UBUNTU AND OMOLUABI ETHICS IN AFRICAN GASTRONOMY: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE HOSPITALITY GUEST EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

This study examines the integration of Ubuntu and Omoluabi ethical philosophies within African gastronomy and their implications for hospitality guest experience. The study responds to the dominance of Western-oriented hospitality models by proposing a culturally grounded framework rooted in indigenous African ethical systems. Using a conceptual and integrative literature review approach, the study synthesised interdisciplinary scholarship from hospitality management, African philosophy, gastronomy, tourism, and service studies. Relevant peer-reviewed literature was analysed thematically to establish conceptual relationships among Ubuntu ethics, Omoluabi values, African gastronomy, service behaviour, and guest experience. The findings reveal that Ubuntu principles of empathy, communalism, relationality, and shared humanity, alongside Omoluabi values of integrity, respect, discipline, and moral responsibility, are strongly reflected in African gastronomic practices through communal dining, food-sharing traditions, storytelling, and culturally guided hospitality rituals. The study further found that these ethical philosophies positively influence service conduct, communal engagement, authenticity, emotional connection, guest satisfaction, and loyalty within hospitality settings. African gastronomy emerged as the mediating mechanism through which these indigenous ethical values are operationalised and experienced. Based on these findings, the study develops a conceptual framework that positions Ubuntu and Omoluabi as foundational ethical drivers of hospitality service design, while African gastronomy functions as the mediating platform shaping guest experience outcomes. The study recommends integrating indigenous ethical philosophies into staff training, service protocols, branding, and experiential management to promote culturally authentic and ethically grounded hospitality experiences.

***Keywords*:** African gastronomy, guest experience, hospitality ethics, Omoluabi, Ubuntu.

Introduction

African gastronomy represents more than a culinary tradition; it embodies cultural identity, ethical frameworks, and relational practices that profoundly shape hospitality experiences. Across the continent, foodways are intertwined with social norms, moral values, and

community-centered philosophies, providing fertile ground for investigating how indigenous knowledge informs service delivery and guest satisfaction (Chauke, Abrahams, & Baum, 2025; Banerjee & Khan, 2024). Yet, much of hospitality scholarship remains grounded in Western paradigms, often overlooking African epistemologies that prioritise communalism, ethical conduct, and relational engagement.

Two distinct African philosophical frameworks, Ubuntu and Omoluabi, offer important perspectives on hospitality ethics and guest experience. Ubuntu, a Southern African concept, emphasises interconnectedness, empathy, and shared humanity, situating hospitality as a relational practice that fosters belonging and social cohesion (Jennings, 2025; Gathogo, 2025). Omoluabi, a Yoruba ethical framework, underscores integrity, respect, responsibility, and moral excellence, guiding not only individual conduct but also collective social interactions (Oladejo &Dastile, 2025; Motadegbe&Ibiyemi, 2025; Onamusi, 2023). Both philosophies highlight how ethical values can shape service behaviours, enhance guest satisfaction, and create culturally authentic dining experiences, positioning African gastronomy as a vehicle for both experiential and moral engagement in hospitality. Despite growing recognition of values-driven hospitality, empirical and conceptual studies integrating African ethics into gastronomy remain limited (Sipondo, 2025; Oelofsen, Majee, Mgijima, & Monson, 2024). Furthermore, the literature has yet to fully articulate how Ubuntu and Omoluabi principles can co-create meaningful guest experiences through commensality, service ethics, and cultural authenticity. To address this gap, the current study develops a conceptual framework linking Ubuntu and Omoluabi ethics to African gastronomy and guest experience, emphasising the possibility of indigenous philosophies to inform service design, managerial practices, and policy in African hospitality contexts.

Statement of the Problem

Most hospitality research focuses on Western service models and often neglects African indigenous ethical frameworks that influence guest experiences. African gastronomy reflects deeply rooted cultural values and social practices, yet the role of philosophies such as Ubuntu, emphasising communal connectedness, and Omoluabi, emphasising integrity and moral character, has received little attention in hospitality studies (Jennings, 2025; Oladejo &Dastile, 2025; Banerjee & Khan, 2024). Current literature provides limited discussion on how these ethical systems affect service behaviors, shared dining, and guest satisfaction (Sipondo, 2025; Oelofsen, Majee, Mgijima, & Monson, 2024). This gap limits hospitality managers in designing culturally grounded, values-based gastronomic experiences and leaves a theoretical and practical void.

