

An investigation of the factors associated with consumer behaviour at arrival, check-in and the check-out process: A case study Marriott International Inc. in the UK

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Keywords

consumer behaviour, influential factors, first impression, staff service, smile

Abstract

Purpose – This research study aims to examine different influential elements that affect consumer behaviour starting from their arrival at check-in and throughout the check-out process in the context of Marriott International Inc., using case study observation and interview methods within a qualitative and quantitative paradigm. It endeavours to identify how certain positive influential factors can contribute to ultimate vacation experiences and therefore provide a competitive advantage to Marriott International Inc.

Design/methodology/approach – This report is grounded on primary research. The empirical framework is based on literatures on potentially influential factors at hotel check-in and check-out that affect consumer behaviour. The research design involved the use of systematic and rigorous methods, including observation, interviewing and data analysis, to test hypotheses and validate research findings. Primary data was collected with the combination of observation of consumers and interviews with management. It aims to establish a reliable and valid relationship between theoretical concepts such as first impressions and observable phenomena in the real world, which can help to inform practice and improve our understanding of consumer behaviour.

Findings – The study found that there are five factors that can greatly influence consumer behaviour, including first impression, smile, staff, service, and waiting time. These factors were categorised into positive, negative, dependent, and bipolar categories, and were shown to have a significant impact on both consumer behaviour and business operations.

Practical implications – The study finds certain behavioural elements impact on the effectiveness of provided service while specific influential factors improve the overall experience. Hence the organisation with the consideration of positive service components can provide exceptional service which enhances consumer loyalty.

Originality/value– This paper represents the first academic research undertaken at Marriott International Inc. to investigate various influential factors that affect consumer behaviour and their implication for its success.

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1. Introduction

Due to digital technology, the new consumer is more advanced therefore we entered a consumer-centric age (Giménez, 2018). Consequently, customers interact with businesses through multiple channels, and a mixture of operational tasks is essential to provide a positive consumer experience. For this reason, the examination of the customer journey map help depicts the various touchpoints (Taşkın, 2021). The customer journey concept concentrates on the individual's action while trying to understand and form the unfolding customer experiences. (Kotler, et al., 2021) Accordingly, understanding the consumer's needs by studying their behaviour is essential to implement the strategy of the business. For several decades, academic researchers and marketers have been concerned with consumer behaviour as a distinct discipline

(Varey, 2002). Consumer behaviour is depending on multiple variables such as motivation, attributes, and attitudes that affect the purchasing decision of customers (Foxall, 1980).

Consumer behaviour can be defined as a series of activities that people do through their everyday life as a consumer to satisfy their desired needs by purchasing something that is considered valuable. These activities generally involve searching, deciding, purchasing, consuming and affecting other people (Varey, 2002). Therefore, focusing on motivation and value creation can be an essential element in different stages of purchase and consumption. However, in order to be able to motivate or create value for the consumer the identification and understanding of various influential factors are needed.

Essential to mention the first impression, which can influence consumers' experiences to various extents. If the first impression is triggered by a negative event consequently individuals have the feeling of a negative first impression that can be consistently in the individual's mind, even if the conditions suggest contradicting evidence (Ambady and Skowronski, 2008). The research highlights two main touch points such as the arrival experience through the check-in process and the check-out process. Upon arrival and during check-in, the research focused on various factors that are related to the first impression and beyond, while during the check-out process, the factors are considered similar, however, it needs to acknowledge, at this point of the consumer journey, the individual already has the experience of their stay.

The aim of the research is to investigate various influential factors that impact the behaviour of consumers from the time of arrival at check-in and during the check-out process in the context of Marriott International Inc. To achieve the research aim the following threefold research objectives are set:

- To determine the influential factors of consumer behaviour upon arrival, check-in and during check-out.
- To study the possible issues that relate to consumer behaviour from the point of arrival at check-in and check-out.
- To specify those factors that contribute to a positive outcome of the ultimate vacation experience.

2. Review of literature

Many businesses acknowledge that consumer behaviour is a process. It is more than having a product or service in return for payment rather a continuing process which comprises various stages (Solomon, 2015). There is no universal rule on how many stages of the buying process. According to Kotler et al. (2021), the process of buying is beginning before the actual purchasing of the product and can be broken down into five stages: **need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behaviour**. However, Davis (2022) argued that there are eight stages of the customer behaviour process. He defined customer buying as a circle which is comprised of **need, learn, buy, and value**, then each and every step was broken down into two different sub-stages such as change, discontent, research, comparison, fear, commitment, expectation, and satisfaction. Solomon (2015) describes the buying behaviour process as a three-phase method which includes the **pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase** stages. According to Swarbrooke and Horner (2007), the consumer's purchase decision process in the hotel sector is more complex regarding the individuals investing in an overall experience, not just a specific product. Therefore, the phases of the purchases are **anticipation**, before the trip, **consumption**, during the trip, **recollection of memories**, after the trip (Swarbrooke and Horner, 2007). From the angle of the research, it can clearly identify the consumer has already made the decision and therefore the arrival **check-in and check-out** experience of the individual **can be positioned in the consumption or post-purchase stage**.

