Effect of Training and Development on Consumer Choice
of AIRBNB in Kwale County, Kenya

Eunice Njeri Nyaga, Dr. Vincent Maranga & Dr. Sisinio
Muthengi

Effect of Training and Development on Consumer Choice of AIRBNB in Kwale County, Kenya

*1Eunice Njeri Nyaga, 2Dr. Vincent Maranga & 3Dr. Sisinio Muthengi

1Student, Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Kenyatta University

2Lecturer, Department of Hospitality and Tourism, Kenyatta University

3Lecturer, Department of Hospitality and Tourism, Kenyatta University

Email of the Corresponding Author: eunicenjerih@gmail.com

Abstract

Airbnb has emerged as a leading provider of short-term rental accommodations through an online marketplace that provides travellers with rooms and homes. Since 2016, Airbnb's sales have tripled, outpacing larger hotel chains' global sales growth of 11%. However, one significant challenge is maintaining consistent service quality standards due to varying levels of host and staff training. The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of training and development on consumer choices of Airbnb accommodations in Kwale County, Kenya. Based on quality management theory, the study used a cross-sectional survey design with a sample size of 112 respondents from a target population of 120 Airbnb employees in Kwale County. Questionnaires and interview guides were used to collect data, which was then analysed qualitatively using content analysis and quantitatively using SPSS. The study revealed that training and development were positively correlated with Airbnb accommodation choice in Kwale County (r = 0.745). Regression analysis revealed that training and development practices comprised 55.5% of consumer choice. The study concluded that training and development have a significant impact on consumer choice of Airbnb accommodations in Kwale County and recommended that these factors be prioritized to improve consumer preference.

Keywords: *Training, Development, Consumer Choice, AIRBNB, Kwale County*

1.1 Background of the Study

The hospitality industry has experienced significant transformation and growth, with international arrivals increasing from 900 million to 1.3 billion over a decade, as reported by EHL (2022). Within this evolving landscape, Airbnb has emerged as a disruptive force, particularly due to its innovative approach to service delivery and customer experience. An, Suh and Eck (2019) conducted empirical research demonstrating that high service quality on the Airbnb platform directly correlates with increased customer satisfaction and repeat bookings, highlighting the crucial role of well-trained staff and developed service capabilities. Their study specifically found that service quality attributes, including staff competence and service delivery consistency, were significant predictors of customer satisfaction. Sun et al. (2019) further reinforced this finding, revealing that service quality in Airbnb contexts is closely tied to several factors, particularly the ability of trained staff to maintain cleanliness standards, ensure listing accuracy, and deliver personalized service. The significance of training and development in the Airbnb context has become increasingly evident as the platform competes with traditional hotels. Wu (2021) stated that service quality management in the hospitality sector heavily relies on structured training programs and continuous staff development to maintain consistent service standards. This finding was supported by Guttentag and Smith (2017), who found that Airbnb has become a significant competitor for hotels, especially within budget and mid-range segments where service quality often serves as a key differentiator. Dogru et al. (2019) further demonstrated through empirical analysis that Airbnb's impact on hotel performance metrics, including room revenues and occupancy rates, was significantly influenced by service quality levels.

In addition, according to Blal et al. (2018) Airbnb customer reviews, which often reflect staff service quality and professionalism, have both complementary and substitution effects on hotel sales performance. In Kenya, research has demonstrated the critical importance of service quality management practices. Ongoto (2019) conducted a study in Kenya revealing that structured training programs and staff development initiatives significantly influence customer choices in the hospitality sector. This finding was complemented by Gichuru's (2018) research, which demonstrated that business performance in Kenya's hospitality sector is directly linked to the quality of staff training and development programs. Studies from neighbouring countries have reinforced these findings. In Nigeria, Edike and Joseph (2020) discovered that service quality dimensions, particularly those related to staff training in areas of assurance, reliability, and empathy, significantly impact customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry. Similarly, research in Cameroon by Kibebsii et al. (2022) found that responsiveness and service consistency, both products of effective training programs, were crucial factors in determining customer satisfaction and choice of accommodation.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Airbnb has emerged as a leading provider of short-term rental accommodations through an online marketplace that provides travellers with rooms and homes (Del Chiappa et al., 2021). Since 2016, Airbnb's sales have tripled, outpacing larger hotel chains' global sales growth of 11% (Neutjens, 2022). However, one significant challenge is maintaining consistent service quality standards due to varying levels of host and staff training. Despite Airbnb's innovative business model and market success, Roma et al. (2019) discovered that many people still prefer traditional accommodation services, citing concerns about service professionalism and standardization. While Airbnb competes successfully in the market, traditional hospitality firms have an advantage due to their established expertise in staff training and professional service delivery (Chege, 2020). The lack of standardized training requirements for Airbnb hosts and support staff leads to uncertainty in service quality levels.

