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Green Product Development, Green Pricing and Performance of Ecotourism Destinations in Selected National Parks and Reserves in Kenya

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ABSTRACT :

This article examines the effect of green product development and green pricing on the performance of ecotourism destinations in selected national parks and reserves in Kenya. The article is extracted from a broader study on green marketing practices and performance of ecotourism destinations in Kenya. Specifically, it addresses two objectives: to evaluate the effect of green product development on performance and to examine the effect of green pricing on performance. The study was anchored on the Natural Resource-Based View and supported by Triple Bottom Line theory and Signaling Theory. A descriptive cross-sectional survey design was adopted. The target population comprised 360 destination management personnel, tourism marketing professionals and tourism enterprise managers in Maasai Mara National Reserve, Amboseli National Park, Tsavo East National Park, Lake Nakuru National Park and Samburu National Reserve. A sample of 154 respondents was selected through stratified sampling, combining a census of 80 management and marketing personnel with random selection of 74 enterprise managers. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, and 144 usable responses were obtained, representing a response rate of 93.5%. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression in SPSS version 31. The findings showed that green product development had a strong positive relationship with destination performance ($r = .641$, $p < .001$) and the strongest positive regression effect ($\beta = .472$, $p < .001$). Green pricing had a weak but significant positive relationship with performance ($r = .254$, $p = .002$) and a small but significant regression effect ($\beta = .234$, $p = .045$). The article concludes that tangible green product practices are more strongly associated with performance than pricing practices, although conservation-linked pricing still contributes positively. The study recommends strengthening structured biodiversity programmes, environmentally friendly accommodation standards, transparent conservation fee reporting and pricing mechanisms that clearly link visitor payments to conservation and community benefits.

Keywords: *ecotourism; green product development; green pricing; protected areas; destination performance; Kenya*

1. Introduction

Tourism has increasingly become linked to environmental sustainability because destinations depend on natural and cultural resources that can be weakened by unmanaged tourism growth. Over the last two decades, concern about climate change, biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation has moved sustainability from the margins of tourism management to its centre (United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2024). Travel and tourism contribute about 10% of global gross domestic product and support roughly one in ten jobs worldwide, but the sector also has a large environmental footprint (World Travel and Tourism Council [WTTC], 2024). This has increased pressure on nature-based destinations to design, price and manage tourism products in ways that protect the resources on which they depend.

Ecotourism is particularly important in this context because it is based on responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and benefits local people (The International Ecotourism Society [TIES], 2023). For ecotourism destinations, performance cannot be judged only by visitor numbers or revenue. It must also consider visitor satisfaction, environmental outcomes and benefits to neighbouring communities. This aligns with the Triple Bottom Line perspective, which views performance through economic, environmental and social outcomes (Elkington, 1997; Stoddard et al., 2012).

Kenya's national parks and reserves are among the country's most valuable natural and economic assets. Tourism is a major source of foreign exchange for Kenya, with international arrivals increasing from 2,089,259 in 2023 to 2,394,376 in 2024, while tourism earnings rose from KSh 377.49 billion to KSh 452.20 billion over the same period (Tourism Research Institute [TRI], 2025). However, national growth masks uneven performance across protected areas. Lake Nakuru National Park received 293,107 visitors and Amboseli National Park received 266,102 visitors in 2024, placing both among the most visited parks in Kenya (Kinyanjui, 2025). In contrast, visitor numbers at Maasai Mara National Reserve declined after Narok County

increased entry fees, with some visitors shifting to Amboseli and destinations in Tanzania (Ondieki, 2026). These variations raise questions about which green marketing practices are most strongly associated with destination performance.

Green marketing refers to marketing activities designed to reduce environmental harm while communicating environmental value to visitors. In tourism, green marketing goes beyond advertising and includes product design, pricing, distribution and promotion (Font & McCabe, 2017). This article focuses on two dimensions: green product development and green pricing. Green product development refers to designing and delivering tourism experiences, accommodation and services that reduce environmental impact, while green pricing refers to price and fee arrangements that recover environmental costs, fund conservation or encourage responsible visitor behaviour.

