, further research may look into hotel managers' motivation to apply UGC across different hotel ratings. Methodologically, further research may be conducted using partial least squares approach to structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) may be used to determine the simultaneous relationship between various variables in the study.

Practitioners in 3-5-star hotels, including general managers, guest relation managers, and marketing managers are should not only monitor content generated by customers, but also respond to the content strategically. In their responses, they need to show affection, account where necessary and take action as needed to address any service failures experiences at their facilities. UGC is crucial in pinpointing service failures in hotels.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Introductory Letter

Dear Sir/ Madam,

I am a Masters student at Maseno University, Kenya. I am researching on managers' application of user-generated content in service experience enhancement among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya. Enclosed is a questionnaire that seeks your opinions about the topic.

You have been selected as one of the samples among the 252 hotel managers who were downsized from a list of 3-5-star rated hotels in Kenya. The list was obtained from Tourism Regulatory Authority.

The questionnaire is a significant part of my research, and I highly value it if you would agree to participate by filling it in. You are the most suitable person to participate in this study because of your role and experience in the hotel industry. In providing your view, you will allow me to successfully complete the research.

I have to emphasize that your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you decide whether or not to take part in the study.

As an assurance, all the provided information will be treated with utmost confidentiality and anonymity. The data will be used strictly for this study.

Kindly fill in the questionnaire and send it back via the same email address (clifbenson@gmail.com). In case of any question, be sure to contact me via 0727077835 or 0770484457.

This research has undergone review by Maseno University Ethical Review Committee. Please get in touch with ethics office on muerc-secretariate@maseno.ac.ke or call the on +254 57 351 622 if you have concerns about the research.

I appreciate your kindness and generous assistance in filling in the questionnaire to aid me with my Masters research.

Yours faithfully

Cliff Benson Moses

Post Graduate Student, Maseno University

Appendix 2 Questionnaire

SECTION A: Demographic data

Gender Male Female

Age group

18 – 27 years

28 – 37 years

38 – 47 years

Above 48 years

Indicate your highest level of education

Certificate Bachelor Degree Ph

Diploma Master Degree Other

Which position do you hold in the hotel?

General Manager Guest/Customer Marketing Manager

Relationship Manager

Years of experience in the Kenyan Hospitality industry

Below 2 years 6 – 8 years Above 11

3 – 5 years 9 – 11 years

Hotel Rating

Three star

Four star

Five star

Which booking site(s) or social media site(s) does your hotel use?

Expedia Trivago Facebook

Trip advisor Hotels.com

Booking.com Other

Twitter

Instagram

SECTION B: Extent to which managers apply user-generated content

The following questions refer to the extent to which you monitor the images, videos or textual content generated by your customers in traveller sites or social media sites such as reviews, blogs, ratings, and comments. Indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.

1. Not at all 2. To quite a small extent 3. To a small extent
 4. To some extent 5. To quite a large extent 6. To a large extent

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Volume						
I check the total amount of previous customer content generated on the web about my hotel						
I check the number of favorable sentiments about my hotel generated by customers on the web						
I check the number of unfavorable sentiments about my hotel generated by the customer on the web						
Valence						
I check the positive content generated by customers on the web about my hotel						
I check the neutral content generated by customers on the web about my hotel						
I check the negative content generated by customers on the web about my hotel						

The following questions refer to your response to content generated by your end-users in traveller sites and social media. Indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Acknowledgement						
I apologize for service gaps and failures in my responses to customers feedback on the web						
I show appreciation in my responses to customer-generated information about my hotel on the web						
I accept responsibility in my responses to customer-generated content about my hotel on the web						
I respond by disputing issues raised by previous customers about my hotel on the web						
Account						
I clarify issues raised by previous customers about my hotel on the web						
I justify issues that previous customers raise about my hotel on the web						
I express refusal of issues raised by previous customers about my hotel on the web						
Action						
I ask customers to contact the hotel management for further assistance in issues that the customers raise in their feedback on the internet						

I invite previous customers back to your hotel in my responses on the web						
I promise previous customers future corrections of experienced shortfalls in my responses on the web						
I assure customers of financial compensation after a service failures or gaps						
Affection						
I express regrets for dissatisfaction experienced by previous customers when responding on the web						
I express embarrassment for an experienced service gap or failure in my responses on the web about my hotel						
I express happiness for the satisfaction of a guest in my responses						

Section C: Managers’ Perception of Hospitality Service Experience: Cognitive Dimension

The questions below are divided into three parts. They refer to your understanding of hospitality service experience. The following are conditions that could make customers act in a particular way before, during and after service in a hotel. Indicate the level of importance that you attach to each of the following statements.

