



***The Lobby as a Living Room:
What Interior Design Innovations and Products do Luxury
Hotels Implement to Attract Guests to their Lobby?***

Bachelor Thesis for Obtaining the Degree
Bachelor of Business Administration
Tourism and Hospitality Management

Submitted to Prof. Dr. Dagmar Lund-Durlacher

Roxane Braun
0811533

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Affidavit

I hereby affirm that this Bachelor's Thesis represents my own written work and that I have used no sources and aids other than those indicated. All passages quoted from publications or paraphrased from these sources are properly cited and attributed.

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Executive Summary

The contemporary hotel is a current design development since the beginning of the 21st century, which considers the needs and demands of today's customers. This thesis concentrates on hotel lobby design in this current aspect. The paper illustrates the modern hotel lobby's definition, purposes, impacts, developments, design strategies and future trends. Furthermore, it will be elaborated how hotel managers and interior designers apply strategies and methods to make the hotel lobby a comfortable, attractive, and focal area for all hotel guests and visitors. Moreover, it will be found out how important the hotel lobby is to both the customer and the hotel, and how the hotel's brand can be experienced on the basis of the lobby design. It will be considered to which extent brands influence the lobby design strategy, in what way the designer him/herself is a brand, and what good hotel lobby design actually means. Most importantly, the thesis aims to show how it is possible to attract the guest to spend more time in the lobby to increase the guests' comfort and consumption and therefore the hotel's profit. Furthermore, it will be illustrated how the needs, wishes, and desires of the contemporary hotel guest are implemented in the hotel lobby design. In this regard the paper will demonstrate examples of luxury, boutique, lifestyle, and design hotels in major cities, which use innovative products and services in their lobby areas to offer everything the guests need to feel welcomed. The thesis ends with an analysis and interpretation of the visual construct of combining lobby design concepts with marketing strategies and a detailed discussion of the presented examples of innovative lobby design.

It was found out that a contemporary hotel lobby acts as a social hub of activities and a gathering place for social interactions. Therefore, it is essential as a hospitality business to adapt to the customers' needs and develop innovations and products to enhance the quality of the service environment. Successful innovative lobby design is a product of a creative idea, a well-designed plan, courage and implementation. Moreover, it needs to attract and stimulate a positive perception and experience towards the lobby, its products and services to create customer satisfaction. For that reason it is vital to combine lobby design concepts with services marketing strategies, when developing a successful lobby experience.

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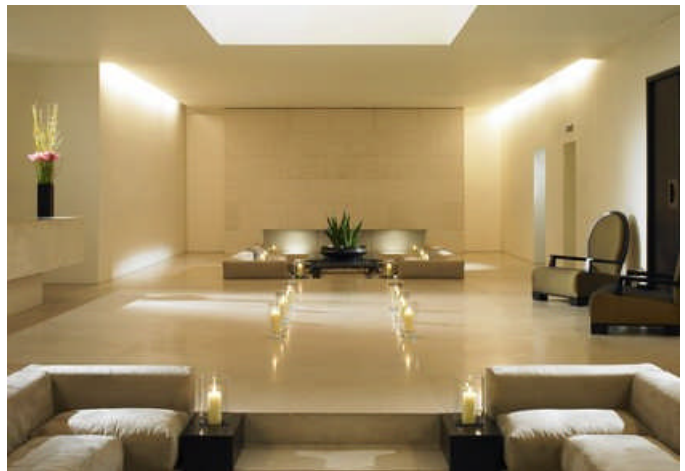
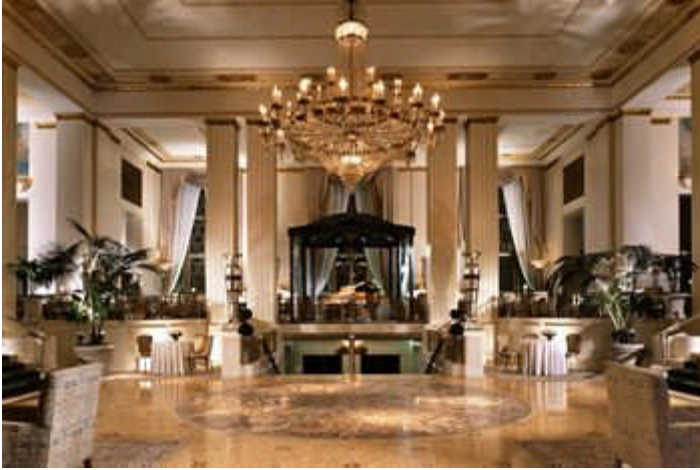
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1. Introduction

Hotel design is a result of socio-cultural changes, technological advancements, economic and political situations, and environmental factors. Those elements create the macro-environment of a hospitality business and strongly influence the customers' demands, wishes, and desires. (Bowie and Buttle, 2004, p.16-20) Therefore, hotel properties and marketers need to carefully observe and evaluate those transformations in order to offer the *"right product [or service], to the right customer, at the right time for the right price"* (Cross, 1997). This attentive behavior will lead to increased revenue and thus profit and success. Evidently, the micro-environment, which includes customers, employees, suppliers, intermediaries, competitors, and publics (Bowie and Buttle, 2004, p.20-21), has also an impact on hotel design but on a much smaller scale. So, if hotel design is being interpreted, it is not only about design, architecture, and property development, but much more. It is necessary to look into not so apparent topics, such as services marketing, consumer behavior, product development, and branding strategies.

The contemporary or new hotel is a current design development since the beginning of the 21st century, which considers the needs and demands of today's customers. This thesis concentrates on hotel lobby design in this current aspect. The paper illustrates the modern hotel lobby's definition, purposes, impacts, developments, design strategies and future trends. Furthermore, it will be elaborated how hotel managers and interior designers apply strategies and methods to make the hotel lobby a comfortable, attractive, and focal area for all hotel guests and visitors. Moreover, it will be found out how important the hotel lobby is to both the customer and the hotel, and how the hotel's brand can be experienced on the basis of the lobby design. It will be considered to which extent brands influence the lobby design strategy, in what way the designer him/herself is a brand, and what good hotel lobby design actually means. Most importantly, the thesis aims to show how it is possible to attract the guest to spend more time in the lobby to increase the guests' comfort and consumption and therefore the hotel's profit. Furthermore, it will be illustrated how the needs, wishes, and desires of the contemporary hotel guest are implemented in the hotel lobby design. In this regard the paper will demonstrate examples of luxury, boutique, lifestyle, and design hotels in major cities, which use innovative products and services in their lobby areas to offer everything the guests need to feel welcomed. The thesis ends with an analysis and interpretation of the visual construct of combining lobby design concepts with marketing strategies and a detailed discussion of the presented examples of innovative lobby design.

2. Problem Definition – Research Questions

Lots of researchers (Mundy, 2008; Lawson, 2007; Riewoldt, 2002; Collins, 2001; Curtis, 2001) defined a current trend of the importance of hotel lobbies and called them a social hub of activities, a gathering place for social interactions, and even living rooms. Since those characteristics of lobbies are a new and modern approach, further investigation and identification of contemporary hotel lobby design would be an interesting angle to look at. The hotel lobby is the first impression and message a guest receives from the hotel and needs therefore, a clear and expressive communication in design (Mundy, 2008; Collins, 2001; Berens, 1997). Finding out what kind of strategies, tactics, and concepts lie behind lobby design, will be elaborated in this paper. Furthermore, hotel lobbies are only a small part in the overall hotel development (Ransley and Ingram 2004; Rutes, 2001). For that reason, researchers have not put as much emphasize on interpreting lobby design as necessary, since they are the focal point of any hotel experience. Consequently, there is a lack of a comprehensive review and demonstration of existing contemporary lobby design examples, which this paper sees as its main goal. Moreover, lots of researchers have elaborated contemporary hotel design, but from various and diverse angles, which makes it difficult for the reader to combine it to an overall picture and understanding (Riewoldt, 2002; Curtis, 2001; Collins, 2001; Berens, 1997). This paper will try to clearly explain contemporary lobby design, its impacts, and future trends. Additionally, the thesis combines lobby design developments with a marketing aspect and strategies, which is a novel approach in research of this topic.

The thesis aims to answer several research questions. Starting with general questions such as *“What is a hotel lobby”* and *“What are the purposes and impacts of a hotel lobby?”* will give an overview of the background of the topic. Getting more precise when asking *“How is services marketing related to lobby design?”*, *“How do brands influence the design strategy?”*, *“Could a designer him/herself be seen as a brand?”*, *“What is good lobby design?”*, and *“What does the customer of the 21st century expect from lobby design?”* will combine the topic of lobby design with marketing strategies. The climax of this paper will be elaborated by means of the question *“Which innovations and products do luxury hotels implement to attract guests to their lobby?”*.

To be able to answer those research questions, it is essential to look beyond the obvious concepts, and combine various topics, such as Services Marketing, Consumer Behavior, Branding Strategies, and Product Development with more apparent subjects i.e. Architecture, Interior Design, and Property Development. This paper tries to combine the research questions, the main background of interior design and applying those on marketing concepts.

Due to the amount of research questions, the methodology of a literature review was considered to be the most appropriate one. The literature review contains of five main chapters, which elaborate and evaluate the background and give answers to the research questions. The analysis of this review will highlight major findings of the research questions, visualize the operationalization of lobby design together with marketing strategies, and analyze in detail the different lobby design concepts, which will be introduced in the literature review.

The framework of the whole thesis is limited to luxury city hotels, due to the financial opportunities in the luxurious hotel segment. The research and analysis of innovative lobby design should not be restricted by monetary issues. During the research process, further hotel categories, namely boutique, lifestyle, and design hotels, were added to the framework. However, the focus remained on luxurious, contemporary, and extraordinary lobby design of any of the abovementioned types of hotels to better illustrate innovative possibilities and challenges in this market segment.

Several limitations were faced during the research process. The most problematic restrictions are lack of literature and information precisely about lobby design. Usually, hotel lobbies were touched in subchapters, but did not offer the detailed descriptions and concepts, which were needed for a full interpretation. Furthermore, when collecting data for the chapter 3.4. *Lobby Design Concepts* on the Internet, mostly, only the corporate websites provided information about their lobbies. Therefore, presenting an objective review and analysis of the hotel lobbies was a major difficulty. Additionally, several hotels, which were necessary examples in the review, did not publish any facts about their hotel lobbies at all. For that reason, either personal perceptions of pictures or real-life experiences were used to better describe the concept and atmosphere of lobbies. Thus, the choice of innovative lobby design examples is very subjective and biased.

Another severe limitation was identifying an appropriate categorization of the hotels. Evidently, there are several defined ways to group hotels, for example star ratings, number or prize of rooms, type of hotels, etc., but during the research process modern hotel types, such as boutique, lifestyle and design hotels, were found and could hardly be categorized. Nowadays the boundaries between types of hotels get more and more blurred, since costs of rooms are not necessarily a categorization of quality and style anymore (refer to boutique, lifestyle, and design hotels). To be able to reasonably classify hotels throughout the thesis, the prize, location, and description of the hotel was taken into account.

Lastly, during the research process it was found out that literature solely explained types of design of hotel lobbies, but not the concepts behind them. As a result, the emergence of lobby design and marketing strategies and tactics cannot be sourced and rely on personal interpretation.

Conclusively, this paper synthesizes the defined problems, which are: a new trend and approach in lobby design; a major gap in literature concerning lobby design concepts and the importance of lobby design in regards to the overall hotel development; a lack of a comprehensive review of contemporary design; and a need of merging lobby design developments with marketing strategies.

3. Literature Review

3.1. The Hotel Lobby – Definitions, Purposes, and Impacts

Hotel lobbies are the hub, the center, the heartbeat of every hotel. (Lawson, 2007 p.199; Berens 1997 p.xiii, Curtis 2001, p.8) Lobbies are, depending on the building's architecture, the first interior place where hotel guests get acquainted with the hotel's style, ambience, service standards, and interior design. Furthermore, lobbies are, after entering the hotel's building, the initial point of communication and interaction between the hotel's staff and the guest. Therefore, a positive first impression is crucial and impacts the overall guests' perception and satisfaction. Lawson (2007, p.199) identified two main purposes of a hotel lobby: mostly the lobby is seen as a place of circulation, where guests enter and leave the building or are transferred to the various public areas in the hotel, such as banqueting and conference facilities, the Fitness Center (if it is open to the public), the various outlets (e.g. restaurants, bars, shops) and the guestrooms. Moreover, the lobby acts as a waiting and staging area. (Lawson, 2007, p.199) For that reason, sitting furniture (couches, fauteuils, sofas) or even a lobby lounge can be often found in the entrance hall. Additionally, the hotel lobby represents an area, in which service deliveries take place, for instance at the reception, Concierge, or Bell Captain's desk. The lastly mentioned examples refer to standard services and operations in a hotel, such as check in, check out, cashier functions, organization of transportation, recommendations of restaurants and attractions or general counseling. (Lawson, 2007, p.199) Since the lobby is the main area for guests and employees, it is essential that designers achieve a balance between the aesthetic interior design and operational needs to avoid too much human traffic, noise, and an inhibited flow of circulation. (Lawson 2007, p.213, 220; Collins, 2001, p.59; Mundy, 2008) If those risks are not recognized and anticipated in an early stage, not only the functional efficiency will be limited, but also the overall customer satisfaction will decrease and guests are very unlikely to spend more time in the lobby as necessary. Customer perceptions, experiences, and behavior will be discussed in more detail in a further paragraph of this chapter.

