Sensory Brand Experience and Post-Purchase Behavior among Millennial Guests of Classified Hotels in Nairobi City County, Kenya

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Abstract

The study aimed to determine influence of sensory brand experience on post purchase behaviour of millennial guest of classified hotel brands in Nairobi City County, Kenya. An embedded mixed-method research design was applied to collect quantitative and qualitative data from millennial guests born from 1982-2002. Convenience sampling was used to select millennial respondents from each hotel category, while purposive sampling was used to collect supplementary information from the managers. A sample size of 384 respondents was obtained from the possible 10,000 target population of millennial guests in classified hotels in Nairobi City County. Questionnaires were used to collect data from millennial hotel guests and front office and restaurant managers. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics, correlation and regression analysis with aid of SPSS v.29. The findings revealed a significant and positive influence of sensory, brand experience on post-purchase behaviour of millennial hotel guests. Thus, sensory brand experience serves as a robust predictor of post-purchase behavior among millennial guests. Therefore, the study recommends that hotel management and marketers place a strong emphasis on cultivating a sensory-rich brand experience. Investing in elements such as appealing color schemes, curated music playlists, and distinctive scents can contribute significantly to enhancing the overall guest experience and, consequently, drive positive post-purchase behaviors among millennial guests.

Keywords: *Sensory Brand Experience, Post Purchase Behaviour, Millennial Guest, Hotel*

1.0   Introduction

The hospitality industry plays a crucial role in promoting economic growth and fostering industrialization on a global scale. In addition to its role in promoting globalisation and contributing to sustainable development, the sector also plays a key role in the overall gross domestic product (GDP) (Bunghez, 2016). In the midst of these shifts and developments, the influence of the millennial generation has brought about changes in the hospitality landscape. Post-purchase behavior in this evolving hospitality landscape becomes a critical aspect, representing guest loyalty. This behavior encompasses a guest's response to a specific product or service purchase. According to Smith (2020), guest loyalty refers to the attachment exhibited by guests to the products and services of an organisation. The attachment manifests in post-purchase actions such as positive word-of-mouth, intention to purchase similar products or services, and intention to support (Górska-Warsewicz & Kulykovets, 2020; Nyagadza et al., 2022). Given its role in making an organisation gain and maintain a competitive advantage over others, post-purchase behaviour/guest loyalty has become a topic of substantial importance to scholars in marketing (Moretta Tartaglione, et al., 2019).

Studies in Kaohsiung, Taiwan (Liu & Hu, 2022), and Bali, Indonesia (Sandri & Ghani, 2023), have found that perceived brand experience positively influences brand loyalty. Brand experience is a multifaceted concept encompassing aesthetic, educational, and entertaining experiences (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). It is also a conglomeration of five experiences: sense, feel, think, act, and relate (Schmitt, 1999). Sensory brand experience is important in marketing because of its role in the post-purchase behaviour of customers, comprising attitudinal and behavioural reactions to products and services. According to Brakus et al., (2009), the sensory facet of brand experience consists of the sensory motivations among customers that emanate from product and service provisions. Huaman-Ramirez and Merunka (2019) argue that sensory stimulations comprising the visual attributes of a brand are more important because customers can easily remember them and help organisations shape the aesthetic look of their service climate.

There is no currently precise definition of millennials and when they were born. This study defines millennials as those born between 1982 and 2002. Hence, the age range of millennials in 2020 is 21 to 41 years. Singh et al., (2023) state that professionals have debated whether millennials are the most loyal to their brands or are unpredictable and unreliable. One thing that has been proven for sure is that millennials are very selective when choosing their brands and products. The African hospitality industry tends to make decisions based on assumptions rather than existing data (Lingelbach et al., 2012). Even in cases where hotels have taken steps to attract millennials, there are still significant gaps in services and packages offered to the target group (Elkins, 2017). The risk of not understanding the preferences and trends in the millennial choice of hotels implies that hotels may be spending funds on developing packages that may not be embraced by the millennial cohort (Shipman, 2020).

Kenya, especially Nairobi and other cities, has witnessed an upsurge in property owners investing in the hotel industry. As this sector leaps forward, much competition is expected from existing and new players. Previously, the industry had faced challenges such as political uncertainties, terrorism, and global economic recessions. These challenges have necessitated hotel managers to rethink their marketing strategies and target clientele- millennials being their best stake.

