



Integrating Green-Hotel Marketing Into Entrepreneurship Curricula in Private HEIs in Uganda: A Case Study of Kampala International University and Uganda Martyrs University

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Accepted: 16th April 2026; Published: 1st May 2026

<https://doi.org/10.58653/nche.v13i2.2>

Abstract

In the era of sustainable development, higher education institutions (HEIs) are increasingly expected to foster green entrepreneurship and environmental stewardship. This study examines how private HEIs in Uganda integrate eco-hotel marketing into entrepreneurship curricula to promote practical learning and green startup development. Despite growing awareness of sustainable tourism, gaps remain in pedagogy and curriculum innovation needed to support eco-enterprise creation. The study was guided by two research questions: (i) How is eco-hotel marketing embedded within entrepreneurship courses? and (ii) What impact does this integration have on students' readiness to launch green hospitality startups? A mixed-methods case study design was employed focusing on Kampala International University and Uganda Martyrs University. Purposive sampling was used to select 20 faculty members and curriculum experts, while stratified random sampling guided the selection of 80 final-year entrepreneurship students. Data were collected through curriculum content analysis, semi-structured interviews, focus

group discussions, and structured questionnaires. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression, while qualitative data were analysed thematically. The regression results indicate that curriculum integration of eco-hotel marketing concepts, experiential pedagogical approaches, and university-industry linkages significantly and positively predict students' readiness for eco-hospitality entrepreneurship, with experiential pedagogy showing the strongest influence. Qualitative findings further reveal that although sustainability themes are present in the curriculum, practical exposure remains limited. Emerging innovations such as sustainability-focused student enterprises and project-based learning demonstrate strong potential for strengthening green entrepreneurial competencies. The study concludes that stronger integration of eco-hotel marketing within entrepreneurship education enhances students' capacity for sustainable venture creation. These findings have implications for aligning HEI curricula with Uganda's green growth agenda and SDG-driven entrepreneurship.

Keywords: *Curriculum innovation; Innovation pedagogy; Practical learning; Tourism marketing education; Sustainability*

Introduction

Sustainable development is now a key focus in global policy and academic discussion. It has changed what is expected of higher education institutions (HEIs). They are increasingly seen as drivers of innovation, social change, and care for the environment. Universities are not just providers of academic knowledge anymore. They are also responsible for fostering entrepreneurial mindsets, sustainability skills, and practical abilities needed to tackle global issues like climate change, environmental decline, and inclusive economic growth (Leal Filho et al., 2019; Hall et al., 2020). These expectations are especially relevant in sectors like tourism and hospitality, which rely heavily on natural ecosystems yet also create environmental pressures from energy use, waste, and land usage.

In Uganda, tourism is vital for national development. It greatly contributes to job creation, foreign exchange earnings, and regional growth. However, the fast-paced growth of tourism has raised concerns

about environmental sustainability, uneven distribution of tourism benefits, and a lack of environmentally friendly practices in hospitality businesses. National policies, including the Tourism Sector Development Plan (2020-2025) and the Uganda Green Growth Development Strategy (2017-2030), stress sustainable tourism, eco-friendly entrepreneurship, and private sector innovation as key ways to achieve long-term economic resilience and inclusive growth (Uganda Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife & Antiquities, 2020; UNDP, 2021). These frameworks highlight the need for a skilled workforce that can incorporate sustainability into tourism business models and entrepreneurial initiatives (Hall et al., 2020; Ratten & Jones, 2021).

In this context, eco-hotel marketing has become a crucial concept for promoting sustainable tourism. Eco-hotel marketing involves the strategic communication and promotion of environmentally friendly hospitality practices, such as energy efficiency, waste reduction, water conservation, biodiversity protection, and community involvement. These practices are core to a hotel's value proposition. Unlike traditional hospitality marketing, eco-hotel marketing highlights sustainability features as competitive advantages that attract environmentally conscious travelers. Research shows that eco-hotel marketing can build consumer trust, enhance brand credibility, and increase the likelihood of choosing environmentally responsible hotels. This improves market competitiveness and environmental outcomes (Han et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2022; Martínez-Pérez et al., 2021). As tourists become more environmentally aware, hotels that clearly communicate their sustainability efforts can better attract and keep eco-conscious customers.

Alongside developments in tourism, entrepreneurship education has significantly changed. Worldwide, it has shifted from purely profit-focused models to broader frameworks that include sustainability, innovation, and social impact. Modern approaches focus on preparing students to spot opportunities that tackle environmental and societal challenges while generating economic value (Lans et al., 2018; Ratten & Jones, 2021). Studies find that sustainability-focused entrepreneurship education can boost students' confidence in entrepreneurship, their ability to identify opportunities, and their intentions to create environmentally responsible businesses in areas like renewable energy,

sustainable agriculture, and eco-tourism (Soomro et al., 2020). However, the move towards sustainability in entrepreneurship education doesn't always mean specialized fields like eco-hotel marketing are consistently included in curricula.