Hotel lobbies give guests a feeling of arrival to their travelling destination. (Berens, 1997, p.xiii) Berens (1997, p.xiii) even calls a hotel lobby "*a destination in itself*", meaning that entering a

hotel let the guest dive into another world and be impressed by the interior design, the atmosphere, and ambience. There are different guests coming to different hotels for various reasons, with different needs and wishes. (Curtis 2001, p.7) Depending on the purpose of travel, guests' necessities and desires should be recognized and implemented not only during a service delivery, but also in the lobby design. For a leisure traveler, for example, a relaxed, welcoming, warm, and extraordinary greeting is essential. Leisure guests want to experience something unusual and exotic, simply something that helps them to escape from their normal lives (refers, according to Curtis (2001, p.7) especially to Resort hotels). Business travelers though, need a much more efficient, effective, modern way of service, design, and equipment. Moreover, needs of travelers on a city break could be allocated in the middle of the two above mentioned examples of tourists. They want sincere and friendly service with a touch of the city's culture. (Curtis, 2001, p.7) It is undisputable that hotels need to define their target market to concentrate on a special segment to offer the needed services. Johnston and Clark (2008, p.57-59) elaborated that so called "*focused service operations*", which concentrate on a narrow range of offered services, tend to be more efficient and successful businesses. Curtis (2001, p.7) however, stated that the globalization and general trend towards a modern, high-tech life cause blurred boundaries between the defined target segments. This means that "*on the one side it encourages guests to demand a mix of services that allows a more enriched "experience" of the hotel, and on the other, it encourages the hotel to offer a fusion of functions*" (Curtis, 2001, p.7). This concept also has to be reflected in the lobby design. Designers and managers have to identify appropriate services, which can be offered near the reception area, so that guests come back to the lobby, spend time there and use the offered services and facilities.

Mundy (2008) defines a lobby as a "*multi-purpose space*", referring to the various services, which are offered in a lobby. The standard operational services at the front desk and supportive desks, such as for example the Bell Captain, were already mentioned previously. Other common services are, as Lawson (2007, p. 203) has identified, a lobby lounge, cloakrooms, toilets, public and house telephones, shops, display cases, vitrines, brochure racks for hotel and local information, or notice boards. Moreover, Mundy (2008) added internet access, televisions, and convenience/retail stores as service offers for guests in the hotel lobby. A more detailed analysis of products and services, which could be found in the hotel lobby and real-life examples, will be displayed in chapter 3.4. *Lobby Design Concepts*.

Berens (1997, p.xiii) defines: "*Lobbies are where public and private worlds meet.*" This statement can be understood as a guideline to success of a good lobby design. Lobbies are not only an area of arrival, but a place to network and socialize for in-house and outside guests (visitors) (a detailed elaboration of importance of lobbies can be found in chapter 3.2. *Hotel Lobby's Development*). Therefore, it is difficult to find a good harmonization between "*openness and*

exclusivity” (Berens, 1997, p.xiii), meaning that hotels and their lobbies should be well integrated in their surrounded environment, but also deliver an atmosphere of a closed entity – a “*safe haven*” (Mundy, 2008, p.45) – and engage guests to dive into another world. If this principle is well understood and applied by the hotel, it will become part of the urban landscape and people come to the hotel “*to see and to be seen*”. (Berens, 1997, p.xv) This will respectively result in a good reputation and image for the hotel.

From a more Marketing oriented perspective, hotel lobbies can be defined as a “*physical facility in which the service is performed, delivered, and consumed*” (Zeithaml et al., 2006, p.317). As the traditional marketing mix (Place, Price, Product, Promotion) was expanded for services, the importance of physical evidence for the customer experience (amongst Process and People) was identified. (Zeithaml et al., 2006, p.25-27) The term physical evidence describes the “*environment [also called physical facility or servicescape] in which the service is delivered and in which the firm and the customer interact...*” (Zeithaml et al. 2006, p.217) Zeithaml et al. (2006, ch.11) found out that physical evidence has a significant impact on how the customer feels whilst spending time in the servicescape. Moreover, the customer perception of the brand and organization and the overall customer satisfaction can be influenced by strategic management of the service facility.

The following theories will help to connect this marketing angle with the aspect of hotel lobby design (a detailed interpretation and analysis of this topic will be elaborated in the chapter 4. *Analysis – Discussion – Interpretation*): Since hotel services provide the customer with a highly intangible product, namely a (subjective) experience, the physical evidence helps the customer to evaluate the service prior, during, and after the consumption and to add an emotional connection to the organization (positive or negative). (Zeithaml et al. 2006, p.317-320) In other words: Depending on how comfortable the customer feels in the environment of the service delivery (the lobby), the more likely the customer is satisfied, will spend more time in that area and has a positive opinion of the hotel. Naturally, the physical evidence not only impacts the customers’ perspective of an organization, but also the employees’ one. If the servicescape is not well managed and designed, it is more difficult for employees to work efficiently and effectively, to maintain the service standards and feel comfortable and passionate about their duties at the same time. (Zeithaml et al. 2006, p. 322) In a servicescape there is a high social interaction between customers and employees, as well as among customers themselves. (Zeithaml et al., p.329) Therefore, it is advisable not to underestimate the impacts of the service environment, which strongly influences the nature, quality, and duration of the social interactions (Zeithaml et al., 2006, p.322, 329). From a company’s perspective it is crucial to please the internal (employees) and external (customers) parties of those interactions to create satisfaction and in the long-run profitability. Furthermore, service organizations may control or

influence the customers' and employees' experience by managing the components of a service environment.

Bitner (1992) identified three different dimensions of servicescapes, which are often referred to by researchers (for example: Zeithaml et al. 2006; Kasper et al. 2006): *Ambient Conditions*, *Spatial Layout and Functionality*, and *Signs, Symbols and Artifacts*.

Ambient Conditions refer to characteristics or conditions in the background of the service facility, such as temperature, lighting, noise, music, scent, and color. (Bitner 1992, Zeithaml et al. 2006, p.334) All those mentioned elements are perceived by the customer's senses and may therefore manipulate his/her way of responding to the servicescape. (Kasper et al. 2006, p.391)

Kotler et al. (2006, p.308-310) linked the atmosphere of a servicescape to this sensory experience. It was elaborate that sight, sound, scent and touch are the "*main sensory channels for atmosphere*" (Kotler et al., 2006, p.308), which are categorized in visual (color, brightness, size, shape), aural (volume, pitch), olfactory (scent, freshness), and tactile (softness, smoothness, temperature) dimensions of atmosphere. Such sensory terms could help to characterize and interpret the nature of servicescapes. (Kotler et al., 2006, p.308)

In the context of customer response to servicescape, it has to be added that Mehrabian and Russell (1974, cited by Kasper et al. 2006, p.390) classified two ways of reactions to a servicescape, also termed *individual behavioral responses*. The *approach behavior* refers to a positive mindset of the customer towards the environment and arouses a desire to stay and explore this setting and get involved into social interactions and exchange. *Avoidance behavior* however, explains the opposite side of a customer's reaction to a servicescape, to be precise the wish to spend as little time as possible in this surrounding due to an unpleasant feeling whilst spending time in the service facility. (Kasper et al. 2006, p. 390, Zeithaml et al. 2006, p. 328) So, ambient conditions are, if applied in an attracting and stimulating way, very powerful indicators for a positive service experience. Bitner (1992, p.66, cited by Zeithaml et al. 2006, p.335-338) elaborated three situations, in which those conditions even have greater and more notable effects on the customer's or employee's response: The aforementioned background elements (temperature, noise, odor, music, air quality, etc.) may be especially remarkable, positively or negatively, when they appear intensely, for example when the music playing is extremely loud, or the temperature is extraordinary hot, etc. Moreover, the impacts of ambient conditions get more recognized when the customer is spending a certain amount of time in the service environment. The third significant condition is when the customer's expectations do not match with the actual setting of the environment (e.g. too gloomy lighting). It has to be mentioned here that every individual reacts differently on various conditions. "*Personality differences as well as temporary conditions such as moods or the purpose for being there* [in the

service environment] *can cause variations in how people respond to the servicescape.*" (Mehrabian and Russell 1974, Russell and Snodgrass 1987, both cited by Zeithaml et al. 2006, p.333)

The second environmental dimension of servicescapes is *spatial layout and functionality*. (Bitner 1992) Service facilities are created to achieve a specific purpose and satisfy certain needs of customers and employees. In this context spatial layout and functionality are two essential factors in designing the service environment to achieve people's satisfaction. Zeithaml et al. (2006, p.336) explained spatial layout as "*the ways in which machinery, equipment, and furnishings are arranged, the size and shape of those items, and the spatial relationships among them.*" Kasper et al. (2006, p.392) added that the use of spatial elements could let the environment be experienced in diverse ways. For example depending on the age or design of the furniture, a different atmosphere can be created. The functionality of the above mentioned items have similar impacts on the service experience and should make service operations and processes easier to aim customer and employee goals. (Kasper et al. 2006, p.392, Zeithaml et al. 2006, p.336) Spatial layout and functionality is especially important when the customer or employee has to fulfill complex duties or is under time pressure. (Bitner 1992, p.66)

Signs, Symbols, and Artifacts (Bitner 1992, Zeithaml et al. 2006), also called *Tangible Service Evidence* (Kasper 2006), is the third dimension of how servicescapes may influence service experiences. A service environment generally offers *implicit* and *explicit* signals to the customer. (Zeithaml et al. 2006, p.336) *Explicit* signals, explained as direct communication between service organization and consumer by Kasper et al. (2006, p.392-393), may refer to signs, which are shown inside or outside the servicescape, e.g. name of a company, directions, or information. (Zeithaml et al. 2006, p.336) Sufficient and well explained signs reduce an obstructed circulation in the service facility and stress. For that reason, customer's satisfaction and the organization's image may be influenced. (Zeithaml et al. 2006, p.336) A tool for indirect communication to the customers and employees (Kasper et al. 2006, p.393) are *implicit* signals (symbols and artifacts), such as quality construction materials, artwork, photographs, floor coverings, or colors. (Zeithaml et al. 2006, p.336) According to Bitner (1992, p.66), those environmental symbols and artifacts may "*communicate symbolic meaning and create an overall aesthetic impression*". This statement shows that the message behind signs, symbols and artifacts is crucial for representing the brand, creating a competitive advantage and a good first impression to the customer.

All those three dimensions of a servicescape may influence customer's behavior in a service environment. It is crucial for the success of a servicescape that designers and developers look at it

from a customer's perspective to get a holistic view of the service environment. The total experience of a servicescape includes the customer's general perception, behavior, satisfaction, and respectively a mixture of the three dimensions: ambient conditions, spatial layout, and signs, symbols and artifacts. (Bitner 1992, p65; Lovelock 2009, p.266)

Conclusively, hotel lobbies are servicescapes, which can influence guests' and employee's satisfaction by numerous cues, such as the ambience, use of space, signs, and symbols. Depending on the person's personality traits and current temporary condition, the service environment (the lobby) can be perceived differently and impacts the length of interactions with other parties, the length of stay in that environment, how the guest perceives the company, and finally the guest's satisfaction. Considering all these factors, physical evidence strategies should be applied and products and innovations implemented in the hotel lobby design to enhance customer's satisfaction and correspondingly profitability for the hotel.

3.2. Hotel Lobby's Development

The previous chapter provided a first insight of hotel lobby's definitions, purposes, and impacts on customers. This section however, will concentrate on the change of lobbies' importance, design strategies, and appearance over the last decades, by means of visual aids. Furthermore, it gives an insight of how a designer plans and works on lobby design strategies and limitations, which may occur. The chapter ends with a chronological overview and milestones focusing on the changes of hotel and lobby design.

3.2.1. Lobby Design – A Designer's Perspective

Ransely and Ingram (2004, p.44) defined design by means of the following statement: *“Design incorporates the planning, drawing and arrangements of properties, and the design process represents the operationalization of a project from ideas to drawings and reality.”* Design is a very powerful and influential tool to manipulate customer's behavior, experience, and satisfaction, as it was elaborated in the previous chapter 3.1. *The Hotel Lobby – Definitions, Purposes, and Impacts.* However, design is a hugely subjective and individual perception and is strongly dependent on different tastes, styles, and trends. Therefore, it is a rather difficult task for a designer to create a successful service environment. This subchapter will explain the role of a designer, the components of design, and important lobby design features.