- 1. Unimportant
- 2. Of little importance
- 3. Moderately important
- 4. Neutral
- 5. Important
- 6. Very important

a. Managers’ Perception of Hospitality Service Experience: Affective Dimension

	1	2	3	4	5	6
The social background of customers						
The cultural background of customers						
Preconceived images on the web						
The environmental context of service provision						
Previous experiences of other customers						
Personality traits of a customer						
The values of the customer						
The beliefs of the customer before service						
The technological skills of the customer						
The functional literacy of the customer						

The following refers to the physical contact between the hotel, employees and the customer during service. Indicate the level of importance that you attach to each of the following factors.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Standard of the hotel						
Duration of service						
Level of customer involvement with adopted technologies						

Available infrastructure as pertains to service provision						
Quality of contact between employees and customers						
Quality of contact between customers						
Taking responsibility of the customer complains						

b. Managers' Perception of Hospitality Service Experience: Behavioral Dimension

The following refers to the reactions of the service encounter of a customer. Rate each of the reactions according to your level of importance

	1	2	3	4	5	6
The behaviour of customers after a service						
The feelings of customers after a service						
The judgement of the customer about my hotel after service						
The perception of value acquired from the service encounter						
The intentions of the customers after the service encounter						
The wishes of the customers after the service						
Emotions of the customer after the service encounter						
Perception of service quality after service encounter						

Appendix 3: Examples of UGC

Trip Advisor Member (October, 2020 to Acacia Premier Hotel)



Passport674438



1

●●●●● Reviewed October 25, 2020

Ms.

I found a much improved hotel, the following areas

1. Swimming restaurant - very quick and beautiful presented food as we wanted
2. Bar was great as well, we kept asking for hot water and dawa, great service
3. The best was the rooms. Loved the small petit four in the rooms super surprise I think I needed sugar.

Concierge and reception area, quick and bills presented very well.

Thank you so much

Show less

Date of visit: October 2020

[Ask Passport674438 about Acacia](#)

Thank Passport674438



This review is the subjective opinion of a TripAdvisor member and not of TripAdvisor LLC.

Trip Advisor Member (February, 2016 to Acacia Premier Hotel)



KevalS_11
Kisumu

29 16

●●○○○ Reviewed February 14, 2016 via mobile

Poor service

We went on Valentine's with friends for dinner and drinks. .

The initial orders were well dealt with. The moment they got a bit busy the waiters fell over themselves to make it a miserable evening. Drinks took ages to come. We wanted to order a dish from their downstairs restaurant and the waiter refused and took intervention of a manager to sort it out.

The hotel and atmosphere in hotel is superb.but could do with better and professionally trained employees.

Twice we heard the waiters arguing amongst themselves. Which iv never seen even in a 2 start hotel.

During my first visit a lady waiter told us there is no baby chair only when enquiring with another waiter he brought it within a minute. .

Overall i wouldn't recommend it

Show less

Date of visit: February 2016

[Ask KevalS_11 about Acacia](#)

Thank KevalS_11



This review is the subjective opinion of a TripAdvisor member and not of TripAdvisor LLC.

Appendix 4: Informed Consent Form

Introduction

This is a consent form for the hotel managers that will take part in this study.

Research Title: Managers' Application of User Generated Content in Hospitality Service Experience Enhancement among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya

Name and position of Researcher:

Cliff Benson Moses, Masters student, Department of Ecotourism, Hotel and Institution Management, Maseno University

Project: **Master Degree Thesis**

Sponsoring institution

This study is being conducted under the guidance of the School Graduate Studies, Maseno University. You may contact the University through the following contact:

Office of the Vice Chancellor

Maseno University

Private Bag

Maseno, Kenya

Tel: +254 - 57 - 351620/22

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to investigate managers' application of user generated content in hospitality service experience enhancement among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya; to assess the extent to which managers apply user-generated content among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya; to assess managers' perception of hospitality service experience among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya; to determine the influence of managerial monitoring of UGC on hospitality service experience enhancement among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya and; to determine the influence of managers' response to UGC on hospitality service experience enhancement among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya

Statements of Confidentiality

The researcher and supervisors will be the only parties that have the right of access to the data provided by respondents. The researcher shall protect the anonymity and confidentiality of the data provided during and after the collection of the data by concealing the identity of respondents by using codes instead of their names. The data will strictly be used for this study with the consent of the respondents and not for any other purpose.

Volunteerism and Assurance to Withdraw at any time

Participation in this study is voluntary. At any point, the participant has the right to decline to answer a question or set of questions, withdraw partially or completely from the study process. The respondent shall not be forced or coerced to sign the consent form or participate in the study.

