

## Interior Design of Hotel Rooms as a Factor Affecting Customer Satisfaction in Hotels

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### Abstract

This study was focused on hotels operating in Abakiliki, the State capital of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The subjects of the study were both customers and managers from the selected hotels. A sample size of 150 respondents was used for the study. A survey research method was adopted where questionnaire and interview were employed as instruments for data collection. The question was structured in 5 points Likert rating scale. The questionnaire was validated by five experts who modified the questions to achieve the objectives of the study. The questionnaire was tested for reliability through one test administration and the internal consistency was measured using Cronbach Alpha which showed a numeric value of alpha of 0.85. Simple descriptive statistics such as percentages and frequency distribution tables were to analyze the data. The results revealed that proper interior design of hotel rooms reduces wear and tear maintenance cost; makes the guest feel more satisfied and willing to spend more and increases the level of patronage thereby leading to income generation thereby increasing return on investment (ROI) of the hotel owners. Therefore, management should adopt the use of proper interior design to make guests more comfortable and reduce the cost of maintenance to increase revenue generation.

**Keywords:** Hotel, Interior design, Customers, Satisfaction,  
Hotel rooms.

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### **Background to the Study**

Hotel interior design can help make or mar a guest's experience. Hotel interior design creates the first impression on anybody who walks through hotel's doors. The interior environment must be created to be lively and beautiful to make guests have experience that is rewarding, pleasant and comfortable to make them return for a repeat patronage. For instance, a well-designed lobby is an indication of a well-designed room. Equally, an outdated lobby with old furnishings can turn off guest who is seeking clean and modern amenities. With today's technology, potentials search hotels online where they want to stay based primarily on the design before considering the price. When a hotel has really cool unique features, then the hotel is marketed free; a good product market itself. In our society today, people look at pictures when looking at hotel online to see if it is new, clean, and has space before booking. Once someone sees that a family member or friend stays in a cool hotel, then the person will want to go to the same hotel.

Hotel design plays a very significant role in the hospitality industry in our society today. Interior spaces within buildings are defined by the architectural elements of structure and enclosures which include floors, ceilings, walls, windows, doorways, and stairways. According to Grimley and Love (2007) creating a unique face of the interior together with its style, color, lighting, layout and furnishings, should comprise the main task for the designer during hotel construction. In the narrow sense of the term, "design" means the process of artistic construction and is directly related to the interior. Interior is an architectural and artistic design of the internal areas of the building, which provides an aesthetic perception and favorable conditions for human life (Blakemore & Rabun, 1997). Hotel design makes the interior spaces habitable-functional fit, aesthetically pleasing and psychologically satisfying for activities. Designing makes objects to appear more beautiful, eye-catching, and attractive. Design may take place in households, hotels, restaurants, banks, and every other organization. Interior hotel design directly influences the profitability and success of hotel establishments in the hospitality Industry. The concepts of hotel interior design and demand for hotels are highly correlated. Nobles (1999) emphasized 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'. This establishes the fact that there is interdependence between interior decoration of hotels and demand for hotels and hotel profitability and sustainability. Buchanan (1999) identified design as the human power of conceiving, arranging and creating products that permit human beings to attain their individual and collective purposes. Stipanuk (2006) describes 'design in hospitality and tourism facilities as the core aspect that contributes to adding value for both operations by tourists'. More so, the American Society of Interior Design (ASID), describes the essence of interior design as both functional and enhancement of the quality of life and culture of the occupants.

Most hotels operating in Abakiliki, Ebonyi State have not given adequate attention to the interior design of the hotels to sustain the revenue generation to keep them going as is obtainable in developed countries like US, Dubai, UK, Spain, France, South Africa and many other developed countries. These countries place high priority on interior design

