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**EFFECT OF BRAND MANAGEMENT ON THE PERFORMANCE OF STAR
RATED HOTELS IN NAIROBI COUNTY, KENYA**

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MBA/104860



**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO STRATHMORE BUSINESS SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF BUSINESS
ADMINISTRATION AT STRATHMORE UNIVERSITY**

NOVEMBER 2021

DECLARATION

I declare that this work has not been previously submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis/dissertation (use as appropriate) contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis/dissertation itself.

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ABSTRACT

Global, regional and local shutdowns after the Covid-19 pandemic have seen players in the hotel industry record losses and some firms have been forced to permanently shut down. The remaining hotels have to demonstrate their capability to sustain performance; and in this relation, star-rated hotels have to demonstrate their ability to sustain their performance through competitive brand management strategies. Despite increased literature on branding, most of the studies have focused on firms outside of the hospitality industry within the country hence they are limited studies focusing on brand management and performance of star-rated establishments. This study sought to examine the influence of brand management on the performance of star-rate hotels in Kenya. The study specifically examined the effect of brand identity on performance, brand association on performance, brand recognition on performance, and brand personality on the performance of star-rated hotels in Kenya. The research was grounded on the resource-based-view theory, the social identity theory, and the theory of brand loyalty. The study was premised on a positivism research philosophy. A descriptive research design was adopted which allowed for the examination of the phenomena in its natural setting. The study population was the 53 star-rated hotels within Nairobi County. The study targeted three senior managers in each of the star-rated hotels. The study employed a census approach in selecting 159 managers from the hotels using a judgemental sampling approach. The research utilized a structured research questionnaire with both physical and online approaches used in the data collection process. The study research instrument was pretested among 10% of the sample respondents. This was integral in supporting reliability and validity testing. The collected data was analyzed using quantitative techniques such as percentages, frequencies, means, correlation tests, and regression tests. The research was able to obtain a 77% response rate which was suitable for quantitative analysis. The response indicated that most of the participants were marketing managers and finance managers. The test for correlation revealed that there was a moderate positive effect of brand identity on organization performance. Results also noted a weak positive effect of brand association, brand recognition, and brand personality on the performance of the star-rated hotels. The regression tests established that 38.2% of the changes in the organizational performance of star-rated hotels are as a result of brand management practices. The regression tests supported the conclusion that brand association has an insignificant effect on the organizational performance of star-rated hotels. Further, conclusions were that brand identity, brand recognition, and brand personality had a positive and significant effect on the organizational performance of star-rated hotels. The study recommends that the Tourism regulatory authority in partnership with the various star-rated hotels can develop standardized branding guidelines which will help the local hospitality industry compete with international hotels. Further, the research recommends hotels should develop suitable package offerings focused on the local customer base who shy away from established star-rated hotels. More so, the management should review their competitor's service and product offering to ensure their brand recognition practices are distinct in the market which is critical to enhanced performance. Lastly, the management can employ social media channels in their product placement to ensure they are able to appeal to a larger market and create recognition for their brand offering. The study was limited severely by the closure of some of the hotels as a result of the ongoing pandemic containment measures. However, this limitation was overcome through the inclusion of other hotels which are not highly rated but are registered and licensed to operate within the borders of Nairobi City County.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xi
DEFINITION OF TERMS	xii
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background to the Study.....	1
1.1.1 Brand Management.....	2
1.1.2 Organization Performance	5
1.1.3 Star-Rated Hotels	6
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	8
1.3 General Objective	10
1.3.1 Specific Objectives	10
1.4 Research Questions.....	10
1.5 Scope of the Study	10
1.6 Significance of the Study	11
CHAPTER TWO	13
LITERATURE REVIEW	13
2.1 Introduction.....	13
2.2 Theoretical Review	13
2.2.1 Resource Based View Theory.....	13
2.2.2 Social Identity Theory.....	14
2.2.3 Theory of Brand Loyalty	16

2.3 Empirical Review.....	17
2.3.1 Brand Identity and Organization Performance	17
2.3.2 Brand Association and Organization Performance.....	20
2.3.3 Brand Recognition and Organization Performance	22
2.3.4 Brand Personality and Organization Performance.....	24
2.4 Summary of Literature Gaps.....	25
2.5 Conceptual Framework.....	27
2.6 Operationalization of Variables	30
2.7 Chapter Summary	30
CHAPTER THREE.....	32
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	32
3.1 Introduction.....	32
3.2 Research Design.....	32
3.3 Target Population.....	32
3.4 Sampling Design and Sample Size	33
3.5 Data Collection Instruments	33
3.6 Data Collection Procedures.....	34
3.7 Research Quality.....	34
3.7.1 Reliability Tests	34
3.7.2 Validity Tests.....	35
3.8 Tests of Regression Assumption.....	35
3.8.1 Collinearity Tests	35
3.8.2 Normality Tests.....	36
3.8.3 Autocorrelation Tests.....	36
3.9 Data Analysis and Presentation	36
3.10 Ethical Considerations	37
CHAPTER FOUR.....	38

PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS.....	38
4.1 Introduction.....	38
4.2 Demographic Information.....	38
4.2.1 Response Rate.....	38
4.2.2 Participants Demographic Profile.....	38
4.3 Descriptive Results	40
4.3.1 Brand Identity	40
4.3.2 Brand Association.....	41
4.3.3 Brand Recognition	42
4.3.4 Brand Personality.....	43
4.3.5 Organization Performance of Star-Rated Hotels	44
4.4 Correlation Results.....	45
4.5 Diagnostic Results	46
4.5.1 Normality Test	46
4.5.2 Collinearity Test.....	46
4.5.3 Autocorrelation Test.....	47
4.6 Regression Results	48
4.6.1 Effect of Brand Identity on The Organization Performance Star Rated Hotels In Nairobi County, Kenya	48
4.6.2 Effect of Brand Association on the Organization Performance Star Rated Hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya	49
4.6.3 Effect of Brand Recognition on the Organization Performance Star Rated Hotels In Nairobi County, Kenya	50
4.6.4 Effect of Brand Personality on The Organization Performance Star Rated Hotels In Nairobi County, Kenya	51
4.7 Regression Summary	52
4.7 Summary of the Study	54
CHAPTER FIVE	56

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	56
5.1 Introduction.....	56
5.2 Discussion of Findings.....	56
5.2.1 Brand Identity and Organization Performance	56
5.2.2 Brand Association and Organization Performance.....	57
5.2.3 Brand Recognition and Organization Performance	58
5.2.4 Brand Personality and Organization Performance.....	59
5.3 Conclusions.....	60
5.4 Recommendations.....	60
5.4.1 Contribution to Theory	60
5.4.2 Policy Recommendations.....	61
5.4.3 Practical Recommendations.....	61
5.5 Limitations and Suggestions for Further Studies.....	62
REFERENCES.....	63
APPENDICES	75
Appendix I: Introduction Letter	75
Appendix II: Research Questionnaire.....	76
Appendix III: List of Star-Rated Hotels.....	81
Appendix IV: Ethical Review Committee Letter.....	84
Appendix V: NACOSTI Authorization Letter.....	85

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1 Summary of Empirical Literature Gaps.....	26
Table 2.2 Operationalization of Variables.....	30
Table 3.1 Target Population.....	33
Table 3.2 Reliability Test Results.....	35
Table 4.1 Summary of Demographic Results.....	39
Table 4.2 Brand Identity of Star-Rated Hotels.....	40
Table 4.3 Brand Association of Star-Rated Hotels.....	41
Table 4.4 Brand Recognition of Star-Rated Hotels.....	42
Table 4.5 Brand Personality of Star Rated Hotels.....	43
Table 4.6 Organization Performance of Star-Rated Hotels.....	44
Table 4.7 Correlation between Brand Management Practices and Organization Performance.....	45
Table 4.8 Normality Results.....	46
Table 4.9 Collinearity Results.....	46
Table 4.10 Autocorrelation Results.....	47
Table 4.11 Regression between of Brand Identity on The Organization Performance Star Rated Hotels.....	48
Table 4.12 ANOVA for Brand Identity on The Organization Performance Star Rated Hotels.....	48
Table 4.13 Regression Coefficients for Brand Identity on The Organization Performance Star Rated Hotels.....	48
Table 4.14 Regression between Brand Association on the Organization Performance Star Rated Hotels.....	49
Table 4.15 ANOVA for Brand Association on the Organization Performance Star Rated Hotels.....	49
Table 4.16 Regression Coefficients for Brand Association on the Organization Performance Star Rated Hotels.....	50

Table 4.17 Regression between brand recognition on the organization performance star rated hotels	50
Table 4.18 ANOVA for Brand Recognition on The Organization Performance Star Rated Hotels	50
Table 4.19 Regression Coefficients for Brand Recognition on The Organization Performance Star Rated Hotels	51
Table 4.20 Regression Between Brand Personality and The Organization Performance Star Rated Hotels.....	51
Table 4.21 ANOVA for Brand Personality on The Organization Performance Star Rated Hotels	52
Table 4.22 Regression Coefficients for Brand Personality on The Organization Performance Star Rated Hotels	52
Table 4.23 Regression for Brand Management and Organization Performance	53
Table 4.24 ANOVA for Brand Management and Organization Performance.....	53
Table 4.25 Regression Coefficients for Brand Management and Organization Performance	53



LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework29

Figure 4.1 Response Rate38



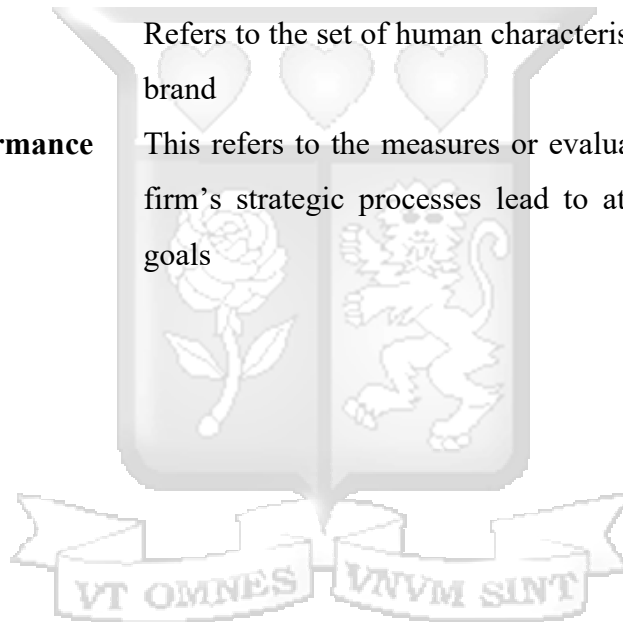
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
NCBDA	Nairobi Central Business District Association
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
SSE	Small Scale Enterprises
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America



DEFINITION OF TERMS

Branding	Branding is the act of giving value to a particular company, product or services through creation and shaping of the trademark
Brand association	The combination of tangible and intangible attributes creates a bond/link between the customer and the brand
Brand identity	This defines how the brand wants to be perceived and its image to customers
Brand management	This focuses on the initiatives undertaken towards building and maintaining the brand and strengthening the brand equity
Brand personality	Refers to the set of human characteristics associated with a brand
Organization performance	This refers to the measures or evaluation of how well the firm's strategic processes lead to attainment of the firm goals



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Globally, fierce competition forces organizations to either restructure operations or to adopt strategies that create a firm's competitive advantage. As such, creating a brand name that has well-established associations enables firms to achieve this goal (Anselmsson, Bondesson, & Johansson, 2014). In a competitive business environment, firms usually aim at developing their brand as a way of differentiating their brands from other substitute products on the market (Kim & Chung, 2012). Arslan and Altoona (2012) posit that if an organization develops a brand in the right way, it will attract desired influence on customers, enhance competitive advantage, and enhance the organization's performance and profitability. When companies conduct brand awareness campaigns that are effective, they are more likely to attract the attention of consumers and convince them to try out the new product or use it numerous times which leads to an increase in sales for the firm (McKee, 2010).

Over the last decade, the hotel industry has firmly embraced and accepted the value of branding as an essential component of its marketing strategy especially given extensive hotel brand segmentation and management practices (Wang, Yang, & Yang, 2019). Anselmsson, Bondesson, and Johansson (2014) posit that in recent years, brands have become particularly relevant in the hospitality industry. In such a competitive sector, which is characterized by similar service offerings and imitation, brands serve as referential elements for customers. Mühlbacher, Raies, Grohs, and Koll (2016) note that most small hospitality businesses in Europe are facing performance challenges including increased customer switching. To address this emerging challenge, most of the businesses in the region have resorted to increasing investment in branding strategies which have become an important management tool for differentiation and cognitive anchors for customer decision-making, thus enhancing customer retainment.

Kamunge (2014) posits that SMEs face many obstacles that restrict their long-term survival. The rate of business failure is alarming with only a few businesses surviving a few months to one year (Gumboh & Gichira, 2015). This signifies that SMEs operating in industries in the hospitality sector should be nurtured and supported to enhance performance. In developed nations like Italy, the hotel industry is a key sector within the tourism industry since it is crucial to the provision of all other tourism services making it the most basic element of tourism

(Bresciani, Thrassou, & Vrontis, 2012). Gyamfi (2015) notes that in Ghana the tourism and the hospitality industry has been experiencing several setbacks with its associated growth over the past few years.

In 2019, the travel and tourism industry, which the hotel industry leverages, contributed to 12% of Kenya's GDP. Star-rated hotels were the main beneficiaries of the receipts. However, Kenya recorded her first Covid 19 case in March 2020, leading to shutdowns and curfews which saw most, if not all hotels shut their doors, at least temporarily. Furthered by international travel restrictions, the loss of travellers, tourists, and national and international conferences, companies in the hotel industry have lost their source of income. Cytonn (2020) reports that the problem has been exacerbated by restrictions of movement and especially night travel, booking cancellations, prohibition of leisure activities, and suspension of physical meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions due to the ban on public gatherings. The result is revenue losses, low investor confidence, disruption in supply chains, job losses, reduced liquidity of firms in the sector, temporary and permanent closure of some of the major players in the industry, and other losses that may be unquantifiable.

The WTCC (2020) reports that the sector will still struggle to recover once the pandemic is managed. The key question is, how prepared are the hotels to sustain themselves in this environment, especially in regards to the hotel's ability to meet compliance requirements such as social distancing and proper disease management within the institutions. Ongori, Iravo, and Munene (2015) opine that for hotels in Kenya to remain competitive, there is a need for them to realign their internal business and adapt to the ever-changing environment. One of the key areas that can be pivotal to supporting the performance of hotels throughout the entirety of the pandemic is effective brand management. Therefore, this study sought to investigate the influence of brand management on the performance of star-rated hotels in Kenya.

1.1.1 Brand Management

A brand is a name, sign, symbol, or design, or an alteration carried out to differentiate goods and services of one trader or group from another (Kotler & Keller, 2016). While branding refers to the process of establishing a product or organization into a brand, brand management involves the monitoring and management of the brand's position in the market. Over the years, organizational branding has received immense attention from a number of stakeholders and consumers (Han, Yu, Lee, & Kim, 2019). For Aaker, brand management refers to the manner

in which firms build up an identity for a particular product, then define what it stands for and what it offers to consumers (Aaker, 2014).

Strebinger (2014) notes that brand management refers to the manner in which firms organize, manage and market their brands. Strategic brand management involves building, measuring, and managing a brand's value to an organization, its visibility, and familiarity with the consumer as a means of influencing their purchase decisions. It involves the use of firm assets to ensure consistency in product attributes, quality, and market presence which ultimately leads to a strong presence in the market (Aaker, 2014). Maore (2019) reports that brand management is the analysis, planning, and implementation of branding strategies with the aim of influencing customers' perceptions of a brand or service.