Benefits for participating

The researcher will not give any incentives to participant for participating in the study. However, upon consent from the university, interested participant would receive a summary of the result of the study.

Results and Dissemination Procedures

The researcher and the supervisors shall be the only parties that would have access to the collected data. The results of the study shall be disseminated through a thesis. Accessibility shall be granted to the researcher, the research team and only a summary of the findings to any of the findings shall be

availed to the study participants upon consent from the researcher and the university. The collected data will be stored in the custody of the principal researcher. Only the study supervisors will be granted access to the study, when necessary, otherwise, the information shall be used for the development of my thesis.

People to Contact if questions arise:

Contact the researcher in case of any concern about this study or the completion of the questionnaire

Cliff Benson Moses,

Tel.: 0727077835,

P. O. Box 24-401200 C.O. Saline Atieno Otieno,

Email: clifbenson@gmail.com

Maseno University Ethics Review Committee (MUERC)

Directorate of Research, Publications and Innovations (DRPI)

Maseno University Main Campus

Along Kisumu-Busia Road

P.O. Box Private bag

Maseno, Kenya.

Email address: muerc-secretariate@maseno.ac.ke

Tel. No. +254 57 351 622 EXT. 3050

Appendix 5: List of Classified 3-5-star Hotels in Kenya

CLASSIFIED ESTABLISHMENTS-REGISTER					
GREATER NAIROBI					
NO	ESTABLISHMENT	COUNTY	CAPACITY		RATING
			ROOMS	BEDS	
1	Intercontinental Nairobi	Nairobi	326	372	*****
2	Radisson Blu Hotel Nairobi	Nairobi	271	354	*****
3	The Sarova Stanley	Nairobi	217	440	*****
4	Villa Rosa Kempinski	Nairobi	200	216	*****
5	Fairmont The Norfolk	Nairobi	170	200	*****
6	Sankara Nairobi	Nairobi	156	167	*****
7	The Boma Nairobi	Nairobi	148	178	*****
8	Crowne Plaza Nairobi Airport	Nairobi	144	209	*****
9	Tribe Hotel	Nairobi	137	154	*****
10	Dusit D2	Nairobi	101	122	*****
11	Hemingway's Nairobi	Nairobi	45	50	*****
12	Hilton Nairobi Limited	Nairobi	287	334	****
13	Crowne Plaza	Nairobi	206	254	****
14	Hilton Garden Inn Nairobi Airport	Nairobi	175	226	****
15	City Lodge Hotel At Two Rivers	Nairobi	171	200	****
16	Southern Sun Mayfair Nairobi	Nairobi	171	212	****
17	Eka Hotel	Nairobi	167	220	****
18	Sarova Panafric Hotel	Nairobi	162	324	****
19	Silver Springs Hotel	Nairobi	160	180	****
20	Nairobi Safari Club	Nairobi	146	186	****
21	The Panari Hotel, Nairobi	Nairobi	136	272	****
22	Ole Sereni Hotel	Nairobi	134	206	****
23	Windsor Golf Hotel and Country Club	Nairobi	130	205	****
24	Fairview Hotel	Nairobi	127	133	****

25	Weston Hotel	Nairobi	120	154	****
26	Golden Tulip Westlands	Nairobi	94	188	****
27	Amboseli Serena Lodge	Kajiado	92	184	****
28	Gelian Hotel	Machakos	90	136	****

29	Pride Inn Lantana Apartments and Suites	Nairobi	55	110	****
30	Executive Residency by Best Western.	Nairobi	48	106	****
31	House of Waine	Nairobi	11	20	****
32	Carnivore Restaurant	Nairobi	0	0	****
33	Ibis Styles Nairobi Westlands	Nairobi	277	331	***
34	Maanzoni Lodge	Machakos	272	421	***
35	Azure Hotel	Nairobi	165	231	***
36	Best Western Plus Meridian Hotel	Nairobi	128	166	***
37	Ngong Hills Hotel	Nairobi	110	165	***
38	The Heron Portico	Nairobi	109	218	***
39	Pride Inn Raptha Nairobi,	Nairobi	100	200	***
40	Sportsview Hotel Kasarani	Nairobi	94	188	***
41	Kenya Comfort Suits	Nairobi	88	120	***
42	Amboseli Sopa Lodge	Kajiado	83	166	***
43	La Masion Royale	Nairobi	71	144	***
44	The Clarion Hotel	Nairobi	62	67	***
45	Kibo Safaris Camp	Kajiado	60	120	***
46	Boma Inn Nairobi	Nairobi	59	83	***
47	Utalii Hotel	Nairobi	57	114	***
48	Marble Arch Hotel	Nairobi	41	57	***
49	Fahari Gardens Hotel	Nairobi	32	64	***