Despite growing awareness of sustainability in entrepreneurship education, the integration of specialized topics like eco-hotel marketing can be inconsistent, especially in developing regions. In Sub-Saharan Africa, entrepreneurship education often focuses more on business planning, financial management, and growth strategies while giving limited attention to innovation driven by sustainability and specific applications in eco-hospitality (Adelekan & Jimoh, 2021). As a result, many graduates do not have the necessary skills to create, market, and manage environmentally responsible hospitality businesses.

In Uganda, private higher education institutions have expanded entrepreneurship programs to support national goals for employment and business development. Schools like Kampala International University and Uganda Martyrs University now offer courses aimed at promoting self-employment and business creation among graduates. However, concerns persist about how well these entrepreneurship programs include sustainability-oriented innovation and hands-on learning opportunities for green entrepreneurship. Although sustainability topics are often part of the curricula, research shows they are usually taught theoretically, lacking practical experiences such as internships, partnerships with industry, or student-led enterprises (Byaruhanga & Basheka, 2022).

Hands-on learning and cooperation between universities and industry partners are seen as essential for bridging the gap between theory and entrepreneurial practice. In fields such as eco-hotel marketing, firsthand exposure to real hospitality situations is vital for building skills in green branding, customer relations, regulatory compliance, and sustainable operation management. However, many Ugandan HEIs face structural challenges, including limited funding, weak ties with industry, and rigid curriculum designs that block the use of practical teaching approaches and hinder students' ability to convert sustainability knowledge into successful business ventures.

Even with the rising focus on sustainable tourism and growing entrepreneurship education in Uganda, there is still a lack of concrete evidence about how eco-hotel marketing is included in entrepreneurship programs at higher education institutions. Additionally, little is known about whether this curricular integration helps students get ready to start environmentally responsible hospitality businesses. Most existing studies focus on tourism performance, sustainability practices in hotels, or general entrepreneurship education, leaving a significant gap about how future entrepreneurs are prepared to plan, market, and manage eco-hospitality businesses.

This study aims to fill that gap by looking at how eco-hotel marketing is integrated into entrepreneurship programs at selected private higher education institutions in Uganda. It will also assess whether this integration helps students prepare for sustainable hospitality entrepreneurship. Specifically, the study will examine how curriculum integration, teaching methods, and university-industry connections influence students' readiness to start eco-hospitality ventures. It will focus on Kampala International University and Uganda Martyrs University as case studies within the evolving landscape of higher education and tourism in Uganda.

By positioning eco-hotel marketing as an innovative approach that links sustainability theory to entrepreneurial practice, this study adds to the literature on sustainable entrepreneurship education in developing countries. The findings will provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and industry partners who want to align entrepreneurship education with Uganda's green growth goals and broader sustainable development objectives. In doing so, the study emphasizes the potential of higher education institutions to nurture a new generation of environmentally responsible hospitality entrepreneurs.

Theoretical and Literature Review

Theoretical Review

This study is based on Experiential Learning Theory (ELT). Recent research highlights its significance in entrepreneurship and

sustainability education. Current applications of ELT suggest that entrepreneurial skills develop best through active experimentation, reflective practice, and real-world problem solving, rather than through passive knowledge acquisition (Fayolle & Verzat, 2019; Ratten & Jones, 2021). In entrepreneurship education, hands-on methods like project-based learning, internships, and student-led enterprises help learners understand sustainability concepts and use them in complex business settings, such as eco-hotel marketing and sustainable tourism. This viewpoint supports the study's focus on designing curricula and teaching methods that prepare students for green entrepreneurship.

The study also references the Triple Helix Model of Innovation. This model views innovation as the result of interactions among universities, industry, and government (Etzkowitz & Zhou, 2017). In sustainability-focused entrepreneurship, the Triple Helix framework highlights the role of higher education institutions in connecting curricula with industry practices and policy priorities, particularly in tourism and hospitality. In eco-hotel marketing, the model shows how university-industry collaboration and policy support improve experiential learning, knowledge sharing, and the commercialization of green business ideas.

Finally, the research incorporates modern interpretations of the Resource-Based View (RBV). This view emphasizes intangible assets like sustainability knowledge, green marketing skills, and innovation abilities as sources of competitive advantage (Liu et al., 2020). When applied to entrepreneurship education, RBV suggests that including eco-hotel marketing in curricula gives students unique sustainability-focused skills that improve their confidence and readiness for starting ventures.

Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), the Triple Helix Model of Innovation, and the Resource-Based View (RBV) together provide a helpful foundation for exploring how eco-hotel marketing fits into entrepreneurship education. ELT explains that hands-on teaching methods, like project-based learning, internships, and student-led businesses, help students gain entrepreneurial skills through active practice and reflection. The Triple Helix Model focuses on the environment where this learning takes place. It stresses the need for collaboration among universities, businesses, and government

bodies to support entrepreneurship education aimed at sustainability. Meanwhile, the Resource-Based View describes how the knowledge, skills, and capabilities gained from this education, especially related to sustainability and eco-hotel marketing, can turn into valuable resources. These resources help students become more prepared to spot and seize green business opportunities. When these theories are combined, they create a clear framework for understanding how curriculum integration, hands-on teaching, and partnerships between universities and industries affect students' readiness for eco-hospitality entrepreneurship. This framework serves as a strong foundation for examining how higher education institutions can develop entrepreneurship programs that prepare graduates for sustainable business creation in the hospitality industry.

Literature Review

Eco-Hotel Marketing and Sustainable Tourism

Eco-hotel marketing has become an important way to promote sustainable tourism and responsible hospitality practices. Unlike traditional hospitality marketing, eco-hotel marketing focuses on sustainability aspects, such as energy efficiency, waste reduction, water conservation, biodiversity protection, and community involvement. These elements are key parts of a hotel's appeal (Jones et al., 2016; Han et al., 2020). These practices improve environmental performance and provide competitive advantages for hotels targeting eco-conscious travelers.

Research shows that eco-hotel marketing has a positive effect on tourists' attitudes, trust, and intentions. This includes their willingness to pay higher prices and revisit sustainable destinations (Rahman & Reynolds, 2019; Han et al., 2020). Eco-certification programs, sustainability reports, and green branding boost a destination's competitiveness by enhancing credibility and showcasing environmental responsibility (World Tourism Organization, 2018).

In developing economies, eco-hotel marketing helps promote inclusive tourism by encouraging local sourcing, preserving cultural heritage, and involving communities (Su et al., 2022). However, successfully implementing eco-hotel marketing relies on managerial

skills, marketing knowledge, and entrepreneurial abilities, which are often limited in many developing areas. In Africa, the uptake of eco-hotel marketing is often held back by structural problems, such as low digital marketing capacity, weak enforcement of environmental regulations, and limited consumer awareness of green hospitality options (Kihima, 2020; Byaruhanga & Basheka, 2022). These challenges underline the need to improve skills and knowledge in sustainability through higher education.

Higher education institutions play a significant role in preparing future entrepreneurs who can carry out eco-hotel marketing strategies. Including sustainability-focused marketing skills in entrepreneurship education can provide students with insights into green branding, market positioning, and sustainable tourism business models (Hesselbarth & Schaltegger, 2014; Lans et al., 2018). However, current studies suggest that eco-hotel marketing is often only briefly covered in entrepreneurship programs, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, where sustainability topics are usually seen as side issues rather than central parts of entrepreneurial training (Adelekan & Jimoh, 2021). As a result, students may grasp sustainable tourism concepts but may not acquire the practical marketing and entrepreneurial skills needed to launch eco-hospitality businesses.

Entrepreneurship Education and Sustainability

Entrepreneurship education has increasingly moved beyond traditional profit-focused models to include sustainability, social responsibility, and long-term value creation. Universities are now expected to provide students with skills that help them tackle complex environmental and social challenges while creating economic opportunities (UNESCO, 2021).

Research shows that adding sustainability to entrepreneurship education improves students' confidence in their entrepreneurial abilities, their ability to recognize opportunities, and their desire to pursue green business initiatives (Lans et al., 2018; Soomro et al., 2020). In sectors like tourism and hospitality, sustainability-focused entrepreneurship education helps students create business models that blend environmental care with market innovation (Hall et al., 2020).

Despite global advancements, the incorporation of sustainability into entrepreneurship education is still inconsistent, especially in many developing areas. In Sub-Saharan Africa, entrepreneurship programs often stress traditional business planning and financial management, with little focus on ecological innovation and sustainable business development (Adelekan & Jimoh, 2021). As a result, sustainability concepts are frequently seen as theoretical topics rather than practical entrepreneurial skills.

In Uganda, this issue is particularly worrying given the country's commitment to sustainable tourism and green economic transformation. While national policies like the Uganda Green Growth Development Strategy promote environmentally responsible entrepreneurship, their application in higher education courses is still limited (UNDP, 2021). Previous studies show that entrepreneurship programs often lack specific training in green entrepreneurship and sustainable tourism innovation, restricting graduates' ability to build environmentally responsible businesses (Byaruhanga & Basheka, 2022).