Branding performs the function of creating a matchless position and distinguishing the firm from its rivals and it is a compilation of guarantees to the customers with reference to the product's physical and emotional characteristics and benefits (Ikegwuru, 2020). The study noted that brand management includes brand positioning, brand identity, brand personality, and brand recognition strategies. According to (Keller, 2013) attributes of brand management include brand identity (the noticeable aspect of products), brand positioning (customer's perception about a product relative to competitor's products), brand recognition (customer's ability to identify a brand through its attributes) and brand personality (human characteristics attributed to products) (Aoun & Tournois, 2015). Brand management also encompasses the development of a marketing strategy that is consistent with firms' brand image, goal settings, the appraisal of brand value and image, and the allocation of resources for effective brand management (Aoun & Tournois, 2015). Rahman, Rodríguez-Serrano, and Lambkin (2018) posit that brand management focuses on the initiatives undertaken towards building and maintaining the brand and strengthening the brand equity.

Brand management practices contribute to creating a more clear and reliable image in the customer's mind which gradually leads to increased customer traffic and performance of the organization (Iglesias, Singh, & Batista-Foguet, 2011). Kuria (2020) assessed corporate brand strategies by investigating the effect of brand awareness, brand association, brand attitude, and brand loyalty. Foroudi (2018) defined brand management in the service industry as a function of brand signature, brand reputation, brand attitude, and brand awareness, reporting that the above variables are associated with product dimensions, brand belief, brand recognition, and brand recognisability. Njuguna (2014) associated brand management with brand loyalty, brand

awareness, and perceived quality. Bute (2019) associates product differentiation, focus strategy, leadership strategy, and strategic alliances are key brand management components that determine product positioning.

Globally, businesses, whether small, medium, or large, have recognized the critical role that branding plays in an organization where the consumer is able to identify the difference between products and why, one product is more superior to the other, in terms of quality and satisfaction (Kotler & Keller, 2015). Mihajlovic and Trajkovic (2020) note that brand management strategies are influential aspects of customers' purchasing decisions, adding that brand management has been applied in a multitude of industries including banking, consulting, telecommunications, education, hospitality, among others. Normally, a company's brand will entail who they are, what they do, what kind of quality products or services they provide, their reputation, and level of trustworthiness by their customers (Vijayalakshmi & Manimozhy, 2015).

Increased competition has increased the number of alternative products available in the market; therefore, firms must find unique ways to differentiate their products in the eyes of the consumers (Dierks, 2017). This chain of events has led many organizations to re-evaluate the branding concept (Keller, 2013). Louis and Lombart (2010) found that when consumers understand and relate to the instrumental role of brands in achieving their goals, they often come to regard the brands as meaningful and significant to them. Further, branding is said to be the act of giving meaning to a specific company, or products or services through inventing and shaping a brand in a consumer's mind (Kim & Chung, 2012). This study used Keller's (2001) attributes since their measures are suitable for analysis among service sector providers to which the hotel industry belongs. Thus, this study sought to establish the effect of brand management, measured as (brand identity, brand association, brand recognition, and brand personality), on the performance of star-rated hotels in Kenya.

Brand identity defines how the firm wants a brand wants to be perceived, and it leads to the development of the brand image and is situated on the sender's side. The way a brand is perceived by its customers is key to its success (Bhalla & Nazneen, 2018). It is the extent to which the firm goes to influences outsiders' perceptions of the company's products (Rahi, 2016). Brand positioning or association is designed to ensure that a product or service satisfies the perception of the customer in respect to competitors' products (Foroudi, 2019), thus contributing to product and service differentiation. Brand positioning attempts to establish a

direct relationship between the consumer and businesses through quality-based strategies, convenience-based strategies, differentiation strategies, and price-based strategies (Ciunova-Shuleska, Palamidovska-Sterjadovska, Osakwe, & Omotoso, 2017).

Brand recognition refers to the extent to which a particular product can be identified by customers based on its physical attributes such as logo or motto (Hlatshwayo, 2015). It is an important aspect of product marketing since it denotes a customer's ability to identify a particular product by its design attributes and elements (Arani & Shafiizadeh, 2019). Brand personality refers to a set of human-like characteristics associated with experiences of using particular products or services. Brand personality is also influenced by the name of the manufacturer, the packaging design, and other observable characteristics (McKee, 2010). Muthoni (2018) posits that brand personality is used by brands since customers are attracted to brands that have personalities similar to theirs.

1.1.2 Organization Performance

The performance of a firm is related to both internal and external factors: external, because firms compete in sectors and markets which influence strategy and results; internal, because firms have to choose strategies to be adopted and, in general, to decide the correct way to operate, to allocate resources in order to manage business functions and reach goals (Bresciani, Thrassou, & Vrontis, 2012). Performance is the ability of an organization to fulfill its mission through sound management, strong governance, and persistent rededication to achieve results (Owiti, 2014). Lebens and Euske (2006), organizational performance is a set of financial and non-financial indicators which offered information on the degree of achievement of objectives and results.

Numerous scholars have recommended that performance measurement must involve both financial and non-financial dimensions (Magabli & Muheisen, 2013; Lebens & Euske, 2006). Abu-Aliqah (2012) identified the following measurement items; return on investment, sales growth rate, cash flow from the operation, customer satisfaction, product quality, and market development. Generally, firm performance assesses the sales level, profitability, sales growth, and profit growth (Ates, Garengo, Cocca, & Bititci, 2013). Other firms' performances metrics considered are revenue from sales, profitability, sales growth, and profit growth (Fairoz, Hirobumi, & Tanaka, 2010).

According to Mark and Nwaiwu (2015) business performance consists of all effort by an organization to attain its set goals consisting but not limited to survival, employee, customer,

and satisfaction, sales growth, and profitability. It was further opined that business performance entails the view about the values held by customers. A growing number of firms have adopted the Balance score card as a measure of firm performance. It allows for clarification of an organization's vision and strategy and translates them into actions (Muthoni, 2018). The balanced scorecard model is key to measuring performance among service industries by focusing on both financial and non-financial outcomes through the following perspectives; the internal business process, learning and innovation, customer satisfaction, and financial outcomes (Gumboh & Gichira, 2015).

The performance of hotels in Kenya may be evaluated by both financial and non-financial measures. The hotels fall in the service industry and in this industry, the quality of service delivered to customers is very important and critical to the success of the hotel (Ongori, Iravo, & Munene, 2013). Wanjiku (2009) defines performance as a set of mindsets that drive internal processes, financial perspective, innovativeness, and customer perspective. Odhuno, Kambona, Othuno, and Wadongo (2010) note that the financial perspective encompasses leverage, working capital, asset turnover, cash flow, and profit margin. Customer satisfaction, on the other hand, is about meeting the needs and expectations of the client and therefore plays center stage in the activities of the hotel because a satisfied customer means a repeat client and referral both by the client and the hotel that result in future business. Furthermore, the growth, innovation, and learning aspects can be key metrics of performance within hotels (Mutuku, 2014).

The current study utilized the balance scorecard non-financial perspectives in measuring the performance of hotels in Kenya since they offered more robust information on what supports the competitiveness and sustainability of the firms. The study considered customer satisfaction levels, organization learning, market development, and revenue generation.

1.1.3 Star-Rated Hotels

Organizations today must realize that their products and services, regardless of how good they might be, simply do not sell on their own (Kotler & Keller, 2015). Most organizations, hotels included required various effective strategies to thrive and attain a competitive advantage over their competitors in the hotel industry (Bresciani, Thrassou, & Vrontis, 2012). Given the dynamic nature of the hospitality industry, many hotels ought to change their brand management quite often to cope with the dynamic needs in the market and also remain ahead of the competition (Nzioka & Njuguna, 2017). Akunja (2020) notes that the Kenyan hotel industry is mature and competitive making the firm image act as a vital alternative for

differentiation. Numerous businesses advocate for the importance of their brand image as a source of competitive advantage.

The Kenya government has identified tourism as one of the six pillars of growth in Kenya's Vision 2030. The government aims to formulate joint ventures with private investors to promote Kenya as a top tourist destination; offering a high-end, diverse, and distinctive experience (Hassan, Gunkevych, & Rismani, 2018). The hospitality industry is one of the highest foreign exchange earners in the country and to this end, has received increased attention to improving its capacity to offer world-class services and build a strong brand. The government has also increased infrastructural development such as restructuring governance in the transition period from a centralized system of management to a decentralized system, construction of the standard gauge railway, and commissioning of the Nairobi Expressway to promote domestic tourism (Ndivo & Okech, 2020). To this extent, the country has seen international brands such as Radisson Blu, Park Inn by Radisson, Lonrho Hotels, Moven Pick, and Best Western setting up shop in the greater Nairobi region (Hassan, Gunkevych, & Rismani, 2018).

Hotels that have the ability to develop new services in the hospitality industry tend to attract, satisfy and thus retain consumers are more likely to survive than those firms that do not take that approach (Magablih & Muheisen, 2013). In the context of Kenya, there has been increased international competition among destinations and hotels in Kenya. Hotel industries in Kenya are ranked according to star rating, ranging from 1-star to 5-star, with the classification borrowing from globally accepted features for segmenting customer needs and wants. Hotel rating is dependent on the quality of facilities and services offered at the premises to attract customers and it is important for these organizations to maintain a favorable brand image (Hassan, Mugambi, & Waiganjo, 2017).

The increasing competition in the industry has pushed the Kenyan tourism sector and the players in the hospitality industry to adjust their competitive strategies in order for them to compete successfully both locally and internationally (Bukirwa, 2017). This necessitates the need for effective brand management which has been identified as a positive predictor of firm performance (Claudiu-Cătălin, 2014). In order to survive, the Kenyan hotel firms must be agile enough to respond to the pressures to compete on levels unrivaled in the past (Ngandu, 2014). Nyawira (2016) established that marketing strategies application had a positive impact on the performance of hotels.

Hassan (2018) found out that strategic management practices were major drivers of performance in the hotel industry. There is minimal documented evidence though on the interaction between brand management and performance of star-rated hotels in Kenya. This expanded the available empirical evidence by examining the performance of star-rated hotels in Nairobi City County. According to the Tourism Regulatory Authority (2020), there are 53 star rated hotels within the county. The star rating system is used as a metric for assessing the level of luxury, satisfaction, and appeal of establishments. This is accepted as a global standard that hotels should range from One-star to Five-star establishments. One-star and two-star hotels are classified as those that are able to satisfy basic needs and are economical, three-star hotels offer high services and provide additional amenities, four-star hotels offer first-class services and high-end amenities within the property while five-star hotels are luxury establishments offering state-of-the-art services and highest comfort standards (Tourism Regulatory Authority, 2020).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Globalization and increased business competition have in recent years, forced organizations to leverage their well-established brands as a way of introducing new products to the market, and cutting costs associated with establishing a new brand (Cheung, Kong, & Song, 2014; Magablih & Muheisen, 2013). Globalization has brought about increased familiarity and connectivity and, in this regard, Hirvonen and Laukkanen (2013) indicated there is considerable consensus in research that brand-oriented firms realize better performance. The hotel industry was one of the most adversely affected industries after the first case of the Covid 19 was reported in Kenya. Lockdown restrictions, closure of airports, and suspension and banning of physical meetings and public gatherings have significantly impacted the operational dynamics of hotels (Obura, 2021). The pandemic has seen all hotels reporting a reduction in the volume of guests, a significant shift in the demographics of the clientele, and an increase in the retrenchment of staff (Gursoy, Chi, & Chi, 2021). Coupled with the suspension of government spending and incentives, recovery has been difficult for some of the biggest operators such as Nairobi's Hotel Intercontinental, the Radisson Blu, Jacaranda Hotel, and The Fairmont Norfolk Hotel having to permanently or partially close. Further, all of the hotels in the country have seen a significant reduction in staff members, potentially impacting the service capacity of the hotels (Wachira & Kandie, 2021). Despite increased literature on branding, most of the studies have focused on firms outside of the hospitality industry, with even less focusing on star-rated hotels' association with brand management in Kenya.

Shin, Sharma, Nicolau, and Kang (2021) investigated the impact of hotel CSR on booking behavior and hotel performance during the Covid 19 pandemic and reported that CSR activities such as the provision of accommodation to health workers and participation in feeding programs to the community and reported a negative impact of the strategic philanthropic measures on firm market value. Liu and Hu (2021) report that the brand experience of upscale hotels has a significant influence on brand image, brand loyalty, product attributes, and customer satisfaction. Satisfaction among customers improved non-financial brand performance. Štreimikienė and Ahmed (2021) demonstrated that brand image and brand awareness are determinants of a hotel's ethical, philanthropic, and sustainable dimensions and that these dimensions have a significant impact on firm performance. Kim, Kim, and Lee (2021) affirm that for luxury hotels, the quality of a product is more essential than its price, noting that service and product characteristics are crucial for operational efficiency. Valdez Jr (2021) found out that brand image, reputational, and identity were customer relations management strategies that are positively associated with Indian hotels' performance. Foroudi (2019) also opined that brand awareness, reputation, and recognition were critical to the performance of service industry firms.

Regionally, a Ghanaian study by Ameyibor, Anabila, and Saini (2021) ascertained a significant positive relationship between brand positioning and hotel performance, adding that brand equity has a partial mediation effect on the relationship between brand positioning and business performance. In Nigeria Etuk, (2021) concluded that destination branding capability had a significant positive effect on the satisfaction levels of tourists. In a study on brand equity and marketing performance, Odeleye (2021) reported that brand loyalty and brand association significantly impact the marketing performance of firms in Nigeria's brewing industry. The study reported that brand loyalty is formed through brand commitment, brand image and quality, brand satisfaction, perceived brand value, brand trust, and brand association. In the Kenyan context, Musembi and Ragui (2021) showed that hotel classification was a key source of competitive advantage for Kenyan hotels, reporting that branding influences hotel image, hotel recognition, and customer loyalty. Musoga, Ngugi, and Wanjau (2021) found a positive relationship between corporate reputation and hotel performance.

The above studies reveal that aspects of brand management are critical to improving the performance of organizations. However, the studies were not conducted within Star-rated hotels in Kenya thus creating a knowledge gap that motivates this research. More so, none of the studies considered jointly how brand identity, association, recognition, and personality

impact organization performance in star-rated hotels. This gap was solved by examining the effect of brand management on the organizational performance of star-rated hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya.

1.3 General Objective

The main focus of the study was to establish the effect of brand management on the organizational performance of Star Rated hotels in Nairobi County.

1.3.1 Specific Objectives

The study sought to achieve this by specifically examining;

- i. To determine the effect of brand identity on the organizational performance of Star Rated hotels in Nairobi County.
- ii. To establish the effect of brand association on the organizational performance of Star Rated hotels in Nairobi County.
- iii. To examine the effect of brand recognition on the organizational performance of Star Rated hotels in Nairobi County.
- iv. To establish the effect of brand personality on the organizational performance of Star Rated hotels in Nairobi County.

1.4 Research Questions

- i. What is the effect of brand identity on the organization performance star rated hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya?
- ii. What is the effect of brand association on the organization performance star rated hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya?
- iii. What is the effect of brand recognition on the organization performance star rated hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya?
- iv. What is the effect of brand personality on the organization performance star rated hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya?

1.5 Scope of the Study

The study scope reviewed the influence of brand management strategies on performance of star rated hotels. Conceptually, the study focused on brand identity, brand association, brand recognition and brand personality, and their influence on performance of star-rated hotels in Kenya. The theoretical scope of the study focused on the social identity theory and the theory of brand loyalty. The geographical scope of the study was star-rated hotels in Nairobi County.

The study narrowed down the population of the study to the 53 star-rated operating within Nairobi City County. This was the study population scope. The study methodological scope was a quantitative research approach. The time period of the study was limited to March 2021-May 2021.

1.6 Significance of the Study

To the Management

This study will be beneficial to hoteliers, as it will provide insight on various efficient and effective brand management practices widely used in the industry, therefore enhance the organizations competitiveness and overall performance. The findings of this study will thus be critical to the management of hospitality firms within the County by offering adequate empirical evidence that can help foster their managerial practices with regard to business brandings. The study results will also help managers in developing business performance metrics that can be customized to their organization.

To Policy Makers

The findings of this study will thus be pivotal to lobbyists and hospitality industry associations in developing brand management guidelines that can be adopted by local hotel firms to foster their competitiveness. Furthermore, the Brand Kenya initiative has highly invested in supporting the Kenyan brand globally, and the results of this study can help policymakers in coming up with branding strategies that can be implemented within the hospitality industry. This can help in positioning local star-rated hotels as destination locations for foreign and domestic visitors.