Aim and Objectives

This study aims to construct a conceptual framework that positions Ubuntu and Omoluabi ethical principles

at the core of African gastronomy and hospitality guest experiences.

The objectives are to:

1. Investigate the reflection of Ubuntu and Omoluabi ethics within African gastronomic practices in hospitality contexts.
2. Examine the influence of these ethical principles on service conduct, communal dining, and guest satisfaction.
3. Develop a conceptual framework integrating indigenous African ethical philosophies into hospitality service design and experiential management.

Research Questions

Guided by the study's aim and objectives, the following research questions examine how Ubuntu and Omoluabi ethics shape African gastronomic practices, service behaviors, and hospitality guest experiences:

1. How are Ubuntu and Omoluabi ethical principles reflected in African gastronomic practices within hospitality settings?
2. In what ways do Ubuntu and Omoluabi principles affect service behavior, communal dining, and guest satisfaction?
3. How can Ubuntu and Omoluabi philosophies be integrated into a conceptual framework for hospitality service design and guest experience management?

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the application of Ubuntu and Omoluabi ethical principles within African gastronomy and their implications for hospitality guest experiences. The conceptual exploration is limited to ethical frameworks, cultural values, and communal dining practices that influence service behaviour and guest satisfaction in hospitality contexts. While African gastronomy is practiced across diverse countries and communities, the study emphasises principles that are broadly representative of indigenous African ethical and moral philosophies. The scope is confined to theoretical development and framework construction, without empirical data collection, providing a foundation for future research to test and operationalise the proposed model within hotels, restaurants, and cultural dining experiences.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to hospitality scholarship by highlighting African indigenous ethical philosophies, namely, Ubuntu and Omoluabi, as foundational to service delivery and guest experience. By developing a conceptual framework that integrates these principles into African gastronomy, the study examines how cultural and ethical values influence communal dining, service practices, and guest satisfaction. The study advances theory by extending experiential consumption and service-dominant logic through the perspective of African philosophies. From a practical standpoint, it provides guidance for hospitality managers, educators, and policymakers on creating culturally rooted, values-driven gastronomic experiences. Additionally, the study promotes the preservation and application of African ethical and

culinary traditions within contemporary hospitality practice.

Literature Review

Ubuntu

Ubuntu is a Southern African philosophical framework that emphasisescommunalism, relational interdependence, empathy, and the inherent value of human connectedness (Jennings, 2025; Gathogo, 2025). Within hospitality contexts, Ubuntu shapes service behaviors by promoting relational engagement, attentiveness to guests, and the creation of environments that strengthen social bonds (Banerjee & Khan, 2024; Hughes, 2024). Service delivery underpinned by Ubuntu extends beyond transactional interactions to foster collective responsibility among staff and ethically guided relational practices. Despite its prominence in organisational and tourism studies, Ubuntu has received limited attention in the context of African gastronomy, particularly regarding how its principles are operationalised in service encounters and shared dining experiences. This presents a gap in understanding how communal and ethical practices influence hospitality guest satisfaction, which this study seeks to address by situating Ubuntu as a guiding framework for ethical and relational service delivery.

Omoluabi

Omoluabi, a Yoruba ethical system, embodies integrity, moral excellence, respect, honesty, and responsibility (Oladejo &Dastile, 2025; Motadegbe&Ibiyemi, 2025; Onamusi, 2023). It directs both individual conduct and collective social interaction, offering a moral compass that informs ethical decision-making and relational trust. In hospitality, Omoluabi provides a framework for shaping staff behavior, interactions with guests, and the ethical management of communal dining experiences (Ipadeola, 2024; Nonyelu, 2026). While its significance in leadership, governance, and organisational ethics has been explored (Adegbami, 2025; OjoLawal& Babatunde, 2025), the application of Omoluabi within hospitality service design and gastronomy remains underdeveloped. This study addresses this gap by conceptualizing Omoluabi as a core determinant of ethical service behavior and culturally authentic hospitality practices.