A designer needs to work closely together with the owners, managers, or organizations of the property, as well as with the development and brand management teams. It is essential for the designer to know the framework, the conditions, and any standardized branded design elements before the planning process begins. (Ransley and Ingram 2004, pp. 43-45) Especially for hotel chain properties, the designer needs to understand that *“the commercial aims of the design process should be to maximize the capital investment and financial return of the owners, rather than to satisfy the designer’s artistic sensibilities”*. (Ransley and Ingram 2004, p.44) However, this approach has changed a bit, since boutique and design hotels strongly emphasize on individual, special, and artistic design. Naturally, budget is an indispensable concern in the design process of every type of hotel property. Successful hotel chains tend to have more budgets for the hotel designs; however, more standardized approaches are welcomed in such properties. Wealthy individual owners usually focus on a more extravagant design approach, whereas independent properties usually have fewer budgets available. (Bowie and Buttle, 2004) Most importantly, the budget needs to be defined before starting the design process, as it is a necessary and vital task for any hotel property. Besides the budget, the most important aspect when creating the hotel’s design is to focus on the needs and desires of the customers. Prioritizing the customers’ perspectives will lead to a financial success due to customer acceptance and repeat purchase behavior. (Ransley and Ingram, 2004, p.44) It can be summarized that a designer is restricted in his/her work in three main areas: the *location and site considerations* (such as space, surroundings, type of premises, development constraints), the *market and operator requirements* (facilities, mode of use, company policy, extent to standardization), and thirdly, *cost and time* (level of sophistication, cost limits, investment criteria, program requirements). A successful designer though, is capable to develop solutions despite the various constraints, which may occur. (Lawson 2007, p.39; Ransley and Ingram 2004, p.47) After identifying and elaborating organizational issues and a basic framework of the concept, the designer may start with the design process. His/her core responsibilities include: space planning, form and color, finishes and durability, lighting and audio-visual systems, technology, and costs. The designer is the link *“between the building form, structure, building services, and the operations, in order to turn the concept into reality.”* (Ransley and Ingram, 2004, p.45).

The most crucial task of a designer is to create a balance between image, style, operating efficiency, and customer comfort. *“Image and style are the means through which an organization communicates messages, such as brand identity or quality, while operating efficiency and customer comfort are more tangible operational considerations.”* (Ransley and Ingram, 2004, p.44)

Generally, design includes the exterior and interior environment; however, this paper concentrates on lobby design, thus creating the interior environment. When developing a hotel

lobby, a designer needs to take the following components and features into consideration: the size, the design, the planning, materials, and engineering services. (Lawson 2007, pp.199-205)

As mentioned in the previous chapter 3.1. *The Hotel Lobby – Definitions, Purposes, and Impacts*, the hotel lobby represents the hub of hotel activities and acts as a passage way to public facilities or guestrooms, as a waiting area or social gathering place. The concept of “shared space” would include bars, lounges, retail shops, etc. in the lobby area and, thus, adds additional area, usage, and activity to the lobby. (Rutes et al. 2001, p.283) The size of the hotel lobby depends on the dimension and category of the overall property. As a rule of thumb, the size of the lobby area of a city hotel, for example, can be calculated as 1m² / room (this excludes back office space). (Lawson, 2007, pp.199-200)

The second component of lobby design is the design itself, which defines the style and character of a hotel. Before the designer can decide which furniture, equipment, color schemes, fabrics etc. the lobby should have, it is essential to define the atmosphere and image the lobby should characterize. Moreover, the lobby should be a representation of the hotel brand through the before mentioned three dimensions of the servicescape: ambient conditions, spatial layout & Functionality, and Signs, Symbols and Artifacts (chapter 3.1. *The Lobby Design – Definitions, Purposes, and Impacts*). Moreover, the destination should be illustrated in the lobby through design, local artwork, colors, representative features, etc. (Lawson 2007, pp.199-201)

Planning objectives include considering the front desk, bell desk, and seating area, entrances, office access, guest elevators, and defining circulation routes in the lobby. Those requirements are usually comparable to all types of hotel properties, but may differ according to the lobby’s offers (retail space, cloakrooms, other service, which are optional). (Rutes et al. 2001, p.284)

The fourth component of lobby design are materials. Lobby materials include flooring materials, walls, ceiling construction, and space separations. Their style and layout need to be consistent with the overall design image. Due to the need of flexible space usage and relatively frequent change of materials (soft refurbishments every 3-5 years, hard refurbishments every 10 years), they should be easy to move, to work on, or be exchangeable. Furthermore, fire safety regulations need to be taken into account. (Lawson 2007, p.204)

Engineering services and equipment, such as lighting, heating, ventilation, air-conditioning, fire protection, security, or electricity, need to be cautiously incorporated into the lobby design. Furthermore, efficiency and working operations will be influenced by the positioning of the equipment and is therefore a vital part in the lobby design. (Lawson 2007, pp.204-205)

Conclusively, an interior designer needs to decide on scale, atmosphere, and image of the lobby within certain non-controllable constraints. Design could be explained as the tangible message

of the atmosphere and ambience in the hospitality product. Furthermore, the role of a designer is not only being creative, innovative, and an artist in terms of choosing colors, furniture, materials, accessories etc., but also looking at other components, such as circulation patterns, directions, luggage handling, lighting, security, fire protection, just to mention a few. The most important and also successful task for a designer is to balance visual impacts and functionality. Collins (2001, p.60) stated in this regard: *“The task, then, for the designer of the new hotel lobby is to be innovative and imaginative, and above all, to be able to juggle the issues of budget, functionality, space and volume in order to create the maximum impact.”*

3.2.2. Chronological Development of Hotel and Lobby Design

3.2.2.1. The Beginnings – The 18th and 19th Century

The core idea of hotels, namely staying a night away from home, goes back to ancient times. In ancient Greece or Italy for example, so-called boarding houses, as well as resorts at mineral and hot springs, already existed. In the Middle Ages abbeys and monasteries accommodated travelling people. Inns, guest houses and clubhouses were early European hotels focusing on the necessity of a place to sleep and continue the travel on the next day. (Rutes et al. 2001, pp.7-8; Collins 2001, p.13)

Historical events and revolutions have an impact on the population and usually cause a social and political change. (Collins 2001, p.14) This was the case after the Industrial Revolution in the 1790s, which aroused hotels in Europe and USA. (Rutes et al. 2001, p.8) Lots of castles and palaces in Europe were converted to hotels for the upper society. This was the beginning of the so-called Grand Hotels. (Collins 2001, p.14) Those hotels were designed with opulent, pompous, lavish elements and satisfied a completely different need of travelers, namely the need to escape from everyday life. (Collins 2001, pp. 13-14)

The 19th century offered new industrial and social inventions, such as railroads, and big events, for instance International Exhibitions (e.g. in Paris 1889), which stimulated developers to build hotels in that area. (Rutes et al. 2001, p.9; Collins 2001, p.15) The pioneer Thomas Cook revolutionized foreign travel, when he first introduced guided tours to the, mostly privileged, population. (Collins 2001, p.17) Other tour operators followed and revealed thus foreign travel to a broader, more ordinary audience. (Collins 2001, p.17) Due to this increased interest of other countries and cultures, souvenirs, paintings, and ideas were taken back home from travels and enhanced therefore, the trend of neoclassicism in the hotel design. (Collins 2001, pp. 15-16)

3.2.2.2. Hotel Booms – The 20th Century

As elaborated and evaluated in the chapter 3.1. *The Hotel Lobby – Definitions, Purposes, and Impacts*, the hotel lobby defines the style, ambience and image of the hotel and creates the first and memorable impression to a hotel guest. This concept was already known and followed in the beginning of the twentieth century. Around 1900 and in the 1910s, the hotels' entrances and lobbies were of an elegant and exquisite style, but did not overwhelm the guest. This conservative lobby design approach could be seen as noble reserve.

In the 1920s and 1930s however, the so-called Grand Hotels, implemented pompous, glamorous and extravagant front entrances and lobbies without hesitating of presenting dramatic and lavish design elements. (Rutes et al. 2001, p.24) This phenomenon is defined by Rutes et al. (2001, p.10) as the *"hotel boom #1"* and was promoted by the economic prosperity during those years. The lobby as a place *"to see and to be seen"* (Berens 1997, p. xv) was the motto of hotel lobbies at that time. In contrast to the Grand Hotels, the first designer hotels were opened during the 1920s, when a new style conquered the designers' world after the exhibition (Exposition des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes) in Paris in 1925. The novel style called Art Deco was modern, innovative, and an accepted direction of design liked by a broad audience. (Berens 1997, p.103) Unfortunately, most of the renowned hotels from that time were refurbished and updated during the next decades of the twentieth century, such as the Waldorf-Astoria in New York City (see Image 1, p.11). Remaining Art Deco design elements can be experienced partly in the exterior architecture and the lobby of the hotel. (Berens, 1997, p.104) As history plays an essential role on customers' needs and behavior, the 1930s were difficult times for the world's population due to the Great Depression and the Prohibition. (Rutes et al. 2001, p.10) Therefore, the hype of enormous striking and ostentatious public areas faded and the trend of luxurious private rooms and suites became more popular. However, the renovation of the new Waldorf-Astoria in New York City continued during that time and opened its doors in 1931 (see Image 1, p.11). This event was a renaissance for the extensively designed hotel lobbies. (Rutes et al. 2001, p.24) After the calm years in the 1940s, Rutes et al. (2001, p.10) identified the second hotel boom in the 1950s due to *"expanded education and mass travel"*. This decade can be summarized as an improvement mainly for the resort industry because of an extensive demand of summer holidays.

One of the milestones in lobby design, started in the 1960s, to be precise in 1967, when the Hyatt Regency Atlanta (see Image 6, p.11) implemented a stunning atrium design. (Rutes et al. 2001, p.24, 283) The lobby atrium gives the guest a feeling of openness and freedom due to the extremely high ceilings and a *"wow-effect"* because of such an extraordinary architecture. Until today, Hyatt hotels tend to follow this design strategy, as it can be seen at the Grand Hyatt Shanghai (built in 2000), which records the tallest atrium in the world. (Rutes et al. 2001, p.210) Certainly, other hotels

copied this new kind of *“dramatic form of downtown lobby”* design. (Rutes et al. 2001, p.24) Until then, so in the 1950s and 1960s, there was a trend towards smaller, economical lobbies. The 1970s though, let the impressive, big lobby design revive not only in city hotels, but also in resort, suburban and airport hotels. (Rutes et al. 2001, p.283) Moreover, this decade enhanced hotel expansions to the Middle East because of oil prosperity and the Chinese market due to the opening to foreign tourists. (Rutes et al. 2001, p.10, 282) Furthermore, it became quite popular to renovate old hotel properties.

The 1980s exhibit an extensive decade of new hotels around the globe and therefore the third hotel boom, as Rutes et al. (2001, p.11) had evaluated. Since the hotel lobby became open, grand, and standardized, especially in chain hotels built throughout the 1970s, this development had a rather negative impact on the customers’ perception in the 1980s and 1990s, because they felt a lack of individualism and warmth. For that reason, there was a new trend coming up in the last two decades of the twentieth century. Developers and designers focused *“on more intimate interior spaces, especially in the super-luxury, all-suite, and conference categories”* (Rutes et al. 2001, p.283). Moreover, the importance of the *“interior budgets [shifted to] high-quality materials, lighting, and artwork to achieve a sense of grandeur”* (Rutes et al. 2001, p.24).

Another milestone in the hotel design happened in 1984, when the term *“Boutique hotel”* was mentioned for the first time by Ian Schrager and his later partner Steve Rubell. (Rutes et al. 2001, p.26) Ian Schrager and the interior designer Andrée Putman re-designed the *“Morgans”* Hotel in New York City, and was thus the *“first hotel to emphasize the experience of hotel design from the inside”* (Curtis 2001, p.8). This was a completely new concept of hotel design, *“characterized by personalized service and home-away-from-home ambiance in a setting of timeless elegance”* (Madison Group LLC). Boutique hotels in general were in the last decades of the twentieth century a very trendy way to combine the following aspects in one hotel: *“fashion, glamour, style, chic, hip, flair, elegant, and cool”* (Rutes et al. 2001, p.27). It is interesting to mention here that the lobby at *“Morgans”* was not designed as the centre of attraction to the hotel guest at all. It was rather considered to be an entrance and circulation hall. The importance of lobbies was recognized in the following decade.

In the late 1980s the focus on an individual, outstanding, and fashionable approach to hotel design was continued and designers emphasized on a modern, cutting-edge style, combining the comfortable and extraordinary in the hotel experience. The difference to the progressive style change in the 1920s, mentioned earlier in this chapter, lies in the extraordinary and extreme provocation of the 1980s and 90s. Designers, hotel owners and managers took a risk when implementing the new approach, as it was unknown how the customer will react on the design experience. (Berens 1997, p.105) A significant example of boutique hotels of the 1990s is *“The*

Hempel” in London (see Image 3, p.11), which provocatively demonstrated a new kind of lobby design by the British Designer Anouska Hempel. (Collins 2001, p.60) The Hempel Hotel’s website (The Hempel Hotel, 2011) explains the design as “*stylish, sleek, and exceptional original*” focusing on the Zen minimalism, special use of lighting and Cubist elements. Furthermore, the website highlights the ambience as being “*warm and inviting*”.

