

## **Significance of the Environmental Conservation Strategies to Customer Satisfaction in the Golf Clubs in Nairobi City and Kiambu Counties, Kenya**

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### **Abstract**

In golf clubs' industry, the primary objective is to enhance quality of facilities, which in turn satisfy and attract customers. For the golf clubs' management to achieve customer satisfaction, they must examine and make decisions on various elements that affect customers satisfaction. Today golf clubs are experiencing customer satisfaction ratings associated with environmental risks. This study focused on establishing the significance of environmental conservation strategies to customer satisfaction. A cross-sectional descriptive survey was adopted where questionnaires, interviews, observation checklists and secondary sources provided the data. The study population comprised of captains and customers from 15 golf clubs where a sample of 288 respondents was drawn. The qualitative data was ordered, coded, then, summarized into themes while descriptive and inferential analyses were conducted on the quantitative data. Regressions analyses were employed to determine the relationships existing between study variables. The findings established that environmental conservation strategies and customer satisfaction had a statistically significant relationship ( $p=0.003<0.05$ ). Based on the analysis, the R-value was established as 0.869 denoting a high correlation between the predictors and dependent variable. A resulting R<sup>2</sup> (Square) value obtained was 0.755161, indicating that environmental conservation strategies explained 75.52% of Customer Satisfaction. The study further recommended that effective environmental conservation strategies ought to be implemented as part of customers' satisfaction goal within the golf clubs.

**Keywords:** environmental, conservation, customer, environmental, satisfaction, strategies.

### **1.0 Introduction**

According to Oliver and Westbrook (1991) customer satisfaction means consumer's ability to cognitively compare the expected performance to the actual performance of the service. Kotler (1991) postulated that customer satisfaction is usually the post-purchase services of products evaluation, with consideration of their expectations. Abdullahi and Ruzariu as cited in and by Amoah-Mensah (2010) noted that customers' satisfaction levels were also influenced by internal elements such as corporate governance. According to Veloutsou *et al.* (2015) total customer satisfaction is a dynamic process and often change after the customers utilize given services over time. Amoah-Mensah (2010) further posited that the affirmative evaluations of one's service are signals of an impressive customers' satisfaction. Recently emerging issues of litigation and claims from injured customers, increasing regulatory and environmental code compliances in

service delivery (KPMG International Cooperative, 2018). According to Reiman and Thorborg (2018), decline in the population of the experienced and financially stable golfers has been attributed to low customer satisfaction due to the growing environmental risks exposure.

Mikes and Kaplan (2014) noted that poor management practices and lack of compliance with regulations have also contributed to customers dissatisfaction. Carrow and Fletcher (2017) noted that there were unique [concerns](#) on land-use for golf clubs, destruction of wetlands and ecosystems. Signature Golf Information Centre (2018) report indicated that utilization of water for [irrigation](#) in addition to fertilizers, and pesticides usage usually exceeded the health and environmental regulations. This is a major concern for the golf courses which require development of methodologies for environmental sustainability (Koppel&Kosko,2019). Gacheru (2018) observed that for sustainability purpose, golf clubs are expected to recruit new golfers to replace the inactive customers who leave the sport due to age and health-related issues. According to the Kenya Golf Union Board (2018) report, the junior golfers' initiative had not been fully implemented by the affiliated clubs as a sustainability strategy. Based on the above issues of concern in the golf clubs, this study aimed at filling the knowledge gaps through the investigation of how the environmental conservation strategies employed impacted on customers' satisfaction among the golfers.

### *1.1 Golf Club Environmental Related Risks on Customer Satisfaction*

Carrow and Fletcher (2017) noted that golf clubs have contributed to the destruction of wetlands and the general environment by the use of fertilizers, pesticides, and irrigation as evidenced by the diminishing water resources, chemical deposits in the soil, and water that exceeds the environmental regulations. According to Penrith Golf Club (2016) environmental policy, various strategies have been developed and adopted as a measure of sustainability. Beadlow Manor Club (2018) stated that an environmental policy for golf clubs should focus on specific sustainable objectives in six critical areas: nature and wildlife conservation; energy and water resources conservation; chemical use and waste management.

### *1.2 Course Maintenance and Customer Satisfaction*

According to GoK (2013) environmental policy is a platform for the golf clubs to develop, manage and utilize resources in promoting quality, value, and ecosystems carrying capacity. According to Golf 20/20 (2017) report, golf clubs use large amounts of irrigation water and sand for their landscapes which have an impact on the operations. USA Golf Association (2018) found that about 2.08 billion gallons of water are used daily for irrigation. New irrigation technologies, drought-tolerant grass varieties, and best practices have been established and adopted to enhance sustainability, reduce cost, and improved on services (GCSAA, 2018). The existing research has highlighted the importance of businesses to operate in environmentally friendly behaviour (EFB).