African Gastronomy

African gastronomy encompasses the culinary traditions, foodways, and communal dining practices that reflect the continent's cultural and ethical heritage (Chauke, Abrahams, & Baum, 2025; Banerjee & Khan, 2024). Beyond the preparation and consumption of food, African gastronomy includes the rituals, symbolic meanings, and social norms associated with meals, which influence interpersonal interactions and relational engagement. In hospitality, gastronomy serves as a medium for cultural transmission, enabling guests to engage with local heritage and communal practices. Although African gastronomy has been acknowledged as a cultural resource in tourism and hospitality studies, research has rarely examined its integration with indigenous ethical frameworks such as Ubuntu and Omoluabi. This leaves a conceptual gap in understanding how gastronomy can

mediate ethical principles and shape guest experiences in culturally authentic ways.

Guest Experience

Guest experience refers to the comprehensive set of cognitive, emotional, sensory, and social interactions that a guest encounters in a hospitality environment (Sipondo, 2025). Both operational service quality and cultural and ethical frameworks influence satisfaction, emotional engagement, perceived authenticity, and loyalty. In African hospitality, guest experience can be shaped by communal dining practices and culturally guided service behaviors informed by Ubuntu and Omoluabi (Jennings, 2025; Mdletshe, 2025). Current literature remains largely Western-centric, emphasising service quality metrics while neglecting the ethical and cultural dimensions that frame guest experiences. By positioning guest experience as the outcome of culturally and ethically grounded service behaviors mediated through African gastronomy. This study addresses the gap in understanding how indigenous philosophies shape hospitality encounters. The literature reviewed demonstrates the theoretical relevance of Ubuntu, Omoluabi, African gastronomy, and guest experiences while simultaneously revealing critical gaps. Specifically, the operationalisation of Ubuntu and Omoluabi within hospitality services is underexplored, the integration of these ethical frameworks with African gastronomy has not been systematically examined, and the influence of these cultural and ethical principles on guest experience remains largely untested. This study responds to these gaps by developing a conceptual framework that links Ubuntu and Omoluabi ethics with African gastronomy and hospitality guest experience, providing a foundation for theoretical development and future empirical research.

Gaps in the Literature

Although existing literature highlights the philosophical

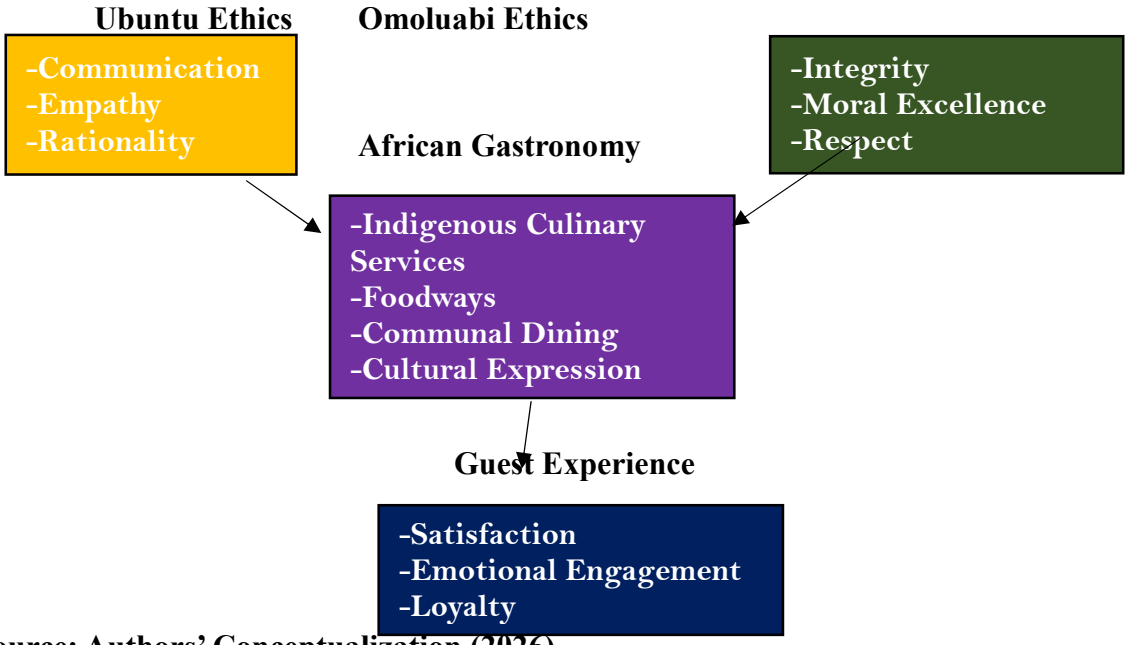
and cultural significance of Ubuntu and Omoluabi, research on their application in hospitality contexts remains limited. Ubuntu has been extensively examined in organisational leadership, education, and tourism, where it is shown to foster relational engagement, ethical decision-making, and communal responsibility (Hughes, 2024; Jennings, 2025; Gathogo, 2025). However, few studies have explored how Ubuntu principles are operationalised in African gastronomy and hospitality service, particularly in shaping communal dining experiences and guest satisfaction. Similarly, Omoluabi has been discussed in the context of leadership, governance, and organisational ethics, emphasising integrity, respect, and moral responsibility (Oladejo & Dastile, 2025; Motadegbe & Ibiyemi, 2025; Onamusi, 2023; Ipadeola, 2024). Its role in influencing hospitality service behaviours, staff-guest interactions, and the orchestration of culturally authentic gastronomic experiences has received little attention.