Besides Andrée Putman and Anouska Hemple, the designer Philippe Starck started his successful career at that time with a cooperation with Ian Schrager. Their first project was in London, designing the ... He has developed several projects together with Ian Schrager, such as the Royalton in New York City, St Martins Lane or the Sanderson, both located London. One of Starck’s hotel projects in New York City, The Hudson Hotel, will be described in detail in the chapter 3.4. *Lobby Design Concepts*. (Morgan Group LLC. 2004-2011. *Luxury Hotels by Morgans Hotel Group: Official Site*)

The approach of creating a warm, cozy, homelike, and inviting lobby started in the end of the 1990s when the new Starwood boutique brand “W” was launched (1998) and will be discussed in more detail in the following subchapter (2.2.2.3. *Contemporary Design – The 21st Century*).

In summary, lobby design has undergone lots of trends, hypes and re-inventions in the twentieth century. Nevertheless, it is undisputable that lobbies capture the guests from their first second they have entered the hotel and are therefore a crucial part of the hotel overall experience.

3.2.2.3. Contemporary Design – The 21st Century

The more individualized and sophisticated customers’ needs and expectations become, the more difficult it is to satisfy those. Several opinions or different tastes result in numerous outcomes and outputs of designs, service offers, and concepts. Lots of discussion is going on in the literature about what is contemporary design and what does the customer of the 21st century really want and need. This subchapter tries to give an overview of various views, beliefs and interpretations of contemporary hotel lobby design.

The hospitality industry is very heterogeneous in its development, design, and trends. In other words, diversity is one of the industry’s major characteristics. (Kretschmar-Joehnk and Joehnk, 2009, p.11) Several books, which were found during the research process, focused on various hotel design themes, which may help to better understand the diversity and the difficulty to categorize contemporary hotel designs. For example: Curtis (2001) broke down her book in the following main chapters: “the contemporary city” (“city hotels with subtle and luxurious work”), “Intimate”, “Hotel

as a Theatre”, “New for Old: Adaptive re-use”, or “new classics”. Riewoldt (2002) however, focused on “ascetic modernism”, “nostalgic opulence”, “extravagant fantasy” and “exotic exclusivity”. Those various ways of labeling contemporary hotel design show that finding suitable categories in this context is a rather difficult task to do. Especially nowadays as limitations, boundaries, or restrictions in design development decrease, and therefore opportunities, challenges, and respectively diversity increase.

Kretschmar-Joehnk and Joehnk (2009, p.7) summarized that the success of contemporary design lies in the *“credibility and authenticity of a product’s story”*. Moreover, it tries to avoid *“tinsel and kitsch”* and focuses on pureness, truth and beauty (Kretschmar-Joehnk and Joehnk, 2009, p.7). Contemporary design is about creative ideas that emotionally engage the customers’ imaginations to the design and the surroundings. (Kretschmar-Joehnk and Joehnk, 2009, p.7) Riewoldt (2002, p.6) used the following metaphor to describe contemporary hotel design: *“Today’s hotel scene is like a box of chocolates – full of delightful confections, which present business travelers and holidaymakers alike with deliciously agonizing choices.”* This statement underlines the aforementioned main characteristic of the modern hotel industry, namely diversity. Collins (2001, p.14) also highlights the consideration of diversity in design, architecture, and service, but broadens the idea of contemporary design by saying that the mutual thought of the modern hotel is escapism. It is further explained that this factor not only describes the customer’s wish to flee from everyday life, but also let the guest dive into another world by experiencing a new, uncommon lifestyle. Riewoldt (2002, p.7) goes further in this context and states that the *“hotel becomes a stage, a film set, a place where guests can enact their desires and learn more about themselves”*. Ian Schrager, who coined the term “boutique hotels” in the 1980s, compared the various areas at a hotel with a play: *“the lobby is the prelude, the first act of the hotel’s drama, which has its finale in the individual guest rooms”*. (Riewoldt 2002, p.9)

Due to the extraordinary media influence of our fantasy, imagination, creativity, and perception, our expectations towards the real world have changed too (refer to an overload and saturation of customers’ senses). The customer of the 21st century needs entertainment, excitement, style, fashion, and technology on the one hand, and tranquility, wellness, calmness, and indulgence on the other. Combining those customers’ needs and desires under one roof, the contemporary hotel is built. (Riewoldt 2002, pp.6-7) The modern customer wants to be embedded in an emotional travel of senses, powerful images and pure expressiveness. Those elements are significant components of contemporary design. (Riewoldt 2002, p.8)

Another essential development in contemporary design is the hotel building itself. It is considered to be outdated to build a single-use hotel, which is fully utilized for accommodation and

conference purposes. Nowadays, hotels are part of the urban surrounding and act as a center of attraction of the city, where outside guests can meet, network, socialize, and enjoy their time. (Riewoldt 2002, p.10) There are only a few traditional and conservative city hotels, which remain the core idea of luxurious privacy, separated from any contact to the outside environment.

One of the most crucial aspects of contemporary design is that hotel design and especially lobby design tries to embrace the local culture and thus submits the exterior message into the interior, meaning the aim is to give the interior design a touch of the local culture, the hotel is surrounded of.

Conclusively, contemporary design is an interplay between creating an emotional adventure and a creative experience by letting in the natural surrounding, e.g. natural lighting, soft/earthy color schemes, and most importantly the culture itself. There are exceptions to the rule: certainly, creating an extraordinary and unusual experience needs remarkable, exceptional, or even bizarre elements. Nevertheless, essential is that the overall hotel design follows a consistency in every aspect in the hotel, such as design, furniture, equipment, as well as service operations.

3.3. Design vs. Brand

As elaborated in chapter 3.1. *The Hotel Lobby – Definitions, Purposes, and Impacts*, knowing, understanding, and reacting to the customer experience and behavior are crucial steps on the way to success. This section of the thesis' literature review concentrates on the importance of brands in design development, how brands influence the design strategy, in what way the designer is a brand him/herself, and what good hotel and lobby design actually means.

Chapter 3.2. *Hotel Lobby's Development* elaborated that especially in the 1970s hotel chains invented a new design strategy. The idea was to create a standardized, identifiable, global design to better position the company in the customers' minds. The thought behind it was that whenever and wherever the guest enters a particular hotel company, he/she will immediately recognize the brand. Good examples of this phenomenon were Hilton and Sheraton hotels. (Ransley and Ingram 2004, p.267) This approach has vanished in the last two decades, as it will be described in next paragraphs.

In this context it is advisable to take a deeper look into marketing strategies. A brand is referred to or characterized by a certain name, term, sign, symbol, design, or a mixture of those components to better classify companies' products and services and differentiate them on the market. (Kotler et al., 2006, p.315) "A brand is a critical component of what a company stands for. It implies trust, consistency, and a defined set of expectations" (Kotler et al., 2006, p.316). The concept

of branding, considered to be essential for product identity and recognition, is a useful strategy not only to increase brand awareness and brand loyalty, but correspondingly also sales volume. (Ransley and Ingram 2004, p.268; Lovelock et al. 2009) Branding is about distributing the company's values, mission, and vision to employees and customers. (Kotler et al, 2006, p.316)

Due to the effect of globalization, there is a tendency, recognized in the last twenty years, towards creating global brands, especially in the hotel chain segment. The key to success in this regard is primarily identified by a consistent brand image, service delivery of both the tangible product and services, and affordable prices dependent on the target market. Since luxury and upscale hotels are highly interactive servicescapes, it is especially difficult to manage a global consistency throughout the hotel chain. Therefore, standardized processes, trainings of procedures, scripts for employees, fragmented tasks, and shared credos and values were developed to recruit, train, and retain staff on an international basis. (Ransley and Ingram 2004, p.268-269) In contrast to standardized chain hotels, boutique and design hotels, which were first introduced in the 1980s, are individual, personalized, and modern properties, focusing on the customer's experience and adventure during their stay (refer to chapter 3.2.2.3. *Contemporary Design*). Those types of hotels are not eager to be global brands, but rather emphasize on being an attractive brand in a city – a magnet where not only overnight guests, but also local visitors may enjoy the experience. It has to be added that conservative hotel chains, as well as boutique and design hotels have defined an important focus on cultural diversity and appreciation of the local culture in the last decade. This approach is enhanced by recruiting and training local staff, active engagement in the local community or developing products, which can be produced in the region. (Ransley and Ingram 2004, pp.268-269) This commitment, which is also an element of the corporate responsibility, then becomes part of the brand's philosophy as well as the brand experience. The trend of acknowledging the local environment and a regional touch can often be found in the hotel's exterior and interior design as well (refer to chapter 3.2.1. *Lobby Design – A Designer's Perspective*).

The popularity of boutique hotels caught the attention of hotel chains, which try to refurbish their conservative, standardized image by creating endorsed brands, such as Starwood Hotels & Resorts or the Hyatt Corporation. The W in New York City was initially a unique concept and individual property, which then expanded to numerous cities and is now part of the Starwood Group. (Rutes et al 2001, p.31; Lovelock et al. 2009, pp.97-98) Another approach can be identified, as boutique hotels merge and create their own boutique chains, such as the Morgans Hotel Group, Malmaison, and others. (Rutes et al 2001, p.31) Due to the movement to individualistic, personalized, fashionable, and hip brand experiences, new job positions in hospitality organizations were created. Brand managers, brand officers and environmental psychologists have gained in importance and develop, create, and market the brand experience. Those employees are usually members of the

corporate headquarter and work closely together with the designers, architects, and developers during the pre-opening phase of hotels. Whether the brand has a significant impact on the design or not, evidently depends on the hotel's strategy. W Hotels, for example, emphasize on a strong recognition of the brand in the public areas of their hotels. (Del Campo, 2010) However, individual boutique hotels may focus on the exceptional design and use this for their brand positioning strategy.

Boutique hotels sprout everywhere today. It is unquestionable that this trend will continue and the importance of the designer's name will have significant influence on the brand overall experience. Philippe Starck, Anouska Hempel, Ian Schrager, and Andrée Putman set very successful examples of how the work of a designer can be acknowledged and marketed. The advantage of the designer's work is that it is unique, individual, and off the beaten track, which exactly reflects the idea of contemporary design (refer to chapter 3.2.2.3. *Contemporary Design*). (Berens 1997, p.103) *"Designers of the new hotel tend to use the lobby as a kind of manifesto for their design intentions in a particular project; it becomes a shorthand statement of the hotel's style."* (Collins, 2001, p.60) Another novel and remarkable approach are Fashion Designer Hotels. Armani, Bulgari, Missoni, Versace are just a few examples of fashion designers conquering the hospitality world. (Coggins, 2009)

Talking about design, brands, and success leads to the basic question: *"What is actually 'good' hotel and lobby design?"* Ransley and Ingram (2001) looked at this issue and the effects of efficient design on hotel profitability. Good hotel design may have soft and hard components, which affect the property's attractiveness. Soft factors, such as image, style, comfort, marketing, and ambience, are rather subjective, intangible design features. Whether soft factors are utilized successfully by a hotel or not, decides the customer based on personal perception. Hard design factors include operational efficiency, costs, safety, maintenance, noise, and space allocation. Those tangible and clearly identified features are an outcome of well-organized and structured concepts of designers and developers. It is essential to mention here that design in public areas is not the sole way to success. Functionality for employees and guests are a major element in efficient and good hotel and lobby design. The design development team needs to carefully evaluate and develop efficient space planning and strategies to satisfy the employees' and customers' requirements. *"Good hotel design can lead to increased sales, reduced staffing levels, higher gross operating profit, and the need for lower capital investment and maintenance costs."* (Ransley and Ingram 2001, p.86) Moreover, the hotel product is strongly influenced by lifestyles and hypes, as well as determined by the power of brands to increase awareness and customer loyalty. For that reason boutique and design hotels should be aware of the decreasing time-span of product life cycles due to the fast

changing customers' demands. This has an effect on marketing activities and their costs and efforts to maintain customer awareness and popularity. (Ransely and Ingram 2001)

Conclusively, there are several elements in hotel and lobby design, which could be branded and respectively affect the brand awareness, recognition, loyalty, and sales volume. Branded design elements include furniture, collaterals, ambient conditions, space utilization, the physical property, or even the designer him/herself.

3.4. Lobby Design Concepts

As elaborated in the chapter 3.1., *The Hotel Lobby – Definitions, Purposes, and Impacts*, lobbies are the first point of contact and impression the visitor gets when entering the hotel. It is the public space and especially the lobby, which sets the tone and style of the hotel and acts as a differentiation factor or competitive advantage to other properties in the industry. Therefore, the majority of hotels put a lot of emphasize on creating and designing an outstanding, phenomenal, and great lobby. The aim of developing new innovations and products to attract guests to spend time in the lobby is following an open-minded, modern, a bit risky, and creative approach towards lobby design. In other words, if the hotel's philosophy focuses on privacy and anonymity, the contemporary approach of lobby design, being a social and interactive place, will not be suitable. The next paragraphs will evaluate innovative lobby design strategies of various hotel chains and individual properties.