However, in the hotel industry, these touchpoints can be critical to influencing consumer decisions. According to Bond's Loyalty Report (2020), the experiences that generate the most value by involving participants **before, during, and after the event**, taking into account both the current market dynamics and the future changes that may shape the "new normal" (Bond, 2020). These findings can be relevant in the context of check-in and check-out in order to generate more value to enhance the consumer's experiences. There is a significant influential factor that overlaps the consumer behaviour process, namely consumer anticipation. **Consumer anticipation** refers to the cognitive process through which individuals evaluate the expected physical, experiential, social, emotional, or behavioural outcomes that will result from a consumption decision or experience that has yet to occur (Vichiengior, et al., 2019). **Anticipation** is the sole

means by which the future is manifested in the present (Miller, 2018). The phenomenon of **consumer anticipation takes place when there is a delay between the initial thoughts about a product or service and the subsequent experience** of it. Situations, where consumption is delayed, allow consumers to envision their future consumption by planning or imagining it, such as when consumers book their hotel stay in advance (Vichiengior, et al., 2019). Consumer anticipation is pivotal. If a service truly anticipates its customers' desires and wishes, those customers will be well on their way to feeling they can't, or certainly don't want to, live without that service (Solomon, 2014).

Therefore, the identification of various influential factors can provide benefits for multiple levels by increasing the quality of service and helping identify needs before the need arise.

2.1 Service

The check-in and check-out procedures are key touchpoints within the service process. It is crucial to have a clear understanding of the definition of hospitality service in order to fully comprehend the potential sources of influential factors. Hospitality service can be defined based on core service characteristics. The most essential characteristic that separates service from goods is **intangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity, perishability, and ownership** of the product (Williams, 2002). Bruhn and Georgi (2006) further emphasised the characteristics of service as intangible, perishable, non-transportable, heterogeneous and dependent on consumer involvement for production and delivery. To summarise, the service process occurs between the consumer and the service provider, and the consumer must be actively involved in the service for it to be realised. Therefore, it can state the consumer can be influenced by the service, within the process of service. Consequently, there are multitudinous factors can be present that are affecting consumer behaviour. Laws (2004) emphasised that the hospitality industry can reduce consumer complaints by designing and implementing a customer-oriented approach to their services. Therefore, by taking this approach, the hospitality industry can increase customer satisfaction and reduce the number of complaints, ultimately leading to a more positive experience for customers. According to Bolton (2016), the service industry has a significant impact on people's lives and their quality of life globally and within their societies. By focusing on development and innovation in service, businesses can create an atmosphere that supports customer satisfaction. The effectiveness of a service can have a significant impact on customer loyalty. Customers are more likely to return to a business and make repeat purchases if they have had a positive experience with the service they received (Mattila, 2004). Service quality is linked to an individual's mindset and experiences in a certain place, and it encompasses various theoretical knowledge factors that cannot be fully understood through digital means or by studying them in isolation. The perception of high-quality service can have a positive impact on an individual's intention to purchase and their likelihood of repeat business, as it leads to increased customer satisfaction and a more positive overall experience (Yen-Ying, 2022).

Outstanding service in quality goes beyond just the physical aspects of a product or service and encompasses the entire customer experience (Saxton and Finkelstein, 2022). The characteristics of the service outlined above must prioritise the customer, be efficient, and maintain a high level of quality. Providing **service with a positive result** is most likely to **foster a sense of trust**. The consumer and service provider collaborate to produce the desired outcome. Their level of trust and emotional state affect their observations, reactions, and cooperation (Dasu and Chase, 2013).