Although Kenyan studies have examined green practices in hotels, lodges, manufacturing firms and utilities, limited empirical evidence exists on how green product development and green pricing affect the performance of national parks and reserves as ecotourism destinations. Previous studies have focused on tourist hotels in Nyeri County (Mutitu, 2025), urban hotels in Kenya (Kamunzyu et al., 2024), tourist lodges in Nakuru County (Mahugu et al., 2026), and Eco-rated lodges in Samburu County (Obegi et al., 2025). These studies are useful but do not fully address public protected areas where conservation, tourism revenue, visitor experience and community livelihoods intersect.

The study objectives:

i. To evaluate the effect of green product development on the performance of ecotourism destinations in selected national parks and reserves in Kenya.
ii. To examine the effect of green pricing on the performance of ecotourism destinations in selected national parks and reserves in Kenya.

The article contributes to green marketing and ecotourism literature by providing quantitative evidence from Kenyan protected areas. It also provides practical guidance to the Kenya Wildlife Service, county governments, park managers, reserve managers and tourism enterprises on how green product and pricing practices relate to destination performance.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on the Natural Resource-Based View and supported by Triple Bottom Line theory and Signaling Theory.

The Natural Resource-Based View was developed by Hart (1995) as an extension of the resource-based view of the firm. It argues that capabilities related to environmental management can become sources of competitive advantage because they are valuable, difficult to imitate and embedded in organizational routines. In ecotourism destinations, the natural environment is the core resource. Therefore, practices such as waste management, low-impact visitor experiences, conservation activities, environmental certification and green technology can improve destination performance by protecting the environmental asset that attracts visitors.

The Triple Bottom Line theory, introduced by Elkington (1997), argues that organizational performance should be measured through economic, environmental and social outcomes. In this article, destination performance is viewed through financial performance, visitor satisfaction, environmental impact and community benefit. This is appropriate because an ecotourism destination cannot be considered successful if it generates revenue while degrading ecosystems or excluding local communities from tourism benefits.

Signaling Theory explains how organizations communicate unobservable qualities to external audiences (Spence, 1973; Connelly et al., 2011). In ecotourism, visitors may not know before travelling whether a destination genuinely supports conservation. Green pricing can act as a signal when conservation levies, transparent pricing and reinvestment pricing show that visitor payments support environmental management and community benefit.

2.2 Green Product Development and Destination Performance

GreenGreen product development in ecotourism involves designing tourism facilities, services and experiences that reduce environmental impact while offering authentic contact with nature and culture. In parks and reserves, this may include environmentally friendly accommodation, conservation activities in tour packages, biodegradable materials, low-impact visitor experiences, environmental certification, biodiversity interpretation programmes, waste management systems and adoption of green technologies.

Font and McCabe (2017) argue that sustainable tourism marketing must be grounded in actual destination practices rather than unsupported environmental claims. This means green product development is the foundation of credible green marketing. If visitors experience visible waste management, conservation activities, renewable energy use, low-impact trails and meaningful interpretation, the destination's environmental claims become more credible.

Empirical studies support the performance value of green product development. Leonidou et al. (2013) found that environmental marketing strategy supported competitive advantage and performance among hotels. In Kenya, Mutitu (2025) established that waste management, water management, energy conservation and green marketing had significant positive effects on competitive advantage among tourist hotels in Nyeri County. Kamunzyu et al. (2024) found that green practices had a positive effect on sustainability in urban hotels in Kenya. Hadassa (2024) also concluded that environmentally friendly practices and community involvement increased tourist satisfaction and repeat visits in Kenyan ecotourism destinations.

However, these studies mainly focused on hotels and lodges. National parks and reserves differ because product development is influenced by conservation mandates, public management systems, concession agreements, visitor pressure, wildlife protection and county or national policy. This creates a contextual gap that the present article addresses.
Hypothesised as:
H1: Green product development has a significant positive effect on the performance of ecotourism destinations.