One of the most characteristic modern lobby design strategies are represented by W Hotels, an endorsed boutique brand of Starwood Hotels & Resorts since 1998. (Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc. About W, 2011) According to the W website (Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc. W Style, 2011), their design strategies are summarized in the following four words: *"Inspiring. Iconic. Innovative. Influential"*. W hotels call their lobby area *"Living Rooms"*, which is not considered to be an *"average lobby – meet, greet, flirt, play, sip, and savor in this modern playground."* (Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc. W Words, 2011) *"The mission was to recreate a hotel like it was in old days where the local community saw it [the lobby] as a place to hang out. The whole hotel is designed to inspire people to sit and enjoy, linger and lounge."* (said Diane Briskin, Corporate Director of Sales and Marketing for W Hotels – Haussman, 2001)

W Hotels describe their hotel design as *"a storybook of style"*:

"Every W Hotel is a new chapter in a storybook encounter of style and soul, and as our story has taken us around the world, we have created our hotels to be unique and individual expressions of modern travel and modern living." (Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc. W Style, 2011)

This idea of creating such an individual experience in every of their properties, combined with involving the local culture in their hotel and lobby design, represents contemporary design, as described in chapter 3.2.2.3. *Contemporary Design*, very well.

Furthermore, W Hotels want to delight their visitors by a “*world of sensory experiences*” by focusing on lighting, signature scents, art, and music. (Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc. W Style, 2011) The theoretical aspect of this approach was discussed in chapter 3.1. *The Hotel Lobby – Definitions, Purposes, and Impacts*, when ambient conditions as elements of the servicescape (the lobby) were assessed. Especially, the effects of lighting represent a modern and ever-changing experience of the W servicescape. Moreover, W Hotels have developed their own “*W Hotels Signature Scent*”, which is called Sicilian Fig, and could be interpreted as “*infused with rich cypress then finished with fresh lemon blossom and delicate heliotrope*” (Juliana, 2010) Furthermore, special designed board games amuse guests during day and live DJs entertain visitors in the evenings, both in the living room (see Image 8).

“The artistry of our architecture coupled with the comfort, luxury and whimsy within, is designed to become a beacon in our cities, a civic center of Culture. Influences of old and new, local and global, come together in playful harmony. W Hotels are designed to accentuate qualities indigenous to our locations, creating a unique, balanced relationship with our environment.” (Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc. W Style, 2011)



Images 8 – 12 (from left to right):

Image 8: Life DJ at the W Hotel Living Room, Hong Kong

Source: Hong Kong Hustle. 16.09.2008. Claude Challe’s sneak appearance at the W!.

Image 9: Living Room at the W Hotel New York

Source: Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc. 2011. W New York.

Image 10: Living Room at the W Hotel Hollywood

Source: LA's The Place. 2006-2007. W Hollywood Hotel and Residences sponsor KCRW Angel Gala. LAsThePlace.com.

Image 11: Living Room at the W Hotel London, Leicester Square

Source: Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide Inc. 2011. W London – Leicester Square.

Image 12: Living Room at the W Hotel Barcelona

Source: Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide Inc. 2011. W Barcelona.

Marriott International Inc., and especially their luxury brand JW and the contemporary boutique brand Renaissance have developed and introduced a new lobby concept in 2006, which is called *"The Great Room Concept"*. (Sheehan, 2006) *"The new concept designed for the 24/7 work patterns of today's business travelers, who might mix work, relaxation, socializing, and play throughout their day"* (Sheehan 2006, p.41). This idea was developed when experts and researchers conducted interviews with business travelers, concerning their daily habits, work patterns, and needs. *"The lobby is the staging area for everything that goes on in a hotel. It's the best opportunity to address the business traveler's needs. We wanted the most compelling hotel lobby design in the industry,"* says George Aquino, General Manager of the JW in Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA (360 Steelcase, 2007, p.2). The Great Room Concept removes architectural barriers to adapt to the guests' needs and thus divides the lobby area into four areas: welcome zone, individual zone, relaxing work zone, and the social business zone. The welcome zone becomes a more personalized and creative area focusing not only on the check in, but as well on individual and tailored concierge services and retail offerings. The individual zone should satisfy the need of a calm relaxing, *"public private"* area where the customer may read, work, have a snack, or simply spend some time. The relaxing work zone is well equipped with all necessary and state-of-the-art technological devices for a comfortable working place, whereas the social business zone represents an unwinding lounge atmosphere for small group meetings, discussions, and social activities whilst having a glass of wine or cup of coffee. The architectural pattern and design of those zones is overlapping, but still clearly differentiated to adapt to the business traveler's needs. Furthermore, the interior lighting is stimulated by big glass walls, letting in the natural light to embrace the cultural surroundings, as well as enhancing business traveler's concentration and mood (impacts of natural light on the human psychology will not be further evaluated in this thesis). Other ambient conditions, such as background music, specially developed for the Marriott brands, and branded air scents, give the lobby a comfortable atmosphere. (Sheehan, 2006; 360 Steelcase, 2007)



Image 13: The ‘greatroom’ lobby concept at the Marriott Portsmouth, UK

Source: Sleeper Magazine. 30.07.2009. Marriott introduces “Great Room” lobby design in the UK.

Image 14: Lobby at the Marriott Southwest Minneapolis

Source: Marriott International Inc. 1996-2011.

Photo Gallery. Minneapolis Marriott Southwest.

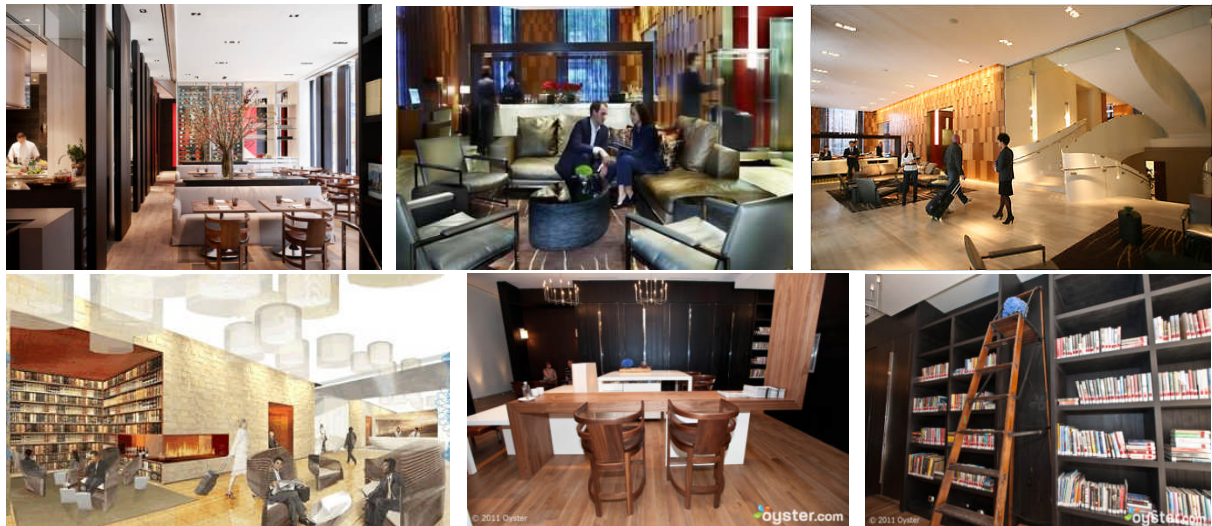
The next example of contemporary and fashionable lobby design is Andaz, which is a new endorsed brand of Hyatt. The first Andaz opened in 2007 in London on Liverpool Street, several properties in the US followed (NYC, West Hollywood, San Diego). Currently there are five Andaz hotels in Europe and the US, but the chain will expand soon to the Chinese, Indian, and South American markets. (Hyatt Corporation, Locations Worldwide, 2011) David Rockwell, the designer of the Andaz Wall Street in New York City, explained:

“Since Andaz is Hindi for ‘personal style’ we wanted to give guests a sequence of unexpected personalized experiences through unconventional configurations in the lobby, bar and restaurant, and twists on traditional features in the guest rooms. All of these components are surrounded by rich materials and textures for a warm and inviting atmosphere.” (Rockwell Group, 2010)

Andaz hotels call themselves *“a stylish and sophisticated hotel”*. (Hyatt Corporation, Andaz Hotel Development, 2011) Furthermore, Andaz hotels have a strong focus on captivating the cultural surrounding into their hotel design and let the guest experience this culture with all their senses. The lobby is called *“lounge”* to strengthen the atmosphere of a social gathering place.

“The atmosphere at Andaz is vibrant, yet relaxed. Each hotel reflects the unique cultural scene and spirit of the surrounding neighborhood. In addition to friendly and uncomplicated service, signature Andaz elements include a personalized arrival experience” at the Andaz Lounge (Lobby). (Hyatt Corporation, Andaz Hotel Development, 2011)

Moreover, Andaz hotels are one of the first brands, which do not apply the concept of a traditional reception desk, but use portable PCs for a flexible, comfortable, and personal check in, whilst having a complimentary drink in the lounge. (Hyatt Corporation, About Andaz 2011) Lobbies at Andaz Hotels follow an uncomplicated, relaxed, contemporary design mix. The lobby area acts as a social hub with unforeseen elements, for example a kitchenette, a communal reading/working table, a library, or an art-collection. (Hyatt Corporation, About Andaz, 2011)



Images 15 – 20 (from left to right):

Image 15: Lobby Lounge at the Andaz 5th Avenue, New York City

Source: Kropf, Robert. 25.08.2010. NY: Alles ist anders im Hotel Andaz.

Image 16: Lobby at the Andaz wall Street, New York City

Source: FNE Travel. Andaz Wall Street.

Image 17: Lobby at the Andaz Wall Street, NYC

Source: The New York Times. Andaz Wall Street.

Image 18: Lobby at the Andaz 5th Avenue, NYC

Source: Calvo, Andrew. 22.10.2007. Hyatt Andaz @ 75 Wall Street. Passions of a zealot.

Image 19: Living Room atmosphere at the Andaz 5th Avenue, NYC

Source: Oyster. 2011. Lobby at the Andaz Fifth Avenue.

Image 20: Library at the Andaz 5th Avenue, NYC

Source: Oyster. 2011. Library at the Andaz Fifth Avenue.

The Radisson Blu Hotels & Resorts try to engage with modern and innovative lobby design. Lots of Radisson Blu hotel lobbies reflect the cultural surrounding very strongly in their interior design. Good examples of interesting hotel lobbies are: Radisson Blu Style Hotel Vienna (see Image 21), Radisson Blu Hotel Berlin (Image 22), or Radisson Blu Hotel Cairo Heliopolis (Image 23). The Radisson Style Hotel in Vienna is closely linked to the lobby bar, which is a trendy hotspot in the city, especially in the evenings. Highlights in the H12 bar are colored lighting spots, and jazzy music, which stand in controversy with the traditional art-deco architecture of the exterior building. This

interpretation of the hotel lobby was made upon personal experience and perception, since neither the corporate website, nor any literature has further evaluated the hotel's lobby design. Another outstanding lobby design approach can be found at the Radisson Blu Hotel Berlin. In the middle of the lobby area stands the renowned AquaDom, which represents

“the world's largest cylindrical aquarium with one-million litres of saltwater, and it is a stunning habitat for many species of tropical fish. The AquaDom is maintained by the Sea Life Berlin, which is located right next to the hotel. [...] The highlight of the Sea Life discovery tour is the two-story elevator ride through the middle of the AquaDom, during which guests learn about both the tropical-fish inhabitants and the architecture of the AquaDom.” (The Rezidor Hotel Group, Aqua Dom, 2011)

It is interesting to mention that customers only may enter the AquaDom when they participate in the Sea Life discovery tour, which starts in the building next door. The cooperation between the Radisson Blu and the company Sea Life Berlin guarantees hotel guests a discounted entrance fee. (The Rezidor Hotel Group, Aqua Dom, 2011)

From an architectural perspective, the AquaDom is a very spectacular and unusual component in the hotel design. The huge cylindrical aquarium in the rather small atrium lobby could be perceived as a surrealistic element. (upon personal perception) The lobby lounge, called “Atrium Lobby Lounge & Bar”, underneath the AquaDom gives the customer a relaxing and indulged lounge atmosphere during the day and a trendy place for cocktails in the evening. (The Rezidor Hotel Group, Atrium Lobby, Lounge & Bar, 2011)



Images 21 – 23 (from left to right):

Image 21: Lobby and Lounge area at the Radisson Style Hotel Vienna

Source: True Venue. Schenkenfelder Kommunikation im Tourismus GmbH. 2011. Radisson Blu Style Hotel.

Image 22: Lobby at the Radisson Blu Berlin

Source: The Rezidor Hotel Group. 2011. Radisson Blu Hotel Berlin. AquaDom.