Most studies on consumer behaviour in Kenya have focused on factors influencing consumer behaviour. For instance, Gekonge, et al., (2021), Kibet and Miriti (2016), and Kosgei (2018) have done general studies of consumer behaviour in Kenya. Additionally, Mwangi (2018) conducted a study on millennials' purchase behaviour in the airline industry in Kenya. In light of this, the present study sought to address the gaps in the literature in the hospitality industry in Kenya regarding millennials buying behaviour and their loyalty to hotel brands in Kenya's Nairobi City County.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

The current study is anchored on the tenets of the rational action theory. The basic principle of the rational choice theory is that aggregated social behaviour comes from the individual actors' behaviour (Lovett, 2006). The rational choice theory also emphasises the elements of individual choices (Goldfield & Gilbert, 1995). It assumes that individuals have likings among available choice alternatives that allow them to mention options they like. According to this set of principles, individuals make practical and rational choices that offer them the utmost benefits or fulfilment and are in their highest self-interest (Lovett, 2006). This theory helped identify and understand the determinants of individual choices among millennials and how those determinants affected their choices regarding hotel brands.

According to McCarthy and Chaudhary (2014), rational choice theory is concerned with the link between individuals' preferences and choices. Thus, hotels should seek to offer a broad category of preferences within a particular package to enhance the chances of satisfying clients' preferences. The advantage of this approach includes the likelihood of creating loyalty and repeat bookings at the hotel because it aligns with the theory of rational choice.

2.0 Literature Review

Liu et al.'s (2021) study found that sensory brand experience positively influences consumer loyalty towards businesses, particularly in Taiwan hotels. The research examined the mediating effect of brand image and found a significant positive relationship between sensory brand experience and brand loyalty. Additionally, Liu and Hu's (2022) study found that sensory brand experience positively impacts brand loyalty in upscale Taiwanese hotels. Their 2021 study, focusing on mainland Chinese tourists, found that perceived brand experience positively impacts non-financial aspects of hotel performance, including brand loyalty and guest satisfaction. However, these studies were limited to high-end hotels, overlooking other hotel segments like two-, three-, and four-star hotels. Moreover, existing studies did not investigate the impact of brand experience on brand loyalty among millennial customers. The current investigation sought to investigate this gap by conducting a comprehensive analysis of the influence of hotel brand experience on millennial guests' post-purchase behaviour. Thus, the study hypothesized

H_{01}: *Sensory brand experience is not associated with post-purchase behaviour among millennial guests of classified hotels in Nairobi City County, Kenya.*

3.0 Research Methodology

The current research adopted an embedded research design to gain an in-depth understanding of the influence of hotel brand experience on the post-purchase behaviour among millennial guests of classified hotels in Nairobi City County. The study surveyed millennial guests in

54 Nairobi City County hotel establishments, including 11 five-star, 19 four-star, 15 three-star, and 9 two-star hotels, as well as the front office and restaurant managers of these establishments, as per the Tourism Regulatory Authority (2022) guidelines.

3.1   Sampling

Only hotel guests born from 1982 to 2002 (Crampton & Hodge, 2011) who had stayed at least one night in classified hotels of their accommodation in Nairobi City County were targeted. The current study excluded hotel guests born before 1982 and after 2002 who had not stayed for a night or more in classified hotels of their accommodation during data collection. Cochran's formula (1977) was utilized to determine sample size of 384 millennial hotel guests based on the approximate proportion of an attribute in the target population, acceptable precision, and confidence level. Regarding the sample size for the qualitative data collection, Saunders and Townsend (2016) suggest that between 15 and 60 interviews are sufficient for organisational studies. Accordingly, the sample size for the current study was 30 participants, which was within the suggested range. The current study utilised convenience sampling to pick 384 respondents for quantitative data collection. The utilisation of convenience sampling facilitated efficient access to the targeted participants for data collection (Kothari, 2012). The study also employed a purposive sampling strategy to pick key informants for the purpose of collecting qualitative data.

3.2 Research Instruments and Variable Measurement

The current study used an online self-administered questionnaire to collect quantitative data from the millennial guests who stayed at the targeted hotels. The online survey was created on Google Forms®. Hotel brand experience was measured with items borrowed from Brakus et al., (2009). The researchers employed the observable indicators of the post-purchase behaviour construct as delineated in the study done by Hapsari et al. (2017). The items within each construct were evaluated using a five-point Likert scale, except for socio-demographic factors, with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 5 indicating strong agreement.