African gastronomy, while recognised as a critical medium for cultural expression and tourism, is often treated descriptively in the literature (Chauke,

Abrahams, & Baum, 2025; Banerjee & Khan, 2024). Many studies do not systematically link foodways to ethical and cultural frameworks such as Ubuntu and Omoluabi. The mechanisms through which gastronomy mediates ethical principles and contributes to guest experience, satisfaction, and loyalty remain largely unexplored. Furthermore, research on guest experience in hospitality has focused predominantly on operational quality and Western-centric service metrics, overlooking the influence of indigenous African ethical and cultural frameworks (Sipondo, 2025; Mdletshe, 2025). Consequently, there is a clear theoretical and practical gap in understanding how Ubuntu and Omoluabi, when integrated with African gastronomy, shape hospitality guest experiences. The absence of a conceptual framework linking these indigenous ethical philosophies to service delivery and experiential outcomes in hospitality limits both scholarly discourse and managerial practice. This study seeks to fill this gap by developing a conceptual model that situates African ethical systems at the core of gastronomic hospitality and guest experience, providing a foundation for future empirical research and culturally grounded service management.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework Linking Ubuntu Ethics and Omoluabi Ethics to African Gastronomy



Source: Authors' Conceptualization (2026)

The conceptual framework for this study positions Ubuntu and Omoluabi ethical philosophies as foundational drivers of hospitality service orientation and guest experience, with African gastronomy operating as the mediating conduit through which these values are enacted. Ubuntu, rooted in African humanism, emphasises relationality, empathy, communal responsibility, and shared humanity, shaping service interactions that prioritise care, inclusiveness, and social connectedness (Hughes, 2024; Jennings, 2025; Gathogo, 2025). Within

hospitality settings, Ubuntu guides how service encounters are structured, encouraging staff to engage guests beyond functional transactions and to foster a sense of belonging through attentive and relational service practices. Omoluabi, grounded in Yoruba moral philosophy, complements this relational orientation by foregrounding integrity, moral excellence, respect, and ethical conduct (Onamusi, 2023; Ipadeola, 2024; Oladejo &Dastile, 2025; Motadegbe&Ibiyemi, 2025). In hospitality contexts, Omoluabi guides service behaviour by shaping ethical standards in guest interactions, communal dining arrangements, and professional conduct. It reinforces trust, dignity, and accountability in service delivery, ensuring that hospitality practices reflect culturally embedded moral values rather than solely operational efficiency.

African gastronomy mediates the influence of these ethical philosophies by translating abstract values into tangible hospitality practices. It encompasses culinary traditions, food preparation techniques, modes of presentation, and communal consumption rituals that reflect shared cultural meanings (Banerjee & Khan, 2024; Chauke, Abrahams, & Baum, 2025). Through gastronomic practices, Ubuntu and Omoluabi are embodied in commensality, shared meals, storytelling, and culturally respectful service rituals. Gastronomy thus becomes a cultural interface through which ethical values are experienced, rather than merely observed, positioning foodways as central to hospitality experience formation. Guest experience emerges as the outcome of these interrelated ethical and gastronomic processes, encompassing emotional engagement, perceived authenticity, satisfaction, and relational attachment (Sipondo, 2025; Mdletshe, 2025). The framework suggests that when hospitality services are grounded in Ubuntu and Omoluabi and enacted through African gastronomy, guests are more likely to experience meaningful social connection and cultural resonance. This perspective extends dominant hospitality experience models, which have largely emphasised service quality metrics and Western experiential paradigms, by incorporating indigenous ethical and cultural determinants.