Image 23: Lobby at the Radisson Blu Cairo Heliopolis

Source: Booked.net. 2007-2011. Radisson Blu Hotel, Cairo Heliopolis.

The Sofitel Vienna Stephansdom is an endorsed luxury brand of the Accor Hotel Group and was recently opened in 2010. The overall hotel design was developed by the French architect and designer Jean Novel and captivates contemporary visions with traditional Viennese elements. (Sofitel Luxury Hotels) The lobby area is spaciouly designed, and is enhanced by some extraordinary creative components, such as diagonal and inclined walls and shapes, which demonstrate an architectural freedom and eliminate boundaries. (refer to image 24 and 26) Furthermore, natural lighting plays an important role in the lobby, since most of the walls are glass. (Cvent, 2011) Another ambient condition of the Sofitel’s hotel lobby is music, which is specially created for Sofitel hotels. The reception desk is split up in four smaller independent black booths, which loosens up a bit the borders to the customers. Next to the main entrance area, there is a lounge, which is called Le K-Fé. The highlight of the lobby is a huge kaleidoscope, which abducts the guest to a play of colors and shapes. The artist of this unusual lobby design element was inspired by the nature of the Stephansdom. (Sandra, 2011) (refer to image 25)



Images 24 – 26 (from left to right):

Image 24: Lobby at the Sofitel Vienna Stephansdom

Source: Etherington, R. 03.03.2011. Sofitel Vienna Stephansdom by Jean Novel

Image 25: Kaleidoscope as unusual lobby design element

Source: Schober, C. 10.12.2010. Kaleidoscope

Image 26: Animated image of the lobby area at the Sofitel Vienna

Source: Booked.net. 2007-2011. Sofitel Vienna Stephansdom

The next three examples of innovative lobby design show a more provocative, contemporary and exceptional approach. Usually, boutique hotels and individual properties take the risk to invent something fresh, abstract, and new to the market, which will be illustrated in the next couple of paragraphs.

The next example of innovative lobby design is the Kameha Grand in Bonn, Germany. The Kameha Grand is a lifestyle luxury hotel, which opened in November 2009. (Hennig, 2010) The name “Kameha” originates from the first king of Hawaii, whose name was Kamehameha I. and means “*The Unique One*” (Top Hotel, 2009) The hotel, located next to the river Rhine, reflects this name in its design, service operations, and philosophy very well. The Kameha Grand represents a contemporary, creative, exclusive, and hip hotel property. Carsten Rath, the founder of Kameha Hotels & Resorts, explained their positioning strategy as “*The Contemporary Grand Hotel*”. (Hennig, 2009) As assessed in chapter 3.2. *Hotel Lobby’s Development*, the so-called Grand Hotel in the 19th and 20th century represented the lifestyle and trends at those times. The Kameha Grand continues this core believe adapted to the 21st century. Their idea is not to be trendy, but to create trends. (Hennig, 2009)

The hotel’s design is exceptional, unique, and unusual. Although targeting business travelers, the hotel offers a colorful, modern, expressive, and hybrid interior design. The mix of big and small design elements give the impression of endless possibilities, no barriers, and a touch of surrealism. (refer to Image 27) The lobby is illuminated throughout by natural light due to the fact that all the walls are made from glass. This gives the guest the opportunity to feel the outside environment while sitting in the hotel lobby. Furthermore, it enhances the Kameha Grand’s philosophy by creating free spirits and thoughts, which lie between fiction and reality. It is a place of diversity, as well as of cordial and sincere service. (Hennig, 2009) Moreover, instead of a standard block acting as a reception desk, there are several white cocktail or stand-up tables, which let borders between service personnel and the guests disappear. (Hennig, 2009)

The designer Marcel Wanders wanted to highlight a neo-baroque and detailed interior design and created thus a “*sexy and cool place*”. (Top-Reiseinfo, 2009)

One of Kameha Grand’s foci lies on conferences, events, and other private celebrations. The Dome is the main facility, which is located next to the lobby area and is divided only by a glass wall. Thus, both areas appear to be one entity. It can be even said that the lobby area itself transforms to a huge party area. (Kameha Grand Bonn) (refer to Images 28 and 29)



Images 27 – 29 (from left to right):

Image 27: Lobby area at the Kameha Grand, Bonn

Source: Christoph Römer. 23.04.2010. Rhein in Flammen: die besten Hotels.

Image 28: View oft the Dome and the Lobby area in the back

Source: Carsten Hennig. 18.06.2010. Kameha Grand Bonn: Top/Auszeichnung als „Hotel des Jahres 2011“.

Image 29: Opening Event oft he Kameha Grand at the Dome

Source: Der Gastromacher. 12.05.2010. Kameha Grand Hotel Bonn (Teil2).

The Hudson Hotel in New York City belongs to the Morgans Group and represents an urban lifestyle adventure in the middle of Manhattan. It is a lifestyle hotel, which was designed by Philippe Starck in 2001, and demonstrates *“the next generation of Cheap Chic – stylish, democratic, young at heart and utterly cool”* (Morgans Group LLC, Hotel Overview). A relatively small entrance let the guest escape from the hectic streets of New York City and dive into an opaque glass tunnel with diffuse and unusual lighting installments. The escalator transports the guest, *“both literally and figuratively, to a dream world that is both captivating and unforgettable— Hudson’s climactic lobby. With forty-foot ceilings and rampant climbing ivy, it is a soaring and magical space unlike any other”*. (Morgans Group LLC., Hotel overview) (see Images 30 and 31)

Upon personal perception, it can be said that the Hudson Hotel is a good example of contemporary, hip, and fashionable lobby design. After experiencing the upward escalator ride in a tiny crack and yellow lighting, the guest arrives in a spacious and trendy lobby area. Catchy design elements are a big crystal chandelier in the mostly minimalistic lobby. Another highlight is the roof, which is completely covered by ivy tendrils. Special lighting installments emphasize certain areas and design elements, for example the reception desk, and give the lobby a rather gloomy, but colorful atmosphere.

The Hudson is a *“placement of eclectic inherited furniture—mismatched Starck, Droog, Versace, flea-market finds, and other pieces—suggests an informal, found elegance throughout the public spaces and the garden planted in the courtyard of the U-shaped building.”* (Davidson)



Image 30: Lobby at the Hudson, New York City

Source: Qantas Airways Limited. 29.12.2008. Brandon Gien, Executive director, Australian International Design Awards on the Hudson Hotel, New York.

Image 31: Escalator brings the guest from the main entrance directly to the lobby

Source: Yahoo! Inc. 2011. Escalator in Hudson Hotel – NYC.

A very young project in the boutique hotel segment is the Gramercy Park Hotel in New York City by Ian Schrager together with the interior designer Julian Schnabel. The public spaces and especially the lobby represent a vibrant, bright, and artistic design strategy, which mixes traditional and modern elements. *“The Gramercy Park Hotel represents a sensuous vision of artful diversity. Bohemia reinvented for the 21st century with an original combination of styles, with great pieces of furniture and artwork and the extraordinary use of color.”* (GPH Partners, LLC.) The diverse use of fabrics and materials create an exceptional and unique atmosphere, highlighted by wooden ceilings, black-white checkered floors, velvet drapes, crystal chandeliers, and modern art paintings. Furthermore, a pool table highlights the aspect of a social gathering place. The controversial designs and styles in the lobby area *“create an alternative universe that’s like stepping into a 3-D painting - a classical vocabulary transformed into an edgy new language.”* (GPH Partners, LLC.)

The Gramercy Park Hotel reflects an enchanting and legendary heritage and the vivid, adventurous spirit of current times. *“A luxury hotel in New York City is not just a building, it is an individual, with personality, spirit and authenticity.”*(GPH Partners, LLC.)



Image 32: Lobby at the Gramercy Park Hotel, NYC

Source: The Top 10 Boutique Hotels In New York City. The Gramercy Park Hotel.

Image 33: Lobby area (modern meets traditional) at the Gramercy Park Hotel, NYC

Source: Design2Share LLC. 14.02.2008. Favorite Hot Designer.

3.5. Future Trends of Lobby Design

As the reader of this paper has experienced in the past chapters various stages and developments of hotel and lobby design over centuries, as well as contemporary strategies, it is time to look ahead. This chapter will give a short introduction of future trends and developments of lobby design. To be able to predict the future, it is necessary to shortly recap past and current developments.

In the chapter 3.2.2. *Chronological Development of hotel and Lobby Design*, it was found out that developments and inventions (such as railways, motor cars, air transportation), major events (for instance World Exhibitions, Wars, political unrest, difficult economic times), or technological progress (e.g. reservation and yield management systems) strongly influenced the customers' demands and, thus hotel design. Furthermore, socio-cultural developments, meaning changes of lifestyles, desires, or personal perceptions and views, have a significant control on design as well. It is evident that those impacting factors will remain influential and powerful elements in future design development.

Industry structures have changed over time from ownership, which represented a prestigious and wealthy business man until the beginnings of the 20th century, over emergences of powerful groups of operators (e.g. Starwood Hotels & Resorts), to service providers and management operators (e.g. Four Seasons). Furthermore, a trend shows that senior managers are leaving the operational properties and become corporate managers, as well as there is a shift from focusing on hospitality to profits. This movement is mainly determined by the strong cooperation between asset management and yield technology. (Ransely and Ingram, 2004, pp.300-301)

“In tomorrow’s competitive market for temporary accommodation the personal touch, mind-set and individual character of a hotel will be decisive factors in securing and serving clients, target groups and guests” (Kretschmar-Joehnk and Joehnk, 2009, p.11) As the hospitality market grows significantly every year, it becomes more and more difficult for the customer to choose from the huge available offer. Therefore, hotels need to clearly identify their target market, their competitive advantage, and image. Customers want to know what they can expect, want to pay a fair price for the services, and are eager to have a reliable host. (Collins, 2001, p.213-215) If a hotel understands their customers’ needs, and exceeds their expectations in a positive way, the hotel is on its way to success. A contemporary approach to find out what customers really want, are social media platforms. Those online communities have and will have a significant influence on the hospitality industry. (Kretschmar-Joehnk and Joehnk, 2009, p.14)

Sustainability and stewardship are two very current and future oriented approaches in the hospitality industry. Hotels need to show an increased awareness and actions in this field, since customers are more and more educated in this regard and show consciousness and active engagement. Moreover, showing global and environmental concern will increase the hotel’s image. *“Intelligent and efficient energy management will be a further hallmark of the stylish and forward-looking hotels of the future”* (Kretschmar-Joehnk and Joehnk, 2009, p.16).

The rise of boutique and design hotels with their extraordinary, creative, and personal design mix have led to a very popular and successful hotel segment. However, there is a future trend that shows an over-saturation of such hotel types. (Rutes et al, 2001, p.34; Collins, 2001, p.214) Moreover, some boutique hotels try too hard to create an exceptional design and a statement that they fail to achieve their goals. (Collins, 2001, p.214) Richter (2009) continued this thought of repetitive design elements and old ideas and mentioned that only very few hotels have succeeded and will succeed in creating a new experience through design. Richter (2009) argues further that design hotels actually are already outdated and old-fashioned and the *“new trend is concept hotels”* (p.11). It is stated that travelers are getting more interested in learning something whilst being on holidays. Therefore, a new trend can be recognized towards creating *“experimental design”* elements (p.11). It is all about getting guests involved into the experience, rather than overwhelming the customers with superficial decorations. In this regard W Hotels awarded the *“Designer of the Future”* grant in Miami and Basel in 2010. (Mills, 2010) The competition was about creating installments, which anticipate participation. This approach shows that there is still space for new and innovative hotel design and sensory experiences, as branding strategies are not fully utilized yet.

Evidently, there is still a current trend going on towards building and developing boutique hotels, but it will be slowly vanish as soon as other entrepreneurs and pioneers will develop a

different innovative idea of hotel design. (Rutes et al., 2001, p.35) Nevertheless, the boutique touch, meaning the highly personalized and individualized service, will remain in future hotel operations.

The next two examples of lobby design show future projects, which are worth looking at due to their innovative lobby design strategies.