2.3 Green Pricing and Destination Performance

Green Green pricing refers to pricing practices that reflect environmental costs, finance conservation, encourage responsible visitor behaviour and support community benefit. In protected areas, green pricing includes conservation levies, full-cost pricing, differential pricing, off-peak pricing, community compensation, reinvestment pricing, value-based pricing and transparent pricing.

Pricing is important in ecotourism because protected areas require revenue for conservation, infrastructure, security, habitat restoration, visitor management and community engagement. Kenya Wildlife Service sets conservation fees for national parks, while county governments set fees for national reserves (Kenya Wildlife Service [KWS], 2025). These fees serve both revenue and conservation functions.

Several willingness-to-pay studies suggest that visitors may support higher fees when these are linked to conservation. Navrud and Mungatana (1994) estimated that wildlife viewing at Lake Nakuru National Park had high recreational value, suggesting potential for conservation-based pricing. Pedroso and Kung'u (2019) found that visitors to Maasai Mara were willing to pay for upstream restoration and conservation in the Mara River Basin. Mmopelwa et al. (2007) found that tourists in Botswana were willing to pay higher park fees where the money was tied to improved conservation management. Reynisdottir et al. (2008) similarly found high willingness to pay entrance fees at natural attractions in Iceland.

However, pricing has limits. The decline in Maasai Mara visitor numbers after a fee increase shows that conservation pricing must be designed carefully and communicated clearly (Ondieki, 2026). Visitors may accept green pricing where they perceive fairness, transparency and visible conservation benefits, but may resist pricing that appears excessive or poorly justified.
Hypothesised as:
H2: Green pricing has a significant positive effect on the performance of ecotourism destinations.

2.4 Conceptual Model

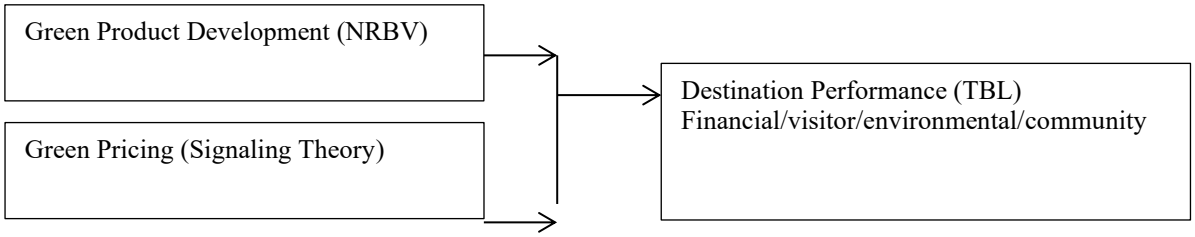


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Green promotion and green distribution, the remaining elements of the green marketing mix in the wider study, are entered as controls. This allows the unique contribution of each focal practice to be estimated.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Study Sites

A descriptive cross-sectional survey design was used (Saunders et al., 2023). Five protected areas were selected purposively to cover both management arrangements (KWS and county governments), three ecosystem types (savannah, lakeside and arid) and a range of visitor volumes: Maasai Mara, Amboseli, Tsavo East, Lake Nakuru and Samburu.

3.2 Study Population and Sampling

The unit of analysis was the destination, and the unit of observation was the individual respondent. The target population comprised 360 people: 45 destination management personnel, 35 marketing professionals and 280 enterprise managers. All 80 management and marketing personnel were included through a census. Enterprise managers were sampled using Yamane's (1967) formula at a 10% margin of error:

$n = 280 / (1 + 280 \times 0.10^2) \approx 74$

These 74 were allocated almost equally across the five destinations and selected randomly. The total sample was 154 (Table 1).