The framework further clarifies that African ethical philosophies are not peripheral cultural references but central mechanisms through which hospitality value is created. By situating African gastronomy as the mediating pathway, it demonstrates how ethical principles are operationalized in everyday service encounters, shaping relational engagement and experiential outcomes. This integration connects indigenous African philosophical traditions with contemporary hospitality theory, offering a culturally grounded explanatory model that advances scholarly understanding and provides a foundation for future empirical testing within hospitality and tourism research.

Methodology

This study adopts a conceptual and integrative literature-based research design appropriate for theory development within hospitality and tourism scholarship. Given the study's

objective of advancing understanding of how Ubuntu and Omoluabi ethics influence the guest experience in hospitality through African gastronomy, a non-empirical approach is employed to synthesise, reinterpret, and extend existing knowledge. This approach is consistent with Q1 journal expectations for conceptual advancement, particularly in contexts where indigenous philosophies and culturally embedded constructs remain under-theorised in mainstream hospitality literature. The study draws on peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, edited volumes, and authoritative conceptual works addressing Ubuntu philosophy, Omoluabi ethics, African gastronomy, hospitality service, and guest experience. The literature was sourced from reputable academic databases, including Scopus-indexed journals, Web of Science, SSRN, and leading academic publishers. Selection criteria emphasised conceptual relevance, theoretical depth, and contextual alignment with African ethics, hospitality, and gastronomy. Priority was given to recent publications while also incorporating foundational works necessary for philosophical grounding.

Data analysis followed an interpretive and thematic synthesis approach. The selected literature was critically reviewed to identify dominant conceptual positions, recurring themes, and theoretical assumptions relating to ethical philosophy, foodways, commensality, and hospitality experience. Ubuntu and Omoluabi were examined as ethical constructs, African gastronomy as a cultural and mediating practice, and guest experience as an experiential outcome. Through iterative reading and comparison, conceptual linkages were established, areas of convergence were identified, and omissions within existing hospitality frameworks were systematically highlighted. The analytical process emphasised logical integration rather than aggregation of findings. Concepts were refined through comparative interpretation, allowing the study to position African gastronomy as the mechanism through which ethical philosophies are translated into hospitality practice. This synthesis informed the development of the conceptual framework, which explains relational pathways between ethics, gastronomy, and guest experience. The framework was refined through continuous alignment with established hospitality theories while remaining grounded in indigenous African philosophical traditions.

To ensure rigor and credibility, the study adhered to principles of transparency, coherence, and theoretical consistency. Arguments were grounded in established scholarship, and interpretations were continuously cross-validated across multiple sources. Rather than proposing causal claims, the study focuses on conceptual clarity and explanatory strength, providing a structured foundation for future empirical research. This methodological approach enables the study to contribute meaningfully to hospitality and tourism literature by advancing a culturally grounded conceptual model. It supports theory development in non-Western contexts and offers a robust platform for subsequent quantitative, qualitative, or

mixed-method studies seeking to test the proposed relationships empirically within hospitality settings.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

Research Question One

How are Ubuntu and Omoluabi ethical principles reflected in African gastronomic practices within hospitality settings?

The findings show that Ubuntu and Omoluabi are deeply reflected in African gastronomic practices through communal dining, hospitality rituals, ethical conduct, and culturally guided service interactions. Ubuntu promotes empathy, interconnectedness, and shared humanity, which are evident in African hospitality settings where meals are treated as collective social experiences rather than mere consumption activities. Jennings (2025) and Gathogo (2025) explain that Ubuntu encourages relational engagement, collective responsibility, and social care. These values are expressed through shared meals, guest inclusion, storytelling, and practices that strengthen social bonds. Omoluabi is reflected through integrity, respect, discipline, and moral responsibility in hospitality interactions. Oladejo and Dastile (2025) describe Omoluabi as a framework of ethical excellence and responsible behaviour, while Onamusi (2023) links it to respectful and disciplined social engagement. Within hospitality settings, these principles shape staff behaviour, professionalism, and culturally respectful dining environments. Okech and Timothy (2023) further note that African culinary traditions are strongly connected to communal values and cultural identity. The findings therefore suggest that African gastronomy serves as a medium through which Ubuntu and Omoluabi values are practiced and experienced.