The B2 Boutique Hotel in Zurich will open in spring 2012 and will target the contemporary customer of the 21st century by creating a modern, stimulating, and elegant experience. The hotel will have 60 rooms in total and the lobby will be generously spacious with a ratio of 6m² per room (compare to the standard ratio of 1m² per room, mentioned in the chapter 3.2.1. *Lobby Design – A Designer’s Perspective*). (Turicum Hotel Management AG) The B2 Hotel Zurich is a member of the hotel collection “*Hotels with a Bookmark*”, which focuses on aesthetic and stylish design elements in individual, unique, and historic properties. Furthermore, hotels of this collection call their competitive advantage their “*bookmark*” and should deliver an exceptional, pleasant, and memorable experience, just like a book. (Hotels with a Bookmark (a)) The highlight of the B2 Boutique Hotel Zurich will be the library in the lobby area with around 30 000 books, which underlines the hotel’s philosophy being “*A hotel with (hi)story*”. (Hotels with a Bookmark (b)) This innovative lobby product is a good example of the idea of a contemporary hotel lobby, embracing culture, people, and experience. (refer to the Image 34)

The second hotel project describes the national stadium in Beijing, which was built for the Olympic Games in 2008. Now, the company dEEP Architects are planning a transformation of the renowned “*Bird Nest*” as part of the “*Post Olympic Commercial Strategy*”. (Halil, 2011) The theme of the Art hotel will be “*A Fluid Dream*”, supported by concepts of surrealism á la Salvador Dalí. The public spaces and the lobby area will be designed with multi-dimensional art elements, which shall create a dynamic and uninterrupted dream world. Walls, textures, furniture, and shapes will be inspired by the “*movement of the human body, to art sculpture and painting, to light patterns, and to the concept of fluidity*” (Halil, 2011). (refer to the Images 35 and 36)



Images 34 – 36 (from left to right):

Image 34: Future lobby area at the B2 Hotel, Zurich

Source: Turicum Hotel Management AG. B2 Boutique Hotels.

Image 35: Future Lobby area at the Art Hotel at the Bird Nest, Beijing

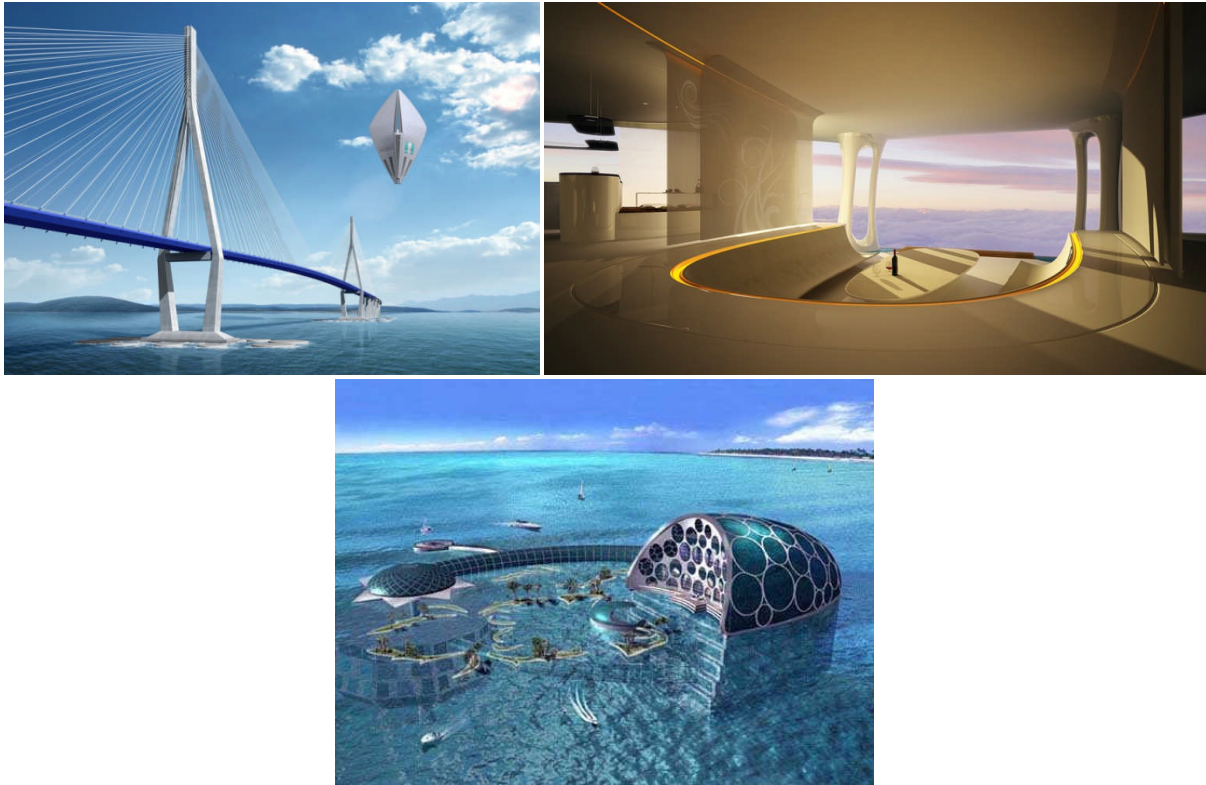
Source: Hilal, Al. 03.01.2011. Hotel in the Bird Nest by dEEP Architects.

Image 36: Future Lobby space at the Art Hotel at the Bird Nest, Beijing

Source: Hilal, Al. 03.01.2011. Hotel in the Bird Nest by dEEP Architects.

The future of lobby design is not predicted in any literature, rather on blogs on the Internet. Understanding the current trends of lobby design, namely creating a comfortable atmosphere, individual service, or local cultural elements, may help to define and develop other innovative ideas. For example, dropping the traditional hotel lobby desk, and use portable PCs instead, is a rather pioneering thought. *“Designers will face a constant challenge to create something that is both new and timeless.”* (Collins, 2001, p.215) Maybe instead of designing the most unusual, outstanding, and expensive design elements, it would be more advisable to elaborate how technological progress could be used in public areas to enhance efficiency and quality of the service delivery. Predicting the style and design themselves is a rather difficult task to do and still dozes in some pioneer’s head. General future hotel design plans try to make anything possible – hotels are planned under the sea, somewhere on the sea, in trees, in deserts, in the air, or even in the space and on the moon. (see Images 37 – 39)

As Ian Schrager said: *“I think the market is infinite because it’s about stimulation, subversion, and freshness.”* (Riewoldt, 2002 p.10)



Images 37 – 39 (from right to left):

Image 37: Animation of the future floating hotel

Source: Seymourpowell. 19.12.2010. Luxury Floating Hotel in the Air Concept – Aircruise by Seymourpowell.

Image 38: Lobby Lounge Area at the future floating hotel

Soucre: Seymourpowell. 19.12.2010. Aircruise Living Room Interior Design.

Image 39: Future Hydropolis (Underwater) Hotel, Dubai

Source: Successful Blog Tips. 23.05.2010.The Future Projects – Dubai Hydropolis.

4. Analysis – Discussion – Interpretation

Throughout the thesis the word “innovation” has played an essential role. The question is however, what innovation actually is, what makes design innovative, and how can innovation be measured. Innovation means originally “to renew” or “to change” something, thus, having new ideas would be an innovative approach. But how novel has the idea to be, to consider it as innovative? Would it be enough to create a new shape of a chair or an unusual color mix? Or does it mean to develop a completely new angle of views and see everything upside down? Or does an innovative person have to revolutionize thoughts, beliefs, and values of a whole society? As long as you do not mix it up with new inventions (which are an extension of an existing good) or the result of any idea, all of the abovementioned examples would be considered as innovative thinking. Indeed, nowadays it is very trendy to use the word innovation for anything that is new, starting from product re-inventions or re-positioning to new product developments. The most important components of

innovation though, are being creative and implementing this idea to reality. If one or the other part is missing, the process of innovation cannot take place. Therefore, innovative actions need a creative idea, a plan, a structure, courage, and realization. Doubtless, a certain risk is involved in implementing innovative inspirations and success is not a definite result of this process. Taking the example of Ian Schrager, who revolutionized hotel design in the 1980s when he invented a new type of hotel – the boutique hotels. It was a completely new approach at that time to use the hospitality product as a personalized place of interaction and individualized service combined with electric and unusual design elements to emphasize the sensory experience during the stay. After creating standardized and uniform hotels for the mass market in the 1970s and beginning of 1980s, Ian Schrager's idea gave the hospitality industry a fresh unique touch. Certainly, any innovation causes controversial opinions and needs some time to be accepted by a broad audience. In the example of boutique hotels, this development took quite some time, since the peak of boutique hotels was in the 1990s and beginning of the 21st century. The question is now, as soon as an idea or new approach gets acknowledged by the mass market, is it still innovative then?

Certainly, discussing the meaning of innovation is endless, subjective, and very difficult to generalize. Moreover, it always depends in which context innovation is mentioned and talked about. The next section concentrates on demonstrating a visual and textual construct of combining innovative lobby design concepts and marketing strategies.

The marketing concept of physical evidence and servicescapes was elaborated in detail in chapter 3.1. *The Hotel Lobby – Definitions, Purposes, and Impacts*. Figure 1 (p.49) demonstrates how the concept of physical evidence as part of the marketing mix of services can be combined with hotel lobby design strategies. Evidently, the lobby is a servicescape since service processes and service deliveries take place in that area. There are four major definitions and purposes of a hotel lobby: it is a place of circulation, a waiting area, a multi-purpose space, and a social interactive space. This description of a hotel lobby leads to developing and implementing products and innovations to enhance the hotel's offer of services and facilities to the customers. Those products and innovations are called in a marketing context the dimensions of the servicescape. Developing new or extended product lines are influenced by the company's philosophy, values, and the brand itself to maintain consistency throughout the company's activities. How strong the influence on the products and innovations is, depends on the branding strategy of the hotel. Servicescapes consist of three defined components, meaning that the products and innovations in the hotel lobby need to have certain elements to be attractive to the customer. Those elements include ambient conditions, functionality and layout, and signs, symbols and artifacts. In other words, those elements characterize the nature of products and innovations. Real-life examples of implemented products and innovations in the

lobby and how they are influenced by the three elements, will be shown in a further paragraph of this chapter. Some illustrations of possible innovations and products could be an art gallery implemented in the servicescape. An art gallery would be characterized as an implicit (indirect) signal and way of communication from the hotel to the customer, representing a certain image. Furthermore, ambient conditions by the art gallery, such as lighting and colors installments, will influence the experience of the lobby area. This example shows that innovations and products are usually identified by a mix of the three dimensions.

After the implementation of the products and innovations in the lobby, the customer will experience them and will lead to a certain behavior. This response could be either an approach behavior – customer likes the environment with the implemented innovations and products – or an avoidance behavior – customer dislikes the lobby environment. The customer's behavior is further influenced by personal traits and temporary conditions. Those psychological factors cannot be influenced by the company but have a strong impact on the customer's reaction. The response behavior, meaning how comfortable the customer feels while being in the lobby, leads to customer's satisfaction and dissatisfaction. This process impacts the customer's perception of the lobby's attractiveness, the length of stay in this environment, the quality and duration of interactions with other customers or employees, and the perceived image of the brand. It is vital to add that the whole development of satisfaction and dissatisfaction concerns not only the customers, but also the employees working in this environment. Creating employees' satisfaction will more easily lead to customer's satisfaction. Conclusively, it has to be mentioned that lobby design can be the most innovative and extraordinary one, as long as the service and thus the staff is not attentive, well-trained, and friendly, the hotel will be unsuccessful.

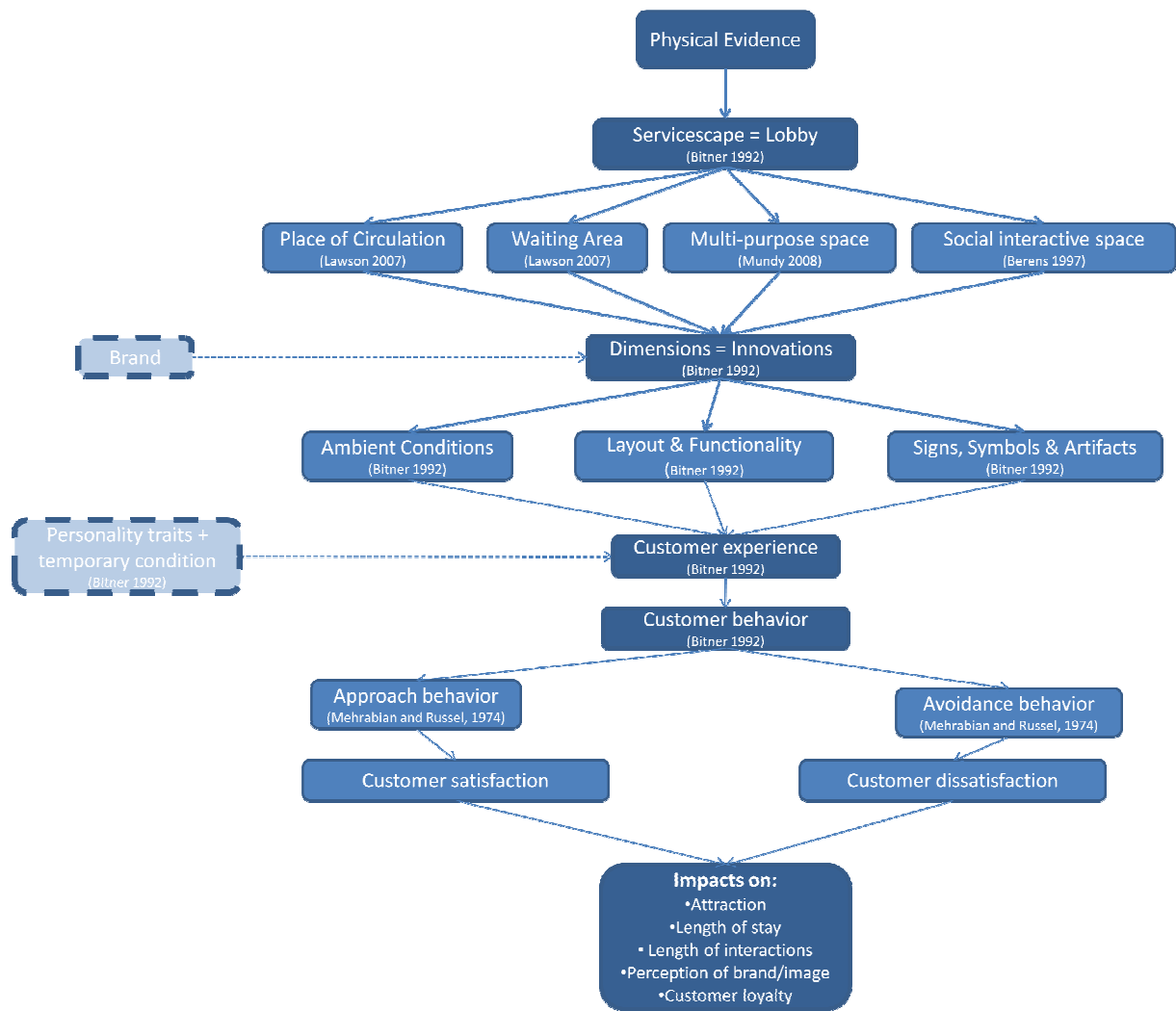


Figure 1: Visual construct of combining marketing strategies with lobby design concepts