Pedagogical Innovations and Experiential Learning

Pedagogical innovation is now a key focus in modern entrepreneurship education, especially regarding sustainability-oriented learning outcomes. Traditional lectures can effectively convey conceptual knowledge, but they are often criticized for their limited ability to develop essential entrepreneurial skills like opportunity recognition, creativity, problem-solving, and sustainable decision-making (Fayolle & Verzat, 2019). Consequently, scholars increasingly promote experiential learning approaches that immerse students in real-world entrepreneurial situations, allowing them to apply theoretical concepts in practice.

Experiential learning methods, based on Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, focus on learning through cycles of concrete experiences, reflective observation, conceptual understanding, and active experimentation. In entrepreneurship education, these methods often include project-based learning, problem-based learning, business simulations, internships, field visits, and student-led enterprises (Johansen, 2018; Ratten & Jones, 2021). Research shows that these experiential approaches boost entrepreneurial self-efficacy, improve

opportunity recognition, and enhance the ability to turn sustainability ideas into viable business models.

In eco-hotel marketing and sustainable tourism, experiential learning is especially beneficial because it helps students observe and engage with sustainability practices in real hospitality settings. Activities such as sustainability audits, eco-marketing campaigns, and consulting projects with hospitality businesses give students hands-on experience with green branding strategies, stakeholder engagement, environmental certification systems, and responsible tourism operations (Hesselbarth & Schaltegger, 2014). These opportunities help students move from abstract sustainability principles to practical entrepreneurial solutions that address market and environmental challenges.

Yet, the use of experiential learning methods remains inconsistent in many developing regions. Universities in Sub-Saharan Africa often face structural issues like limited funding, rigid curricula, and inadequate institutional support for applied entrepreneurship education (Nhamo & Mjimba, 2020). In Uganda, similar challenges hinder the implementation of internships, field-based learning, and sustainability-focused enterprise projects within entrepreneurship programs (Byaruhanga & Basheka, 2022). As a result, students generally gain theoretical knowledge of sustainability concepts but lack chances to apply these ideas in entrepreneurial contexts.

Enhancing experiential learning methods is therefore a crucial strategy to improve sustainability-oriented entrepreneurship education. Adding project-based learning, industry-linked assignments, and student-run green enterprises to entrepreneurship curricula can build students' practical skills and prepare them to create sustainable hospitality ventures. In eco-hotel marketing, experiential learning helps students grasp how environmental values can become marketable business opportunities, closing the gap between sustainability theory and entrepreneurial action.

University-Industry Partnerships in Green Entrepreneurship

University-industry partnerships are becoming increasingly important for improving entrepreneurship education and supporting innovation-

driven economic development. In the area of green entrepreneurship, these collaborations help with knowledge exchange, resource sharing, and hands-on learning that links academic insights with industry practices (Guerrero et al., 2021). By partnering with industry, universities can keep entrepreneurship programs aligned with changing market needs, technological advances, and sustainability goals.

In sustainability-focused entrepreneurship education, partnerships with industry, including eco-hotels, tourism businesses, certification bodies, and destination management organizations, give students chances to take part in internships, mentorships, consulting projects, and innovation incubators (OECD, 2019; Xie et al., 2021). These collaborations allow students to experience green business models, sustainability certification systems, eco-branding techniques, and environmentally friendly practices in the hospitality field.

Evidence from both developed and emerging economies shows that strong university-industry partnerships improve hands-on learning and entrepreneurial success. In various countries, collaborations between universities and hospitality businesses have led to the creation of sustainability-driven innovation hubs and tourism incubators that support eco-tourism and green hospitality startups (Xie et al., 2021). Such initiatives allow students to test business ideas, meet industry professionals, and turn sustainability knowledge into viable businesses.

Despite these successes, university-industry collaboration in green entrepreneurship is still limited in many African regions. Structural issues like weak innovation systems, limited policy support, and inadequate funding often hinder sustained partnerships between universities and industry players (World Bank, 2020). In many instances, collaborations are informal or short-term, primarily focused on student internships rather than deeper cooperation such as joint curriculum design, co-supervised research, or collaborative innovation projects.

In Uganda, university-industry partnerships in the tourism and hospitality sector are still quite underdeveloped. Eco-hotels and tourism businesses usually do not participate in curriculum development, joint research efforts, or structured hands-on learning programs in entrepreneurship education (Byaruhanga & Basheka, 2022). As a result,

students often lack real-world exposure to eco-hotel marketing practices, sustainability certification procedures, and green hospitality operations. This absence of institutional collaboration contributes to the ongoing gap between theoretical entrepreneurship education and practical sustainability-focused business development.