To Academia and Knowledge

There is limited empirical knowledge of the importance of brand management on organization performance of star-rated hotels in Kenya hence the findings of this study are expected to be vital in enhancing the available empirical knowledge in the subject matter. Further, the study was of theoretical contribution the applicability of the, resource-based view, social identity theory and theory of brand loyalty on selection of brand management as a source of firm competitiveness and performance. The research will further act as a reference material for future research work on the performance of star-rated hotels in Kenya.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a detailed review of the literature in relation to the research variables. The chapter specifically presented; the theoretical literature, the empirical studies, the summary of empirical gaps and the conceptual framework.

2.2 Theoretical Review

The study used a multi-theory approach with the resource-based view theory being the dominant theory in explaining how brand management has been critical to the performance of star-rated hotels. This was complemented by the social identity theory and the theory of brand loyalty.

2.2.1 Resource Based View Theory

The resource based-view theory was developed from the work of Penrose (1991) and advanced by other theorists such as Stefan (2012) who opined that organizations depend on the resources they possess to deploy and align to the industry to gain a competitive advantage. Barney (1991) also formalized the term RBV perspective into a theoretical framework while clarifying the understanding of the impact of a firm's environment on firm performance. Barney defined resources as "assets, capabilities, processes, firm attributes, information and knowledge controlled by a firm that enable the firm to conceive and implement strategies that improve its efficiency and effectiveness.

Priem and Butler (2001) viewed the organization as a bundle of assets or resources which are tied semi-permanently to the firm. The RBT suggests that the firm, in competitive business environment, needs to leverage its unique resources, capabilities and competencies and perform tasks efficiently and expeditiously to improve their ability to meet changing market and customer needs (Al-Ansari, 2014). The theory further argues that resources should pass the scarce (rare), irreplaceable (imperfectly imitable) and valuable test so as to be considered as basis of competitive advantage that is sustainable (Barney, 1991). Hamel and Prahalad (1993), argued that for achievement of the competitive advantages processes must be right sized and the implication therefore is that the existing resources must be maximized such that more outputs are gotten and their use is maintained at optimal level.

Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Parmar and Colle (2010) also argues that, for a firm's resource to be a source of sustained competitive advantage, it must be unique, rare, valuable, inimitable

(hard to copy) and non-substitutable. This theory supports the coordination of tangible and intangible resources for higher performance and competitive advantage. Its major weakness is that many firms have limited bundle of strategic assets and capabilities and are easily copied by competitors (Al-Ansari, 2014).

Various studies associate brand management with increased firm performance. Kumar, Sujit, Waheed and Fernandez (2021) established a strong relationship between brand value and firm value, demonstrating brand management as a key competency for businesses. As a source of competitive advantage, Buhalis and Park (2021) assert that certain hotels in the tourism industry have benefitted from effective brand management, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, leveraging on their brand name to sustain operations. The theory supports this study as it argues that firms which possess unique capabilities are better positioned to sustain performance and generate competitive advantage (Bukirwa, 2017). In this study, the hotel's brand management capabilities influence brand equity which has been associated with increased performance. In the context of hotels, this theory posits that high performing hotels will have services and products that are perceived to be more reliable and can be easily recognized. This theory informs this study in that it ascertains that product personality and recognition are key sources of competitive advantage and can influence the firm's performance. Thus, better brand management in hotels would result in improved firm performance, demonstrating that firms can rely on the quality assured by the brand as a resource that can attract customers and increase visitor count. This theory thus was fundamental in highlighting how star-rated hotels in Nairobi can leverage on their brand management capabilities to improve performance.

2.2.2 Social Identity Theory

The concept of social identity has gained prominence in the field of organization behavior and resource management within firms (Hogg, 2016). The theory culminates from the works of Turner, Brown and Tajfel, (1979) who suggested that social identity focuses on the creation of unity within individuals. That is, individuals attending to similar group will define and identify themselves with that particular group and distinguish themselves from others. The theory was initially focused on psychological works, but recently it has been extended to consumer behavior and how individuals form a link with particular brands (Fennis & Pruyn, 2007). Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) hold that firms are able to brand their products and services that are able to meet the consumer self-definition or those of a particular group. Ahearne, Bhattacharya and Gruen (2005) suggest that in line with the social identity themes, consumers can be

identified by focusing on particular organization brands through the strength of the brand identity and behavior associated with the brand. Thus, as noted by Madhavaram, Badrinarayanan and McDonald (2005) brand management should always be considered by the organization as the first step of integrating a particular group of individuals.

The social identity theory is a strong predictor of behavior displayed by groups or individual and as such can be instrumental in forming relationships based on uniform aspects (Vernuccio, Pagani, Barbarossa, & Pastore, 2015). The primary tenet of the theory is that individuals sought to be members of groups that can enhance their self-esteem (Wang, 2017). This leads to a positive reinforcement concept, where individuals waslieve that their group is better than other groups in creating their social identity, hence they sought to raise the status of their group (Johnson & Lowe, 2015). Thus, in the modern world where advertisement and brand management are central to organizations, being aware of the behavior of groups or individuals will help create a relationship with particular brands (Dehdashti, Kenari, & Bakhshizadeh, 2012).

Zhou, Zhang, Su, and Zhou (2012) indicate that social identity is able to express the strength of the social relations that a customer has with members of the community through shared identity. Thus, a detailed understanding of the customers' social identity will enable organizations to come up with a detailed brand management that meets the preferences of a particular group. Mousavi, Roper and Keeling (2017) note when customers view the external brand image and recognize the distinctive and prestigious traits, their relationship to the brand was strengthened. Consequently, better understanding by firms of their customers social identity can be significant in building the right brands.

As such, this study finds the theory of social identity to be central to undertaking brand management campaigns that can generate behavior that resonates with particular groups, hence influence how they associate with the brand. Hsiao, Lee, Chen and Lin (2018) and Moise Gil-Saura, Šerić and Molina (2019) assert that corporate social responsibility, environmental sustainability efforts and resident engagement significantly influence destination choice of tourists. As the tourism and hospitality business ecosystem matures and competition becomes globalized, the branding process has become more complex, and the concept of brand-co-creation whereby various stakeholders are involved in defining the brand has been widely adopted. This helps create a uniform identity that tourists and hotel guests can easily associate with. This theory asserts that active engagement of customers in co-creation increases brand

strength through increasing brand association. This theory will thus be key in explaining the influence of brand management on how customers associate with certain hotel products and services, contributing to the overall customer experience, hence firm performance.

2.2.3 Theory of Brand Loyalty

This theory has been explored in traditional marketing literature but was exhaustively addressed by Oliver (1999) in his studies on brand loyalty. The theory emphasizes on two main dimensions when explaining loyalty; behavioural and attitudinal loyalty. This theory presents a framework which associates brand loyalty with a hierarchy of effects model with cognitive, affective, cognitive (behavioural intent), and action (repeat purchase behaviour) dimensions (Kim, Han, & Park, 2001). This theory integrates the constructs of customer satisfaction and holds that consumers will develop intent to reacquire or re-purchase a particular product or service regardless of all other market forces designed to induce switching behaviour (Alnawas & Altarifi, 2016). The traditional conceptualization of attitudinal brand loyalty incorporates cognitive, affective, and behavioural purchase intent dimensions. It focusses on how customers feel about a particular brand, depending on the available information about the product. It shows one's commitment and attitudes towards future purchases (Han, Yu, Lee, & Kim, 2019). Efforts aimed at influencing behavioural intent are traditionally influenced by mass media communications designed to substantially improve the brand image. In the hotel industry, patrons are assured of comfort, world class service, security and privacy. It is important to note that customers can remain loyal, even when they are dissatisfied with particular aspects of the product or service (Back & Parks, 2003). According to Oliver (1999), cognitive loyalty involves the client making enquiries and comparisons regarding different product before making the purchase intention. Emotional brand loyalty, on the other hand is dependent on the degree of satisfaction with a product, rather than purchasing products based on prior knowledge (Leckie, Nyadzayo, & Johnson, 2016). The purchaser pays for the product out of attachment rather than operational satisfaction. However, satisfied customers tend to remain loyal over a long period of time (Candan, Ünal, & Erciş, 2013). T

According to this theory, customers will be more loyal to brands that satisfy their needs, and meet or exceed their expectations. This theory posits that loyalty is an asset, and Aaker (2014) asserts that loyal customers are cheaper to retain than to acquiring new customers. Dick and Basu (1994) associated loyalty with positive word of mouth marketing, and Reichheld et al., (2000) reported that loyal customers are a source of continuous profit, reduce marketing and operating costs and result in reduced rates of switching to competing hotels. Friberg and

Sanctuary (2018) showed that brands with loyal customers were able to expand into new markets faster, possessed higher market share and reported high levels of brand equity. This theory informs the researcher on the strategies that managers can adopt to reinforce loyalty behaviour among customers of star rated hotels.

2.3 Empirical Review

This section presents an empirical review of studies that identify the relationships between the various variables of brand management and organizational performance. The section reviewed empirical studies regarding brand identity, brand association, brand recognition and brand personality and their relationship with performance among different industries.

2.3.1 Brand Identity and Organization Performance

Brand identity incorporates tangible and intangible branding dimensions that promote brand integrity, brand signature, and prestige and represents the basis for the image and reputation of a product (Allison & Flaherty, 2020). Brands can be identified through their logos and product design and culture. Apart from visual tenets, a firm's level of professionalism, responsiveness, and social responsibilities are key to defining a firm's unique identity. Apart from attracting consumers, brand identity has been associated with improving a firm's attractiveness to potential employees as it encompasses the firm's history, heritage, and beliefs (Aaker, 2014). The identity of a firm resonates in its image, which is a mental picture of an organization from the consumer's perspective while identity deals with how an organization presents itself to consumers. Brand identity defines internal components of a brand and companies convey their mission and vision through their corporate identity.

Ishaq, Hussain, Asim and Cheema (2014) endeavoured to identify the interrelationship of customer-based brand equity dimensions (brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand image, and service quality) in the Pakistani hotel industry. The study involved five star hotels from different regions in Pakistan and data was collected from 821 customers who had first hand experience at the hotels. Data analysis involved mediating regression and stepwise regression analyses were applied for investigation of study hypotheses. The study determined that; perceived service quality positively and significantly influences brand loyalty, brand image, and brand awareness. Further, the study determined that customer-based brand equity dimensions positively influence customer loyalty, which is key to enhancing competitive advantage and sustainability among players in the hotel industry. The study proposes that customer-based brand equity serve as a tool for evaluating marketing initiatives since it can evaluate both customer and employee feedback which is key to determining the effects of

product positioning and product branding strategies. The study only focused on eight five-star rated hotels in Pakistan, while the current study examined all star hotels in the greater Nairobi region.

Maurya, Mishra, Anand and Kumar (2015) explored the link between corporate identity, customer orientation and performance of SMEs in India. The study employed a positivist research philosophy with 102 samples being considered in the analysis. The study adopted structural equation modelling and the findings established that corporate identity had a positive influence on the incremental performance of the small and medium enterprises. The study indicated that the firm's corporate image and personality had positive effects on customer's intent to purchase products from a particular business. The study focused on food processing firms while current study tested the performance of star-rated hotels in Kenya.

Lahap (2015) carried out an investigation seeking to determine the importance of brand image on customer satisfaction and to examine whether the image of brand is key in determining satisfaction levels among customers. The study adopted stratified sampling and used factor analysis in to determine the relationship between the variables. Respondents were all hoteliers in the Kalang Valley. The study revealed that brand image has a strong influence on customer satisfaction among Malaysian hotels. Paying attention to the premises' physical environment, ambience, accessibility and staff professionalism are essential to increase customers' satisfaction levels. The study determined that customers remained loyal and were prepared to pay higher rates due to better ambience and service delivery.

Hinson, Abdul-Hamid and Osabutey (2017) conducted an investigation of the impact of market orientation and positioning in star-rated hotels in Ghana. The study conducted a survey of star-rated hotels and collected responses from 105 respondents. The research employed descriptive, exploratory factor analysis and hierarchical regression to tests research hypotheses. The results established that market orientation and positioning strategies implemented to establish a firm's identity significantly impact performance among star-rated hotels. The researchers argue that identifying customer needs, developing market intelligence collection techniques, improving brand name and enhancing service provision lead to improved performance among Ghanaian hotels. The study considered large star-rated hotels in Ghana while current study reviews the performance of Kenyan star-rated hotels.

Qoura and Khalifa (2016) sought after the factors that determine hotel reputation and their influence on hotel image among clients of five-star rated hotels in Egypt. The reputation

management factors were sourced from the RepTrak model available in the Reputation Institute website. The study determined a significant relationship between reputation success factors and hotel image among customers. The study revealed that hotel leadership, product and service quality, performance, involvement in hotel social responsibilities, innovation initiatives and governance procedures have a positive effect on Egyptian hotels' reputation. However, the workplace environment contributed to negative image among some hotels, impacting their performance outcomes. The study revealed that all constructs of the hotel reputation model significantly impact brand image and performance. The study did not analyse other constructs of brand management impact hotel performance.

Akunja (2020) adopted an explanatory design in an examination into the relationship between brand image and loyalty among hotel customers in Nairobi, Kenya. The study adopted purposive, stratified and systematic random sampling methods. Factor analysis and simple regressions were conducted in hypothesis testing. The study found a positive relationship between brand image and customer loyalty. The level of uniqueness, the brand reputation and advertisement strategies were significant determinants of brand image. Customer loyalty was influenced by previous experience, hotel décor and ambience and total package offering. High levels of customer loyalty were positively related with intent to recommend the hotel to friends and relatives. The study utilized factor analysis and used multiple sampling methods in data analysis.

Maore (2019) investigated the relationship between brand management attributes, corporate image, customer characteristics and customer satisfaction among undergraduate university students in Kenya. The research applied a descriptive research design with random sampling being employed in selection of study participants. The study indicated that brand management attributes had a statistically positive influence on the level of customer satisfaction. The research reveals that brand management attributes significantly impact customer satisfaction levels. In the context of universities, the university brand, its image, culture, service offering, reputation, alumni association and history are integral in influencing students' willingness to enrol. The study considers how brand management affects satisfaction level only while this research focused on brand management and performance within star-rated hotels in Nairobi County.

2.3.2 Brand Association and Organization Performance

Brand positioning refers to the brand's position in the mind of the customer and sets the product apart from the competitors. Effective branding necessitates the establishment of a cordial relationship between the provider and the recipient (Hosseini & Behboudi, 2017). Brand positioning strategies are key to ensuring customers spend more than the average on a product or a service primarily as a result of their expected satisfaction levels (Ciunova-Shuleska, Palamidovska-Sterjadovska, Osakwe, & Omotoso, 2017). Foroudi (2019) conducted a review of the influence of brand signature, brand awareness, brand attitude, brand reputation on hotel industry's brand performance. The study adopted a multi-dimensional approach through literature review and primary data analysis to establish association of the variables. The proposed research model was tested using structural equation modelling. The results indicate that brand signature, brand attitude (association and brand belief), brand awareness (brand familiarity and recognisability) and consistent brand reputation were key to creating an association between a product and customers. Firms that were able to create and sustain desirable attributes in a particular product over the long time were noted to have more loyal repeat customers. The examination focuses on brand performance of global hotels while this study examines the performance of star-rated hotels in Kenya.

Ciunova-Shuleska, Palamidovska-Sterjadovska, Osakwe and Omotoso (2017) conducted a study in the Balkans on the impact of customer retention orientation and brand orientation on customer loyalty and financial performance in SMEs. The study employed structured research questionnaires and analysis was conducted using structured equation modelling (SEM). The study suggests that customer loyalty can be improved through orienting strategies towards ensuring customer retention, creating brand value and supporting brand consistency. The study established a positive association between brand association and financial performance with a significant partially mediating effect of customer loyalty. The study focus was general SME firms while current research context is specifically on star-rated hotels in Kenya which have a standardized environment of operations.