To check the respondents' comprehension of each questionnaire, a pretest was conducted on a sample of 20 individuals, which accounted for 5.2% of the calculated sample size. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), it is proposed that a pretest sample size ranging from 1% to 10% of the intended sample size is acceptable for pretesting. Face validity was used in the current study to ascertain the validity of the questionnaire, which was determined through expert judgment by professionals in hospitality and tourism management and research supervisors. In order to assess the dependability of the constructs employed for evaluating the independent and dependent variables, According to the results.4, the α coefficients for all the constructs exceeded the recommended criterion of 0.70 for Cronbach's α (Hair et al., 2010).

3.3   Data Analysis and model specification

For data analysis, presentation and reporting of the results, data was put through screening before being used for analysis, interpretation and conclusion. The data screening process comprises data preparation, editing, coding and screening to look out for outliers. Data was summarized using descriptive statistics and general observations concerning the association between strategic Leadership and state commercial corporation performance. The descriptive techniques employed entailed mean and standard deviations. The review also used inferential

statistics to make judgements on the suggested hypotheses generate in the review. To measure the strength of the causal associations existing between variables in the study. The study was to employ Pearson's product moment's correlation. Multiple regressions were used to assess direct influence on sensory brand experience and post-purchase behaviour among millennial guests of classified hotels. Multiple regression models is presented as

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_2 + \varepsilon$$

Where: -
Y is post-purchase behaviour among millennial guests of classified hotels
X_1 is sensory brand experience
β_0 is a constant
ε is Error term (random variation due to other unmeasured factors).

4.0   Findings and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the impact sensory brand experience on the post-purchase behaviour of millennial customers staying at classified hotels in Nairobi City County. It also presents the results of the moderating influence of socio-demographic factors like gender, age, education, and monthly earnings on the relationship between sensory brand experience and post-purchase behaviour among these customers.

In addition, this chapter provides an overview of the response rate, shows descriptive data that summarises the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants, and reports the replies pertaining to the study constructs. Furthermore, inferential results are presented in accordance with the specified objectives and corresponding hypotheses..

4.1 Sample Characteristics
The majority of respondents (38.99%) were aged between 21 and 25, followed by those aged between 26 and 30 (32.70%), 31 and 35 (18.55%), and 36 and 40 (9.75%). Drawing inferences from these results, it is apparent that over half (50.00%) of all the millennial guests sampled in the current study were below 30 years old. A majority (42.77%) of respondents were holders of diploma qualifications, followed by those who were holders of degree qualifications (25.79%), master degrees (13.21%), secondary school (7.86%), primary school (5.66%), and PhD (4.72%), respectively. These results demonstrated that over three-quarters (86.48%) of all sampled respondents in the current study were well informed with education qualifications ranging from diploma to PhD. A large percentage of respondents (30.82%) reported earning between $500/KSh.60,000 and less than $1,000/KSh.120,000, followed by those whose earnings were less than $500/KSh.60,000 (29.56%). Additionally, respondents earning between $1,000/KSh.120,000 and less than $1,500/KSh.180,000 and $1,500/KSh.180,000 and less than $2,000/KSh.240,000 accounted for 21.70% and 14.15%, respectively. Only 3.77% reported monthly earnings above $2,000/KSh.240,000. These results demonstrated that most (70.44%) respondents earned above $500/KSh.60,000 monthly, depicting the financial ability of millennial guests to purchase products and services provided by classified hotels.

4.1 Descriptive Results
Table 1 presents the descriptive results of respondents' perspectives on their post-purchase behavioural intentions.

Table 1. Descriptive Results of Post-Purchase Behaviour

"Statement	SD n (%)	D n (%)	N n (%)	A n (%)	SA n (%)	Mean	SD
I like this hotel better than any other hotel.	19 (6.0%)	52 (16.4%)	60 (18.9%)	99 (31.1%)	88 (27.7%)	3.57	1.38
I would be inclined to stay/return to this hotel over any other hotel.	22 (6.9%)	88 (27.7%)	90 (28.3%)	83 (26.1%)	35 (11.0%)	3.09	1.41
I would be motivated to choose this hotel as my first choice compared to other brands	18 (5.7%)	42 (13.2%)	44 (13.8%)	112 (35.2%)	102 (32.1%)	3.73	1.28
I would be inclined to recommend this hotel to my friends/family.	18 (5.7%)	55 (17.3%)	44 (13.8%)	111 (34.9%)	90 (28.3%)	3.65	1.26
I would be motivated to say positive things about this hotel.	11 (3.5%)	20 (6.3%)	54 (17.0%)	133 (41.8%)	100 (31.4%)	3.91	1.01