Stern (2000) proposed the implementation of organizational activities in ways that reduced the undesirable effects on the natural environment. This would help the firms to actively improve environmental standards, which then create a good relationship with their stakeholders including

fulfilling their customers' expectations and satisfaction. Beadlow Manor Club (2018) noted that EFB can be used as a good measure of any firm's responsibility towards the environment. According to Penrith Golf Club (2016), corporate environmental risks responsiveness and EFB strategies help to solve serious and minor environmental issues. These exogenous risks include the external environment of the firms such as location, demographic, ecological characteristics and the population environmental attitudes.

According to Global Golf Insight (2019), numerous studies have been conducted to determine how golf clubs operate in an environmentally friendly manner. This study surveyed 3,250 club managers who comprised the target population. The study results showed that the US golf clubs considered corporate environmental responsibility (CER) as more important than the European clubs. In addition, US golf clubs were engaged in the environmentally responsible behaviour (ERB) practices more and perceived minimal barriers to the ERB implementation. Lai, Azizan, and Samad (2017) study concluded that engaging in environmentally friendly practices benefited the firms the stakeholders support which improved their performance and attraction of the potential customers. USA Golf Association (2018) noted that ERB implementation helped to differentiate a club's image from its competitors, encouraged customer satisfaction and loyalty through improved the golf course environment.

### *1.3 Course Size and Landscaping on Customer Satisfaction*

According to the Signature Golf Information Centre, (2018), there are two physical measures of golf club size, length, and the number of holes, indicate the structure of a golf course. According to Golf 20/20 (2017), the 18 holes golf courses are referred to as "regulation" courses, while 9 holes golf courses are classified as "short". These two aspects are very important in attracting players and increasing the frequency of play shown by the number of rounds played and membership size (Signature Golf, 2018). According to Beadlow Manor Club (2018), golf courses require regular grass mowing, irrigation, pest control, and sand-trap maintenance. Failure to do regular maintenance deteriorates the golf clubs' course condition leads to loss of clientele. Golf clubs with the better-maintained courses have a higher and greater demand for golfing services (University of California, 2018). However, Dick's Sporting Goods Inc (2018) observed that regular course maintenance was associated with higher expenditures and customer satisfaction especially where the realized golf clubs' revenue exceeded the operation cost. According to the University of California (2018) report on golf clubs' profile, revenues varied as per the prevailing economic conditions of their location.

Large "regulation" golf facilities (18 holes courses and above) had a higher number of patrons, charged higher membership fees than small "short" golf clubs (9 holes' courses). The summary of revenue volume by source showed unique insights into the golf clubs' performance according to the clientele base and the prevailing economic conditions (Golf 20/20 (2017). Lai, et al. (2017) observed that golf membership subscriptions decline negatively affected the clubs' services provision and consequently their survival. New golfers, millennials, and younger demographics were discouraged from golf activities by the high subscription fees and satisfaction-related issues (Global Golf Insight, 2018; Signature Golf Information Centre, 2018).

## **2.0 Method**

### *2.1 Research Design*

This study engaged the descriptive cross-sectional survey design with quantitative and qualitative approaches that explored and explained the relationship between the study variables (Douglas, & Carless, 2015). The adopted research design provided in-depth awareness of the study facts that existed between the research variables and all the measurements. According to Brother ton (2008), the design was considered for this study since it is relatively easy and quick to obtain subjective data for statistical analysis. Further to this, the survey design helped researcher to make observations of the status and facts as opposed to manipulating the study variables (Gall & Borg, 2010). In summary, this research design was selected since it allowed collection of quantitative data that was statistically tested to generate numerical findings and qualitative data for the interpretation of observations and the respondents' expressions (Mahmood, 2019).

### *2.2 Sampling Procedures*

The captains' population in the 15 golf clubs was reachable and homogenous hence census sampling technique was considered. The decision to sample the entire captains' population followed recommendations by Kothari (2004) for relatively small population to minimize the sampling error. For the customers, convenient sampling was employed as per their individual availability during this study. This sampling technique was necessary because specific vital information could only be obtained from the active golfers who frequented the golf clubs. Convenient sampling assists the researcher to obtain data from customers during their visits to an establishment (Vitiis, et al, 2014).