when constructing hotels because they believe more customers will be attracted by the hotels through their designs, which helps in guest satisfaction. The hotels in these countries do not only pay attention to design during hotel construction but go beyond that by refurbishing and redesigning from time to time to be up to date. If the hotel owner wants to redesign the facility it should first communicate with the customer and research on its wants and recommendations on aesthetics (the wall decor, paintings/pictures, furniture, flooring/carpeting, sound.) of the hotel because the customers are eventually the ones that are directly influenced by those decisions (Ryu & Han, 2011). Also, it is stated that the results of assessing the customer opinion on the aesthetics of the hotel can differentiate depending on the new or repeat customer or time period of the previous design that was implemented in the hotel. Overall satisfaction affects customer loyalty and repeats customers. Aesthetics does not only increase loyalty in the existing customers but also can be a positive experience that will attract new customers and increase revenues (Ryu & Han, 2011). More frequent driver was interior design both in favorable and unfavorable experiences, than the exterior (Walter & Edvardsson, 2012). The essence of refurbishing and redesign is to be up to date to meet customers' expectations to make more people interested to stay. Because the more a hotel stays up to date, the more people are satisfied and attracted to stay at the hotel, and the more profit is made. According to Jana & Chandra (2016), customer satisfaction has become an important aspect of the hotel industry. Unlike other industries, the hotel industry prospers due to customers' retention. It is only through customer satisfaction that a hotel can retain its customers. Basically, customers' loyalty is dependent on the quality of the services that they get in a hotel. Moreover, the hospitality industry has experienced the entrance of many investors who are willing to meet all the needs of their customers. Therefore, if customers are not satisfied with the services they receive in one hotel, they will look for better services elsewhere (Jana & Chandra, 2016). Perceived quality of any servicescape is largely determined by the quality of its interior design (Countryman & Jang, 2006; Lin, 2004; Lucas, 2012; Orth, Heinrich, & Malkewitz, 2012). For this reason, interior design should be a priority during hotel construction. Customer satisfaction is increased when a customer feels that the hotel design and its color, lighting and music are reflecting the quality of hotel. Also, customers tend to set higher their perceived reasonable prices if the physical environment is reflecting or increasing hotel quality (Ryu & Han, 2010).

It becomes important to maintain a high standard interior design of hotels to make hotels a destination of preferences that will satisfy the guests and provide them with unique comfort and experience, as well as providing the right financial returns to the owners. This is because more hotel users are becoming more educated, selective, responsible and sensitive to their immediate environment.

Therefore, in order to create interior design of hotel room environment that is aesthetically pleasant, many hotels have put various measures in place to make their facilities more preferred than others as it is common in western countries. On the contrary, some hotels in Abakiliki, Ebonyi State have gone extinct; others are confronted with loss of revenue, guest rejection of rooms, lower customer patronage and more so hoteliers don't have return

on their investment because of poor interior design and redesign that meet the taste of time. Even guests that used a particular hotel hardly return to the same hotel for repeat patronage due to bad interior design. Poor interior design will affect a guest's stay, their satisfaction and intention to repeat patronage. It is on this premise that this study, therefore, endeavors to examine interior design in hotels as a factor that influences customers' satisfaction and eliminate the danger of customer rejection of rooms, loss of revenue and low customer patronage and guarantee return on investment. Specifically, the study was aimed to;

- i. Examine some rooms and to identify items for decoration within the hotels under study.
- ii. Examine critically the perception of the overall interior design of hotel rooms in the hospitality industry.
- iii. Ascertain the effect of the hotel interior decorations on guest's choice of hotel rooms.
- iv. Evaluate the extent of income that interior design has brought into the hotel.
- v. Determine the strategies employed by the hotel management to maintain a good interior design of hotel rooms.

### **Research Methods**

This study was focused on hotels operating in Abakiliki, the State capital of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The subjects of the study were customers and managers from the selected hotels for the study. A total number of 12 managers who were chosen from 12 hotels were used for this study. The population of customers was not known which enabled the researcher to employ infinite population (when the population is not known) formula as a statistical technique to determine the sample size, given as thus;

$$n = \frac{Z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

n = sample size

q = probability of failure (0.1)

p = probability of success (0.9)

z = standard error (1.96)

e = level of significance (95%) = (0.05)<sup>2</sup>

$$\frac{1.96^2 (0.9) (0.1)}{(0.05)^2}$$

= 138 customers

Hence, the sum of 138 customers and 12 managers totaling 150 respondents was the sample size used for the study. A survey research method was adopted where questionnaire and interview were employed as the instruments for data collection used for the study. The questionnaire was used to collect the data needed for this study. The question was structured in 5 points Likert rating scale. It was used to collect data from respondents which were the basis of data presentation and analysis. The questionnaire was of two (2) sets. One

set was for customers and another for the management. Each questionnaire was structured into three sections. The questionnaire was validated by five experts who modified the questions to achieve the objectives of the research. The questionnaire was tested for reliability through one test administration and the internal consistency was measured using Cronbach Alpha which showed a numeric value of alpha of 0.85. The total number of copies of the questionnaire produced and administered the respondents was 150. The researcher administered the questionnaire through the help of research assistant to the customers and management at the selected hotels and all questionnaire copies were retrieved. Simple descriptive statistics such as percentages and frequency distribution tables were to analyze the data.

### **Results and Discussion**

In this study, the respondents found in the hotels were asked the reason they reject hotel rooms and go for more expensive rooms in the same hotel. In their responses, out of 150 guests interviewed all the guest showed that the room was not beautiful to their liking and so were not attracted by the features of the room interior decoration.