The next section will combine the aforementioned construct with real-life examples. Those samples are taken from the chapter 3.4. *Lobby Design Concepts* and will further discuss, how their innovativeness could be measured and which opportunities do they bring to the customers. Furthermore, it will be tried to evaluate which innovations and products affect which dimensions of servicescapes. This approach brings some difficulties along since some innovations and products are affected by a mix of the three dimensions (ambient conditions, functionality and layout, and signs, symbols and artifacts).

As mentioned already in chapter 2. *Problem Definition – Research Questions*, some limitations concerning the collection of objective information for demonstrating design concept examples, occurred during the research process. Therefore, the descriptions of hotel lobbies were a bit bloomy and with a promotional touch. Nevertheless, the examples and descriptions show

evidently the diversity and opportunities of lobby design, and at the same time similar concepts and strategies.

To better analyze the eight different examples of lobby designs, Figure 2 (p.50) shows which elements are represented in which property. The left column demonstrates fifteen possible innovations and products in a lobby, whereas the first row represents the various properties. The analysis is based on how many elements are available in the hotels, which products and innovations seem to be more popular than others, and how the eight properties could be grouped accordingly.

Innovations/ Products	W Hotels	Marriott	Andaz	Radisson Blu (Berlin)	Sofitel Vienna	Kameha Grand	Hudson	Gramercy Park
Lounge/Bar	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Social hub	X	X	X	X		X		X
Very unusual design elements				X	X	X	X	X
Ambient conditions	X	X			X		X	
No trad. reception			X			X		X
Business/working area		X	X					
Art gallery			X					X
Library			X					X
Shops	X	X						
Living Room	X		X					
Event area						X		
Party area						X		
Live DJs	X							
Board games	X							
E-corner								

Figure 2: Analysis of innovations and products implemented in hotel lobbies (real-life examples)

The ranking according to the number of available innovations and products looks as followed:

1. W Hotels 7 out of 15
2. Andaz 7 / 15
3. Kameha Grand 6 / 15
4. Gramercy Park Hotel 6 / 15
5. Marriott Hotels 5 / 15
6. Radisson Blu Berlin 3 / 15
7. Sofitel 3 / 15
8. Hudson Hotel 2 / 15

The next ranking demonstrates which of the fifteen defined lobby innovations and products are the most popular ones among the eight example hotels:

1. Lounge/Bar	7 / 8	9. Shops	2 / 8
2. Social Hub	6 / 8	10. Library	2 / 8
3. Unusual Design Elements	5 / 8	11. Party Area	1 / 8
4. Ambient Conditions	4 / 8	12. Live DJs	1 / 8
5. No Traditional Reception	3 / 8	13. Event Area	1 / 8
6. Living Room	2 / 8	14. Board Games	1 / 8
7. Business/Working Area	2 / 8	15. E-Corner	0 / 8
8. Art Gallery	2 / 8		

Before elaborating in detail the aforementioned rankings, it has to be added that the choice of innovations and products (see “X” in Figure 2, p.50) in the different hotel properties is based on the descriptions in chapter 3.4. *Lobby Design Concepts*, and respectively on the available literature. As a result, it might occur that lobby elements were missed out or misinterpreted due to the lack of variety of sources and personal experience.

The lobby lounge or bar, actually considered to be a rather traditional lobby design approach, is presented as a frequently used method. The reason for this popularity is evident. A lounge or bar is a revenue-center for the hotel and invites, besides of hotel guests, outside visitors to come to the hotel and enjoy some time in the hotel’s atmosphere.

As elaborated in the literature review, contemporary lobby design considers the hotel lobby as a social hub of activities and interactions. This concept was represented in five out of eight hotels, whereas the strategy of a living room inspired two hotel lobby designs. This shows that W and Andaz hotels obviously have a major focus on a personalized lobby atmosphere, representing a home-like ambience. This does not only mean that those two hotel brands want to create a “home away from home” impression, but also help the guests to experience a different and exceptional home. The innovation of creating social hubs and a living room atmosphere are clearly influenced by the use of ambient conditions and communicate implicit signals to the customers, namely a trendy, hip, cozy, and comfortable place to be. Moreover, it is interesting to see that the product of a library is represented in two properties, which also focus on social interactions in the lobby. However, only Andaz Hotels combine the element of a library with a living room atmosphere. The Gramercy Park Hotel on the other hand, emphasizes on reading books in a more artistic and extraordinary surrounding. Generally, a library as a design component is considered to send an indirect message to the guest, emphasizing an awareness of culture and education, but as well creating a cozy, calm, and pleasurable atmosphere. W Hotels want to delight their guests by offering them specially designed board games to enjoy and enrich their time in the living room.

Unusual design elements are utilized quite often in contemporary lobby design, which are for example: the aquarium in the atrium lobby of the Radisson Blu Berlin, the surrealistic overall lobby design at the Kameha Grand in Bonn, the ivy roof at the Hudson in New York City, and the kaleidoscope at the Sofitel Vienna. The idea behind this strategy is to attract not only hotel guests to experience their lobby, but also act as a magnet and a popular place to be in the city. It is about involving the local population to the hotel lobby. So, it can be stated that the innovation of unusual design elements is an implicit symbol and communication from the hotel to the customer and could be enhanced by ambient conditions. In this regard, it is interesting to see that four out of the five hotels, which have an unusual design element in their lobby, offer a lobby lounge or bar as well. Evidently, the extraordinary design should draw the attention to the location and then act as a social gathering place for the customers and as a revenue-center for the hotel. The Hudson Hotel, which has not a lounge directly in the lobby, offers various food and beverages outlets next and behind to it. In this context, it is an important question what actually is considered to be lobby area, meaning that it is unclear where the borders of a lobby area start and end. In the context of developing extraordinary design elements in a hotel lobby, this idea could be even enlarged by installing an art gallery in the lobby area. Andaz hotels and the Gramercy Park Hotel focus on implementing art sculptures and paintings into their public spaces. Especially the Gramercy Park Hotel can be even experienced as a museum of modern art and enhances the sensual stimuli, and respectively ambient conditions. Furthermore, the innovation of art galleries as lobby design components acts as a symbol and implicit statement of the hotel's philosophy, being open-minded, creative, artistic, and aesthetic.

The fourth introduced innovation of lobby design is ambient conditions. Being one of the three major components of creating a servicescape, ambient conditions are a very useful and powerful tool to stimulate customers' senses and experiences. It has to be mentioned here that most of the hotels have some kind of ambient conditions installed in their lobby, i.e. music, or lighting, but do not promote it, since they should create subtle experience to the guests' subconscious. Those cases are not taken into consideration. Ambient conditions were mentioned in the hotels' descriptions in various implementations, for example: W Hotels focus on a complete sensual experience stimulating all senses, whereas the Sofitel Vienna only applies music installments, which were exclusively created for Sofitel hotels. Marriott hotels use specially developed background music, branded air scents, and lighting installments in their "Great Room Concept". The Hudson Hotel has a strong focus on lighting in the lobby area, as part of their strategy to highlight certain areas. Ambient conditions are crucial components of the customer's experience in a hotel lobby and should therefore be developed very carefully, not to overwhelm the guests' senses. Moreover, they are evolved to implicitly represent the company and create a branded experience, so, it is an especially delicate strategy not to create an avoidance behavior.

To attract business travelers two of the eight examples try to create a comfortable and calm working and business area. Marriott hotels emphasize very strongly on business travelers' demands and needs in their "Great Room Concept". Marriott even implemented three different zones, adapting to business travelers' wishes and desires: a quiet, well equipped working area, a social gathering area for small meetings and socializing activities, and a relaxing zone. Andaz focuses more on the concept of "working at home". It is quite surprising that the innovation of e-corners in the lobby area, meaning a little business center with computers and printers, seems not to be a considerable approach in the luxury, boutique, design or lifestyle hotel segment.

A very contemporary and innovative lobby design approach is dropping the traditional idea of a reception desk. Those usually long thick blocks, representing the reception desk, seem like a border and a gap between guests and service staff. The new idea of being closer to the customer and acting as their hosts, not receptionists, is refreshing and definitely revolutionizes lobby design. Andaz hotels started with this approach, checking in their guests with portable PCs while having a complimentary drink at the lounge. The Kameha Grand uses stand-up tables to be on the same level as their guests, and the Gramercy Park Hotel offers to sit together at a desk. Eliminating the traditional reception desk affects the dimension of functionality and layout of a servicescape. Due to the portable PCs, flexibility can be increased and efficiency with it. It is a very innovative approach to find solutions to reduce service processes in order to achieve a quicker and more efficient service delivery.

Entertaining innovations, such as transforming the lobby area to an event or party space and let DJs spin their records there, are implemented by W Hotels and Kameha Grand. These innovative ideas influence the implicit representation of the hotel by a subtle statement, such as trendy, hip, fashionable, modern place to be. Certainly, ambient conditions will play a strong role in such areas and installments.

The last example of products, which attract guests to the lobby area, is shops and retail space. In the example of W Hotels branded shops sell W merchandising products and enhance not only the customer's experience in the lobby, but also the customer's loyalty when having W products at home. This innovation might be considered to be an explicit sign and communication to the customers by showing a direct connection to the hotel.

In summary, successful, innovative lobby design is a product of a creative idea, a well-designed plan, courage and implementation. Moreover, it needs to attract and stimulate a positive perception – an approach behavior – towards the lobby and its products and services to create customer satisfaction.

5. Conclusion

Life in the 21st century has changed people's behavior, attitudes and way of living dramatically. It has become much more hectic, stressful, changing, challenging, and faster. As the requirements for human beings have been altered, needs, wishes and desires did too. The modern hotel guest is much more demanding than earlier. (Curtis, 2001, p.6) According to Curtis (2001, p.6-8), the contemporary hotel guest wants a stylish, comfortable, luxurious, creative design with excellent, 24/7, personal, authentic service. It is not an easy task for hotels to fulfill those, basically, controversial wishes of their guests, especially because there is no checklist or recipe to follow. It needs a good combination of *"modern design on a creative, interesting, stimulating and intelligent level that will appear to him/her in both the global (in touch with the world) and the personal (in touch with him/her) sense."* (Curtis, 2001, p.7-8). Furthermore, technological developments, socio-cultural backgrounds, and current events, influence the customer's needs and wishes enormously. Standards, for instance technological equipment, certain design features, or exciting experiences, rise within progress. Contemporary hotel design is defined as a current design branch, which has started in the beginning of the 21st century.

A contemporary lobby's task is to combine the hotel's message, the exterior environment and the guests' comfort and wishes through interior design, the atmosphere, and service. The customer of the 21st century needs entertainment, excitement, style, fashion, and technology on the one hand, and tranquility, wellness, calmness, and indulgence on the other. Combining those customers' needs and desires under one roof, the contemporary hotel is built. Nevertheless, it is essential not to overwhelm the guest with too much information, facilities, design elements, and sensory experiences. A hotel or brand needs to understand that the customer seeks for a clear concept and profile to better comprehend and appreciate the experience. To create a lobby, offering stimulating and extraordinary innovations and products, a creative idea, a well-designed plan, courage and implementation is essential. Moreover, the impacts of those elements on the customer need to be evaluated and combined with marketing strategies to achieve customer satisfaction.

In the end, it should not be forgotten that actually the most important key to success of a hospitality business is not developing the fanciest, craziest, most extraordinary or expensive design elements, but creating an aesthetic and pleasant atmosphere combined with offering an exceptional, friendly, sincere, and warm service delivery.

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