Hlatshwayo (2015) reviewed brand positioning strategy in growing and sustaining South African SMEs. The study notes that most SMEs (40%) fail within the first year and the lack of appropriate management and marketing skills have been identified as predictors of the failure rate. The study conducted in-depth interviews across 15 SME owners and findings indicate that there is an inadequacy in the marketing practices and skills. The study indicates that effective brand positioning strategies such as competitive positioning, corporate identity, consumer

positioning promote SME sustainability in South Africa. The study relies on a qualitative review while this research employed quantitative approach. Furthermore, the study does not identify the association between brand identity and hotel performance which this research reviewed.

In a research conducted in Uganda hotels Nuwamanya (2018) examined the effects of branding on image of Kampala and Entebbe Protea hotels. The study employed a quantitative approach with questionnaires utilized in the data collection. The study established that most of the hotels were undertaking regular internal service assessments to ensure that they deliver the best quality to customers. The hotels were also active in creating alliances across different branches to provide a personalized customer experience. The study indicated that hotel branding positively contributed to repeat purchases, enhanced customer loyalty and improved customer patronage. The study notes that most hotels struggled in branding due to high customer expectations and the costs involved. The study does not establish how specific branding approaches impact the performance of the hotels.

Kiviti (2018) studied the effect of market positioning strategies on performance of KCB Bank Group Ltd, Kenya. The study adopted a qualitative approach with in-depth interviews being utilized in the data collection. The study used content analysis to analyse collected data. The study results indicate that the bank has rolled out brand, product and price positioning strategies in the market. The study notes that brand positioning in the firm involves a competitive angle, targeted marketing and value-based brand presence in the market. The respondents noted that the bank ensured the brand identity was clear, consistent, credible and competitive in the market. The study focused on a review of brand identity aspects within commercial banks in Kenya while this research examines the brand identity of star-rated hotels in Kenya.

Nzioka and Njuguna (2017) conducted a study across 58 hotels in Nairobi region focusing on the relationship between firm orientations and performance of hotels. The study utilized primary research data and employed multiple linear regression in the analysis. The regression findings indicate that market power, strategic orientation, organization structure and the market orientation positively improve organization performance. The study notes that market orientation focused on competitor orientation and constantly monitoring customer quality and positioning strengthen the performance of the hotels. The study does not specifically evaluate how brand association impacts performance of hotels in Nairobi City County hence this study solved this empirical gap.

2.3.3 Brand Recognition and Organization Performance

It is also the ability of a consumer to recall a brand when exposed to some cues, without specifically mentioning its name. An increased level of brand recognition is key to influencing the purchase intention, which gives the brand a competitive advantage in the market (Khurram, Qadeer, & Sheeraz, 2018). Van Grinsven and Das (2016) suggested that brand recognition measures decisions made at a point of purchase, where the brand, logo, and packaging are recognizable. Arani and Shafiizadeh (2019) carried out a case study in an investigation on brand familiarity and brand recognition and how they relate with repurchase intention, loyalty and brand recommendation. The mediating variable in the study was brand reputation. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The findings showed that customer awareness which is determined by brand recognition and brand familiarity have a significant impact on brand reputation. Brand reputation, on the other hand significantly impacted brand performance by inducing intention to buy and brand loyalty. Positive brand reputation also positively influenced brand recommendations. The study focused on a single hotel while the current assessed all-star-rated hotels.

Khurram, Qadeer and Sheeraz (2018) studied the role of brand recall, brand recognition and price consciousness in understanding actual purchase. The study was conducted across firms in Pakistan with survey questionnaires being adopted in the data collection. The study considered female shoppers as the study participants. The analysis of the study data indicated that brand recall and brand recognition have a positive relation to actual purchases within the retail stores. The study also indicated that price consciousness did not moderate the relationship between brand recognition and actual sales within the firm. The study only considers actual purchases in retail stores while this research reviewed the organization performance of star-rated hotels in Kenya.

Horsfall and MacKingsley (2018) investigated the relationship between brand awareness and performance of food and beverage firms in Nigeria. The study adopted purposive sampling and applied Pearson's product moment correlation coefficients in data analysis. The analysis revealed that brand awareness was positively related with customer retention and brand extension. The study recommended that food and beverage industries formulate creative packaging and carry out extensive awareness programs to ensure that consumers are familiar with their unique product attributes and brand designs.

Damar, Nancy and Wilson (2018) examined the effect of branding strategy on the performance of multinational corporations in Kenya. The study adopted a survey research design with management staff from selected multinational corporations being considered in the study. The research utilized semi-structured research questionnaire with regression analysis and correlation being employed. The study established that strategies had been adopted in the MNCs to a large extent, these includes; brand recognition, brand element brand personality, brand name and brand identity are to a large extent adopted within the firms. The study indicated that the branding strategies had a positive and significant effect on performance of multinational firms. The study indicated that constantly reviewing the efficacy of the branding practices is required to achieve desired results. The study was conducted across multinational firms while this study examines hotel performance in Kenya.

Kilei, Iravo and Omwenga (2016) conducted a survey on the impact of brand awareness on market brand performance of service brands. The study randomly selected 347 consumers from the Kenyan banking industry to participate in the research. The research employed correlational and regression analysis. The results show that brand recall and brand awareness had a positive and significant correlation to market brand performance. The study indicated that brand recognition had no significant impact on market brand performance. The study indicates there is minimal consumer attention to the brands hence there is need for more brand building campaigns and creation of awareness. The study focusses on the banking industry and does not consider the organization performance as a predicted by brand recognition aspects.

Ndege and Kegoro (2019) studied the influence of brand awareness, customer characteristics on customer loyalty of savings and credit cooperative societies in Embu County, Kenya. The research used a cross-sectional research design with the population of the study derived from members of the 30 Saccos operating in Embu. The study employed an open-ended questionnaire. The study results indicate that brand recognition and brand awareness significantly influenced the customer loyalty. The study indicated that most firms failed in creating brand identity and conducting awareness campaigns such as marketing and alternative distribution channels which limited customer loyalty. The study focused on customer loyalty within Saccos while this research examines performance of star-rated hotels SMEs in Nairobi County.

2.3.4 Brand Personality and Organization Performance

Brand personality provides consumers with something to relate and it increases brand equity by having a consistent set of traits that specific customer bases enjoy. Brand personality is a product of brand identity and brand image, giving products distinct characteristics (Annah, 2019). Tuominen, Hirvonen, Reijonen and Laukkanen (2016) study focused on an examination of the internal branding process and financial performance in service companies. The study sampled 124 services companies in Finland and utilized structured questionnaires to collect data. The study model was tested using SEM analysis. The results of the study established there is an indirect effect of internal branding on the brand and market performance of the service companies. The results revealed there is a direct association between internal branding processes such brand value concepts, set beliefs and attributes and firm's financial performance. The research does not interrogate how other aspects of brand management affect performance of the firms which this study examined.

Sop and Kozak (2019) conducted a research on the effects of brand personality, self-congruity and functional congruity on hotel brand loyalty. The study sampled 732 customers drawn from 25 five-star hotels in Turkey. The study relied on survey questionnaires in the data analysis with explanatory factor analysis and regression modelling being adopted. The findings indicate that brand personality has a significant effect on the loyalty within the hotel. The study showed that sincerity of the hotels and the excitement with the brand are key to improving loyalty within the hotels. The study established that functional and self-congruity significantly mediates the relationship between brand personality and brand loyalty. The study did not review link between personality and hotel performance which was the focus of this research.

Yufang, Bin and Qiaoyi (2014) study examined the effect of brand personality on the brand value of smartphone makers in China. The study conducted online surveys among 1335 customers of the smartphones. The results indicated that developing a brand personality through improved competence of the brand and excitement enhances the value of the phone makers through great influence on brand choice. The research also showed that brand personality had a significant positive effect on the brand value of the firms. The research focused on smartphone firms while current study examines the brand personality within star rated hotels in Kenya.

Ogbuji, Onuoha and Owhorchukwu (2016) conducted a study on deposit money banks in Nigeria and reviewed the association between brand personality and marketing performance.

The study employed a survey research design with 76 questionnaires being distributed in the data collection process. The study applied spearman rank correlation and regression analysis. The study established that brand personality has a positive and strong effect on market performance. The study indicated that brand sincerity, brand competence and brand sophistication are integral to improved sales growth, profitability and customer loyalty. The examination was conducted across commercial banks while current study reviews performance of hotel industry firms in Kenya.

Sammy, Iravo and Omwenga (2016) conducted a quantitative study on the effects of service brand personality on brand performance in the context of Kenya's Insurance Sector. The study utilized a quantitative research questionnaire in the data collection with 214 insurance entities being considered in the main research. The results of the regression analysis indicated that service brand personality has a positive effect on customer-based and financially-based brand performance metrics within insurance firms. The study noted that painting a brand image, describing what the brand stands for and evoking feeling among the clients is critical to fostering brand loyalty. The study was focused on insurance firms while current study reviews the performance of star-rated hotels.

Annah (2019) studied the influence of brand personality on customer loyalty in fast food restaurants in Kisumu City, Kenya. The study employed a descriptive cross-sectional research design with 100 customers being considered in the research. The study adopted a mix of descriptive and inferential analysis techniques. The study established that there is a significant relationship between brand personality and customer loyalty. The study indicated that brand excitement, sincerity, competence and sophistication were critical to improved customer loyalty in fast-food restaurants. The study only considers customer loyalty while this research takes into account more organization performance measures. Furthermore, the study did not focus on star-rated hotels in Kenya.

2.4 Summary of Literature Gaps

The study reviewed a number of studies focusing on Branding across different regions and industries. The available empirical literature focused on the effect of different branding strategies on performance of companies operating in multiple industries. However, the studies also revealed that there is inconclusive evidence on the effect of brand management strategies on performance among star-rated hotels. Building from the reviewed literature the study was able to identify a number of empirical and methodological gaps that are summarized as follows.

The study by Ishaq, Hussain, Asim and Cheema (2014) determined a strong relationship exists between customer-based brand equity dimensions and customer loyalty. However, the study involved five star rated hotels, while the current included organizations with lower star ratings. Hinson, Abdul-Hamid and Osabutey (2017) carried out their analysis investigating the impact of market orientation on firm positioning, this study did not look at how the orientation of the market determines brand management strategies. Although Maore (2019) found a positive effect of brand management attributes on customer satisfaction, the study was based on satisfaction among university students. This study assessed brand management and its influence on overall performance of hotels. Foroudi's (2019) study used measures of brand management such as brand signature and brand attitude and brand awareness that this study did not adopt.

In Uganda, Nuwamanya (2018) specified the effect of branding on hotel image; it did not look at how branding affects other aspects of hotel performance such as customer attraction and loyalty. Kiviti's (2018) study investigated positioning strategies and how they influence bank performance. This was not the focus of the current study. Further, the study utilized interviews while the current used structured questionnaires. Another gap that was identified was from the study by Arani and Shafizadeh (2019) which was a case study assessing how brand management aspects influence customer loyalty of a single hotel while the current assessed multiple hotels. Horsfall and MacKingsley (2018) investigated brand management in beer distribution firms which have a close relationship with the hotel industry; but different performance and brand management metrics. Annah (2019) specified on aspects of customer loyalty in fast food restaurants and not on star rated hotels. Table 2.1 below presents detailed review of some of the identifies gaps.

Table 2.1 Summary of Empirical Literature Gaps

Author	Title	Findings	Research Gap	Type of Gap
Kilei, Iravo and Omwenga (2016)	Impact of brand awareness on market brand performance of service brands	The study indicated that brand recognition had no significant impact on market brand performance	The study focusses on the banking industry and does not consider the organization performance as a measure of the brand impact	Methodological

Ndege and Kegoro (2019)	Influence of brand awareness, customer characteristics on customer loyalty of savings and credit cooperative societies	The study results indicate that brand awareness significantly influenced the customer loyalty	The study focused on customer loyalty within Saccos while this research examines performance of star rated hotels in Nairobi County.	Contextual gap
Nyarangi (2018)	Influence of market orientation on performance of small-scale enterprises in Kisumu City, Kenya	The study indicates that improving knowledge of various market orientation practices can significantly enhance the SSE performance	The study does not explicitly consider star-rated hotels which is the focus of this research.	Methodological gap
Nzioka and Njuguna (2017)	Relationship between firm orientations and performance of hotels	The study notes that market orientation and positioning will strengthen the performance of the hotels	The study does not specifically evaluate how Branding impacts performance of hotels in Nairobi City County	Empirical gap
Kiviti (2018)	Effect of market positioning strategies on performance of KCB Bank Group Ltd, Kenya	The study notes that brand positioning in the firm involves a competitive angle, targeted marketing and value-based brand presence in the market.	The study focused on a review of brand positioning in commercial banks while this study examines star-rated hotels in Nairobi County.	Methodological gap

Source: Researcher 2021

2.5 Conceptual Framework

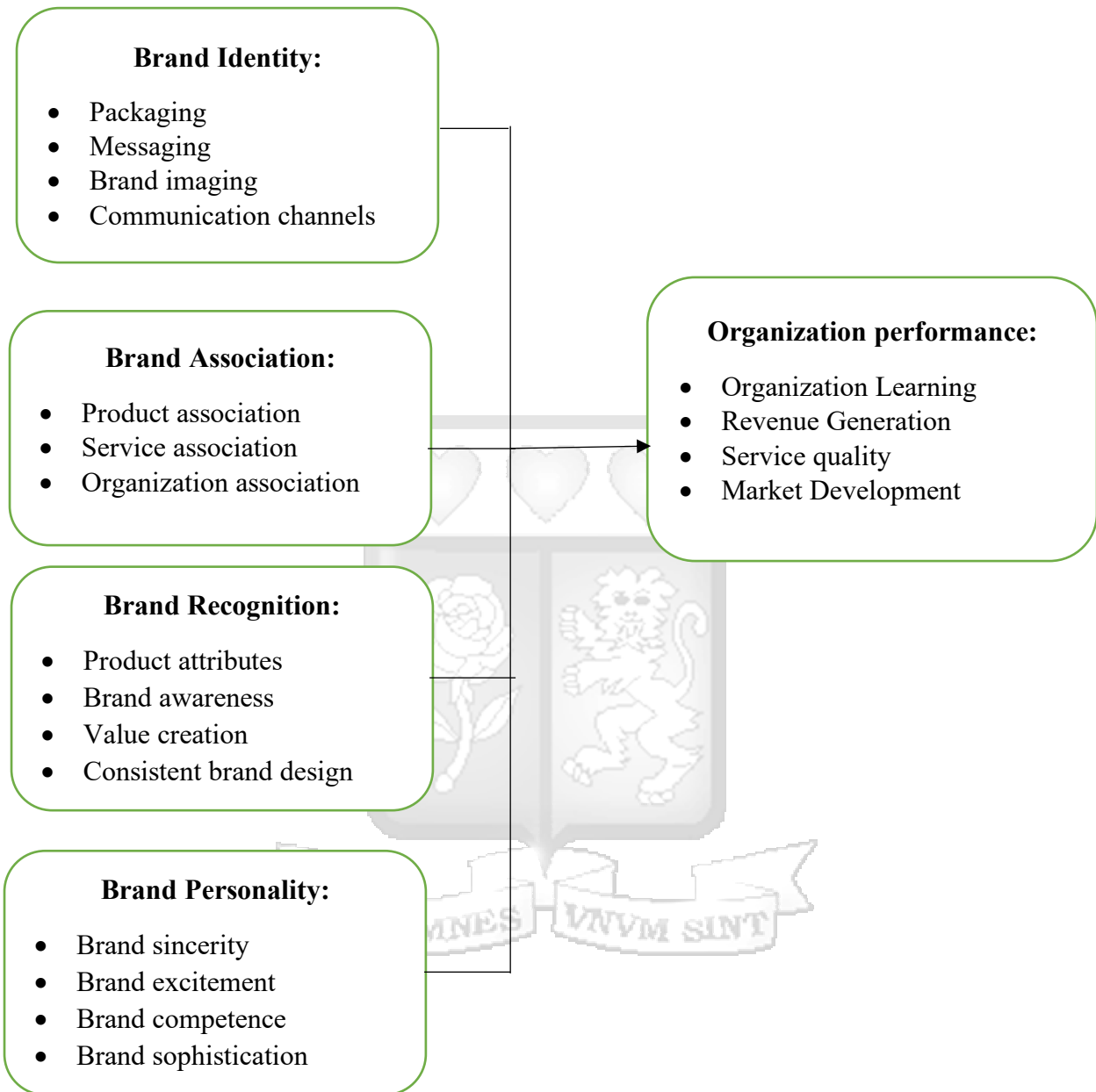
Based on the theoretical foundation of the study, utilizing brand management practices can be a key resource capability that a firm can leverage on to drive better performance. Further, the

social identity theory affirms that brand management can be utilized to drive association of the hotel with a particular group which can contribute to brand loyalty. The brand loyalty theory notes that behavior and attitude can be employed to drive repeat purchase behaviour which is key to driving performance within a firm. Based on the above the below conceptual framework illustrates the association of the study variables. The conceptual framework was based from review of literature and conceptualization in linking brand management and performance of star-rated hotels in Nairobi County.



Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework
Independent Variables

Dependent Variable



Source: Researcher 2021

The study conceptualized the brand management into; brand identity, brand association, brand recognition and brand personality. The organization performance of the star-rated hotels was assessed using non-financial measurements.

2.6 Operationalization of Variables

The dependent variable for the study was organizational performance while the assessed predictor variables were brand identity, brand association, brand recognition and brand personality. The variables are operationalized below.

Table 2.2 Operationalization of Variables

Variable	Type of Variable	Indicators	Data collection tool	Data analysis	Supporting literature
Brand identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent Variable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Packaging Messaging Brand imaging Communication channels 	Structured questionnaire; 5-point Likert scale	Descriptive analysis and inferential analysis	(Allison & Flaherty, 2020; Bhalla & Nazneen, 2018; Aaker D. , 2014)
Brand association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent Variable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Product association Service association Organization association 	Structured questionnaire; 5-point Likert scale	Descriptive analysis and inferential analysis	(Ciunova-Shuleska, Palamidovska-Sterjadovska, Osakwe, & Omotoso, 2017; Claudiu-Cătălin, 2014)
Brand recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent Variable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Product attributes Brand awareness Value creation Consistent brand design 	Structured questionnaire; 5-point Likert scale	Descriptive analysis and inferential analysis	(Hlatshwayo, 2015; Khurram, Qadeer, & Sheeraz, 2018)
Brand personality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent Variable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brand sincerity Brand excitement Brand competence Brand sophistication 			(Annah, 2019; Muthoni, 2018)
Organization performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dependent Variable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organization Learning Revenue Generation Service quality Market Development 	Structured questionnaire; 5-point Likert scale	Descriptive analysis and inferential analysis	Wanjiku (2009); (Gumboh & Gichira, 2015)

Source: Researcher, 2021

2.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter addressed the literature addressed to the study. The chapter is divided into two main sections, section one reviewed the theoretical literature review and the second section a comprehensive review of empirical literature on the study constructs. This review culminated

into the development of the conceptual framework along with the operationalization of the variables table. The review of empirical literature indicated various gaps that was solved by conducting the current research. The empirical evidence showed that most of the studies were not conducted within the hospitality industry and did not take into consideration similar components of brand management that have been adopted in this study. The research solved this by examining the effect of brand identity, brand association, brand recognition and brand personality on organizational performance.



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discussed the methodology that was adopted in conducting the study. The chapter details the design that was employed, the study population, the sampling process, data collection instruments, data collection procedures and the research quality. The chapter further presents the data analysis methods and presentation as well as explains how ethical issues were addressed.

3.2 Research Design

A research design is the framework or roadmap that a researcher adopts to guide the structure of his or her study in terms of methodology, kind of data to be collected, methods and instruments of collection, in addition on how to allocate limited resources to the entire research project (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). Cresswell (2014) notes that a cross sectional studies enable a researcher to collect data that describes the general characteristics of a study subject without interfering, changing or influencing the study environment. The current study used a descriptive cross sectional research design that utilized quantitative techniques in the examination of the association between the research variables. Descriptive research refers to the approach that aims at exploring and describing a given phenomenon within its' natural setting (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). The design was selected since it allowed the study to collect research data at a particular time period and allow for determination of the association of the relationship between the study variables.

3.3 Target Population

A study population is defined as the grand total of all units of a research, for which a researcher interested in conducting a study makes inference (Cresswell, 2014). According to the Tourism Regulatory Authority (2020) there are 53 star rated hotels within Nairobi County. For this study therefore, the population of the study was all-star rated hotels in Nairobi which stood at 53 as at March 2021. The unit of analysis of the study was selected from the registered star-rated hotels in Nairobi City County. The unit of observation was the hotel manager since they are deemed to possess requisite knowledge on the brand management and organizational performance of their respective firms. The study targeted senior level managers within the star-rated hotels operating within Nairobi County who hold the positions of Managing Director,

Marketing Manager, and Finance Manager. This implied the population of this study was 159 managers.

Table 3.1 Target Population

Category	No of Hotels	Population
Managing Director	53	53
Marketing Manager	53	53
Finance Manager	53	53
Target Population		159

Source: Tourism Regulatory Authority (2020)

3.4 Sampling Design and Sample Size

Cooper and Schindler (2014) define sampling design as the process of determining and establishing a sample size to be used in a study, and that can effectively represent the entire study population. A sampling design is composed of the sample size, the sampling technique and the sample frame. A sampling frame is the list that contains all elements of a study population from which a study sample is drawn (Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill, & Bristow, 2015). Researchers use the sample frame to structure the parameters of a study, by restricting the researcher to a specific scope (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2016). The sample frame for the study was drawn from the operating star-rated hotels within Nairobi County. A sample size is defined as the actual elements for the study sample that a researcher examines and uses the findings to extrapolate to the entire population (Cresswell, 2014). The study adopted a census survey of the 159 respondents selected from the hotels. The study used judgemental sampling in selecting the study participants. The adoption of this technique made sure that only the managers at the hotels are selected for participation in this research. This was key to ensuring the research data was only collected from individuals with knowledge on the brand management practices and performance of the hotels.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

Data collection method can also be defined as a systematic manner in which a researcher collects data that responds to a study phenomenon (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2016). There are two major sources of research data; primary sources and secondary sources (Mitchell & Education, 2018). This study relied on primary data that was collected from registered star-rated hotels managers in Nairobi County. This study employed a structured closed ended questionnaire with 5 level Likert scales to collect primary data. According to Creswell (2014),

a structured questionnaire is most appropriate for collecting quantitative data as it restricts respondents within a given scope making it easy to conduct data analysis.

The study questionnaire development was informed by the conceptualization of the study variables and the review of previous empirical literature aided in formatting the statements on the individual variables adopted in the research. The questionnaire was divided into 3 main sections. Section A covered demographic information, section B covered the independent variables brand identity, association, recognition and personality respectively and section C was the dependent variable.

3.6 Data Collection Procedures

According to Cooper and Schindler (2014), research procedure is a detailed set of systematic steps that a researcher engages to conduct a study from inception, to data analysis and presentation of the study. The questionnaire was self-administered and researcher utilized a drop and pick technique in the data collection. This involved making prior appointments with the managers of the star-rated hotels to ensure that interviews are conducted during off-peak hours when minimal customers are at the establishment. This ensured that the researcher observes the social distancing guidelines of Covid-19. The researcher was in agreement with the managers on the actual date to pick up the questionnaire to avoid inconveniences to the personnel working within the hotels and adhere to public health regulations. In situations where access is unavailable, google forms was adopted to facilitate online responses. Further, Google forms was used to complement the data collection procedures and ensure where physical data collection is not possible the online approach is adopted.

3.7 Research Quality

A pilot session was held with the 10% (n=11) of the participating firm managers to determine whether the questions, time limits, as assumed, are appropriate for the data collection session (Cresswell, 2014). The feedback from the pilot session was used to make adjustments to the data collection instrument. To ensure a high response rate, the questionnaires were delivered in person by the researcher, and the respondents were encouraged to respond. The pilot study involved hotels in Kiambu County and these responses were not included in the final research. The pilot data was utilized in the reliability and validity testing of the study instrument.

3.7.1 Reliability Tests

Reliability is the degree to which a research instrument can give similar results in repeated trials (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). The reliability of the research focuses on ascertaining the

internal consistency of the research instruments. The research used the Cronbach Alpha Coefficients which was utilized in assessing the reliability scores of the research variables. As a rule of thumb, for a construct to be considered reliable, it has to meet a threshold of an alpha score of 0.7 and above (Oluwatayo, 2012). The study used all the constructs with reliability scores of 0.7 and above. The study conducted the pretest of the instrument with 8 participants drawn from the target hotels. The findings of the tests showed that every variable had a Cronbach alpha of above 0.7 which was ascertained as the benchmark for ensuring internal consistency in the study instrument.

Table 3.2 Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Brand identity	.755	6
Brand association	.703	6
Brand recognition	.768	5
Brand personality	.758	6
Organization performance	.779	7

Source: Survey Data (2021)

3.7.2 Validity Tests

The research utilized both construct and content validity. To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by a peer expert within the field of Branding and with prior knowledge on the performance of firms in star-rated hotels industry within Nairobi City. The content validity also conducted with the help of the supervisor. The construct validity was upheld by ensuring that all the research variables are covered in the questionnaire.

3.8 Tests of Regression Assumption

The study used a multiple linear regression to determine the relationship between the variables. To meet the criteria for this technique the study adopted the following tests to determine suitability of the research data. The current research used the collinearity tests, normality tests and autocorrelation tests.

3.8.1 Collinearity Tests

Multicollinearity test is usually done to ascertain that there is no high degree of association between variables in a study (Cresswell, 2014). Generally, tolerance below 0.2 and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) of 10 or higher may be a reason for concern because it shows

multicollinearity between variable (Anderson, Sweeney, & Williams, 2012). Multicollinearity test makes use of variance inflation factor (VIF). The rule of thumb is where the VIF of the independent variables are less than 10 (≤ 10). Therefore, a VIF of over 10 (≥ 10) shows that there is multicollinearity (Zainodin & Yap, 2013).

3.8.2 Normality Tests

The objective of normality test was to determine if the sample got from a normally distributed population (Kothari & Garg, 2014). Normality is essential when the researcher wants to fit the regression model, whereas data that is not normally distributed is not fit for linear regression analysis (Sobh & Perry, 2006). To test normality a the research applied the Shapiro-wilk tests.

3.8.3 Autocorrelation Tests

Another assumption of linear regression is that there should be no auto correlation. One of the tests used for auto correlation is Durbin Watson test which checks for serial correlation (Anderson, Sweeney, & Williams, 2012). Durbin Watson test takes values of between 0 to 4. A value of 2 shows that errors are not correlated. However, values from 1.50 to 2.50 are considered acceptable.

3.9 Data Analysis and Presentation

After collecting the data from the field, the researcher first focused on the editing and coding process. The study utilized the Statistical Programme for Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. According to Creswell (2014), data analysis is the process of converting raw data into meaningful information that answers the study questions. Data analysis is also the process of inspecting, modelling and transforming raw data into meaningful information. The study utilized SPSS 25 in the analysis of the collected research data. The study utilized both descriptive and inferential analysis techniques. The descriptive results are key in presenting the tabulations and summaries of the analyzed data in terms of frequencies, means, mode and the variance. The study used charts, bar graphs and tables in the presentation of research data. The inferential statistics were key in determining the associations between the variables used in the study, and were presented using correlation analysis and regression analysis.

The study conducted ANOVA tests to determine statistical significance of the adopted regression model. The study utilized the following regression model;

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \epsilon$$

Where:

Y is the dependent variable (organization performance)

α is the model intercept

β is the coefficient of independent variables

X is the independent variable (X_1 – brand identity, X_2 –brand association, X_3 – brand recognition, X_4 – brand personality)

ϵ is the error term

3.10 Ethical Considerations

The study sought relevant approvals from the Strathmore University Institutional Ethics Review Committee. The study made sure that research permit is sought from the National commission of Science Technology and Innovation. The study ensured that the collected data was utilized in solving the research problem and the respondents' anonymity was upheld throughout the course of the study. The research made sure that the collected data is stored securely to ensure that there is no unauthorised access to the research data. The study enforced confidentiality of participating firms by ensuring that no identifiable names are indicated in the questionnaire. The anonymity of the research respondents was maintained and all the responses obtained was utilized solely for academic purposes. The study also got the University Approval and NACOSTI approval is obtained in order to allow for data collection to commence.



CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

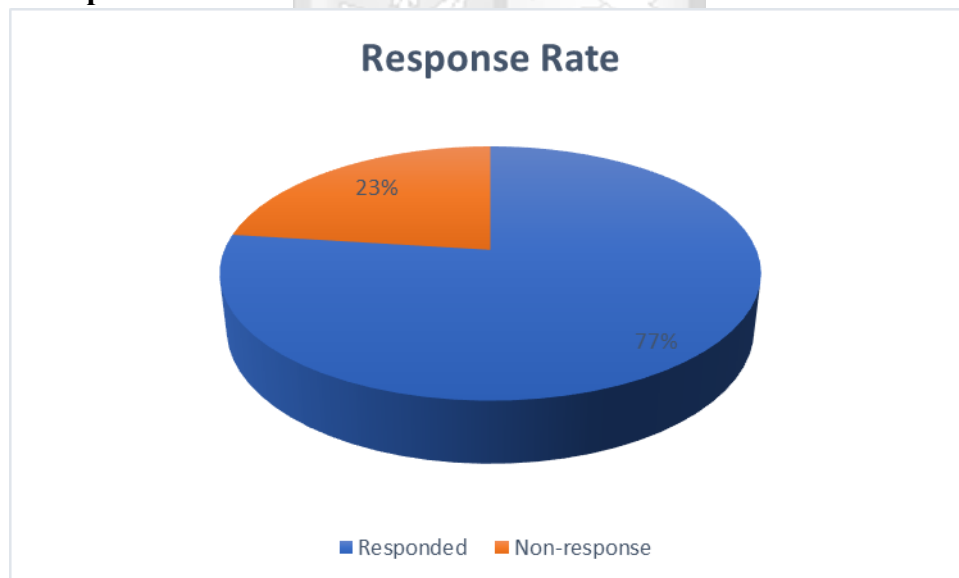
This chapter is important in the study as it captured the research findings from the analysis of the collected study data. The chapter dwelt with the demographic information such as response rate and participant's profile. Further, descriptive analysis, correlation tests, diagnostics and regression analysis were presented.

4.2 Demographic Information

4.2.1 Response Rate

The study targeted the star-rated hotels operating within Nairobi City County. Due to the ongoing containment measures imposed by the government on establishments in the hospitality industry there was a scale down in operations which limited the study access to the various participants sought. The study was only able to obtain a response rate of 77% (n=124) between July and August 2021. According to Fincham (2008), response rates approximating 60 percent for most research is adequate for analysis. This response rate was considered to be admissible for quantitative analysis and was representative of the study group.

Figure 4.1 Response Rate



Source: Primary Data (2021)

4.2.2 Participants Demographic Profile

The examination focused on understanding the demographic profile of the respondents who took part in the study. The research specifically reviewed the age of the respondents, their

gender, education attainment, position in the hotel and the experience in their work station. The summary of the results is shown on Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1 Summary of Demographic Results

Profile	Statement	Frequency	Percentage
Age of the Participants	Below 35 years of age	39	31.5
	36-45 years	54	43.5
	46-55 years	30	24.2
	Over 56 years	1	.8
	Total	124	31.5
Gender of participants	Male	61	49.2
	Female	63	50.8
	Total	124	100.0
Education level	Doctorate	3	2.4
	Masters level	34	27.4
	Graduate level	71	57.3
	College diploma	16	12.9
	Total	124	100.0
Participant's experience	Below 5 years	17	13.7
	6-10 years	59	47.6
	11-15 years	39	31.5
	Over 16 years	9	7.3
	Total	124	100.0
Position in Hotel	Managing director	24	19.4
	Marketing Manager	60	48.4
	Finance Manager	40	32.2
	Total	124	100.0

Source: Primary Data (2021)

The results indicated the study respondents were diverse in their age profile as indicated by most of the participants 43% (n=54) being 36-45 years of age, 24% (n=30) were between 46-55 years and 1% were above 56 years of age. The findings also revealed that majority of the respondents 51% (n=63) were female with 49% (n=61) were male employees which can be deemed to be an indicator of inclusivity in the hotel industry staffing. The study showed that the participants have been in the hotel industry for diverse timelines which depicted they had experience on how brand management impacts performance. This was informed by the results which indicated that 47% (n=59) had worked for 6-10 years, 13% (n=17) had worked for below

5 years and 31% (n=39) had worked for 11-15 years. The findings also established that most of the participants 48% (n=60) were marketing managers with 32% (n=40) of the respondents drawn from the finance managers. Generally, the variations in the portfolios held by the respondents ensured that more robust and divergent responses were obtained in the study.