COAST

50	PrideInn Paradise	Mombasa	240	480	*****
51	Leopard Beach Resort and Spa	Kwale	198	396	*****
52	Hemingways Watamu	Kwale	166	200	*****
53	Diani Reef Beach Resort & Spa	Kwale	143	286	*****
54	Swahili Beach Resort	Kwale	125	250	*****

55	Medina Palms Suites and Villas	Kilifi	40	70	*****
56	Baobab Beach Resort & Spa	Kwale	343	686	****
57	Sarova White Sands Beach Resort and Spa	Mombasa	335	435	****
58	Leisure Lodge Beach & Golf Resort	Kwale	253	506	****
59	Voyager Beach Resort	Mombasa	236	472	****
60	Severin Sea Lodge	Mombasa	188	376	****
61	Diani sea resort	Kwale	170	340	****
62	Serena Beach Resort and Spa	Mombasa	164	328	****
63	Turtle Bay Beach Club	Kilifi	145	290	****
64	Lantana Galu Beach	Kwale	47	240	****
65	Silver Palm Spa & Resort	Kilifi	40	80	****
66	Diamond Dream of Africa	Kilifi	35	70	****
67	Marina English Point	Mombasa	26	28	****
68	Msambweni Beach House and Private Villa	Kwale	5	24	****
69	Sandies Tropical Village	Kilifi	109	218	***
70	Bahari Beach Hotel	Mombasa	105	212	***
71	Indian Ocean Beach Resort	Kwale	101	180	***
72	Kenya Bay Beach Hotel	Mombasa	99	198	***
73	Royal Court Hotel	Mombasa	89	188	***
74	Mnarani Club	Kilifi	80	160	***
75	Crystal Bay Beach Resort	Kilifi	76	176	***
76	Ashnil Aruba Lodge	Taita	52	108	***
77	Isinya Resorts Limited	Mombasa	43	86	***
78	PrideInn Mombasa	Mombasa	40	96	***
79	Azul Margarita Beach Resort	Mombasa	35	98	***
80	Sentrim Tsavo East Camp	Taita	25	50	***
81	JacyJoka Apartments	Mombasa	12	16	***
82	Bollywoods Bites	Mombasa	0	0	***

NAROK

83	Mara serena Safari Lodge	Narok	74	148	*****
84	Cottars Nineteen Twenties Safari Camp	Narok	16	40	*****
85	Olare Mara Kempiski	Narok	12	17	*****
86	Maasai Mara Sopa Lodge	Narok	100	198	****
87	Keekorok Lodge	Narok	99	225	****
88	Sarova Mara Game Camp	Narok	75	150	****
89	Mara Intrepids Camp	Narok	60	93	****
90	Ashnil Mara Camp	Narok	56	118	****
91	Fairmont Mara Safari Club	Narok	51	102	****
92	Neptune Mara Rianta Luxury Tented Camp	Narok	20	40	****
93	Mara Engai Wilderness Lodge	Narok	20	40	****
94	Little Governors' Camp	Narok	17	34	****
95	DBA Mara West Tented Camp	Narok	16	30	****
96	Governors' Ilmoran Camp	Narok	10	10	****
97	Mara Explorer Camp	Narok	10	20	****
98	Encounter Mara Camp	Narok	10	24	****
99	Naboisho Camp Tented Camp	Narok	9	22	****
100	Olarro Lodge	Narok	9	18	****
101	Mara Simba Lodge	Narok	84	168	***
102	Sekenani Camp	Narok	15	30	***
103	Tipilikwani Mara Camp	Narok	20	34	***
104	Sanctuary Olonana Camp	Narok	14	28	***

NAKURU

105	Enashipai Resort and Spa	Nakuru	140	215	*****
106	Lake Elementaita Serena Camp	Nakuru	25	50	*****
107	SentrimElementaita Lodge	Nakuru	83	166	****
108	Lake Naivasha Sopa Lodge	Nakuru	82	164	****
109	Lake Naivasha Sawela Lodge	Nakuru	74	150	****
110	Sarova Lion Game Lodge	Nakuru	67	134	****
111	Lake Nakuru Sopa Lodge	Nakuru	62	138	****
112	Naivasha Kongoni Lodge	Nakuru	29	29	****