Strengthening university-industry partnerships is crucial for advancing green entrepreneurship education in Uganda. Formal collaborations between universities and hospitality businesses can create better hands-on learning opportunities, enhance curriculum relevance, and promote the development of sustainability-oriented entrepreneurial skills. In eco-hotel marketing education, such partnerships can facilitate practical training, innovation-driven learning, and the commercialization of environmentally responsible hospitality ventures.

Methodology

This study used a mixed-methods case study design to gather both quantitative and qualitative insights about how eco-hotel marketing is integrated into entrepreneurship programs at private higher education institutions in Uganda. The mixed-methods approach allowed us to confirm findings from various data sources, increasing the study's reliability and validity. By analyzing curricula, conducting qualitative interviews, and surveying students, we gained a complete view of how eco-hotel marketing is included in entrepreneurship education and how this inclusion affects students' readiness for green entrepreneurship.

The study took place in two private higher education institutions in Uganda: Kampala International University (KIU) and Uganda Martyrs University (UMU). These institutions were chosen because they have strong entrepreneurship programs and show commitment to sustainability and tourism-related education. Additionally, both universities attract students from different academic and regional backgrounds and have started adding sustainability themes to their curricula. This selection provided a relevant context for exploring how eco-hotel marketing is integrated into entrepreneurship education in Uganda's private higher education sector.

The study focused on faculty members, curriculum developers, and final-year entrepreneurship students at the selected institutions. Two groups of participants were sampled to gather both instructional and student viewpoints about the integration of eco-hotel marketing into entrepreneurship education.

First, faculty members and curriculum experts involved in designing and delivering entrepreneurship programs were chosen through purposive sampling. In total, 20 faculty participants were included because they were directly engaged in curriculum development, teaching, or program coordination. While this number may seem large for qualitative interviews, it ensured diverse representation from different departments, course specializations, and leadership roles at both universities. This diversity helped the study capture various insights into curriculum development processes and teaching practices focused on sustainability.

Second, final-year entrepreneurship students were selected using stratified random sampling to ensure representation based on gender, academic performance, and specializations within entrepreneurship programs. A total of 80 students took part in the survey. The larger sample size was necessary to allow for statistical analysis, particularly in estimating the regression model that examined factors influencing students' readiness for eco-hospitality entrepreneurship.

A multi-method data collection strategy was used to explore different aspects of eco-hotel marketing integration in entrepreneurship education.

First, Curriculum Content Analysis (CCA) was performed through a systematic review of entrepreneurship course syllabi, outlines, and instructional materials from the selected universities. This analysis aimed to determine the extent to which eco-hotel marketing and sustainability themes were included in entrepreneurship courses. Topics examined included sustainable tourism principles, green marketing strategies, eco-certification systems, and community-based tourism models. This method is commonly used in education research to evaluate specific themes within academic curricula.

Second, semi-structured interviews were held with faculty members and curriculum developers to discuss how eco-hotel marketing concepts are integrated into teaching, the methods used, and the challenges that institutions face regarding sustainability-oriented entrepreneurship education.

Third, focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with final-year entrepreneurship students to gather their thoughts on curriculum exposure, hands-on learning opportunities, and their perceived readiness for eco-hospitality entrepreneurship.

Finally, structured questionnaires were given to the student sample to collect quantitative data on their exposure to eco-hotel marketing concepts, teaching experiences, entrepreneurial self-confidence, and readiness to start sustainability-focused hospitality ventures.

Quantitative data collected from student questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and mean scores summarized patterns in curriculum exposure, teaching methods, and indicators of student readiness.

Inferential statistical analysis was conducted to examine relationships among key variables. Independent-sample t-tests compared perceptions between student groups, while Pearson correlation analysis assessed connections among curriculum integration, teaching exposure, and entrepreneurial readiness indicators.

Qualitative data from interviews, focus group discussions, and curriculum analysis were analyzed through thematic analysis. A coding framework was developed based on the research questions while allowing new themes to emerge during analysis. NVivo software helped organize and code the data. The reliability of qualitative interpretation was enhanced through peer reviews and ongoing comparison of coded themes.

To determine whether curriculum integration and teaching practices influence students' readiness for eco-hospitality entrepreneurship, the study used multiple linear regression analysis. Based on the theoretical framework and literature review, the study tested several hypotheses.

H1: Curriculum integration of eco-hotel marketing concepts positively predicts students' readiness for eco-hospitality entrepreneurship.