2.2 First impression

Investigating the influential factors associated with consumer behaviour, experts and academics highlighted the phenomenon of first impressions. For instance, a positive and strong first impression helps to increase other confidence and shed light on the better side of the individual (Knight, 2016). The first impression has a great influence on others which is essential in the life of the business (Van Edwards, 2017). The first impression can be defined as an early judgment of an individual based on the initial sense. The formation of first impressions happens naturally from perception originating from human sensory processing. **Arguably sight and sound are the potential sense to perceive other individuals** (Ambady and Skowronski, 2008). The formation of the first impression can happen within the tenth of the second from facial expressions (Willis and Todorov, 2006). For most individuals, making a good first impression is

crucial since many people do not have the time or inclination to get to know someone better before making judgments. Rather, they tend to make split-second assumptions and decide if they want to pursue a relationship, either personal or professional. Once they form an opinion, they are unlikely to change their minds (Mychals, 2013).

2.3 Facial expression

Faces play a crucial role in visual perception. Research in both perception and cognition has consistently demonstrated human's ability to accurately identify information such as gender, age, identity, and facial expressions in faces. Among these, facial expressions stand out as unique in that they are the only aspect of the face, apart from mouth movements during speech, that constantly and rapidly changes in intricate ways (Kaulard, et al., 2012). Matsumoto et al. (2013) provided a similar definition by indicating that facial expression is one of the elements of nonverbal communication which is considered the most complex nonverbal channel for signalling essential emotion. For instance, Wang et al. (2017), mentioned a significant number of research indicate that smiles are influential social factors that affect positively interpersonal perception in many forms. The smile has been used as a tool of marketing to generate positive consumer perceptions. There are seven basic emotions that can express through facial expressions such as joy, surprise, contempt, sadness, anger, disgust and fear that have a universal understanding (Matsumoto, et al., 2013). In the interpretation of social interactions, facial expression is a key stimulus as they help recognise the individual and his/her emotional condition. Facial emotions are the essence of a human signal system when expressing feelings and events (Martínez, et al., 2020). Facial expression can be a crucial influential factor in the formation of the first impression.

2.4 Body language

In the world of emotions, our facial expressions, postures, and gestures are essential and when our surroundings oppose the unspoken communications encompassed within them, the individuals doubt the spoken word, they consider what we do (Mehrabian, 1971). Matsumoto et al. (2013), argued that there is evidence that is suggesting emotional expression can be biologically based. Van Edwards (2017) emphasised that individuals are more attractive to the winners, and everybody wants to be in the same team.

Therefore, concentrating on the displayed posture by standing straight and with shoulders back, can create an impression of confidence. Peterson (2019) made a comparison between lobsters and the human hierarchical system. As pointed out in his work the lobsters as humans live in a hierarchy and their nervous system, which is producing serotonin, depends on the achieved status on the hierarchical ladder. The dominant lobster always stands straight which is suggesting his high position. Consequently, if people take a posture, and stand-up shoulder back, it is suggesting the individual voluntarily accepts the challenges of simply being. Using a posture, such as walking with the chest held high can express confidence (Knight, 2016). Body language is more than a posture of standing. The movement of hands and arms forming gestures is directly related to the meaning of the spoken word (Beattie, 2004). Body language can be a contributing factor to the first impression.

2.5 Tone of voice

The sounds that convey emotional states are referred to as tone of voice, making it one of the primary methods of communicating temporary emotional states through speech (Tiwari and Tiwari, 2012). Most of us are familiar with the saying, "It's not what you say, but how you say it.". The unspoken components that come together with verbal expression are just as crucial as the spoken words themselves in conveying significance through speech (Matsumoto, et al., 2013). The choice of voice significantly impacts the interpretation of spoken words. For instance, an individual may employ a sarcastic tone when conversing with a friend and a more respectful tone when communicating with someone who deserves reverence. The tone of voice, similar to body language, has the potential to influence the interpretation of the words that someone speaks. To achieve effective communication, it is imperative that the tone of voice is consistent with the intended message (BBC, 2023). The tone of voice is considered a nonverbal element that is attached to the spoken word within the voice communication channel. Voice communication is the main channel that consists of three subchannels such as verbal, speech style and tone (Matsumoto, et al., 2013).

2.6 Waiting time and its effects.

There is a connection between time and happiness. In order to enhance happiness, one needs allocation of time for it (Aaker, et al., 2011). However, the waiting time may not be that factor that the individuals are planning in advance. According to Li (2010), the duration of waiting generally negatively impacts the level of satisfaction of tourists. Pàmies et al. (2016) indicated, people from different cultures may or may not view waiting time as a factor in their satisfaction. This highlights the experience of waiting may not be seen as shorter or longer, but rather, present or absent. Kumar et al. (1997) highlighted a connection between time guarantee and consumer satisfaction. Customers are more satisfied with their waiting experience at firms that offer and adhere to time guarantees, compared to those that only meet their expected wait time, in the beginning, throughout, and ending of the wait. However, it needs to be cautious with the promised time guarantee. Violating a time guarantee has a more negative impact on customer satisfaction at the end of the process compared to simply not meeting their waiting time expectations. This suggests that companies that offer time guarantees but fail to invest in the necessary operations to fulfil them will likely lose customer loyalty (Kumar, et al., 1997). The negative impact of the waiting time can be minimised by using additional fillers in the process.