113	Sunbird Lodge	Nakuru	16	32	****
114	Lake Naivasha Simba Lodge	Nakuru	70	140	***
115	Hotel Cathay	Nakuru	62	140	***
116	Lake Nakuru Flamingo Lodge	Nakuru	60	91	***
117	Hillcourt Resort & Spa	Nakuru	43	50	***
118	The Ole Ken Hotel	Nakuru	40	54	***

KISUMU

119	Acacia Premier Hotel	Kisumu	92	97	****
120	The Vic Hotel	Kisumu	106	122	***
121	Kisumu Hotel	Kisumu	86	120	***
122	Imperial Hotel	Kisumu	78	90	***
123	Sovereign Hotel	Kisumu	32	64	***
124	Jambo Impala Eco-lodge	Kisumu	12	24	***

CENTRAL

125	Mountain Breeze Hotel Ltd	Embu	60	75	***
126	Ikweta Safari Camp	Meru	15	23	***
127	Panari Resort, Nyahururu	Laikipia	100	200	*****
128	SegeraRetreat Lodge	Laikipia	11	20	*****
129	Fairmont Mt. Kenya Safari Club	Nyeri	120	240	****
130	White Rhino Hotel	Nyeri	102	128	****
131	Sarova Shaba Game Lodge	Isiolo	85	170	****
132	Sweetwater's Serena Camp & O 1 Pejeta House	Laikipia	62	112	****
133	Aberdares Country Club	Nyeri	47	94	****
134	Ashnil Samburu Camp	Isiolo	30	62	****
135	Samburu Intrepids Camp	Samburu	26	56	****
136	Saruni Safari lodge, Samburu	Samburu	8	20	****
137	Sportsman's Arms Hotel	Laikipia	180	360	***
138	Green Hills Hotel	Nyeri	100	260	***
139	Samburu Simba Lodge	Isiolo	70	134	***

140	Westwood Hotel	Nyeri	57	74	***
141	Outspan Hotel	Nyeri	43	93	***
142	Serena Mountain Lodge	Nyeri	42	84	***
143	Giraffe Ark Camp Lodge	Nyeri	30	52	***
144	Mantis Mutara Tented Luxury Camp	Laikipia	15	30	***

NORTH RIFT

145	Boma Inn, Eldoret	Uasin Gishu	68	80	****
146	The Noble Conference Centre	Uasin Gishu	53	67	***
147	Kerio View Lodge	Elgeyo Marakwet	28	40	***
148	Samich Resort	Elgeyo Marakwet	15	30	***



REPUBLIC OF KENYA



NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: 308974

Date of Issue: 19/May/2023

RESEARCH LICENSE



This is to Certify that Mr. Cliff Benson Moses of Maseno University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Kisumu, Mombasa, Nairobi, Nakuru on the topic: **MANAGERS' APPLICATION OF USER-GENERATED CONTENT IN SERVICE EXPERIENCE ENHANCEMENT AMONG 3-5-STAR HOTELS IN KENYA** for the period ending : 19/May/2024.

License No: NACOSTEP/23/25833

308974

Applicant Identification Number

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MASENO UNIVERSITY SCIENTIFIC AND ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

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Private Bag – 40105, Maseno, Kenya
Email: muerc-secretariate@maseno.ac.ke

REF: MSU/DRP/MUSERC/01058/22

Date: 7th July, 2022

TO: Moses Cliff Benson
EL/EHM/01382/2018
Department of Ecotourism, Hotel and Institution Management
School of Business and Economics
Maseno University
P. O. Box, Private Bag, Maseno, Kenya

Dear Sir,

RE: Management Application of User Generated Content in Hospitality Service Experience Enhancement among 3-5-Star Hotels in Kenya

This is to inform you that Maseno University Scientific and Ethics Review Committee (MUSERC) has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your application approval number is MUSERC/01058/22. The approval period is 7th July, 2022 – 6th July, 2023.

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements;

- i. Only approved documents including (informed consents, study instruments, MTA) will be used.
- ii. All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by Maseno University Scientific and Ethics Review Committee (MUSERC).
- iii. Death and life threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to Maseno University Scientific and Ethics Review Committee (MUSERC) within 24 hours of notification.
- iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affected safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to Maseno University Scientific and Ethics Review Committee (MUSERC) within 24 hours.
- v. Clearance for export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions.
- vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.
- vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to Maseno University Scientific and Ethics Review Committee (MUSERC).

Prior to commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) <https://oris.nacosti.go.ke> and also obtain other clearances needed.

Yours sincerely

Prof. Philip O. Owuor, PhD, FAAS, FKNAS
Chairman, MUSERC



MASENO UNIVERSITY IS ISO 9001 CERTIFIED