H2: Experiential pedagogical approaches positively predict students' readiness for eco-hospitality entrepreneurship.

H3: Institutional-industry linkages positively predict students' readiness for eco-hospitality entrepreneurship.

The model is specified as follows:

Where:

- represents students' readiness for eco-hospitality entrepreneurship, operationalized through:
 - entrepreneurial self-efficacy,
 - interest in green ventures, and
 - perceived market opportunities
- denotes curriculum integration of eco-hotel marketing concepts
- denotes pedagogical approaches, including lectures, case studies, project-based learning, internships, and student-led enterprises
- denotes institutional-industry linkages, such as internships, mentorship, and partnerships with eco-hotels or tourism enterprises is the intercept term
- are the regression coefficients associated with each predictor variable
- is the error term, capturing unobserved influences on students' readiness

The estimated coefficients correspond directly to the predictors presented in Table 4. Specifically:

- captures the effect of curriculum integration
- captures the effect of pedagogical approaches
- captures the effect of institutional-industry linkages on students' readiness for eco-hospitality entrepreneurship.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. Participation in the study was voluntary, and respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. All data were securely stored and used only for academic research. Ethical approval for the study was granted by the relevant institutional research ethics committees.

Results/ Findings

Curriculum Coverage of Eco-Hotel Marketing Themes

To examine how eco-hotel marketing concepts are embedded within entrepreneurship curricula, a curriculum content analysis was conducted using course syllabi and instructional materials from the two universities. Student survey responses were also used to assess perceived curriculum exposure.

Table 1 presents descriptive results based on students' perceptions of curriculum coverage.

Table 1: Curriculum Coverage of Eco-Hotel Marketing Themes

(Unit of inquiry: student respondents, n = 80)

Eco-Hotel Marketing Theme	Present in Curriculum (%)	Extent of Practical Application
Sustainable Tourism Principles	65%	Moderate- theory-focused with limited field activities
Eco-Certification and Standards	50%	Low- covered in lectures, minimal hands-on exposure
Green Marketing Strategies	60%	Moderate- case studies and group projects used
Community-Based Tourism Models	55%	Low- occasional guest lectures, rare field visits
Digital Branding for Eco-Hotels	45%	Low- theory-based, minimal applied learning

These descriptive results indicate that sustainability-related content is present within entrepreneurship curricula, although its application remains largely theoretical. Sustainable tourism principles (65%) appear

most frequently, reflecting the emphasis on foundational sustainability knowledge within the curriculum.

However, practical elements such as eco-certification processes, digital marketing tools, and experiential field exposure remain limited. Only 45% of students reported exposure to digital branding practices relevant to eco-hospitality businesses. This suggests a clear theory–practice gap in eco-hotel marketing education, where conceptual understanding is not sufficiently supported by applied training.

Qualitative findings reinforce this observation. Several faculty members noted that eco-hotel marketing is often introduced as a sub-topic within broader tourism or marketing courses rather than as a specialized module. One interview participant explained:

“Eco-hotel marketing is discussed mostly in theory. Students rarely engage with real hospitality businesses or sustainability certification processes.”

Pedagogical Methods Used in Teaching Eco-Hotel Marketing

Students were also asked to evaluate the frequency and effectiveness of teaching methods used to deliver eco-hotel marketing content.

Table 2: Pedagogical Methods Used in Teaching Eco-Hotel Marketing

(Unit of inquiry: student respondents, n= 80)

Pedagogical Approach	Usage Frequency (%)	Effectiveness Rating (1-5)
Lectures	72%	3.0
Case Studies	48%	3.5
Project-Based Learning	35%	4.2
Student-Run Green Enterprises	20%	4.5
Field Visits / Internships	15%	4.8

The results reveal that lecture-based instruction dominates teaching approaches, with 72% of students indicating that lectures are the most commonly used method. However, lectures received only moderate

effectiveness ratings ($M= 3.0$), suggesting limited engagement in developing entrepreneurial competencies.

In contrast, experiential learning methods such as project-based learning, student-run enterprises, and internships were rated significantly higher in effectiveness ($M= 4.2-4.8$) despite their relatively low usage frequency.

Focus group discussions with students further emphasized this point. Many participants indicated that experiential activities such as field visits or sustainability projects helped them better understand how eco-hotel marketing works in real-world settings. One student remarked: “When we visited a hospitality facility practicing eco-tourism, it helped us understand how sustainability marketing actually works.”

These findings highlight the importance of experiential pedagogical approaches in entrepreneurship education and reinforce the relevance of Experiential Learning Theory, which emphasizes learning through practical engagement and reflection.