Table 1: Sample Distribution

Destination	Management	Marketing	Enterprise	Total
Maasai Mara NR	12	10	15	37
Amboseli NP	9	7	15	31
Tsavo East NP	9	6	15	30
Lake Nakuru NP	8	7	15	30
Samburu NR	7	5	14	26
Total	**45**	**35**	**74**	**154**

3.3 Validity and Reliability

Each construct was measured with eight five-point Likert items (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree), and composite scores were computed as item means. Green product development: eco-friendly accommodation, conservation activities, biodegradable materials, low-impact experiences, certification, interpretation, waste management, green technology. Green pricing: full-cost pricing, conservation levy, behavioural discounts, off-peak pricing, community compensation, value-based pricing, reinvestment pricing, transparent pricing. Performance: environmental impact, biodiversity, revenue, visitor numbers, visitor satisfaction, community benefit, competitive position, brand image.

Content validity was established from the literature and supervisor review. The instrument was piloted with 15 respondents at Nairobi National Park, which was excluded from the main study. All scales exceeded the 0.70 threshold for Cronbach's alpha (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011): green product development $\alpha = .901$, green pricing $\alpha = .845$, performance $\alpha = .922$, green promotion $\alpha = .882$ and green distribution $\alpha = .863$. Means were interpreted using five equal bands from 1.00–1.80 (strongly disagree) to 4.21–5.00 (strongly agree).

3.4 Data Collection, Analysis and Ethics

Data were collected in September–October 2026 by drop-and-pick, with an online form for respondents who could not be reached in person. Analysis used SPSS v31. Regression assumptions (normality, linearity, multicollinearity, homoscedasticity and independence of errors) were tested before interpretation (Field, 2018; Hair et al., 2019).

The model was:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 \text{ (green product development)} + \beta_2 X_2 \text{ (green pricing)} + \varepsilon$$

4. Results

4.1 Response Rate and Respondent Profile

Out of 154 questionnaires distributed, 144 were completed and returned in usable form, giving a response rate of 93.5%. Male respondents were 52.1%, while female respondents were 47.9%, indicating balanced gender representation. Most respondents were aged between 30 and 49 years, suggesting that the majority were mid-career professionals with sufficient experience to assess destination practices and performance. Regarding education, 52.8% held a master's degree, 30.6% had a bachelor's degree, 16.0% had a diploma or certificate, and 0.7% had a doctorate. In terms of work experience, 77.1% had worked for two years or more, indicating familiarity with their destinations.

4.2 Descriptive Results

Table 2: Green Product Development and Green Pricing (N = 144)

Green product development	M	SD	Green pricing	M	SD
Waste management integrated	4.10	0.80	Off-peak differential pricing	4.63	0.53
Conservation activities in packages	4.03	0.76	Conservation levy	4.60	0.68
Green technology updating	4.00	0.91	Reinvestment pricing	4.60	0.53
Biodegradable materials	3.91	0.97	Value-based pricing	4.60	0.49
Environmental certification	3.91	0.83	Community compensation	4.57	0.64
Low-impact experiences	3.85	0.91	Full-cost pricing	4.53	0.69
Eco-friendly accommodation	3.74	0.98	Transparent pricing breakdown	4.52	0.59
Interpretive programmes	3.72	1.20	Discounts for responsible behaviour	4.46	0.74
Overall	**3.91**	**0.92**	**Overall**	**4.56**	**0.61**

Respondents agreed that their destinations applied green product development practices, with an overall mean of 3.91 and standard deviation of 0.92. Waste management systems were rated highest (M = 4.10, SD = 0.80), followed by conservation activities in tour packages (M = 4.03, SD = 0.76) and updating tourism offerings to include emerging green technologies (M = 4.00, SD = 0.91). The lowest-rated items were environmentally friendly accommodation (M = 3.74, SD = 0.98) and interpretive programmes on biodiversity (M = 3.72, SD = 1.20).