2.7 Atmosphere

According to Kotler (1973), in the field of marketing, the concept of "atmosphere" refers to the deliberate creation of specific surroundings through the design of a space with the intention of influencing buyers. Doyle (2016), defines **atmosphere** as a component of a store's image that is crafted using a mixture of sensory elements aimed at generating a particular shopping atmosphere. Heide and Grønhaug (2006), argued that in the creation of atmosphere, three critical elements play a crucial role such as ambient, social and design factors. Several researches have shown that the **atmosphere plays a crucial role in determining customer satisfaction** among hotel guests, regardless of their location, nationality, or the type of hotel they stay in (Heide and Grønhaug, 2009). According to Barros et al. (2019), findings show the majority of store atmosphere elements, such as the environment, design, layout, music, and employees, are crucial in the process of shaping consumers' positive emotional reactions to the environment.

2.8 Ambient factors

Heide and Grønhaug (2006) indicated ambient factors refer to elements such as sound, lighting, scent, and temperature. Suh et al. (2015), highlighted these ambient factors play a crucial part in shaping the overall image of a hotel and determining guest satisfaction. Based on Maiwald et al. (2013) findings, the implementation of scents has a beneficial impact on consumers' perception of the brand and their intention to make a purchase. Geng et al. (2023) found that light and colour had a relationship where light would reduce the impact of colour, and any negative effect of colour by diverting the attention to other elements that can improve the evaluation and increase excitement. The relationship between the ambience of a shopping environment and customer decision-making is attributed to the environment's perceived capacity to evoke positive emotions (Chang, et al., 2013). Guillet et al. (2019), findings indicate that the dominant emotions elicited by hotel scents are happiness and pleasure, along with sensuality. These emotions have a positive correlation with the respondents' future attitudes, such as their assessment of the hotel's atmosphere, their contentment with their stay, their allegiance to the brand, their eagerness to return, and their interest in buying the scent for use in their homes or workplace.

2.9 Social factor

The guest's perception of the atmosphere can be affected by several social factors (Heide and Grønhaug, 2006). Marketers emphasise that should every single employee, regardless of their department, should have an awareness of how their position affects the customer experience (Kotler, et al., 2021). Therefore, it can be linked to the employee personality as a social factor that can influence the atmosphere and beyond. According to Rogers and Glendon (2018), there is a well-studied and frequently employed approach to comprehending and classifying variations in personality which is the Five Factor Model (FFM). The five factors of personality are usually referred to as Agreeableness, Extraversion, Conscientiousness,

Neuroticism, and Openness to Experience (Rogers and Glendon, 2018). Based on Jani and Han (2013), findings that are indicated that conscientiousness and extraversion had a positive effect, while neuroticism had a negative effect on social comparison. Hotel owners and managers should consider these findings when selecting and training their service staff.

2.10 Design factor

According to hoteliers, the lobby is the core and essence of any hotel (Higgins, 2005). Regardless of the theme, style, and target audience of a hotel, a well-designed lobby is a smoothly functioning space that is often considered the most important and frequently used component of the hotel's facilities (Kilburn, 2019). Three factors, namely **style, colour, and lighting, have a significant impact on the impression of the lobby** (Countryman and Jang, 2006). The design of the hotel lobby is crucial in creating first impressions. Choosing the appropriate interior design style that suits their target audience crucial for overall guest satisfaction (Nanu, et al., 2020).

3. Research methodology

The core objective of this research is to explore ways to create value by examining consumer behaviour. It is based on the belief that identifying various factors that impact consumer experience will lead to the creation of value for Marriott Inc. By understanding how to create a positive experience for consumers, the research aims to demonstrate how the service can contribute to social value creation. Thus, the underlying philosophy behind this research is based on **interpretivism**. As per Saunders et al. (2019), interpretivism stems from subjectivist perspectives and posits that humans differ from tangible objects as they create meaning and sense. With the line of research philosophy, an **inductive approach** is adopted in this research to build theories. The research will commence by gathering data to comprehend consumer behaviour in the hospitality sector, resulting in the formation of a theory. Both **qualitative and quantitative methods** are used to achieve research objectives