Student Readiness and Motivation for Eco-Hospitality Entrepreneurship

Students’ readiness for eco-hospitality entrepreneurship was measured using indicators such as entrepreneurial self-efficacy, interest in green ventures, perceived market opportunities, and conceptual understanding of eco-hotel marketing.

Table 3: Student Readiness Indicators
(Unit of inquiry: student respondents, $n= 80$)

Indicator	Mean Score (out of 5)	% Above 3.5
Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy	4.1	68%
Interest in Starting Green Hospitality Venture	4.3	72%
Perceived Market Opportunities	3.9	65%
Understanding of Eco-Hotel Marketing Concepts	3.7	60%

The results indicate generally strong entrepreneurial motivation among students. Interest in starting green hospitality ventures recorded the highest score ($M= 4.3$), suggesting strong awareness of opportunities within the sustainable tourism sector.

Entrepreneurial self-efficacy was also relatively high ($M= 4.1$), indicating that many students feel confident in their ability to develop sustainable hospitality enterprises. However, conceptual understanding of eco-hotel marketing scored lower ($M= 3.7$), revealing knowledge gaps that may hinder practical entrepreneurial readiness.

Focus group participants similarly expressed enthusiasm for sustainable hospitality ventures but emphasized the need for stronger practical training and mentorship.

Inferential Analysis

To examine relationships between curriculum integration, pedagogy, and student readiness, inferential statistical tests were conducted.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships between experiential pedagogy, curriculum exposure, and entrepreneurial readiness.

Variable	Readiness for Eco-Entrepreneurship
Curriculum Integration	$r= 0.41, p < .01$
Experiential Pedagogy	$r= 0.46, p < .01$
Industry Linkages	$r= 0.38, p < .05$

These results suggest that students who experienced stronger curriculum exposure and experiential learning reported higher readiness to start eco-hospitality ventures.

Multiple Linear Regression Results

A multiple linear regression model was estimated to determine whether curriculum integration, pedagogical approaches, and industry linkages significantly predict student readiness for eco-hotel entrepreneurship.

Table 4: Regression Results

Predictor	Beta (β)	p-value
Curriculum Integration	0.29	< .05
Experiential Pedagogy	0.34	< .01
Industry Linkages	0.22	< .05

The regression model explains 42% of the variance in student readiness ($R^2 = 0.42$).

Experiential pedagogy emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.34$, $p < .01$), followed by curriculum integration ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < .05$). Institutional–industry linkages also had a significant positive influence ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < .05$).

These findings confirm that practical exposure and curriculum design significantly influence students' preparedness for green hospitality entrepreneurship.

Key Empirical Insight

Overall, the results indicate that while eco-hotel marketing is moderately integrated into entrepreneurship curricula, experiential teaching methods and industry partnerships play a more significant role in shaping students' readiness for sustainable venture creation.

Conclusion/Implications/Recommendations

Conclusions

This study provides clear evidence about how integrating eco-hotel marketing into entrepreneurship education can prepare students for sustainable hospitality entrepreneurship in Uganda. Through a mixed-methods case study of Kampala International University and Uganda Martyrs University, the research shows that while sustainability concepts are somewhat included in entrepreneurship courses, their practical application is still lacking. The findings highlight a significant gap between students' theoretical knowledge of eco-hotel marketing and the hands-on learning experiences needed to develop practical entrepreneurial skills.

The quantitative results indicate that students have a strong motivation to pursue sustainable hospitality ventures. This is reflected in their high levels of entrepreneurial self-confidence ($M = 4.1$) and interest

in starting green hospitality businesses ($M= 4.3$). However, their lower scores in understanding eco-hotel marketing concepts ($M= 3.7$) reveal a lack of applied knowledge. Regression analysis shows that hands-on teaching approaches and integration of the curriculum significantly influence students' readiness for eco-hospitality entrepreneurship. Specifically, methods like project-based learning and field experiences have the most significant impact on entrepreneurial readiness. These findings confirm that simply integrating the curriculum is not enough; practical learning environments are essential for students to apply sustainability concepts in real-life situations.

From an academic viewpoint, this study adds to the growing literature on sustainable entrepreneurship education. It shows how eco-hotel marketing can create a practical link between sustainability theory and entrepreneurial practice in developing economies. By incorporating ideas from Experiential Learning Theory, the Triple Helix Model, and the Resource-Based View, the study illustrates that effective green entrepreneurship education needs to align curriculum design, hands-on teaching, and partnerships between universities and industries. This research enhances understanding of how sustainability-related marketing knowledge can translate into entrepreneurial skills in higher education.

