

The Impact of Interior and Exterior Designs on Demand for Hotels

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Introduction

Design can be identified as the human power of conceiving, arranging and creating products that permit human beings to attain their individual and collective purposes (Buchanan, 1999). Through the process of designing, objects will be more gorgeous, eye-catching, and attractive. Design may take place in households, hotels, companies, banks, and so on. Among them hotel design plays a significant role in today's society as it directly influences profits and success in the hospitality industry.

The concepts of hotel design and demand for hotels are highly correlated. Nobles (1999) emphasised that 'the design of hospitality establishment can lend an identity to the business and project the operation's appeal and vision to visitors or potential visitors'. Furthermore Stipanuk (2006) highlighted that 'design in hospitality and tourism facilities is regarded as the core aspect that contributes to adding value for both operations by tourists'. Thus the above facts prove that there is a close association between the design and the income of or demand for hotels.

Countries like Germany, United Kingdom, France, and South Korea place high priority on design when constructing hotels because they believe more customers will be attracted by hotels through their designs, as design aids mental satisfaction among guests. That is why design has become a major component when constructing hotels in those countries. But in the Sri Lankan context the designers, managers and the hotel owners do not consider design to the same extent when constructing a hotel, presumably due to a lack of knowledge regarding the value of design.

However to develop the tourism industry in Sri Lanka it is important to pay more attention to hotel design. By developing design, occupancy and attractiveness may be enhanced.

Objectives

This study focuses on investigating the impact of interior and exterior design on demand for hotels in Sri Lanka. Although the developed countries are highly concerned about this psychological concept, Sri Lankan hotels do not cover the full range of design, a wide-ranging concept. Therefore it is important to improve the

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tourism industry through well-designed interiors and exteriors which may support guests' mental satisfaction, customer loyalty, and perceptions (Alsaqre, 2011). The main objective of this study was to investigate the impact of interior and exterior designs on the demand for hotels. The secondary objectives are to identify the relationships between interior and exterior designs and customer perceptions, and to examine the importance of design in increasing the demand for hotels.

Methodology

The study site was Hikkaduwa. The sample size was 30 hotels and 60 tourists selected using stratified random sampling method. This covered all categories of hotels such as five-star, four-star, three-star, two-star, one-star and guest houses. Data was collected through interviews, questionnaires and field observations (British Dental Journal, 2008). Data were gathered through hotel managers and tourists who visited Sri Lanka during the last six months of the previous year. Data were presented using figures such as frequency, percentage, means, median, stranded deviation, maximum and minimum values. The analysis was conducted by factor analysis creating interior and exterior indexes, simple linear regression, and one-way ANOVA (Steinmetz & Sussman, 2013).

Major Findings

- The percentage of female tourists (55%) arriving in the Southern Province of Sri Lanka was higher than male tourists (45%).
- The highest percentage of tourists were came from the Germany, Sweden and China.
- Most tourists were between 15 to 35 years of age.
- 69% of tourists were single and 31% were married.
- The highest numbers of travellers were students following part time jobs followed by others, like engineers and doctors, doing white collar jobs.
- The incomes of the tourists were mostly less than US\$ 1,000, followed by others earning between US\$ 1,000 and 3000.
- The highest percentage of travellers in the sample were engaged in private sector jobs (39%) and businesses (30%).
- With respect to exterior design in hotels, most travellers were highly concerned about the entrance of the hotel, as it is the first impression of

their lodgings. In addition to that they were highly concerned with the gardens of their hotels as they spend more time outside the hotel.

- Considering interior designs, they were highly concerned about wall colour as this affects relaxation.
- Travellers did not consider the size of the pool, because they prefer to swim in the sea when in southern Sri Lanka.
- 67% of travellers admitted that they consider hotel design whereas 32.8% stated that they do not care much about design.

Results and Discussion

It can be concluded that the interior and exterior designs were highly impactful on hotel demand. Elements of interior design like the main entrance, wall colour, furniture layout, reception, room type and decor, lobby layout, paintings, lighting, and dining area impacted tourist arrivals. On the other hand exterior design elements such as garden, pool area, main entrance, landscaping and star type were also impacted tourist arrivals.

There is positive relationship between interior and exterior design elements of hotels and consumer perception. This was proved through the comments of the interviewed tourists. Most travellers gave high priority to hotel design as it contributes to the simplicity, neatness, cleanliness and ambience of their lodgings.

In addition to this, it can be concluded that if a hotel is to increase tourist demand or arrivals they should pay attention to the design of their main entrance, wall colours, room decor, landscaping, and lobby, because the tourists interviewed paid particular attention to these factors when they chose a hotel to stay in.

Policy Implications

Considering this study there can be various recommendations to improve or develop the designing of hotels in Sri Lanka. It is a must to develop the concept of design in Sri Lanka as at present we attract tourists from across the world by natural beauty alone. Therefore if Sri Lanka can develop accommodation facilities up to a considerable level it will automatically attract more tourists to the country.

From this study it can be recommended that green hotel designing is increased in Sri Lanka. Nowadays eco-tourism is being developed and the world is moving towards green hotels. Through this concept hotels will strive to be environmentally friendly, and this in turn will create higher desire or preference on the part of guests or travellers, without creating new environmental hazards as a result.

The study found that interior and exterior designs highly impacted demand for hotels and that there is a positive relationship between design and customer perception. Furthermore this study concluded that the hotel lobby design, wall colours, room decor, star type and the room type were extremely important to increase the demand for hotels. This means that in future facilities such as high-speed Wi-Fi, larger rooms, clean facilities, food and entertainment activities will be important, as would eco-tourism and better management systems.

The policy implication of this study is that tourism management, eco-tourism, and green hotel design should be prioritised. There should be effective, long term, and continuous policies regarding the tourism industry. The policy of hotel management can be implemented. This policy involves the better management of workers, managers, designs, facilities, and services provided by hotels. By implementing such a policy, hotels in Sri Lanka can improve their capacities and attract more tourists.

Key words: Interior and Exterior Designs, Customer Perception, Green Hotel Designing, Eco- Tourism, Lobby Designing

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