4.3 Descriptive Results

This area focuses on the summary analysis of all the responses obtained from the participants and presented using mean, standard deviation and sum values.

4.3.1 Brand Identity

The first objective reviewed the brand identity within the hotels which was operationalized by the packaging, messaging, brand imaging and communication channels adopted within the star-rated hotels.

Table 4.2 Brand Identity of Star-Rated Hotels

	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Our hotel ensures there is a clear communication channels with our patrons and stakeholders to improve our relationship management	124	499.00	4.0242	.99970
Our hotel continuously reviews our brand image to ensure all reviews are attended	124	530.00	4.2742	.83946
The hotel ensures there is constant communication with our customers which helps in shaping attitudes towards the company's brand	124	534.00	4.3065	.81826
The hotel strives to continuously improve the performance qualities of our service offering in order to maintain our brand identity	124	508.00	4.0968	.94067
The hotel ensures there is uniformity in the packaging of our hotel services and product packages to maintain consistency with our patrons	124	507.00	4.0887	.90178
The hotel has maintained a good and attractive packaging offers which adds value and quality to our offering	124	510.00	4.1129	.93016
Overall			4.15055	0.905005

Source: Primary Data (2021)

The respondents to a strong agreement indicated that the hotel ensures there is constant communication with our customers which helps in shaping attitudes towards the company's brand as shown by mean of 4.3065 and moderate deviation of .81826. To a strong agreement the respondent also noted that the hotel continuously reviews our brand image to ensure all reviews are attended as indicated by a mean of 4.2742 and moderate deviation of .83946. With regard to the hotel has maintained a good and attractive packaging offers which adds value and quality to our offering the participants agreed as revealed by mean of 4.1129. The participants also agreed that the hotel ensures there is a clear communication channels with our patrons and stakeholders to improve our relationship management as shown by mean of 4.0242 and high deviation of .9997.

4.3.2 Brand Association

The second objective examined the brand association within the hotels and this was operationalized based on the following constructs; product association, service association and organization association within the star-rated hotels.

Table 4.3 Brand Association of Star-Rated Hotels

	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Our customers are more aware of brands through their participation in experiential marketing events in our hotel	124	444.00	3.5806	1.25002
Our customers give valuable feedback to make brands even better in our hotel	124	496.00	4.0000	.84584
The hotel strengthens its relationship with customers through experiential marketing events	124	467.00	3.7661	.99682
Our customers perceptions are evaluated when looking at improving the quality of brands in our hotel	124	503.00	4.0565	.90439
There is strong brand association as customers perceive our hotel brand to be of high quality	124	514.00	4.1452	.81344
The hotel regularly conducts customer research to understand their brand and competitors	124	478.00	3.8548	1.00157
Overall			3.900533	0.96868

Source: Primary Data (2021)

Concerning their strong brand association as customers perceive our hotel brand to be of high quality the participants were in agreement as noted by mean of 4.1452 and deviation of .81344.

The respondents also agreed that the customers perceptions are evaluated when looking at improving the quality of brands in our hotel as indicated by mean of 4.0565 and deviation of .90439. With regard to the customers are more aware of brands through their participation in experiential marketing events in our hotel there was agreement among the managers as shown by mean of 3.5806 and high deviation of 1.25002. The findings also noted agreement the hotel strengthens its relationship with customers through experiential marketing events with a mean of 3.7661.

4.3.3 Brand Recognition

The third objective of the study measured the brand recognition aspects in the star-rated hotels that was operationalized through the product attributes, brand awareness, value creation and consistent brand design.

Table 4.4 Brand Recognition of Star-Rated Hotels

	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Our hotel has established competitive strategies to differentiate from competitors	124	541.00	4.3629	.78951
The hotel ensures that our product attributes are unique to ensure that our products are recognizable in the market	124	521.00	4.2016	.75417
The hotel has maintained a consistent brand designs to ensure familiarity with our products within the market	124	515.00	4.1532	1.00442
The hotel continuously reviews our product and service offering to identify areas for value creation	124	517.00	4.1694	.81372
The hotel has increased product placement over digital channels to access new markets and customers	124	509.00	4.1048	.81469
Overall			4.19838	0.835302

Source: Primary Data (2021)

The study noted strong agreement that the hotel has established competitive strategies to differentiate from competitors as shown by mean of 4.3629 and moderate deviation of .78951. The research also indicated strong agreement that the hotel ensures that our product attributes are unique to ensure that our products are recognizable in the market as indicated by mean of

4.2016. Findings also noted agreement that the hotel has increased product placement over digital channels to access new markets and customers with a mean of 4.1048 and deviation of .81469.

4.3.4 Brand Personality

The fourth objective of the study focused on the brand personality of the star-rated hotels that was measured using the brand sincerity, brand excitement, brand competence and brand sophistication.

Table 4.5 Brand Personality of Star Rated Hotels

	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
The hotel ensures that all our personnel are sincere in the service offering which fosters attachment to the establishment	124	545.00	4.3952	.66036
The hotel ensures that our brand offering is up-to date and consistent with emerging trends	124	527.00	4.2500	.68224
The hotel elicits brand excitement among our patrons by regularly offering giveaways and other promotions	124	467.00	3.7661	1.09030
The hotel enhances excitement in our offering through offering family-oriented and customer-friendly services	124	483.00	3.8952	1.16045
The hotel ensures that our services and product offering are reliable through strict compliance to our service delivery policies	124	505.00	4.0726	.88505
The hotel improves sophistication in our brand through trendy, daring and contemporary service offering	124	494.00	3.9839	.80632
Overall			4.0605	0.880787

Source: Primary Data (2021)

The study noted strong agreement as shown by a mean of 4.3952 that the hotel ensures that all our personnel are sincere in the service offering which fosters attachment to the establishment. There was also strong agreement that the hotel ensures that our brand offering is up-to date and

consistent with emerging trends as indicated by mean of 4.25 and minimal variation of .68224. Participants also agreed that the hotel enhances excitement in our offering through offering family-oriented and customer-friendly services as shown by mean of 3.8952 with high variation of 1.16045. The study also noted agreement among the managers that the hotel improves sophistication in our brand through trendy, daring and contemporary service offering as revealed by mean of 3.9839.

4.3.5 Organization Performance of Star-Rated Hotels

The dependent variable for the research was the organization performance which was operationalized through customer retention, customer satisfaction, market expansion, service quality, market development and revenue generation.

Table 4.6 Organization Performance of Star-Rated Hotels

	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
The hotel has witnessed an improvement in the customer retention levels owing to number of patrons	124	532.00	4.2903	.86273
The hotel has put in place mechanisms to improve the customer satisfaction levels among our patrons	124	529.00	4.2661	.78718
The hotel is constantly expanding to new markets which has improved our market coverage	124	499.00	4.0242	.83094
The hotel ensures that all the services rendered within the hotel meet the service quality benchmarks	124	505.00	4.0726	.91219
The hotel continuously reviews the market needs to improve on the product and service offering	124	506.00	4.0806	.80240
The hotel continuously scans the environment for market development opportunities	124	507.00	4.0887	.85551
The hotel has been able to maintain a steady growth in the revenue generation	124	495.00	3.9919	.81146
Overall			4.116343	0.837487

Source: Primary Data (2021)

The study revealed to a strong agreement (mean = 4.2903) the hotel has witnessed an improvement in the customer retention levels owing to number of patrons. The managers also strongly agreed that the hotel has put in place mechanisms to improve the customer satisfaction levels among our patrons as indicated by mean of 4.2661. The study showed agreement that the hotel continuously reviews the market needs to improve on the product and service offering as indicated by mean of 4.0806 and deviation of .8024. Findings also revealed agreement that the hotel has been able to maintain a steady growth in the revenue generation as noted by mean of 3.9919 and deviation of .81146.

4.4 Correlation Results

The study employed correlation analysis to determine if there was any statistical association between the variables under brand management and the organization performance of the star-rated hotels. A correlation coefficient close to +1 signifies a strong relationship while a coefficient value close to 0 signifies a weak relation between the variables.

Table 4.7 Correlation between Brand Management Practices and Organization Performance

	Brand Identity	Brand Association	Brand Recognition	Brand Personality	Organization Performance
Organization Performance Pearson Correlation	.506**	.400**	.457**	.523**	1
Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
N	124	124	124	124	124

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Source: Primary Data (2021)

The correlation tests showed that brand identity has a moderate positive association with the organization performance $r = .506^{**}$, $\text{Sig} = .000 < .05$. The study also noted a moderate positive association between brand recognition and organization performance of star-rated hotels $r =$

.457**, Sig = .000<.05. The test also showed a moderate positive association between brand personality and organization performance of the hotels $r = .523^{**}$, Sig = .000<.05. Brand association had the least recorded impact on hotel performance, with the results showing $r = .400^{**}$.

4.5 Diagnostic Results

The study sought to estimate a multiple linear regression analysis which requires that the data utilized need to meet some basic assumptions. The study conducted normality tests, collinearity and autocorrelation tests.

4.5.1 Normality Test

Normality is essential when the researcher wants to fit the regression model, whereas data that is not normally distributed is not fit for linear regression analysis (Sobh & Perry, 2006). To test normality the research applied the Shapiro-wilk tests.

Table 4.8 Normality Results

	Shapiro-Wilk Tests		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Organization Performance	.951	124	.168
Brand Identity	.943	124	.098
Brand Association	.961	124	.101
Brand Recognition	.947	124	.055
Brand Personality	.957	124	.061

Source: Primary Data (2021)

The null hypothesis for this test is that the data are normally distributed. The test results above showed that all variables had a sig. value of above 0.5 which leads to the acceptance of the null hypothesis that the data adopted in this research is from a normally distributed test.

4.5.2 Collinearity Test

Multicollinearity test makes use of variance inflation factor (VIF) and the tolerance values to determine if there is any correlation between the study variables.

Table 4.9 Collinearity Results

Model	Collinearity Statistics
-------	-------------------------

		Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)		
	Brand Identity	.601	1.663
	Brand Association	.636	1.573
	Brand Recognition	.713	1.402
	Brand Personality	.579	1.728

a. Dependent Variable: Organization Performance

Source: Primary Data (2021)

Generally, tolerance below 0.2 and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) of 10 or higher may be a reason for concern. However, the above findings point out that the independent variables had the following scores; brand identity (TV= .601, VIF = 1.663), brand association (TV= .636, VIF = 1.573), brand recognition (TV= .713, VIF = 1.402) and brand personality (TV= .579, VIF = 1.728). This indicated there was no collinearity problems within the independent variables of the study.

4.5.3 Autocorrelation Test

One of the tests used for auto correlation is Durbin Watson test which checks for serial correlation (Anderson, Sweeney, & Williams, 2012).

Table 4.10 Autocorrelation Results

Model	Durbin-Watson
1	2.052

a. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Personality, Brand Recognition, Brand Association, Brand Identity

b. Dependent Variable: Organization Performance

Source: Primary Data (2021)

Durbin Watson test takes values of between 0 to 4. A value of 2 shows that errors are not correlated. However, values from 1.50 to 2.50 are considered acceptable. The findings of this

study indicated a d-w value of 2.052 which falls within the acceptable range and thus we can opine there is no serial correlation errors in this study.

4.6 Regression Results

4.6.1 Effect of Brand Identity on The Organization Performance Star Rated Hotels In Nairobi County, Kenya

Table 4.11 Regression between of Brand Identity on The Organization Performance Star Rated Hotels

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.506 ^a	.256	.250	2.96939

a. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Identity

Source: Primary Data (2021)

The above findings showed a coefficient of determination of $R-Sq. = .256$ which was an indication that 25.6 % of the changes in the organization performance of star-rated hotels are as a result of the brand identity.

Table 4.12 ANOVA for Brand Identity on The Organization Performance Star Rated Hotels

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	371.024	1	371.024	42.079	.000 ^b
	Residual	1075.710	122	8.817		
	Total	1446.734	123			

a. Dependent Variable: Organization Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Identity

Source: Primary Data (2021)

The ANOVA analysis is concerned with establishing whether there is any statistical significance in the conducted regression analysis. The results above yielded a F-calculated = 42.079 and Sig = .000<.05. This signified that there is a statistically significant relationship between brand identity and performance of star-rated hotels in Nairobi City County.

Table 4.13 Regression Coefficients for Brand Identity on The Organization Performance Star Rated Hotels

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
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		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	16.798	1.794		9.364	.000
	Brand Personality	.493	.073	.523	6.772	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Organization Performance

Source: Primary Data (2021)

The study results showed that in line with the first objective the variable brand identity yielded a coefficient of $\beta_1 = .493$, Sig = $.000 < .05$. This was an indication that brand identity had a positive and significant influence on organization performance of star-rated hotels. Thus, change in brand identity by a unit will contribute to .493 change in the performance.

4.6.2 Effect of Brand Association on the Organization Performance Star Rated Hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya

Table 4.14 Regression between Brand Association on the Organization Performance Star Rated Hotels

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.400 ^a	.160	.153	3.15658

a. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Association

Source: Primary Data (2021)

The above findings showed a coefficient of determination of $R\text{-}Sq. = .160$ which was an indication that 16 % of the changes in the organization performance of star-rated hotels are as a result of the brand association.

Table 4.15 ANOVA for Brand Association on the Organization Performance Star Rated Hotels

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	231.127	1	231.127	23.196	.000 ^b
	Residual	1215.606	122	9.964		
	Total	1446.734	123			

a. Dependent Variable: Organization Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Association

Source: Primary Data (2021)

The ANOVA analysis is concerned with establishing whether there is any statistical significance in the conducted regression analysis. The results above yielded a F-calculated =

23.196 and Sig = .000<.05. This signified that there is a statistically significant relationship between brand association and performance of star-rated hotels in Nairobi City County.

Table 4.16 Regression Coefficients for Brand Association on the Organization Performance Star Rated Hotels

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	20.205	1.810		11.163	.000
	Brand Association	.368	.076	.400	4.816	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Organization Performance

Source: Primary Data (2021)

The study results showed that in line with the first objective the variable brand association yielded a coefficient of $\beta_2 = .368$, Sig = .000<.05. This was an indication that brand association had a positive and significant influence on organization performance of star-rated hotels. Thus, change in brand association by a unit will contribute to .368 change in the performance.

4.6.3 Effect of Brand Recognition on the Organization Performance Star Rated Hotels In Nairobi County, Kenya

Table 4.17 Regression between brand recognition on the organization performance star rated hotels

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.457 ^a	.209	.203	3.06231

a. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Recognition

Source: Primary Data (2021)

The above findings showed a coefficient of determination of $R\text{-}Sq. = .209$ which was an indication that 20.9% of the changes in the organization performance of star-rated hotels are as a result of the brand recognition.

Table 4.18 ANOVA for Brand Recognition on The Organization Performance Star Rated Hotels

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	302.649	1	302.649	32.273	.000 ^b
	Residual	1144.085	122	9.378		
	Total	1446.734	123			

a. Dependent Variable: Organization Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Recognition

Source: Primary Data (2021)

The ANOVA analysis is concerned with establishing whether there is any statistical significance in the conducted regression analysis. The results above yielded a F-calculated = 32.273 and Sig = .000<.05. This signified that there is a statistically significant relationship between brand recognition and performance of star-rated hotels in Nairobi City County.

Table 4.19 Regression Coefficients for Brand Recognition on The Organization Performance Star Rated Hotels

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	16.846	2.125		7.929	.000
	Brand Recognition	.570	.100	.457	5.681	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Organization Performance

Source: Primary Data (2021)

The study results showed that in line with the first objective the variable brand identity yielded a coefficient of $\beta_3 = .570$, Sig = .000<.05. This was an indication that brand association had a positive and significant influence on organization performance of star-rated hotels. Thus, change in brand identity by a unit will contribute to .57 change in the performance.