Research Question Two

In what ways do Ubuntu and Omoluabi principles affect service behavior, communal dining, and guest satisfaction?

The findings indicate that Ubuntu and Omoluabi positively influence service behaviour, communal dining, and guest satisfaction by encouraging empathy, moral responsibility, and relational engagement. Ubuntu shapes hospitality interactions through attentiveness, inclusiveness, and emotional connection between service providers and guests. Hughes (2024) argues that Ubuntu strengthens caring relationships, while Banerjee and Khan (2024) observe that Ubuntu-based hospitality promotes socially meaningful tourism experiences. These qualities help guests feel welcomed, valued, and emotionally connected. Omoluabi also improves service quality by promoting honesty, accountability, integrity, and respectful conduct. Motadegbe and Ibiyemi (2025) associate Omoluabi with moral discipline and ethical responsibility, while Ipadeola (2024) links it to value-driven behaviour and responsible leadership. These principles strengthen professionalism and trust within hospitality settings. The findings further reveal that communal dining practices inspired by Ubuntu and Omoluabi enhance authenticity, cultural participation, and emotional engagement. Sipondo (2025) notes that

ethical and culturally grounded interactions improve hospitality experiences, while Mdletshe (2025) argues that indigenous practices strengthen authenticity and guest connection. As a result, guests experience greater satisfaction and loyalty because the encounters extend beyond transactional service.

Research Question Three

How can Ubuntu and Omoluabi philosophies be integrated into a conceptual framework for hospitality service design and guest experience management?

The findings show that Ubuntu and Omoluabi can be integrated into hospitality service design through ethical operations, culturally sensitive service delivery, and gastronomic experience management. The conceptual framework developed in this study positions Ubuntu and Omoluabi as the ethical foundations of hospitality practice, while African gastronomy serves as the medium through which these values are expressed. Ubuntu contributes empathy, communal care, inclusiveness, and social connectedness to hospitality service delivery. Jennings (2025) and Hughes (2024) emphasise that Ubuntu supports relational and people-centered hospitality environments. Omoluabi complements this by promoting integrity, accountability, discipline, and respect in guest interactions (Oladejo &Dastile, 2025; Onamusi, 2023). The findings further show that African gastronomy operationalises these ethical values through indigenous culinary traditions, communal food-sharing, storytelling, and culturally respectful dining practices. Banerjee and Khan (2024) argue that indigenous African values enhance authenticity in hospitality, while Nomishan, Oloidi, and Aliyu (2024) identify gastronomy as a major driver of heritage tourism and guest engagement. The framework therefore demonstrates that integrating Ubuntu and Omoluabi into hospitality management can improve guest satisfaction, authenticity, emotional engagement, and loyalty. The study recommends incorporating these indigenous ethical philosophies into staff training, service protocols, branding, and cultural hospitality programming to create more culturally grounded and meaningful guest experiences.

Discussion

This study derives its findings from an integrative synthesis of scholarship on African ethical philosophies, gastronomy, and hospitality experience. The analysis indicates that Ubuntu and Omoluabi ethical principles are intrinsically embedded in African gastronomic practices through communal eating, shared responsibility, moral conduct, and culturally grounded service rituals. Across African contexts, foodways operate not only as systems of sustenance but also as moral and social practices that express collective identity and ethical obligation. Culinary traditions across the continent emphasise sharing, reciprocity, hospitality to guests, and respect for social hierarchies, values that closely correspond with Ubuntu's emphasis on shared humanity and Omoluabi's focus on moral character and integrity (Okech & Timothy, 2023; Jennings, 2025;

Oladejo &Dastile, 2025). Hospitality settings reflect these values through dining arrangements that promote inclusiveness and reinforce social bonds.