Green pricing recorded an overall mean of 4.56 and standard deviation of 0.61, indicating strong agreement that green pricing practices were applied. Off-peak differential pricing was rated highest (M = 4.63, SD = 0.53). Conservation levies, reinvestment pricing and value-based pricing each recorded a mean of 4.60. The lowest-rated practices were discounts for environmentally friendly visitor behaviour (M = 4.46, SD = 0.74) and transparent pricing breakdowns (M = 4.52, SD = 0.59), though these were still highly rated.

Destination performance was rated in the agree band (M = 3.98, SD = 0.50). Revenue growth (4.47), brand image (4.25) and biodiversity (4.22) were rated highest. Competitive positioning (3.59), visitor numbers (3.64) and community benefit (3.69) were rated lowest.

4.3 Correlation and Diagnostics

Pearson correlation analysis was used to establish the direction and strength of relationships among the variables. Green product development had a strong positive and significant relationship with destination performance ($r = .641$, $p < .001$). Green pricing had a weak but significant positive relationship with performance ($r = .254$, $p = .002$).

Table 3: Correlations and Collinearity (N = 144)

Variable	1	2	VIF
1. Performance	1		
2. Green product development	.641**	1	2.501
3. Green pricing	.254**	.241**	1.091

*Note. **p < .01 (two-tailed).*

The results indicate that destinations with stronger green product development practices tended to report better performance. Green pricing was also positively associated with performance, though the relationship was weaker. The weak relationship may partly be explained by the high and clustered ratings for green pricing, which reduced variation in the pricing scale.

4.4 Regression Results

Multiple linear regression was used to determine the effect of green marketing practices on destination performance. Although this article focuses on green product development and green pricing, the regression model controlled for green promotion and green distribution as part of the broader study. The overall model was significant, $F(4, 139) = 33.833$, $p < .001$, and explained 49.3% of the variation in destination performance ($R^2 = .493$; adjusted $R^2 = .479$).

Table 4: Regression Coefficients (Dependent Variable: Destination Performance)

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p	95% CI
Constant	2.010	0.318		6.314	<.001	[1.381, 2.640]
Green product development (H1)	0.316	0.064	.472	4.944	<.001	[0.190, 0.442]
Green pricing (H2)	0.171	0.087	.234	1.987	.045	[0.001, 0.341]

Where Y is destination performance, X_1 is green product development, X_2 is green pricing. Green product development had the strongest significant positive effect on destination performance ($B = .316$, $\beta = .472$, $t = 4.944$, $p < .001$). This means that, holding other practices constant, a one-unit increase in green product development was associated with a .316 unit increase in destination performance. Green pricing also had a significant positive effect on destination performance ($B = .171$, $\beta = .234$, $t = 1.987$, $p = .045$). This means that, holding other practices constant, a one-unit increase in green pricing was associated with a .171 unit increase in destination performance. However, its effect was smaller than that of green product development.

5. Discussion

5.1 Green Product Development and Performance

Green The findings show that green product development has a strong and significant positive effect on the performance of ecotourism destinations. This means that parks and reserves that integrate green practices into the design and delivery of the tourism product are more likely to report stronger performance.

This finding supports the Natural Resource-Based View, which argues that environmental capabilities can become sources of superior performance (Hart, 1995). In ecotourism destinations, the natural environment is the main tourism product. Therefore, practices that protect wildlife, reduce waste, minimize ecological footprints, support biodiversity interpretation and promote conservation activities improve both environmental and market outcomes.

The findings agree with Mutitu (2025), who found that waste management, water management and energy conservation improved competitive advantage among tourist hotels in Nyeri County. They also agree with Kamunzyu et al. (2024), who found that green practices positively influenced sustainability in urban hotels in Kenya. Similarly, the findings support Hadassa (2024), who concluded that visible sustainable tourism practices increase tourist satisfaction and repeat visits.

However, the descriptive results show that not all green product development practices are equally developed. Waste management and conservation activities were rated highest, while environmentally friendly accommodation and interpretation programmes were rated lowest. This implies that parks and reserves have made stronger progress in operational green practices than in practices requiring larger capital investment or visitor education infrastructure. Interpretation programmes are especially important because they convert passive wildlife viewing into learning about biodiversity, conservation and responsible tourism behaviour. Weak interpretation may reduce the ability of destinations to communicate ecological value to visitors.