4.6.4 Effect of Brand Personality on The Organization Performance Star Rated Hotels In Nairobi County, Kenya

Table 4.20 Regression Between Brand Personality and The Organization Performance Star Rated Hotels

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.523 ^a	.273	.267	2.93576

a. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Personality

Source: Primary Data (2021)

The above findings showed a coefficient of determination of $R-Sq. = .273$ which was an indication that 27.3% of the changes in the organization performance of star-rated hotels are as a result of the brand personality.

Table 4.21 ANOVA for Brand Personality on The Organization Performance Star Rated Hotels

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	395.254	1	395.254	45.860	.000 ^b
	Residual	1051.480	122	8.619		
	Total	1446.734	123			

a. Dependent Variable: Organization Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Personality

Source: Primary Data (2021)

The ANOVA analysis is concerned with establishing whether there is any statistical significance in the conducted regression analysis. The results above yielded a F-calculated = 45.860 and Sig = .000 < .05. This signified that there is a statistically significant relationship between brand personality and performance of star-rated hotels in Nairobi City County.

Table 4.22 Regression Coefficients for Brand Personality on The Organization Performance Star Rated Hotels

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	16.798	1.794		9.364	.000
	Brand Personality	.493	.073	.523	6.772	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Organization Performance

Source: Primary Data (2021)

The study results showed that in line with the first objective the variable brand association yielded a coefficient of $\beta_4 = .493$, Sig = .000 < .05. This was an indication that brand personality had a positive and significant influence on organization performance of star-rated hotels. Thus, change in brand personality by a unit will contribute to .493 change in the performance.

4.7 Regression Summary

The study main theme focused on estimating the effect of brand management on the performance of the star-rated hotels. Thus, conducting a multiple linear regression was necessary to determine the magnitude of the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable.

Table 4.23 Regression for Brand Management and Organization Performance

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.618 ^a	.382	.361	2.74178

a. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Personality, Brand Recognition, Brand Association, Brand Identity

b. Dependent Variable: Organization Performance

Source: Primary Data (2021)

Generally, the main output of concern in the regression model is the coefficient of determination calculated from the regression analysis. The above findings showed a coefficient of determination of $R-Sq. = .382$ which was an indication that 38.2% of the changes in the organization performance of star-rated hotels are as a result of the brand management practices.

Table 4.24 ANOVA for Brand Management and Organization Performance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	552.170	4	138.042	18.363	.000 ^b
	Residual	894.564	119	7.517		
	Total	1446.734	123			

a. Dependent Variable: Organization Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Personality, Brand Recognition, Brand Association, Brand Identity

Source: Primary Data (2021)

The ANOVA analysis is concerned with establishing whether there is any statistical significance in the conducted regression analysis. The results above yielded a F-calculated = 18.363 and Sig = .000 < .05. This signified that there is a statistically significant relationship between brand management and performance of star-rated hotels in Nairobi City County.

Table 4.25 Regression Coefficients for Brand Management and Organization Performance

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.

	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	10.272	2.247		4.572	.000
Brand Identity	.215	.087	.229	2.468	.015
Brand Association	.064	.083	.069	.768	.444
Brand Recognition	.252	.106	.202	2.367	.020
Brand Personality	.262	.089	.278	2.935	.004

a. Dependent Variable: Organization Performance

Source: Primary Data (2021)

The study results showed that in line with the first objective the variable brand identity yielded a coefficient of $\beta_1 = .215$, Sig = $.015 < .05$. This was an indication that brand identity had a positive and significant influence on organization performance of star-rated hotels. Thus, change in brand identity by a unit will contribute to .215 change in the performance. Findings on the second objective examining brand association had a coefficient of $\beta_2 = .064$, Sig = $.444 > .05$. This was an indication that brand association had a positive and insignificant influence on organization performance of star-rated hotels. This implied that brand association did not have any predictive impact on performance when considered against other brand management practices currently utilized in the hotels.

The findings revealed that in relation to the third objective the variable brand recognition yielded a coefficient of $\beta_3 = .252$, Sig = $.020 < .05$. This was an indication that brand recognition had a positive and significant influence on organization performance of star-rated hotels. Thus, change in brand recognition by a unit will contribute to .252 change in the performance. Concerning the fourth objective assessing the variable brand personality the analysis showed a coefficient of $\beta_4 = .262$, Sig = $.004 < .05$. This was an indication that brand personality had a positive and significant influence on organization performance of star-rated hotels. Thus, change in brand personality by a unit will contribute to .262 change in the performance.

4.7 Summary of the Study

The study was focused on determining how brand management practices have impacted the performance of star-rated hotels. With the increased competitiveness in the industry due to entry of international hotels; the local market has been under pressure to improve their performance. The onset of covid-19 also led to negative effect on the hotel performance thus it

was vital to examine how brand management can be applied by managers in improving their organization performance. The study focused on the brand identity, brand association, brand recognition and brand personality effects on the performance. The study adopted a descriptive research design that relied on quantitative data and analytical techniques.

The observations for this research were collected from the marketing managers, finance manager and the managing director of the star-rated hotels in Nairobi City County. The study relied on the directory of the Tourism Regulatory Authority which was expanded in the course of the study to include star-rated hotels that were not captured by TRA. The research was able to obtain 77% response rate from the sampled 159 participants of the study. The findings indicated that majority of the senior staff within the marketing, finance and managerial level were female employees. The study also noted that more than 87% of the participants had a graduate level degree and above signalling high education attainment among the senior staff. The study was able to confirm that the star-rated hotels have been offering quality services as indicated by the participants agreement the hotels have been able to sustain their customer retention, customer satisfaction, market expansion, service quality, market development and revenue generation.

The tests for linear regression assumptions affirmed that the research data employed met the basic assumptions of normality, autocorrelation and collinearity between the variables. The correlation tests confirmed the presence of a positive statistically significant association between brand identity, brand association, brand recognition and brand personality and the performance of star-rated hotels. The findings of the multiple linear regression established that 38.2% of the changes in the organization performance of star-rated hotels are as a result of the brand management practices. The study also confirmed that brand identity, brand recognition and brand personality significantly influenced the performance of star rated hotels positively. However, the variable brand association did not have a predictive power on the organization performance of the hotels within the model adopted. This could be an indication that the hotels have not been able to sufficiently create an environment where their patrons feel any association with the products, services and the organization.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The fifth chapter focused on the discussion of the results in relation to the reviewed empirical studies. Further, the conclusions of the research and recommendations drawn were presented. Lastly, the chapter highlighted the limitations of the study and suggestions for future studies.

5.2 Discussion of Findings

This section presents a summary of the findings of the study. The study specifically sought to investigate the influence of brand management on organizational performance of star rated hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya. The study focused on assessing the influence of brand identity, brand association, brand recognition and brand personality on performance of star rated hotels. The study adopted a descriptive research design and utilized both descriptive and inferential analysis techniques. The analysis revealed that all the variables influenced organizational performance. However, while brand identity, brand recognition and brand personality were determined to have a significant and positive influence on organization performance, it was determined that brand association had an insignificant impact on organizational performance. below is a detailed discussion of the findings.

5.2.1 Brand Identity and Organization Performance

The analysis determined that brand identity has a positive and significant influence on firm performance. these findings are in agreement with the study by Aaker (2014), who reported that a brand's identity has the potential to significantly improve its attractiveness to specific customer niches and potential employees since it is the products of the history, heritage and beliefs of the firm. Similarly, Allison and Flaherty (2020) showed that brand identity promotes brand integrity, brand signature and prestige, forming the basis for product image and reputation. The respondents agreed that the hotels strive to increase constant communication with customers to influence customer attitudes towards a brand. In similar fashion, Ishaq et al, (2014) note that adoption of customer-based brand equity dimensions have a significant positive impact on customer loyalty which has been associated with brand sustainability.

Respondents also showed agreement that the hotels carry out constant customer reviews to determine how customers feel about a particular image. The study by Maurya et al, (2015) was able to determine that corporate image and personality were key to determining whether customers will make repeated purchases from a particular business. The respondents also agreed that the hotels try to promote uniformity in packaging to maintain consistency with

patrons. Akunja (2020) found similar results in a study which showed that the level of uniqueness of a product or service significantly influences purchase decisions. Regarding packaging, respondents agreed that the hotels maintain attractive packaging to add value and quality to products and services offered. These factors were found to influence a hotel's reputation in the study by Qoura and Khalifa (2016).

According to the resource-based theory, having unique products and services is a source of competitive advantage. For hotels where services and products are similar and can be replicated, having unique features and services can serve as a source of brand identity, increasing user's ability to identify a brand. In extension, this study is in agreement with the resource-based view theory which posits that the uniqueness of a product or service is key to improving organizational performances.

5.2.2 Brand Association and Organization Performance

The analysis showed that brand association had a positive and insignificant influence on organization performance of star-rated hotels. This is in contrast to the study by Ciunova-Shuleska (2017), who reported that brand association determines customer's willingness to spend more on a product. The study also determined that customer perception of the quality of a product influences their decision to purchase, and repurchase a product. Similarly, Foroudi (2019) asserts that the ability to create and sustain desirable attributes in particular product over a long time increases loyalty among customers which improves organizational performance. Nuwamanya (2018) also established a positive relationship between hotel branding efforts and customer loyalty which improves performance outcomes.

The respondents also agreed that the hotels carry out an evaluation of customer's perception about products and services to gauge the quality of their brand. Nzioka and Njuguna (2017), in their study reported that involving stakeholders in brand development significantly impacts brand association. The study showed limited application of experiential marketing events in Kenya, implying that Kenyan hotels were not adopting experiential marketing strategies to increase brand association. Kiviti (2018) reported that market positioning and brand positioning strategies significantly determine an organization's competitive edge, advocating for increased targeted marketing and value-based brand presence. The respondents showed agreement that market research helps organizations to understand their customers and competitors. Similarly, Hlatshwayo (2015) demonstrated that competitive positioning,

corporate identity and consumer positioning strategies are key to promoting sustainability scores among SMEs.

The findings show that brand management can be enhanced through the deliberate design of products and services that target specific market niches. According to the social identity theory, being able to design products that consumers can associate with increases the purchase decisions of those customers. The findings showed that organizations that can meet the demands of specific customers increase loyalty among these customer groups. This study is in agreement with the social identity theory which calls for companies to design unique products and services that will meet and even exceed the expectations of certain customers since this directly increases repurchase behaviour, hence organization performance.

5.2.3 Brand Recognition and Organization Performance

Brand recognition was determined to have a positive and significant influence on organization performance of star-rated hotels. This outcome was reported by Khurram, Qadeer and Sheeraz (2018) who concluded that increased brand recognition influences customer purchase decisions, which gives the brand a competitive advantage in the market. Respondents indicated that the hotels had established competitive strategies to differentiate their products from competitors. Arani and Shafizadeh (2019) showed how brand differentiation increases brand recognition and brand familiarity, thus having a significant impact on brand reputation. The respondents agreed that the hotels design products that are easy to identify in the market to increase product recognizability. Ndege and Kegoro (2019) determined that that the level of awareness about a product and the ability of customers to recognize it is an indication of increased market presence which significantly influences the performance of the product in the market.

The respondents also agreed that the hotels were maintaining consistent brand designs to promote familiarity of products. Khurram et al (2018) reported that a product's physical characteristics increase its's recognizability. The study linked product recognition with purchase decision. However, the researchers reported that negative perception and good recognizability can negatively impact purchase decisions, demonstrating that other factors also influence customer's decision to make an actual product purchase. The study reported increased product placement over digital channels which increases customer acquisition over the internet. Horsfall and MacKingsley (2018) demonstrated that extensive brand awareness campaigns are essential to acquiring new customers.

The social identity theory recognizes the importance of making products and services be identifiable from others with almost similar features. The theory notes that making brands recognizable through increasing their distinguishing features improves customer recognition. The findings show that the ability of a consumer to recognize and associate with a product increases their chances of purchasing the product, agreeing with the main tenets of the social identity theory that individuals with similar likes and preferences are likely to make similar purchases.

5.2.4 Brand Personality and Organization Performance

The study determined that the humanistic characteristics afforded to brands have a positive and significant influence on their performance, thus establishing a strong positive relationship with organizational performance. This is in agreement with Tuominen et al, (2016) who concluded that brand value concepts, set beliefs and attributes of the brand influence its market performance. Similarly, Muthoni (2018) asserted that brand personality characteristics appeal to certain customer demographics and increased the purchase decision within these consumers. Respondents were in agreement that the hotels ensure that all personnel are sincere in service offering which fosters attachment to the establishment. Li, Yen and Liu (2020) established that brand sincerity and brand empathy were associated with customer loyalty, which is a factor of desirable organization performance. The respondents also reported that the hotels ensure that service and products offered are reliable through strict compliance to our service delivery policies. Similarly, Yufang, Bin and Qiaoyi (2014) established that increasing brand competence and excitement enhances a product's value, calling for managers to develop sustainability-oriented practices to increase a brand's association with reliability.

The respondents showed that the hotels improve sophistication in brands through trendy, daring and contemporary service offering. These findings resonate with findings from Ogbuji, Onuoha and Owhorchukwu's (2016) study which established a strong relationship between brand sincerity, brand competence and brand sophistication and sales growth, profitability and customer loyalty. Annah (2019) also reported that increasing brand excitement through constant targeted advertisements were essential to keeping customers interested and invested in a particular brand.

The theory of brand loyalty postulates that customers will develop repeat purchase behaviour with products after repeated use and depending on the level of satisfaction attained after use. The theory asserts that a product's describable characteristics and the consumer's perception

are influential in determining future purchase decisions. This study established that brand personality has a strong influence on customer's perception. Respondents showed that giving brands desirable personalities improves their performance, agreeing with the tenets of the theory of loyalty. Personalized characteristics such as durability and reliability were reported to influence customers re-purchase decision. Hotel managers were thus recommended to develop product with attributes that can resonate positively with large segments of the market.

5.3 Conclusions

The study concluded that brand management has a positive and significant effect on the organization performance of the star-rated hotels. The results established that a combination of the brand identity, brand association, brand recognition and brand personality are vital to the performance of star rated hotels. The results support the conclusion that brand identity has a positive effect on the performance of the star-rated hotels. Thus, enhancing their packaging choices, messaging processes, effectively communicating and improved brand imaging are significant predictors of better organization performance of the hotels.

The research concludes that brand association does not have a significant effect on the organization performance of the star-rated hotels. The research further revealed that brand recognition has a significant effect on the organization performance of the star-rated hotels. This showed that through improvements in their product attributes, expanding their brand awareness across markets, continuous value creation and consistency in their brand design are critical to the organization performance of the star-rated hotels. Lastly, the findings supported the conclusion that brand personality has a positive and significant influence on the performance of the hotels. Through sustained brand sincerity, excitement, competence and sophistication the star rated hotels can be able to achieve some improvement in their performance.

5.4 Recommendations

5.4.1 Contribution to Theory

The resource-based view theory was adopted as the dominant theory in the study and proposed that the unique ability of the firm to foster their branding capabilities can be critical to enhancing the performance of the firm. This was affirmed by the study results which indicated that brand management was a significant predictor to the performance of the star-rated hotels. The results contribute to the theory essentially since it was affirmed that brand management practices can be a non-imitable resource that an organization can leverage on to drive better performance. The social identity theory asserts that employing certain branding practices can

elicit the desired response from consumers. The study results showed that performance aspects such as customer satisfaction, retention and quality can be determined by a set of brand management practices. Thus, by creating an environment that meets the needs of a particular clientele group the hotels can be able to create a psychological attachment to their establishment which can advance performance. Lastly, as advanced by the proponents of the brand loyalty theory; the findings indicated that utilization of divergent brand management practices is integral to driving loyalty to a particular brand in the market.