3.1 Research instruments/tools

The primary data collection consists of two different methods such as **complete observation** in the field and a **semi-structured interview** with the hotel management. The researchers conducted the observation without disclosing their intentions to the participants and without influencing the activity being observed. The primary tool used in participant observation methods is the researcher themselves (Denscombe, 2021). Due to the fact that participant observation heavily relies on the researcher as the main tool for collecting data, it becomes challenging to replicate the study to assess its consistency (Denscombe, 2021). Therefore, the method of observation started fast-tracking note-taking such as a "**tick note**" where specific features of characteristics were recorded, for instance, the nature of travel is leisure or business. To improve the accuracy of the data, the observation events will be recorded in writing immediately during the observation. The second part of the primary data collection is conducted through interviews.

3.2 Sampling

Because of the characteristics of the research, the **non-probability purposive sampling method** is considered the most suitable approach for the study. The study of purposive sampling must recognise which aspects of the investigated field or phenomenon will be included in the study (O'Gorman and MacIntosh, 2015). As a result, the sample size has been determined to be **50 individuals** for observation and **two in-depth interviews** with the hotel management. The **consumer's feedback was overviewed for one year** between the year 2022 and 2023.

4. Findings

4.1 Observation findings

Fifty individuals were observed during their arrival, check-in, and check-out processes as part of the study. The observation period lasted every day from 8 am to 8 pm and continued until 50 individuals had been observed. The following ambient factors were present during the observation period: the lighting was set to maximum, lobby music was set to level 3, and lobby scent was continuously diffused into the air using an air freshener. The doorman was the first line of contact upon arrival. As part of the study, every time a guest arrived at the hotel courtyard, the doorman was required to greet them with a broad smile, with a resonance deep voice, and offer assistance with their luggage. Out of the 50 individuals observed, 45 individuals responded with a smile, while 5 individuals did not smile. This indicates a **90% smile response rate**.

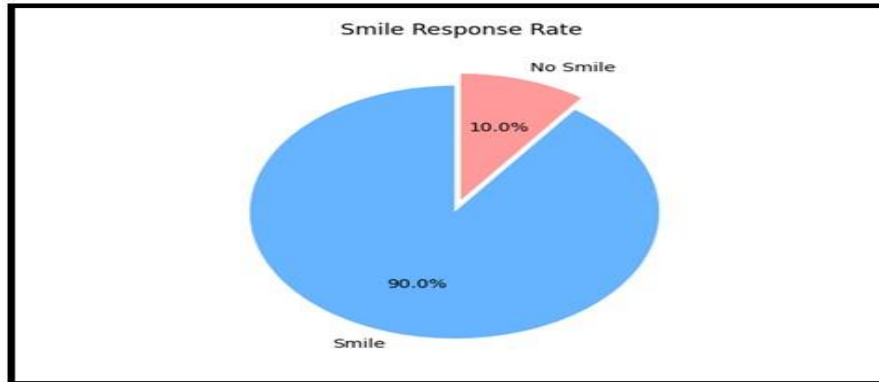


Figure 1. Smiles response rate

Prioritising the use of guests' names in order to personalise the service was a key goal. Three distinct methods were utilised to determine the name of the guest upon arrival. The first method involved the door staff attempting to discern the name of the guest from the luggage tags during the greeting process. The second method was used when the guest had a pre-booked chauffeur, and the hotel concierge was informed of the guest's details just before their arrival. The third and final method involved a brief exchange while the guest was escorted to the front desk agent, during which the guest's name was requested for check-in purposes. Throughout this process, additional welcome amenities were offered to the guest by a concierge or another front desk agent. These amenities included a warm face towel, various sweets, water and, on a special occasion, sparkling wine. The **average check-in time is 10 minutes**. During the check-in process, guests were politely asked about the purpose of their travel.

As shown in Figure 2. out of 50 individuals, **4 were travelling for business purposes and 46 were travelling for leisure**.