Notes: n = 318. SD – Standard Deviation. Scale Anchors (*Mean Range*): 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD) (*1.00 – 1.80*), 2 = Disagree (D) (*1.80 – 2.60*), 3 = Neutral (N) (*2.60 – 3.40*), 4 = Agree (A) (*3.40 – 4.20*), 5 = Strongly Agree (SA) (*4.20 – 5.00*)"

The minimum and maximum means for all the items were 3.09 and 3.91, respectively (Table 4.2), demonstrating that respondents' level of agreement with all items measuring post-purchase behaviour ranged between neutral and agreement. Generally, over 70.0% of respondents agreed that they were motivated to say positive things about the hotels, which was portrayed by the mean of all the responses ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 1.01$). Similarly, the majority (35.2% and 32.1%) agreed and strongly agreed that they were motivated to select the same hotels as their first choice compared to other brands, as represented by responses gathered from all respondents ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 1.28$). Over half of the respondents (63.2%) indicated they would recommend hotels to their families and friends ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 1.26$). Besides, the results revealed that most (31.1% representing those who agreed and 27.7% representing those who strongly agreed) respondents liked the hotels where they were accommodated better than any other hotel, as underlined by the mean value of 3.57 ($SD = 1.38$). In contrast, the results of the current investigation revealed that the majority (28.3%) of respondents were undecided on whether they would continue their stay in the hotel or return in future ($M = 3.09$, $SD = 1.41$). This finding depicted the desire of millennial guests to try various accommodation facilities in a tourist destination such as the one considered in the current study, which would have undesirable implications on overall guest loyalty.

The study aimed to explore the influence of sensory hotel brand experience on post-purchase behaviour among millennial guests. The descriptive results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Results of Sensory Hotel Brand Experience

"Statement	SD n (%)	D n (%)	N n (%)	A n (%)	SA n (%)	Mean	SD
The colour of the hotel's design soothes me.	9 (2.8%)	12 (3.8%)	60 (18.9%)	143 (45.0%)	94 (29.6%)	3.94	0.98
The music played at the hotel is nice.	22 (6.9%)	32 (10.1%)	81 (25.5%)	119 (37.4%)	64 (20.1%)	3.52	1.07
The hotel smells provide a feeling of relaxation.	17 (5.3%)	28 (8.8%)	88 (27.7%)	126 (39.6%)	59 (18.6%)	3.58	1.02

Notes. $n = 318$. SD – Standard Deviation. Scale Anchors (*Mean Range*): 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD) (*1.00 – 1.80*), 2 = Disagree (D) (*1.80 – 2.60*), 3 = Neutral (N) (*2.60 – 3.40*), 4 = Agree (A) (*3.40 – 4.20*), 5 = Strongly Agree (SA) (*4.20 – 5.00*)"

As shown in Table 2, results revealed positive sensory hotel brand experience among respondents. Specifically, a large proportion (78.6%) comprising 45.0% and 29.6% of respondents who agreed and strongly agreed, respectively, reported that they were appeased by the colour of the hotels' design ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 0.98$). Likewise, the majority (58.2%) of 39.6% and 18.6% of respondents who agreed and strongly agreed correspondingly reported that smells in hotels provided a feeling of relaxation ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 1.02$). Moreover, most (57.5%) respondents, encompassing respectively 37.4% and 20.1% of those who agreed and disagreed, indicated that music played at hotels was nice and pleasing ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 1.07$). Based on these results, respondents' sensory hotel brand experience was positive. These results supported the descriptive results of Liu and Hu's (2022) study where mainland Chinese tourists reported positive sensory brand experiences about upscale hotels in Taiwan.

4.2 Correlation Results

A bivariate Pearson correlation was applied to test this hypothesis, summarising the results in Table 3.

Table 3. Sensory Hotel Brand Experience and Post-Purchase Behaviour

Variables		Sensory Brand Experience	Post-Purchase Behaviour
Sensory Brand Experience	Pearson Correlation	1	0.784***
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
Post-Purchase Behaviour	Pearson Correlation	0.784***	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	

Notes. $n = 318$. ***$p < 0.001$

As shown in Table 3, the current study found a significant positive relationship between sensory brand experience and post-purchase behaviour ($r = 0.784$, $p < 0.001$).