5.4.2 Policy Recommendations

The findings of the study showed that brand management practices are vital to performance of the star rated hotels. Thus, the study recommends that the Tourism regulatory authority in partnerships with the various star-rated hotels can develop a standardized branding guidelines which will help the local hospitality industry compete with other regional and international brands. Further, with the decline in the tourism industry performance due to the pandemic the regulator in partnership with state agencies like the Kenya Export Promotion and Branding Agency can utilize the findings in planning for future expos that can be utilized by the local industry in marketing the brands of local hotels in main tourism hubs. This will be key to stimulating the recovery of the hotel industry in Kenya from the current performance slump.

5.4.3 Practical Recommendations

The study recommends that hotel managers should strive to drive better brand identity by applying emerging technologies in the development of content that will improve the image of the firm across various markets. Further, by implementing digital technologies in their operations the hotels will be able to seamlessly communicate with their customers and offer competitive services. Based on the findings the study recommends that the hotels should develop suitable package offerings focused on the local customer base who shy away from established star-rated hotels. This will help in advancing the market coverage and number of customers visiting the establishments. Further, through offering attractive packages will help in expanding the competitiveness of the hotels.

In line with the findings the study recommends that hotels should develop better customer relationship practices that will be integral to meeting customer demands and extend the association with the hotel brand. The management should further review their market research activities to ensure the service offering is cognizant to the demands of the customers and meets

the quality expectations. More so, the hotels should create a robust feedback system that will ensure any complaints or reviews on the company brand are acted upon in order to improve the customer perception of their brand. In recognition of the results the study recommends that the hotels should review their competitors service and product offering to ensure their brand recognition practices are distinct in the market.

The study recommends that the executive of the hotels should also employ social media channels in their product placement to ensure they are able to appeal to a larger market and create recognition for their brand offering. Lastly, in regard to the brand personality aspects the study recommends that the management should train their employees on various service quality dimensions to ensure they are sincere in their service and product offering. Further, through adopting various quality management aspects the hotels can ensure their brand offering is consistent and meets the sophistication desired in the hotel service and product offering.

5.5 Limitations and Suggestions for Further Studies

The study relied on the classification provided by the Tourism Regulatory Authority register which was limited in that it was not updated to cover new hotels that are star-rated in the country. This limited the scope of the study which was adjusted during data collection to have a clearer picture of the industry. Secondly, the containment measures implemented by the government to tackle Covid-19 have resulted in most hotels scaling down their operations or fully closing down. This affected the participating personnel within the hotels who had been suspended from work or outright fired due to down-scaling of operations. Lastly, the restrictions in accessing the hotels affected accessibility to willing participants; hence the study time scope was expanded to mitigate the slow rate of participant response time.

The examination focused only on star-rated hotels within the capital; to enhance the results implications a similar examination can be conducted across all star-rated hotels in the country. Further, the research only focused on the management personnel views of their brand management, a study on brand management influence on customer satisfaction can be undertaken incorporating views of the hotel patrons. This study collected data from primary sources. The study recommends further research seeks secondary data reported by the firms to have a more accurate description of how the study variables affect hotel performance over a given study period.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Introduction Letter

To the Managing Director

..... Hotel

Greetings I am Maina Waithaka, a graduate student at Strathmore University pursuing a Masters of Business Administration Degree. I am currently doing an academic research project on, *“to Establish the Effect of Brand Management on The Organizational Performance Star Rated Hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya.”*. I humbly seek your indulgence, through filling in the questionnaire.

Kindly spare approximately 10 minutes for the exercise among your senior executive staff. The researcher would like to assure you that the information gathered was kept confidential and used strictly for the purpose of this study only. The usefulness of this information to the researcher depended on your honesty.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude for your active involvement in assisting me in my educational endeavours.

Thank you for your time.

With gratitude,

Maina Waithaka,

+254720548949

Appendix II: Research Questionnaire

Dear Respondent, the attached questionnaire aims to get information from personnel within star-rated hotels on *effect of brand management on the organizational performance star rated hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya*. I kindly ask for your kind assistance in answering the attached questions to the best of your ability.

Thank you for participating in this research work.

Part A: Demographic Information

1. Please indicate your age?

Below 35 years of age ()

36-45 years ()

46-55 years ()

Over 56 years ()

2. Please indicate your gender?

Male ()

Female ()

3. Please indicate your highest level of education?

Doctorate ()

Masters level ()

Graduate Degree ()

College Diploma ()

4. How long have you worked in the hotel?

Below 5 years ()

6-10 years ()

11-15 years ()

Over 16 years ()

5. Please indicate the position you hold within the hotel?

Managing Director ()

Marketing Manager ()

Finance Manager ()

PART B: BRAND MANAGEMENT

Please tick the level of agreement of the following statements, as shown in the table.

Please indicate in the table with a tick (✓) or across (×) with a scale of

5= strongly agree 4= Agree 3= Neither agree nor disagree 2= Disagree 1= Strongly Disagree

No	Brand Identity	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Our hotel ensures there is a clear communication channels with our patrons and stakeholders to improve our relationship management					
7.	Our hotel continuously reviews our brand image to ensure all reviews are attended					
8.	The hotel ensures there is constant communication with our customers which helps in shaping attitudes towards the company's brand					
9.	The hotel strives to continuously improve the performance qualities of our service offering in order to maintain our brand identity					
10.	The hotel ensures there is uniformity in the packaging of our hotel services and product packages to maintain consistency with our patrons					
11.	The hotel has maintained a good and attractive packaging offers which adds value and quality to our offering.					

Please indicate in the table with a tick (✓) or across (×) with a scale of

5= strongly agree 4= Agree 3= Neither agree nor disagree 2= Disagree 1= Strongly Disagree

No	Brand Association	1	2	3	4	5
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12.	Our customers are more aware of brands through their participation in experiential marketing events in our hotel.					
13.	Our customers give valuable feedback to make brands even better in our hotel.					
14.	The hotel strengthens its relationship with customers through experiential marketing events					
15.	Our customers perceptions are evaluated when looking at improving the quality of brands in our hotel.					
16.	There is strong brand association as customers perceive our hotel brand to be of high quality					
17.	The hotel regularly conducts customer research to understand their brand and competitors					

Please indicate in the table with a tick (√) or across (×) with a scale of

5= strongly agree 4= Agree 3= Neither agree nor disagree 2= Disagree 1= Strongly Disagree

No	Brand Recognition	1	2	3	4	5
18.	Our hotel has established competitive strategies to differentiate from competitors					
19.	The hotel ensures that our product attributes are unique to ensure that our products are recognizable in the market					
20.	The hotel has maintained a consistent brand designs to ensure familiarity with our products within the market					
21.	The hotel continuously reviews our product and service offering to identify areas for value creation					

22.	The hotel has increased product placement over digital channels to access new markets and customers					
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Please indicate in the table with a tick (√) or across (×) with a scale of

5= strongly agree 4= Agree 3= Neither agree nor disagree 2= Disagree 1= Strongly Disagree

No	Brand Personality	1	2	3	4	5
23.	The hotel ensures that all our personnel are sincere in the service offering which fosters attachment to the establishment					
24.	The hotel ensures that our brand offering is up-to date and consistent with emerging trends					
25.	The hotel elicits brand excitement among our patrons by regularly offering giveaways and other promotions					
26.	The hotel enhances excitement in our offering through offering family-oriented and customer-friendly services					
27.	The hotel ensures that our services and product offering are reliable through strict compliance to our service delivery policies					
28.	The hotel improves sophistication in our brand through trendy, daring and contemporary service offering					

PART C: ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Please indicate in the table with a tick (√) or across (×) with a scale of

5= strongly agree 4= Agree 3= Neither agree nor disagree 2= Disagree 1= Strongly Disagree

No	Organizational performance	1	2	3	4	5
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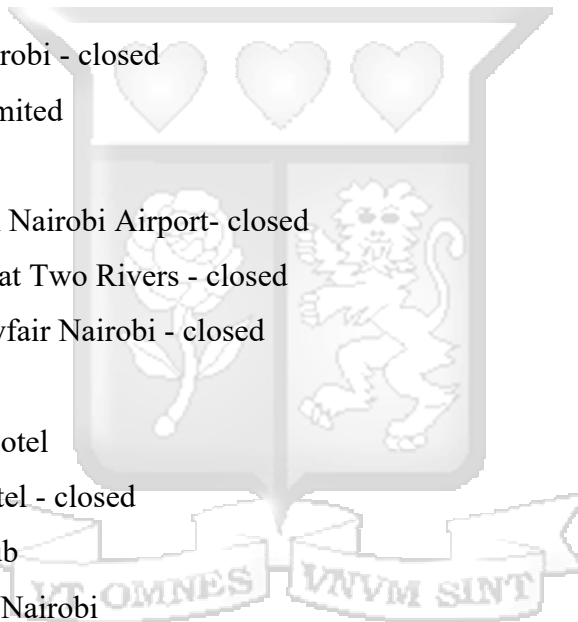
29.	The hotel has witnessed an improvement in the customer retention levels owing to number of patrons					
30.	The hotel has put in place mechanisms to improve the customer satisfaction levels among our patrons					
31.	The hotel is constantly expanding to new markets which has improved our market coverage					
32.	The hotel ensures that all the services rendered within the hotel meet the service quality benchmarks					
33.	The hotel continuously reviews the market needs to improve on the product and service offering					
34.	The hotel continuously scans the environment for market development opportunities					
35.	The hotel has been able to maintain a steady growth in the revenue generation					

Thank you for Your Time

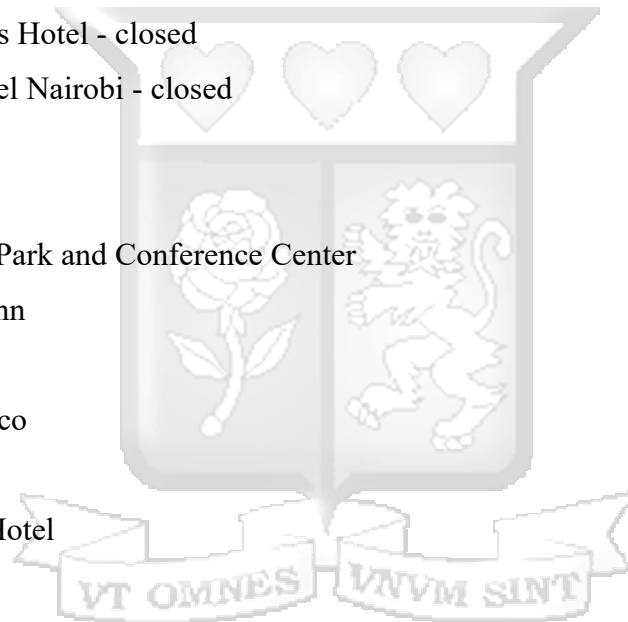


Appendix III: List of Star-Rated Hotels

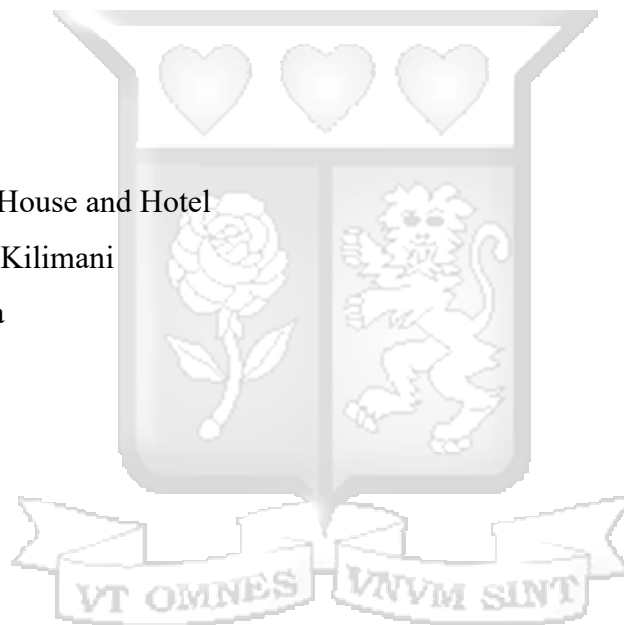
1. Intercontinental Nairobi - closed
2. Radisson Blu Hotel Nairobi - closed
3. The Sarova Stanley
4. Villa Rosa Kempinski
5. Fairmont The Norfolk - closed
6. Sankara Nairobi
7. The Boma Nairobi
8. Crowne Plaza Nairobi Airport - closed
9. Tribe Hotel - closed
10. Dusit D2 - closed
11. Hemingway's Nairobi - closed
12. Hilton Nairobi Limited
13. Crowne Plaza
14. Hilton Garden Inn Nairobi Airport- closed
15. City Lodge Hotel at Two Rivers - closed
16. Southern Sun Mayfair Nairobi - closed
17. Eka Hotel
18. Sarova Panafric Hotel
19. Silver Springs Hotel - closed
20. Nairobi Safari Club
21. The Panari Hotel, Nairobi
22. Ole Sereni Hotel
23. Windsor Golf Hotel and Country Club
24. Fairview Hotel - closed
25. Weston Hotel - closed
26. Golden Tulip Westlands
27. Pride Inn Lantana Apartments and Suites
28. Executive Residency by Best Western.
29. House of Waine
30. Carnivore Restaurant
31. Ibis Styles Nairobi Westlands
32. Azure Hotel



33. Best Western Plus Meridian Hotel
34. Ngong Hills Hotel
35. The Heron Portico
36. Pride Inn Raphta Nairobi
37. Sportsview Hotel Kasarani
38. Kenya Comfort Suits
39. La Masion Royale
40. The Clarion Hotel
41. Boma Inn Nairobi
42. Utalii Hotel
43. Marble Arch Hotel
44. Fahari Gardens Hotel - closed
45. Jacaranda Hotel Nairobi - closed
46. Town Lodge
47. After 40 Hotel
48. Hotel Central Park and Conference Center
49. Summerdale Inn
50. Eton Hotel
51. Zehneria Portico
52. Kahama Hotel
53. West Breeze Hotel
54. HillPark Hotel
55. Hotel Rio
56. Plus 254 Hotel
57. Nairobi Transit Hotel
58. Hennessis Hotel
59. Mooreland Hotel
60. The Luke Hotel
61. Sunstar
62. Sports View Hotel
63. Sagret Hotel
64. Swiss Lenana Hotel
65. Waridi Paradise
66. Four Points Hurlingham



67. Lagos Hotel
68. Meltonia Hotel
69. Parklands Villa Hotel
70. Hotel Emerald
71. La Maison Westlands
72. Seasons Airport Hotel
73. Orynx Hotel
74. The Nest Place
75. Lotos Inn and Suites
76. La Palms Hotel
77. Double Tree
78. Royal Tulip
79. Mirema Hotel
80. Hotel Medina
81. Lenana Guest House and Hotel
82. Wida Resorts, Kilimani
83. Hotel La Mada



Appendix IV: Ethical Review Committee Letter



6th September 2021

Mr Waithaka Maina,
maina.waithaka@strathmore.edu

Dear Mr Waithaka,

RE: Effect of Brand Management on the Performance of Star Rated Hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya

This is to inform you that the Research Services Office has received your above research proposal along with a request for exemption from Ethical Approval.

The office notes that: On the grounds of not having submitted your research proposal for ethical approval, with reason of having already collected data for your study thus negating the need for ethical approval for your research study in the University. This is a letter for you to proceed with the next steps of your academic requirements.

Please be advised, that in future, all research proposals should be submitted to the SU-IERC for ethical approval before receiving a NACOSTI permit to collect data.

Disclaimer: This is not in any way an ethical approval letter

Yours sincerely,



Prof Rachel Mbogo,
Dean Research and Innovation

Ole Sangale Rd, Madaraka Estate. PO Box 59857-00200, Nairobi, Kenya. Tel +254 (0)703 034000
Email admissions@strathmore.edu www.strathmore.edu

Appendix V: NACOSTI Authorization Letter

 REPUBLIC OF KENYA	 NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
Ref No: 257351	Date of Issue: 29/July/2021
RESEARCH LICENSE	
	
This is to Certify that Mr.. Maina Waithaka of Strathmore University, has been licensed to conduct research in Nairobi on the topic: EFFECT OF BRAND MANAGEMENT ON THE ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF STAR RATED HOTELS IN NAIROBI COUNTY, KENYA. for the period ending : 29/July/2022.	
License No: NACOSTI/P/21/12049	
257351 Applicant Identification Number	 Director General NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
	Verification QR Code 
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