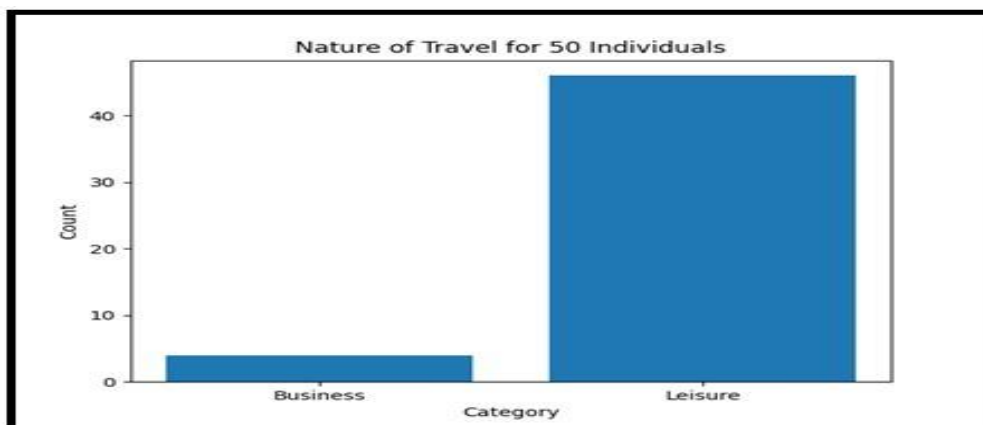


Figure 2. Nature of travel

During the check-in, the front-desk agent identified the level of membership of the guest from the property management system. Marriott International Inc. is offering various loyalty program tiers, which is a complimentary option that can provide benefits to the consumer instantly and for future stays (Marriott, 2023). At the time of the research, the hotel's occupancy rate was 50 per cent. As a result, guests did not have to wait for their rooms after completing the check-in process and were able to immediately occupy their assigned rooms. Observing the process of check-out, the following findings were determined. At the beginning of the check-out process, the front-desk agent politely asked for the guest's room number and then initiated a brief conversation about the guest's stay, using their name. **On average, the check-out process took 3 minutes.** The process of check-out was completed by the handover of the final invoice. If the guest had luggage, the concierge or luggage porter provided assistance delivering it to the door, where the doorman then took over and asked if the guest needed any further help with transportation or loading of their luggage.

Occupancy Level	Average Check-in Time	Average Check-out Time	Smile Response Rate	% of Business Travellers	% of Leisure Travellers
50%	10 minutes	3 minutes	90%	8%	92%

Table 1. Findings of the observation

4.2 Interview findings

In the study, there were two forty minutes of an in-depth interview with the head concierge and the front-desk manager in relation to consumer behaviour and its influential factors.

The reason to select the above-mentioned individuals is that their position and management affect the day-to-day operation. The first influential factor mentioned by the front-desk manager it was the location while the head concierge mentioned the first impression first. However, based on the analysis of the interviews it can be identified from the perspectives of the hotel management that the most mentioned three influential factors are the **atmosphere** of the hotel, consideration of **guest online feedback** and the **service** itself. Also, hotel management places significant emphasis on staff training that covers a broad range of services and involves various sessions on handling sensitive issues and guest complaints. The identified influential factors are presented in Table 2.

Mentioned Influential factors based on the interview	Front-desk manager	Concierge
Atmosphere	√	√
Service	√	√
First impression	√	√
Guest feedback	√	√
Design factor	√	√
Social Factor		√
Ambient Factor	√	√
Warm welcome	√	√
Smile	√	√
Amenities	√	√
Staff/ Staff training	√	√
Waiting time	√	√
Friendliness	√	
Communication	√	√
Effectiveness	√	√
Difficult guest attitude		√

Location

√

Table 2. Identified influential factors

When the interviewees were asked to identify the factors that can pose a challenge within the process of check-out and check-in, they both first identified the **waiting time** issues. The **lack of communication**, including the language barrier, was mentioned as well by both participants of the interview.

4.3 Secondary data findings

The secondary data is collected from the Marriott MGS global source. From 2022 to 2023, there were 1,242 cases of consumer feedback in relation to the hotel. However, only 655 of these feedback entries were complete and relevant to the research topic, so the analysis was based solely on this subset of data. The quality of the staff service was rated by the consumer on a scale of 1 to 10. Based on the research findings in relation to staff service, 57.53% of the feedback indicated that consumers were highly satisfied with the service provided by staff, as evidenced by a score of 10 out of 10.