According to Khan et al. (2018), unlike traditional hotels, which have structured training programs and professional development standards, Airbnb properties often do not have consistent training frameworks, which may have an impact on service quality and consumer confidence. Based on the literature reviewed, there are significant knowledge gaps concerning training and development in the Airbnb context, particularly in Kenya. While studies like Gunter's (2018) research in San Francisco looked at host qualifications and performance, there aren't many comprehensive studies in Kenya. In addition, Murage's (2021) study in Nairobi County, while relevant to accommodation options, did not specifically address the critical aspect of training and development in Airbnb services. This study aims to look into how training and development practices influence consumer choice of Airbnb accommodations in Kwale County, Kenya.

1.3 Objective of The Study

To establish the effect of training and development on consumer choice of AIRBNB in Kwale County, Kenya.

1.4 Research Hypotheses

H_{01}: There is no significant effect of training and development on consumer choice of AIRBNB in Kwale County, Kenya.

2.0 Literature Review

The review covers Quality Management Theory and empirical evidence on training and development in Airbnb's context.

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Quality Management Theory

The Quality Management Theory (QMT) was developed by Deming (1986) as a framework for improving organizational performance through effective management practices (Oakland, 2014). QMT posits that top management plays a crucial role in fostering a productive environment and driving quality management systems, with their commitment to processes, culture, and strategic decisions being essential for success (Deming, 1986). The theory emphasizes management's responsibility for the systems causing most firm issues and the importance of a conducive, collaborative, and learning-focused organizational structure for adopting process management practices and enhancing performance (Oakland, 2014). QMT assumes that quality is a strategic priority for organizations and that continuous improvement is necessary for maintaining competitiveness (Deming, 1986). It also assumes that employee involvement and empowerment are crucial for effective quality management, with training and development playing a vital role in building a quality-focused workforce (Petersen, 1999). In addition, QMT assumes that customer satisfaction is the ultimate goal of quality management efforts and that organizations should strive to exceed customer expectations (Oakland, 2014). The strength of QMT lies in its comprehensive approach to quality management, emphasizing the importance of leadership, employee involvement, and continuous improvement (Oakland, 2014). The theory provides a framework for organizations to align their processes, culture, and strategies towards achieving quality objectives (Petersen, 1999). However, QMT has been criticized for its focus on top-down management and its limited consideration of external factors that may influence quality management efforts (Sitkin et al., 1994).

QMT is relevant to the study variables since it informs the understanding of how Airbnb's management practices, particularly training and development initiatives, can influence service quality and customer experience, thereby impacting consumer choice. The theory is also significant to the study as it indicates the importance of a learning-focused organizational

structure and continuous improvement efforts in enhancing performance and attracting customers. Therefore, QMT is pertinent to the study on the effect of training and development on consumer choice of Airbnb in Kwale County, Kenya.

2.2 Empirical Review

Kim and Kim (2020) used structural equation modelling and empirical data from 156 Airbnb consumers to examine customer loyalty towards Airbnb. The results showed that loyalty is influenced by both dedication and constraint mechanisms, with affective commitment significantly affected by authentic experiences, trust in Airbnb, and social benefits. Calculative commitment is influenced by social benefits and relative attractiveness but not price fairness. De Beckker et al. (2021) examined the impact of a financial education course on consumer choices using a randomized controlled trial and a discrete choice experiment. The results showed a preference for purchase options with free gifts and positive reviews, and cash payments over credit. However, even with increased financial literacy, better consumer choices were not guaranteed, indicating that financial education does not automatically lead to better decision-making.