4.3 Linear Regression Analysis

The study conducted a linear regression analysis to analyse the relative impact of sensory brand experience on the post-purchase behaviour of millennial guests (Table 4). As reported in Table 4 the regression model with the facets of sensory brand experience significantly predicted post-purchase behaviour of millennial guests, $F_{(5, 312)} = 82.041$, $p < 0.001$. Furthermore, significant predictors in the regression model explained 56.8% ($R^2 = 0.568$) of variance in post-purchase behaviour. Moreover, results presented in Table 3 revealed that sensory brand experience ($\beta = 0.267$, $t = 8.364$, $p < 0.001$) has significant positive predictors

of post-purchase behaviour among millennial hotel guests. Consequently, H_{01} was rejected. Therefore, maintaining and enhancing the sensory brand experience would result in positive post-purchase behaviour among millennial guests. Thus, millennial guests experiencing feelings of higher sensory hotel brand experience are more likely to exhibit positive post-purchase behaviour.

Table 3. Linear regression analysis

	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients		
	B	**SE**	**β**	**t**	**Sig.**
(Constant)	2.661	0.124		21.458	0.001
Sensory Experience	0.644	0.077	0.267**	8.364	0.000
Model Summary					
R	0.754				
R^2	0.568				
R^2Adj	0.561				
F	82.041				
Sig.	0.001				

Notes. a. Dependent Variable: Post-Purchase Behaviour. *p < 0.05. **p < 0.01. ***p < 0.001. Ns = Not significant

5.0   Discussion

This study's quantitative and qualitative results regarding the relationship between sensory brand experience and post-purchase behaviour aligned with previous studies. For example, with Liu et al. (2021) study revealed that sensory brand experience positively impacted brand loyalty among guests in Taiwan. Liu and Hu (2022) and Liu and Hu (2021) also found similar results. Together with the results of previous studies, the current investigation underlined the importance of sensory brand experience in boosting positive post-purchase behavioural intentions among millennial guests. Guided by the rational choice theory, this study suggested that sensory brand experience (i.e., the colour of hotel design, music and scents) leads to positive post-purchase behavioural intentions of millennial hotel guests. Specifically, sensory brand experience appeared more important in fostering post-purchase behavioural intentions than other hotel brand experiences. Such results are consistent with previous studies (Huaman-Ramirez & Merunka, 2019; Liu et al., 2021; Liu & Hu, 2022) highlighting sensory brand experience as a driver of brand loyalty.

6.0   Conclusions

Based on the compelling findings of this study, we draw the conclusion that sensory brand experience serves as a robust predictor of post-purchase behavior among millennial guests. Specifically, key elements within sensory brand experience, such as the color scheme of the hotel's design, the inclusion of pleasant music, and the incorporation of relaxing scents, significantly influence and enhance post-purchase behavior. These facets underscore the importance of maintaining and elevating the sensory brand experience, as millennial guests who perceive a heightened level of sensory engagement with a hotel brand are more inclined to demonstrate positive post-purchase behaviors. This highlights the pivotal role that sensory brand experience plays in shaping the behaviors of millennial consumers within the hospitality industry.

7.0 Recommendations

Based on above conclusions, we recommend that hotel management and marketers place a strong emphasis on cultivating a sensory-rich brand experience. Investing in elements such as appealing color schemes, curated music playlists, and distinctive scents can contribute significantly to enhancing the overall guest experience and, consequently, drive positive post-purchase behaviors among millennial guests. Additionally, continuous monitoring and adaptation of sensory brand elements in response to evolving consumer preferences and trends will be essential for staying competitive and resonating with the target millennial demographic in the dynamic hospitality landscape

8.0　　Limitations and Further Studies

The current research, even though it has revealed valuable results, did not attempt to study various sub-sector establishments in the hospitality industry. In future research, a larger sample could be collected from other hospitality establishments, such as restaurants in Nairobi City County and beyond, so that a comparison could be made on the influence of brand experience on the post-purchase behaviour of millennial guests. Additionally, the current study focused on the influence of sensory brand experience in the context of hotels on the post-purchase behaviour of millennial guests. However, brand experience variables, such as affective experience, behavioural experience, ambience experience and price experience. Therefore, conducting a more comprehensive study is an avenue that would interest future researchers.

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