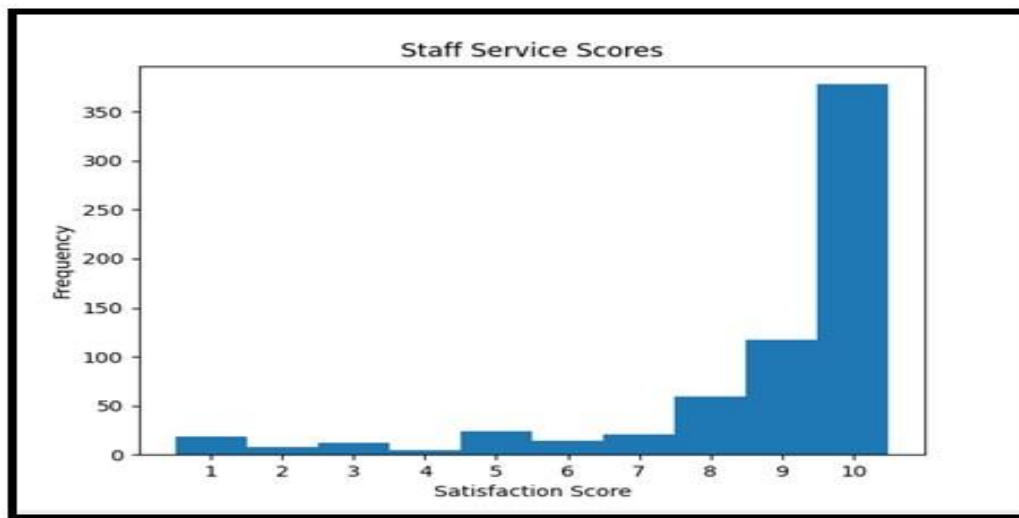


Figure 3. Staff Service Score

NVivo software (version 1.7.1) is used for word frequency quire to analyse the guest's written feedback. It can identify the **location**, **staff**, and **service** are among the most frequently mentioned word in their provided feedback. The **friendliness of the staff** there was **mentioned 84 times**. Upon examining the consumer feedback, **waiting times** were mentioned **13 times** and **service quality** was mentioned **19 times** as complaints in a negative context.

The correlation analysis is highlighted in the reflection of five variables. Pearson product correlation of **intend to recommend**, **staff service**, **design and décor**, **Marriott Hotel (MH) trusted quality experience** and **elite appreciation** found positive and statistically essential connections between these variables. The research highlighted the strongest possible scenario broken down individually for every single factor.

An increase in Intend to recommend would lead to a higher MH trusted quality experience.

$r=.881, p<.001$

An increase in staff service could result in a higher elite appreciation.

$r=.810, p<.001$

An increase in design and décor is likely to result in a higher MH trusted quality experience.

$r=.715, p<.001$

An increase in MH trusted quality has the strongest effect on the intend to recommend and provide the same result as the increase in intend to recommend.

$r=.881, p<.001$

An increase in elite appreciation is more likely to lead to a higher MH trusted quality experience.

$r=.850, p<.001$

		Correlations				
		Intent to Recommend (Property)	Staff Service	Design and Décor	MH: Trusted, quality experience	Elite Appreciation
Intent to Recommend (Property)	Pearson Correlation	1	.788**	.704**	.881**	.778**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	655	655	366	363	329
Staff Service	Pearson Correlation	.788**	1	.597**	.741**	.810**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	655	655	366	363	329
Design and Décor	Pearson Correlation	.704**	.597**	1	.715**	.562**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001
	N	366	366	366	362	192
MH: Trusted, quality experience	Pearson Correlation	.881**	.741**	.715**	1	.850**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001
	N	363	363	362	363	192
Elite Appreciation	Pearson Correlation	.778**	.810**	.562**	.850**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	
	N	329	329	192	192	329

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Figure 4. Correlation analysis

5. Discussion

The analysis identified key factors that can be considered essential influential element that affects consumer behaviour. The **smile** can identify as a crucial influential factor regarding the high level of response rate. In the case of smiling at an individual upon arrival, it can be identified a 90% positive smile response rate. The **atmosphere** and **first impression** were also considered as significant factors that were able to influence consumers' behaviour based on the hotel management's view. Furthermore, the **staff** itself, their **attributes** and **provided service**. The data suggested the **waiting time** and the **service quality** was considered negative influential factors. Additionally, the study discovered a strong correlation between service and consumer experience such as perceived quality, design and décor and intend to recommend. Focusing on these factors these are essential in the company's operation in order to able to increase the quality of service and create loyal consumers which are directly interlinked to the profitability of the business.

5.1 First impression and the smile

The formation of first impression can happen within the blink of an eye (Willis and Todorov, 2006). Ambady and Skowronski (2008), highlighted that negative first impression last longer in the mind, and even later the evidence suggests controversial information. Therefore, it is essential to do everything possible to create a positive first impression on the consumer. Based on the research findings the **smile** can be a frontline tool to generate a positive first impression. The data suggested a **90% positive smile response rate**, therefore the smile, as a facial expression, is considered a **positive influential factor**. It can state the research findings in relation to facial expression, precisely the use of a smile, align with Wang et al. (2017), findings which indicated the smile is a positive influential factor.