Despite these contributions, some limitations must be recognized. First, the study focused on two private higher education institutions, which may limit how applicable the findings are to other universities in Uganda or Sub-Saharan Africa. Second, the cross-sectional design captures student views at one point in time, without tracking whether students go on to establish eco-hospitality ventures after graduation. Third, the relatively small sample size limits the ability to examine differences between institutions across a wider range of universities.

Future research could build on this work by conducting long-term studies that follow graduates over time. This could help examine how sustainability-focused entrepreneurship education impacts the creation of ventures in the hospitality sector. Comparative studies between public and private universities could also shed light on differences in curriculum innovation and industry collaboration. Furthermore,

additional research could look into how incubation programs, green innovation hubs, and policy incentives affect the commercialization of eco-hotel entrepreneurship initiatives from higher education institutions.

Overall, this study shows that integrating eco-hotel marketing into entrepreneurship education has great potential for promoting sustainable tourism and green business creation in Uganda. However, reaching this potential requires a clear move toward hands-on learning models, stronger university-industry partnerships, and support systems that help turn sustainability knowledge into practical entrepreneurial skills.

Implications/Recommendations

The results of this study are important for universities, policymakers, and the hospitality sector in Uganda. These insights come from the findings about how to integrate the curriculum, teaching methods, and student preparedness for eco-hospitality entrepreneurship.

First, the results indicate that hands-on teaching methods lead to much better learning outcomes compared to traditional lectures. While lectures are the most common teaching method, used 72% of the time, they received the lowest effectiveness score ($M= 3.0$). On the other hand, hands-on approaches like project-based learning ($M= 4.2$), student-run green businesses ($M= 4.5$), and field visits or internships ($M = 4.8$) were rated significantly more effective by students. This suggests that universities should shift some class time toward hands-on and field-based experiences. Courses in entrepreneurship that focus on eco-hotel marketing should incorporate structured project work, consultancy projects linked to the industry, and placements at eco-hotels or sustainable tourism ventures. Expanding these hands-on learning opportunities would enable students to apply sustainability concepts in real business settings and greatly improve their readiness for entrepreneurship.

Second, the findings show that eco-hotel marketing concepts are somewhat included in the curriculum but largely remain theoretical. For instance, sustainable tourism principles are found in about 65% of course content, while digital branding for eco-hotels is included in just 45% of course materials and is mostly taught through lectures rather than applied learning. This points to a need for more intentional integration

of eco-hotel marketing as a focused entrepreneurship topic instead of a minor issue. Universities should introduce dedicated modules on eco-hotel marketing that cover areas like sustainability certification, digital marketing for eco-tourism, and green brand positioning. Including these subjects in entrepreneurship courses would enhance students' understanding and better prepare them to create sustainable hospitality businesses.

Third, the study shows that students are highly motivated about sustainable entrepreneurship, as shown by their strong levels of entrepreneurial self-confidence ($M= 4.1$) and interest in starting green hospitality businesses ($M= 4.3$). However, only 60% of students said they had a strong grasp of eco-hotel marketing concepts. This suggests that although there is motivation, there are still gaps in knowledge. Universities should invest in programs that support entrepreneurship and mentorship focused on sustainable tourism. Setting up green business incubators, innovation hubs for sustainability, and mentorship programs with eco-hospitality entrepreneurs could help turn students' entrepreneurial interest into real business startups.

Fourth, the findings reveal weak connections between universities and industry in eco-hospitality entrepreneurship training, limiting chances for internships, practical experience, and mentorship. Given that field visits and internships received high effectiveness ratings ($M= 4.8$), universities should work more closely with eco-hotels, tourism operators, sustainability certification groups, and destination management organizations. These partnerships could offer structured internships, guest lectures led by industry professionals, collaborative student projects, and joint research focused on sustainable tourism innovations. Strengthening these connections would help close the ongoing gap between theory and practice in entrepreneurship education.

Finally, this study has significant implications for national policies and regulations that govern higher education and sustainable tourism development. The results show a gap between Uganda's Green Growth Development Strategy and the effective delivery of sustainability-focused entrepreneurship education. Policymakers and regulatory bodies in higher education should create curriculum standards and incentive programs that promote training in sustainability-oriented

entrepreneurship. Policy measures might include funding for hands-on learning programs, incentives for partnerships between universities and industries, and the creation of platforms for innovation in sustainability within higher education.

In summary, the study suggests that enhancing the integration of eco-hotel marketing into entrepreneurship education requires a comprehensive approach involving curriculum changes, hands-on teaching methods, and stronger industry connections. By adopting these strategies, universities can better prepare graduates with the knowledge, skills, and experience needed to create eco-hospitality enterprises and support Uganda's sustainable tourism development.

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