### *2.3 Sample Procedures and Data Collection Instruments*

A total of 288 respondents comprising of 17 golf clubs' captains and 271 customers were considered for the study. Both primary and secondary data were used by the application of semi-structured questionnaires, interview schedule, and journals with related literature. Secondary data sources included any author(s) publication work, which is/are not a part the direct participants of the study (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). The semi-structured, close and open-ended questionnaire was used to collect data from the customers on golf clubs' environment and satisfaction. This tool was preferred because it assisted to collect general information and current data in respondents' own words and views (Creswell et.al 2010) It also improves the quality of opinions and reliability (Murgan, 2015). A semi-structured interview Schedule was administered to golf club captains to obtain additional data for the triangulation purpose focusing on environmental strategies and customer satisfaction. This tool helped to gain further insight, obtain in-depth information and test responses consistency to increase reliability (Mugenda and Mugenda (2008).

*2.4 Pre-testing, validity and reliability*

Content validity was established through the pretesting in the study environment and from experts’ opinion. The selected content for the data collection tools must be correct and relevant to the variables the validity. The reliability-coefficients were determined to assist in maximizing the internal consistencies of the study variables. The overall Cronbach’s alpha coefficient (0.766) indicated that the data collection instruments were reliable to replicate similar results with their subsequent application (Sauro, 2012). The resulting study variables’ Cronbach alpha coefficients were as in table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Test for the Instruments Reliability

<b>Reliability Statistics</b>				
<b>S/No</b>	<b>Constructs</b>	<b>Cronbach’s obtained Alpha</b>	<b>Cronbach’s Alpha- For standardized Items</b>	<b>No. of Items</b>
01	Environmental Conservation Strat	0.767	0.765	4
02	Customer Satisfaction	0.795	0.787	7
	<b>Overall Reliability</b>	<b>0.786</b>	<b>0.776</b>	<b>11</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2022

**3.0 Results**

Analysis set-out to establish the relationship between environmental conservation strategies and customer satisfaction among golfers in selected golf clubs within Nairobi City and, Kiambu Counties. To begin with, this analysis determined whether the golf clubs had put in place mechanism for maintaining the golf clubs’ environment and their impacts on customer satisfaction. The study further determined the golf clubs environmental related risks, course size and landscaping impacts on Customers appeal and Satisfaction. The study findings were as indicated in **Table3.1**.

Table 3.1: Golf Clubs Course Maintenance and Customer Satisfaction

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Yes, Customer satisfaction</b>	<b>Affected No, does not affect Customer satisfaction</b>
Course Maintenance and Customer Satisfaction	<b>81.57%</b>	<b>18.43%</b>
Golf Clubs Environmental related risks on Customers appeal and Satisfaction	<b>69.23%</b>	<b>30.77%</b>
Course Size and Landscaping and Customer Satisfaction	<b>76.92%</b>	<b>23.08%</b>

From the analysis, a large proportion (81.57%) of the respondents stated that course maintenance influenced customer satisfaction. A considerable proportion of the respondents (18.43%) reported that course maintenance had no influence on customer satisfaction. From the study findings, course environment maintenance greatly impacted customer satisfaction in the selected golf clubs as shown by the respondents. Analysis was further done to determine whether environmental-related risks had any significant impacts on the golfers'/customers' satisfaction. Based on the data analysis, results established that large proportion (69.23%) of study participants stated that environmental-related risks affected their satisfaction. A proportion of the respondents (30.77%) were of the opinion that environmental-related risks had no significant effects on customer satisfaction.

Analysis further set-out to establish the relationship between Golf club's course size and landscaping on Customer Satisfaction. The study established that though courses size landscaping services were very vital among the golf clubs, majority (76.92%) of the respondents reported that they had little impact on customers/ golfers' satisfaction. A proportion (23.08%) of the respondents believed that course size and landscaping services contributed to customers' satisfaction. From these findings, it is clear that course size and landscaping had little effect on golfers' enjoyment of golf clubs' activities hence less significant.

### 3.1. Linear Regression Analysis

The aim of the study was to establish the relationship between environmental conservation strategies and customer satisfaction in the golf clubs. The objective was achieved through a linear regression analysis of the hypotheses. Formulated null ( $H_{01}$ ) and the alternative ( $H_{a1}$ ) hypotheses for the study are presented and stated as follows:

$H_{04}:-\beta_4= 0$  (There is no significant relationship between the environmental conservation strategies and the customer satisfaction in golf clubs in Nairobi City and Kiambu Counties).

$H_{a4}:-\beta_4\neq 0$  (There is a significant relationship between the environmental conservation strategies and the customer satisfaction in golf clubs in Nairobi City and Kiambu Counties).

The hypothesis was tested using regression analysis and presented in **Table 3.2**.