Lee (2020) studied how employee training and development influence firm customer capabilities across 2056 listed firms in 66 countries from 2010-2016. The study used a longitudinal panel data and regression analysis, the study found no significant effects of training on customer loyalty or firm size and market type moderating this relationship, contradicting earlier findings. Shen and Tang (2018) explored how training affects customer service quality through transfer of training and job satisfaction. The study found that training indirectly impacts service quality via transfer of training and job satisfaction. Perceived organizational support moderated the training-transfer relationship. The study extended social exchange theory, reciprocity norms, and goal setting theory.

Nicod et al. (2020) compared proactive (before experience) vs reactive (on request) customer training in retail. Measuring script proficiency and sales, the study found proactive training increased script proficiency which positively influenced sales per customer but not satisfaction. Reactive training avoided critical situations. Abdelhamied (2019) studied training effects on service quality, satisfaction and behavioural intentions in hotels. Regression analysis of employee and customer data showed training positively influenced service quality, generating higher satisfaction and boosting behavioural intentions. The study highlighted training's value for competitive advantage in the labour-intensive hotel industry. Endjala (2020) evaluated training impact on customer service at Namibia's Ministry of Veterans Affairs. The study found that customer care training minimized complaints, improved employee handling of difficult clients and suggested regular skills training every 2 years. Time management and communication skills from training also improved working conditions.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework in Figure 1 illustrates the hypothesized relationship between training and development and consumer choice of Airbnb accommodations in Kwale County, Kenya. Training and development are positioned as the independent variable, while consumer choice serves as the dependent variable.
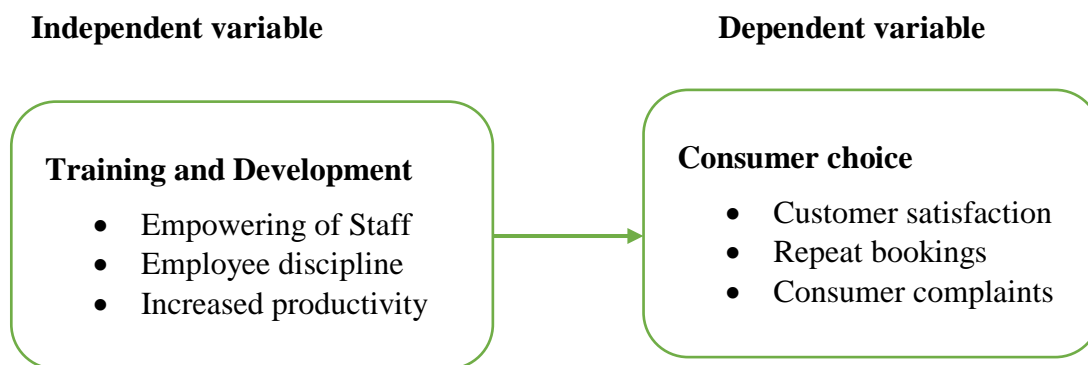
Independent variable　　　　　　　　**Dependent variable**

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3.0 Research Methodology

The study used a cross-sectional survey design, targeting 120 registered Airbnb listings in Kwale County, Kenya. Stratified random sampling based on property size (small, medium and large) was employed to select a sample of 92 employees using Yamane's formula, while 20 managers were purposively selected. The total sample size was 112 respondents. Questionnaires and interview guides, pretested for validity and reliability, were used to collect data. Data collection involved administering questionnaires to employees and interview guides to managers after obtaining necessary approvals from Kenyatta University, NACOSTI, and Airbnb property managers. Quantitative data was analysed using SPSS version 25 for descriptive statistics, inferential analysis (correlations, ANOVA, multiple linear regression), and hypothesis testing. Data screening utilized frequencies and descriptive statistics to detect outliers and missing values. Qualitative data underwent thematic analysis, with interview data processed in Excel, organized by research objectives, and key themes identified and integrated with quantitative findings. Pseudo-codes ensured systematic reference and confidentiality of interview participants. The study adhered to ethical principles including informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, data protection, professional integrity, and institutional compliance.