5.2 Green Pricing and Performance

The findings also show that green pricing has a positive and significant effect on destination performance, although its effect is smaller than that of green product development. This suggests that pricing practices contribute to performance when they are linked to conservation, reinvestment, ecological value and community participation. This finding supports Signaling Theory. Conservation levies, full-cost pricing, reinvestment pricing and transparent pricing can signal that a destination is committed to environmental management (Connelly et al., 2011). Visitors may be more willing to pay when they believe their payments support conservation and community benefit. The findings are consistent with Navrud and Mungatana (1994), who showed that visitors valued wildlife viewing at Lake Nakuru above the fees charged. They also agree with Pedroso and Kung'u (2019), who found

willingness among Maasai Mara visitors to pay for conservation of the Mara River Basin. Similar evidence from Botswana and Iceland shows that visitors may accept park and entrance fees when they are linked to conservation management (Mmopelwa et al., 2007; Reynisdottir et al., 2008).

However, the smaller effect of green pricing indicates that pricing alone is not sufficient to drive destination performance. Visitors may accept conservation fees only when the destination offers a high-quality green product and when pricing is perceived as fair, transparent and connected to visible conservation outcomes. The decline in Maasai Mara visitor numbers after a sharp fee increase illustrates that willingness to pay has limits and that pricing decisions can affect demand (Ondieki, 2026).

The descriptive results also suggest that destinations are stronger in charging conservation levies and applying differential pricing than in providing transparent pricing breakdowns or rewarding responsible visitor behaviour. This is important because green pricing is more likely to gain visitor support when tourists can see how their payments are used. This article examined the effect of green product development and green pricing on the performance of ecotourism destinations in selected national parks and reserves in Kenya. The findings showed that both practices had significant positive effects on performance, but green product development had a stronger effect than green pricing.

The first conclusion is that green product development is a major predictor of ecotourism destination performance. Parks and reserves that invest in waste management, conservation activities, biodegradable materials, low-impact visitor experiences, certification, green technology, interpretation programmes and environmentally friendly accommodation are more likely to achieve stronger financial, visitor, environmental and community outcomes. The second conclusion is that green pricing contributes positively to destination performance, but its contribution is modest. Conservation levies, differential pricing, full-cost pricing and reinvestment pricing can support conservation and communicate environmental value, but their effect depends on transparency, fairness and visible benefits.

The study contributes to theory by supporting the Natural Resource-Based View in the context of public protected areas in Kenya. It also supports the Triple Bottom Line view of ecotourism performance and shows that green pricing can function as an environmental signal when linked to conservation outcomes. For policy, the findings imply that KWS and county governments should incorporate green product standards into park and reserve management plans, concession agreements and tourism development strategies. Environmentally friendly accommodation, waste systems, interpretation programmes and conservation-linked tourism experiences should be made part of destination development requirements.

For practice, park and reserve managers should strengthen structured biodiversity interpretation programmes, invest in green visitor facilities and ensure that conservation activities are visible to visitors. On pricing, managers should publish clear information on how conservation fees are used, including the share directed to conservation, infrastructure and community benefit. Fee increases should be preceded by demand analysis to avoid reducing destination competitiveness.

6. Conclusion and Implications

This article examined the effect of green product development and green pricing on the performance of ecotourism destinations in selected national parks and reserves in Kenya. The findings showed that both practices had significant positive effects on performance, but green product development had a stronger effect than green pricing.

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6.1 Limitations and Future Research

The study relied on managers' self-reported ratings rather than audited revenue, visitor, biodiversity or community benefit data. The cross-sectional design also means that the study identifies associations rather than causality. Future studies should use longitudinal designs and objective performance data. Further research should also survey visitors directly to establish how they perceive conservation fees, green product features and willingness to pay.

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