Smiling is an expression of signalling positive emotion (Martínez, et al., 2020). **Therefore, it can identify the smile affect the consumer by conveying positive stimuli and evoking positive emotion from the individual.** This, help generate a positive first impression. Consequently, the first impression is considered an individual factor that affects consumer behaviour. It is essential to highlight while the **first impression** can trigger positive outcomes it is a **dependent factor** that can evoke negative outcomes as well,

while the smile is an individual factor that has a positive influence on the formation of first impressions. Therefore, the **smile** is a **positive influential factor**.

5.2 Atmosphere and the staff

Based on the research findings the management of the hotel concentrating on the creation of a positive atmosphere to influence the guest. The atmosphere is a creation of precise surroundings with the considered design to influence the individual (Kotler, 1973). The atmosphere is more complex than just a designed area. The atmosphere requires design, ambient factors and human elements as the employee (Barros, et al., 2019). The data suggested at the studied Marriott property where the research took place, the guest's two major preference was the location and the staff itself. It is essential to highlight in the studied feedbacks it was a significant number of mentioned friendly staff. That led to the conclusion without staff the atmosphere is not complete. Based on the research findings the atmosphere and staff are critical factors that influence consumer behaviour. On the other hand, it is essential to highlight the effect of the atmosphere is correlated with the staff itself, while the individual can trigger a negation of consumer behaviour. Therefore the atmosphere can classify as a **dependent factor** while the **staff** it can classify as a **bipolar influential factor**.

5.3 Service and the staff

Within the process of service, there are two essential components the consumer and the individuals who proving the service (Bruhn and Georgi, 2006). The study validates that within one service process such as check-in and check-out, there are multiple individuals/employees get involved in the delivery of service. Also, the data suggesting the service provided by staff significantly influence the perceived quality of the service. Based on provided data, the staff service increases significantly the consumer experience through elite appreciation, which is the result of the increasing trust experience in the brand as well. The **service** is considered a **dependent influential factor** that correlated with additional influential factors. That is proven by the findings of the research because the service itself was mentioned several times when the consumer addressed their complaint.

5.4 Waiting time and service

The analysis of investigated data identified that **waiting time** can be a major **negative influential factor**. The consumer's feedback suggested the most mentioned negative factor in their complaint and feedback was related to slow check-in and perceived waiting time. The findings align with the thesis introduced by Li (2010), that waiting negatively affects the level of satisfaction (Li, 2010). Consequently, the occurrence of waiting is interconnected with the service. As mentioned above there was a complaint about slow check-in, which is occurring in the process of service with the interaction with the staff. The **staff is classified as a bipolar factor** because the research believes the employee as a human being has the ability to make a certain decision that can trigger positive or negative outcomes from the beginning to the end of the service.

6 Limitations of the study and direction for future studies

One limitation of the research is that it was conducted outside of the peak season, resulting in low hotel occupancy and shorter waiting times for guests. If the study had been conducted during a busier time, the results may have been different, as guests would have had to spend more time waiting for check-in or check-out. Therefore, the findings may not be generalisable to busier periods, and future research should consider conducting the study during the peak season to get a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behaviour. Another potential area for research is the relationship between employee personality and consumer behaviour. Previous research has suggested that personality traits can influence employee performance and customer satisfaction, and it would be valuable to explore how these factors intersect in the context of the hotel industry.

7 Study implications

The findings of this research have important practical implications for organisations looking to improve consumer satisfaction. It is clear that the quality of service provided plays a critical role in shaping the

overall satisfaction of the consumer. Therefore, it is essential for organisations to identify the factors that influence service delivery and to view the process from multiple perspectives. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of considering service delivery as an influential factor that is dependent on variables such as staff participation. By minimising negative factors and focusing on positive service components, organisations can provide exceptional service that enhances consumer loyalty. Ultimately, this can lead to improved business performance and increased profitability.

8 Conclusions

This study aimed to explore various factors that impact consumer behaviour throughout the check-in and check-out processes at Marriott International Inc. in the UK. The result indicates that the smile is an essential influential factor that can trigger positive consumer behaviour, while the waiting time is the most mentioned negative factor in relation to the process of check-in and check-out. The discovered strong connection between a smile and a positive response for it validates Wang et al. (2017) findings which are indicating a smile is an essential factor that is influencing interpersonal perception positively. The research also identified a correlation between staff service, elite appreciation, and trusted quality experience. That is confirming Dasu and Chase (2013) argument that is indicating the level of trust depends on the level of service (Dasu and Chase, 2013).

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