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INFLUENCE OF USER BEHAVIOUR ON VOIDS AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF
COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS: A CASE STUDY OF NAIROBI CENTRAL BUSINESS
DISTRICT. //

BY

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ABSTRACT

There is a growing apathy and discontent in the building investors of Nairobi City and in other parts of Kenya because of the relatively low economic returns from the buildings caused by poor occupancy rates of buildings. The under utilized buildings constitutes unsustainable use which then leads to unsustainable construction practices and consequently to unsustainable development.

The problem of the under used buildings is evident through large volumes of ready to let built spaces advertised in the public media and results of studies carried out by others researchers for instance Ngunga (2001) found the void rate at 26 per cent in Nairobi Central Business District (NCBD).

This problem may be caused by a combination of factors but the study hypothesized that the users' behaviours as shaped by tastes, needs, preferences, hard economic times, age of buildings and other factors was influencing the prevailing voids in commercial buildings of the NCBD and consequently their under utilization.

The study intended to find out the prevailing level of under use of buildings and what could be causing the large volume of under utilized built spaces in the surveyed NCBD buildings that was leading to disaffection in the building ownership and inadequate sustainable development practices.

To prove this argument, 120 questionnaires were sent to building owners and estate managers within the Nairobi Central Business District, 57 of which were responsive. The results from the field were analysed using qualitative and descriptive methods such as percentages, means, product moment coefficient of correlations. The hypothesis was tested using chi-square and the results on the surveyed 57 buildings confirmed existence of high void rate hence the unsustainably used built space.

User behaviour was found to influence the voids rate in the buildings and of the listed factors of user behaviour, changing business patterns and hard economic times experienced by the tenants of a building was found to have influenced more of the void than the others. It influenced 33 per cent of the unsustainably used built space in the surveyed NCBD buildings.

The study recommended that more flexible and adaptable designs and construction methods should be encouraged that would allow ease of alterations to suit the changing business patterns thereby addressing the rapidly changing tastes, needs and preferences of users.