4.0 Findings and Discussions

This section presents the results regarding the first objective on the effect of training and development on consumer choice of Airbnb in Kwale County, Kenya. The descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis were presented.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics results on training and development are as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Training and Development

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. D
Training and development empower Airbnb staff.	4%	15%	3%	69%	9%	3.64	0.976
Employee discipline improves through training and development.	0%	0%	15%	66%	19%	4.04	0.582
Training and development enhance productivity in Airbnb.	1%	3%	9%	63%	24%	4.06	0.732
Staff gain essential skills through training and development.	0%	2%	12%	62%	24%	4.08	0.659
Training and development foster professionalism and competence.	1%	5%	9%	65%	20%	3.98	0.761
Training and development increases job satisfaction and morale among employees.	1%	3%	14%	59%	23%	4.00	0.762
Average						**3.967**	**0.745**

Based on the results of the descriptive statistics for training and development: a significant majority of respondents (69%) agreed that training and development empower Airbnb staff. In terms of employee discipline, the majority (66%) believed that it improves through training and development. A substantial portion (63%) agreed that training and development enhance productivity in Airbnb. Most respondents (62%) believed that staff gain essential skills through training and development. In the context of professionalism and competence, 65% of respondents agreed that training and development foster these qualities. In addition, a majority (59%) agreed that training and development increase job satisfaction and morale among employees. The overall average rating for training and development effectiveness was 3.967, indicating a generally positive perception among respondents. The standard deviation (Std. Dev) was 0.745, suggesting that the responses were relatively consistent, with moderate variation around the mean score. These results indicate that respondents largely recognize the positive impact of training and development practices within the Airbnb context in Kwale County, Kenya. It suggests that these practices are viewed positively as mechanisms for improving staff empowerment, discipline, productivity, skills acquisition, professionalism, and overall job satisfaction. The study agrees with other findings for instance, Alshaabani et al. (2021) who found that well-structured training programs could lead to employee empowerment, which in turn affects organizational performance positively.

In addition to the questionnaire, interviews were conducted with managers of Airbnb. The purpose of these interviews was to gain deeper insights on how training and development might affect consumer choices regarding Airbnb.

The KII informant 001 stated that:

> *"I've had a positive experience with AIRBNB accommodations in Kwale County, Kenya. The options are diverse, ranging from cozy apartments to beautiful cottages. The flexibility of booking and the unique offerings available through AIRBNB make it an attractive choice for travellers like me."*

The KII informant 0011 showed that:

> *"In our Airbnb accommodations in Kwale County, we have regular training sessions for staff. These sessions cover various aspects, including customer service, safety protocols, and local knowledge. We also encourage our staff to take courses related to hospitality and tourism to enhance their skills."*

The KII informant 003 said that:

> *'Our staff is customer-oriented. They prioritize guest satisfaction by being attentive to their needs, offering personalized recommendations for local experiences, and ensuring a welcoming and hospitable atmosphere. We believe that a guest-centric approach enhances the overall experience."*

4.2 Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was carried out to examine the relationship between training and development and its effect on consumer choice of Airbnb accommodations in Kwale County, Kenya. The purpose was to assess the nature and strength of the association between training and development practices and consumer choice preferences. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis for Training and Development and Consumer Choice

	Consumer Choice	Training and development
Consumer Choice	1.000	
Training and development	0.745	1.000
	0.000	

The analysis revealed significant findings. The results indicated a significant positive association between training and development practices and consumer choice ($p < 0.000$; $r = 0.745$). This positive correlation suggests that as training and development initiatives within Airbnb accommodations in Kwale County improve, there is a corresponding positive effect on consumer choice preferences. Therefore, consumers are more likely to choose accommodations that prioritize staff training and development. The study agrees with De Beckker, De Witte and Van Campenhout (2021) who found that a clear inclination towards buy alternatives that provide complimentary items and get favourable evaluations, as well as a preference for cash transactions as opposed to credit-based purchases. The study findings also align with Kim and Kim (2020) study who indicated that loyalty is controlled by two factors: devotion and constraint mechanisms.

4.3 Regression Analysis

To explore the statistical influence of training and development on consumer choice within Airbnb accommodations in Kwale County, Kenya, a regression analysis was conducted. This analysis aimed to quantify the extent to which training and development practices could predict consumer choice preferences. The results of this regression analysis are presented in the following sections, including the model summary, ANOVA, and regression coefficient, which collectively provide insights into the relationship between training and development and consumer choice. The results are shown in Table 3, 4 and 5.