Table 3.2: Linear Regression Results of the Environmental conservation strategies on the overall customer satisfaction

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.545	.535		2.887	.010
	Environmental Conservation	.675	.197	.628	3.421	.003

Based on the analysis of findings, the t=statistic and calculated p-value for the predictor variable environmental conservation was, t (3.421), p-value (0.003) respectively. Calculated p-value was less than the significant level ( $p= 0.003 < 0.05$ ). Thus, null hypothesis was therefore rejected and a conclusion stated that, there was a significant relationship between environmental conservation strategies and customer satisfaction. The obtained t-statistic was positive ( $t= 3.421$ ) which

indicates a similarity in the directionality of the effect. The findings implied that the golfers were more satisfied with the clubs that had well maintained environment and had effective environmental conservation policies in place. According to the interviews, waste management has been greatly improved as a result of environmental policies as explained by golf club Captain number.

*“Our environmental policy has clearly outlined rules that govern waste disposal. Litters and other wastes have greatly reduced”.*

Table 3.3: Model Summary of Moderated Multiple Regression Analysis on Environmental Conservation Strategies as determinants of Customer Satisfaction.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	Df1	Df2	Sig. F Change
1	.869 <sup>a</sup>	.755	.752	.49534	.631	13.617	6	9	.000

a. Predictors (Independent Variables): (Constant)Environmental Conservation Strategies  
 b. Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction

Based on the analysis, the resulting R-value denoting the simple correlation value was calculated as 0.869. The R-value (0.869) obtained further indicated a high correlation degree between Environmental Conservation Strategies and Customer Satisfaction. The resulting R<sup>2</sup> (Square) value obtained was 0.755, which indicated that the independent (Predictors) variables explained 75.5% of Customer Satisfaction among Customers (golfers) in Nairobi City and Kiambu Counties. Therefore, this meant that other determinants which were not studied or covered by this research accounted for 24.5% of the satisfaction among customers at the selected golf clubs. Therefore, further research was suggested to be conducted to investigate these other determinant (31.3%) of customer satisfaction in the golf clubs.

**4.0 Discussion**

*4.1 Summary of Findings*

Findings established that all the selected golf clubs had put in place effective environmental conservation measures. The study findings further showed that a statistically significant and positive relationship between environmental conservation strategies and the customer satisfaction existed. The analysis results affirmed the findings in Golf 20/20 (2017) report which posited that golf clubs with effective environmental conservation strategies enjoyed high customer satisfaction ratings. The findings implied that the golfers were more satisfied with the clubs that had well maintained environment and had effective environmental conservation policies in place. According to Penrith Golf Club (2016) the environmental policies at the clubs

have contributed greatly to the reduction of environmental pollution. The findings further showed that the activities and operations within the clubs did not contribute to environmental pollution, which in turn helped to increase customer satisfaction. The study established that the golf courses were well maintained to increase the comfort of the golfers. Such maintenance helped to reduce complaints and increase satisfaction.

The study findings are in line with the Global Golf Insight, (2019) results which showed that improved environmental conservation measures greatly influence the golfers' satisfaction levels. This study further identified that environmental conservation strategies were key determinants of customers satisfaction among golfers in selected clubs. The study found-out that the activities for all the golf clubs covered in the study did not contribute to environmental pollution, and had environmental policies. Based on the data analysis, the study findings established that 69.23% of respondents stated environmental-related risks affected customer satisfaction. On the relationship between environmental conservation, the analysis established that environmental conservation strategies and the customer satisfaction were significantly related ( $p=0.003<0.05$ ). The implication was that golf clubs with good environmental conservation strategies had the potential to attract more customers. The study established that courses size and landscaping services were very vital among the golf clubs. This is attributed to the majority (76.92%) of the customer respondents who reported that these two elements had impact on their level of satisfaction. Further to these findings, a large proportion (81.57%) of the participants stated that course maintenance influenced customer satisfaction

#### *4.2 Conclusion and Recommendation*

Regarding environmental conservation strategies, the study concludes that good environmental conservation contributes to customer satisfaction. In this regard, the study concludes that the golf clubs have put in place effective environmental conservation policies and procedures to ensure that the customers are satisfied. The clubs have well maintained the golf courses to ensure the golfers are satisfied. This would improve the quality of the golf course and satisfaction with the usage of a well-maintained facility. This study further recommended the golf clubs' management to explore the role of corporate governance and environmental conservation strategies as means of achieving customer satisfaction. The management should ensure that the golfers in these establishments are informed of the potential risks associated with using the golf clubs' facilities. The management should further ensure that a risk management policy is in place and implemented as a means of customer satisfaction strategy. The management ought to ensure effective governance structures are adopted to enhance responsibilities of customer satisfaction. Effective environmental conservation policies and procedures need to be applied in the golf clubs to ensure that the customers are satisfied.

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