The synthesis further indicates that Ubuntu and Omoluabi ethics exert a meaningful influence on service behaviour, communal dining, and guest satisfaction. Ubuntu shapes hospitality encounters by encouraging empathy, attentiveness, and relational engagement between service providers and guests, creating environments in which guests experience recognition and belonging rather than purely transactional service (Hughes, 2024; Gathogo, 2025). Omoluabi ethics strengthen this relational orientation by guiding conduct through principles of respect, accountability, and moral discipline, influencing how hospitality personnel interact with guests and manage shared dining spaces with cultural sensitivity (Onamusi, 2023; Motadegbe&Ibiyemi, 2025). When these ethical orientations are enacted through gastronomy, they influence not only culinary preparation and presentation, but also the social processes of sharing food, narrating its cultural significance, and engaging guests in meaningful dining experiences.

The findings also highlight how African gastronomy serves as a vehicle for translating ethical philosophies into experiential value within hospitality contexts. Research on heritage tourism and gastronomic branding demonstrates that African cuisines are embedded with symbolic meanings related to identity, morality, and belonging, which enhance experiential depth when incorporated into hospitality offerings (Nomishan, Oloidi, & Aliyu, 2024; Banerjee & Khan, 2024). At the same time, global media representations frequently marginalise these ethical and cultural dimensions, positioning African food within narrow ethnic frames and limiting its recognition as a sophisticated gastronomic system (Fofie, 2025; Lee Ferrand, 2025). This disparity reveals a gap between indigeneous meanings attached to African foodways and their representation within global hospitality and tourism narratives. The literature further reveals tensions between dominant discourses on culinary innovation and the lived realities of African gastronomic practice. While innovation centred frameworks dominate gastro tourism research, African culinary traditions often prioritize ethical continuity, communal meaning, and moral symbolism, dimensions that are insufficiently addressed in prevailing models (Fisher & Du Rand, 2023). Studies on gastrodiplomacy suggest that African cuisines possess considerable potential to communicate cultural and ethical values internationally, yet this potential remains underutilised within hospitality service design (Erbay & ATEŞ, 2023). These observations point to the need for conceptual approaches that recognize ethics as integral to gastronomic value creation.

In response to these patterns, the findings indicate that Ubuntu and Omoluabi philosophies can be systematically embedded into hospitality service design by aligning gastronomic practices, service protocols, and guest engagement strategies with principles of communal care, moral responsibility,

and cultural respect. Scholarship on digital branding and local gastronomic entrepreneurship further suggest that when hospitality experiences are communicated through value oriented narratives rather than purely commercial messaging, they enhance perceptions of authenticity and strengthen guest connection (Ndekwa&Mng'ong'ose, 2024). This supports the development of a conceptual framework that integrates African ethical philosophies into both operational practice and experiential communication. The findings demonstrate that Ubuntu and Omoluabi ethics function as active determinants of gastronomic practice and guest experience in African hospitality contexts rather than abstract philosophical ideals. By positioning African gastronomy as the mediating mechanism, the study articulates how ethical philosophies shape service behaviour, communal dining, and guest satisfaction. The resulting conceptual framework responds to gaps in hospitality scholarship by embedding indigeneous African ethics into service design and guest experience management, offering a culturally grounded model that extends existing hospitality theory and provides a platform for future empirical investigation.

Conclusion

This study advances hospitality scholarship by demonstrating the centrality of African ethical philosophies in shaping service delivery and guest experience. By integrating Ubuntu and Omoluabi within the context of African gastronomy, it illustrates how indigenous moral systems inform relational engagement, communal dining practices, and culturally authentic hospitality services. The proposed conceptual framework positions ethics and culture as active drivers of guest experience, offering an alternative to Western-centric models that emphasize operational efficiency while neglecting moral and cultural dimensions. African gastronomy functions as the mechanism through which ethical principles are translated into practice within hospitality settings. Ubuntu's focus on relationality and collective humanity, together with Omoluabi's emphasis on integrity, responsibility, and moral excellence, establishes a clear link between philosophical values and observable service behaviours, culinary practices, and experiential outcomes. This perspective reconceptualizes hospitality as a practice deeply embedded in cultural and ethical values, rather than merely operational efficiency.