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.745a	0.555	0.551	0.238016

Table 3 shows that the coefficient of determination (R-squared) is 0.555, indicating that approximately 55.5% of the variation in consumer choice can be explained by the training and development predictor variables. These results suggest that training and development practices have a statistically significant influence on consumer choice within Airbnb accommodations in Kwale County, Kenya, as indicated by the R-squared values.

Table 4: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	7.003	1	7.003	123.617	.000b
	Residual	5.608	99	0.057		
	Total	12.612	100			

Table 4 indicates that the F-statistic, which measures the significance of the model, is 123.617, and the associated p-value (Sig.) is 0.000, which is less than the significance level of 0.05. These results indicate that the regression model is statistically significant in explaining the influence of training and development on consumer choice of Airbnb accommodations in Kwale County, Kenya.

Table 5: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.191	0.245		4.861	0.000
	Training and development	0.592	0.053	0.745	11.118	0.000

Consumer Choice of Airbnb Accommodations

$Y = \beta_0 1.191 + \beta_1 0.592$

Where:

Y = Consumer Choice of Airbnb Accommodations

X1 = Training and Development

The regression coefficient results demonstrate a positive and statistically significant relationship between training and development (X_1) and consumer choice of Airbnb accommodations in Kwale County, Kenya (Y) ($\beta = 0.592$, $p = 0.000$). This suggests that for each unit increase in training and development, consumer choice of Airbnb accommodations in Kwale County, Kenya is predicted to increase by 0.592 units. The study findings align with

Kim and Kim (2020) study who indicated that loyalty is controlled by two factors: devotion and constraint mechanisms. In addition, emotional commitment is highly impacted by genuine experiences, confidence in Airbnb, and social advantages. The study also aligns with De Beckker et al. (2021) who found that a clear inclination towards buy alternatives that provide complimentary items and get favourable evaluations, as well as a preference for cash transactions as opposed to credit-based purchases.

4.4 Hypothesis Testing for Training and Development on Consumer Choice of Airbnb

The study aimed to test the following null hypothesis:

H01: There is no significant effect of training and development on consumer choice of Airbnb in Kwale County, Kenya.

The p-value method was utilized to test the hypothesis in the regression analysis model. According to standard practice, if the p-value for H01 is greater than the 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis would be accepted; otherwise, it would be rejected. The regression coefficient results also confirmed a positive and significant effect between training and development and consumer choice (β= 0.592, p=0.000). This implies that a unit change in training and development leads to an increase in consumer choice of Airbnb accommodations in Kwale County, Kenya by an equivalent unit. Therefore, the null hypothesis that *there is no significant effect of training and development on consumer choice of Airbnb in Kwale County, Kenya* was rejected; and the alternative hypothesis was adopted that training and development significantly affect consumer choice of Airbnb in Kwale County, Kenya. The study findings are in line with previous research such as Kim and Kim (2020), who found that training and development, among other factors, influenced customer loyalty. This study also corroborates the findings of De Beckker et al. (2021), showing the importance of service quality variables like training and development in affecting consumer choices.

5.0 Conclusion of the Study

Based on the empirical findings, training and development demonstrated a significant relationship with consumer choice of Airbnb in Kwale County, Kenya. The correlation coefficient of 0.745 (p = 0.000) indicates a strong positive relationship, with regression analysis revealing that training and development explains 55.5% of the variation in consumer choice. The in-depth interviews with Airbnb managers reinforced these statistical findings, revealing that regular training sessions covering customer service, safety protocols, and local knowledge enhancement significantly contributed to service quality and guest satisfaction. The study particularly found that staff empowerment through training (69% agreement) and improved employee discipline through development programs (66% agreement) were crucial aspects that influenced consumer choices. This conclusion is supported by the qualitative findings where managers reported implementing structured training programs that enhanced staff capabilities in areas directly impacting guest experience.

6.0 Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is recommended that Airbnb establishments in Kwale County prioritize structured training programs covering customer service, safety protocols, and local knowledge to empower staff, improve discipline, and enhance guest experiences. Regular training sessions and encouraging staff to pursue hospitality and tourism courses can directly impact consumer choice. Managers should also foster a customer-oriented culture and implement training initiatives that develop staff capabilities in areas crucial to guest satisfaction.

REFERENCES

Abdelhamied, H. H. S. (2019). The impact of training activities on quality of service, customer satisfaction and behavioral intention. *Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Management*, *7*(1), 135-148.

Alshaabani, A., Hamza, M., & Rudnák, I. (2021). Well-structured training programs and employee empowerment in organizational performance. *International Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 28(3), 112-126.

Blal, I., Singal, M., & Templin, J. (2018). Airbnb's impact on hotel sales performance. *Journal of Hospitality Financial Management*, 26(3), 97-112.

Chege, J. (2020). Staff training and service delivery in traditional hospitality enterprises. *African Journal of Business Management*, 14(6), 245-258.

Del Chiappa, G., Lorenzo, A., & Melis, G. (2021). Short-term rental accommodations: A study of Airbnb market performance. *Tourism Economics*, 27(3), 446-462.

Deming, W. E. (1986). *Out of the Crisis*. MIT Press.

Dogru, T., Suess, C., & Ciftci, O. (2019). The impact of Airbnb on hotel performance metrics: A comparative analysis. *Tourism Management*, 72, 130-137.

Edike, U., & Joseph, A. (2020). Service quality dimensions in Nigerian hospitality industry: An empirical study. *Journal of African Business*, 21(2), 95-108.

EHL. (2022). Transformational trends in the hospitality industry. *Ecole Hôtelière de Lausanne Annual Report*.

Endjala, F. T. (2020). *Evaluating the impact of training and development on customer service in Namibia: the case study of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs* (Doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University).

Gichuru, A. (2018). Staff training and business performance in Kenya's hospitality sector. *Kenya Journal of Tourism Research*, 12(4), 321-340.

Gunter, D. (2018). Host qualifications and performance in Airbnb accommodations. *Journal of Urban Tourism*, 19(5), 245-261.

Guttentag, D., & Smith, S. (2017). Airbnb as a disruptive innovation: Impacts on hotels. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 23, 37-47.

Khan, A., Mustafa, Z., & Aslam, T. (2018). Training frameworks and consumer confidence in service quality. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 42(3), 122-135.

Kibebsii, M., Nchise, A., & Obie, A. (2022). Training programs and service consistency in Cameroon's hospitality sector. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 11(1), 67-89.

Kim, J., & Kim, D. (2020). Exploring loyalty mechanisms in Airbnb: Dedication and constraint perspectives. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 46(1), 87-102.

Lee, G. J. (2020). Employee training and development as an antecedent of firm customer capabilities: Longitudinal moderation by firm size and market type. *Journal of African Business*, *21*(4), 462-475.

Murage, P. (2021). Accommodation choices and training in Nairobi County. *Kenya Tourism Review*, 8(3), 177-190.

Neutjens, L. (2022). Airbnb sales growth and market dynamics. *Global Hospitality Reports*, 35(4), 45-58.

Nicod, L., Llosa, S., & Bowen, D. (2020). Customer proactive training vs customer reactive training in retail store settings: Effects on script proficiency, customer satisfaction, and sales volume. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *55*, 102069.

Oakland, J. (2014). *Total Quality Management and Operational Excellence: Text with Cases*. Routledge.

Ongoto, J. (2019). Structured training programs and customer choice in Kenyan hospitality. *East African Journal of Tourism*, 9(2), 113-126.

Petersen, K. (1999). The application of quality management theories. *Quality Progress*, 32(3), 78-83.

Roma, P., Dominici, G., & Bassi, F. (2019). The preference for traditional accommodation services over Airbnb. *Tourism Economics*, 25(6), 907-923.

Shen, J., & Tang, C. (2018). How does training improve customer service quality? The roles of transfer of training and job satisfaction. *European management journal*, *36*(6), 708-716.

Sitkin, S., Sutcliffe, K., & Schroeder, R. (1994). Distinguishing control from learning in quality management. *Academy of Management Review*, 19(3), 537-564.

Sun, J., Wang, C., & Zhu, L. (2019). Airbnb service quality: Insights from customer reviews. *Journal of Service Management*, 30(4), 567-590.

Wu, X. (2021). The role of structured training programs in service quality management. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 48, 100-110.