The study further enriches theoretical discourse in hospitality by introducing constructs such as communal care, moral accountability, and culturally informed engagement into service design and guest experience research. It also provides a foundation for extending experiential consumption theory and service-dominant logic into non-Western contexts, highlighting the influence of indigenous value systems on service perception, satisfaction, and loyalty. Conceptually, the framework emphasizes the ability for hospitality operations and service design to be guided by ethical and philosophical principles, resulting in experiences that are morally coherent, culturally grounded, and socially meaningful. It

offers a structured basis for empirical testing and cross-cultural application, thereby strengthening theoretical development and informing management practice in global hospitality research.

Areas of Future Studies

Although this study establishes a conceptual integration of Ubuntu, Omoluabi ethics, African gastronomy, and guest experience in hospitality, several directions remain for future investigation. Empirical testing of the proposed framework is essential to examine how these ethical principles are enacted in diverse hospitality contexts and to quantify their effects on guest satisfaction, loyalty, and perceptions of authenticity. Quantitative research could assess the relative influence of Ubuntu and Omoluabi on service behaviors, communal dining practices, and experiential outcomes, while qualitative approaches could provide rich, contextualized accounts of staff and guest interactions within culturally grounded hospitality settings.

Further studies could explore the mediating role of African gastronomy in translating indigenous ethical frameworks into tangible guest experiences across different cultural and regional contexts. Comparative research could highlight variations in culinary traditions, commensal practices, and service norms across African countries, offering insights into region-specific applications of Ubuntu and Omoluabi in hospitality. Interdisciplinary investigations that integrate hospitality management, ethics, and cultural studies could examine how these philosophies inform emerging hospitality trends, including sustainable tourism, gastrodiplomacy, and digitally mediated culinary experiences. Additionally, future research could focus on the practical implementation of African ethical philosophies in staff training, service protocols, and brand positioning, evaluating how culturally embedded operational strategies impact both employee engagement and guest perceptions. Such studies would strengthen understanding of how indigenous value systems can inform hospitality practice globally while preserving cultural integrity and ethical coherence.

Recommendations

Objective One

To investigate the reflection of Ubuntu and Omoluabi ethics within African gastronomic practices in hospitality contexts.

The study recommends that hospitality organizations preserve and intentionally promote African gastronomic practices that reflect Ubuntu and Omoluabi values. Hotels, restaurants, and tourism establishments should incorporate communal dining traditions, indigenous food-sharing practices, storytelling, and culturally respectful hospitality rituals into their service offerings. These practices reflect Ubuntu's emphasis on shared humanity, empathy, and communal connection, as well as Omoluabi's focus on integrity, respect, and moral responsibility. Hospitality managers should also collaborate with local communities and cultural custodians to preserve indigenous culinary traditions and ensure that African ethical values remain visible

within contemporary hospitality experiences.

Objective Two

To examine the influence of these ethical principles on service conduct, communal dining, and guest satisfaction.

Based on the findings, hospitality organizations should integrate Ubuntu and Omoluabi principles into staff training, operational procedures, and customer service standards. Training programmes should emphasize empathy, attentiveness, inclusiveness, honesty, discipline, and respectful guest engagement. Ubuntu-driven service delivery can encourage emotionally supportive and relational interactions with guests, while Omoluabi ethics can strengthen professionalism, accountability, and ethical conduct among hospitality personnel. In addition, hospitality operators should design communal dining experiences that encourage social interaction, cultural participation, and shared experiences among guests. These practices can improve guest satisfaction, emotional engagement, authenticity, and loyalty by creating experiences that extend beyond transactional service encounters.

Objective Three

To develop a conceptual framework integrating indigenous African ethical philosophies into hospitality service design and experiential management.

The study recommends that hospitality organisations, educators, and policymakers adopt the conceptual framework developed in this research as a culturally grounded model for hospitality service design and guest experience management. Hospitality businesses should align their branding, experiential marketing, service protocols, and gastronomic offerings with Ubuntu and Omoluabi ethical values to create culturally authentic and ethically coherent hospitality experiences. The framework should also inform hospitality curriculum development, professional training, and policy formulation within tourism and hospitality sectors. Furthermore, future empirical studies should test and refine the framework across different hospitality settings to strengthen its practical application and contribution to hospitality theory and management practice.

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