The guest was also asked why they prefer a particular hotel of their choice to other hotels with good security and in the same location, despite that the rooms were cheaper and affordable. Responding to this question 98.7% of the guests were of the opinion that their preference of the hotel to others despite their affordability, location and security was because of the beautiful interior and exterior design of the hotel. The guests were asked question on the possible reason that would make them to return to the same hotel. The two major reasons given by the respondents were the design of the hotel and services of the hotel.

The study showed three photographs of double rooms of three different hotels without the names of the hotels on them. The respondents were asked to choose the hotel room of their choice without considering the room tariffs by looking at the pictures. The respondents preferred room 1 to others which were as a result of how comfortable and pleasant the room features appear.

#### **Room 1**



Room 2



Room 3



Table 1 shows the basic items used for decoration in the double rooms of the three sample hotels. The basic items found in three double rooms for which the respondents were asked to choose the most preferred as explained above.

**Table 1:** Basic items found used for decoration in the double Rooms

S/N	Item	Room 1	Room 2	Room 3
1.	Bed	√	√	√
2.	Table	√	√	√
3.	Chair	√	√	√
4.	Sofa	√	×	×
5.	Support for suitcases	√	√	√
6.	Wardrobe	√	√	√
7.	TV	√	√	√
8.	Refrigerator	√	√	√
9.	Air conditioner	√	√	√

10.	Built – in – safe	√	√	√
11.	Telephones	√	√	√
12.	Flowers	√	√	√
13.	Carpets	×	×	×
14.	Pictures	√	√	√
15.	Curtains	√	√	√
16.	Bath tub	√	√	√
17.	Shower	√	√	√
18.	Toilet	√	√	√
19.	Sink facilities	√	√	√
20.	Towels	√	√	√
21.	Floor mats	√	√	√
22.	Soaps	√	√	√
23.	Shampoo	√	√	×
24.	Body lotion	√	×	×
25.	Conditioner	√	√	×
26.	Bed side tables	√	√	√
27.	Armchairs	√	√	×

**Source:** Field study, 2017

**Key:** (√) where a particular item is found

(x) Where a particular item is not found

There were beds in the three rooms under study. Sofa was only found in room 1. There was support for suitcases in the rooms. Wardrobe, TV, refrigerator, built in safe, telephones, flowers, pictures, curtain and air conditioner were available in all rooms. Heater was also available for heating of water, lounge area for entertaining guest. Hot tub was not found in any of the rooms.

In table 2 respondents agreed that the furniture was excellent with a mean score of 2.93 above the bench mark of 2.5. Also, a mean score of 2.84 respondents agreed that the flooring is excellent while a mean score of 2.89 agreed that the painting is excellent. A mean score of 2.71 respondents agreed that the spacing and layout is excellent, and a mean score of 2.55 respondents agreed the curtains are excellent.

**Table 2:** Guests perception of the overall interior design of hotel rooms in the hospitality industry

*Mean response of how guests rate the quality of the room decoration from their experience.*

S/N	ITEM	$\bar{X}$	SD	REMARK
1.	Furniture	2.93	0.84	EXCELLENT
2.	Flooring	2.84	0.98	EXCELLENT
3.	Painting	2.89	0.94	EXCELLENT
4.	Spacing and layout	2.71	0.87	EXCELLENT
5.	Curtains	2.55	0.82	EXCELLENT
6.	Flowers	2.24	0.81	BELOW EXPECTATION
7.	Lighting	2.22	0.76	BELOW EXPECTATION
8.	Bed	2.75	0.90	EXCELLENT
9.	Music	2.75	0.90	EXCELLENT
10.	Colour	2.51	0.88	EXCELLENT
11.	TV	2.98	0.97	EXCELLENT
12.	Electricity	2.61	0.89	EXCELLENT
13.	Internet facilities	1.90	0.77	BELOW EXPECTATION
14.	Room temperature	2.61	0.82	EXCELLENT
15.	Telephone services	2.51	0.81	EXCELLENT

**Source:** Field survey, 2017

N= Number of guests; 150,  $\bar{x}$  = Mean response of guests, SD = Standard Deviation.

However, respondents agreed that flowers are below expectation with a mean score of 2.24 while a mean score of 2.22 respondents shows that the lightening is below expectation. Meanwhile, a mean score of 2.75 respondents shows that the bed is excellent and a mean score of 2.75 respondents shows that background music is excellent. The result revealed mean score of 2.51 respondents showing that the colour of the rooms was excellent, a mean score of 2.98 respondents agreed that the TV was excellent, 2.61 mean score of respondents shows that electricity was excellent. The internet facilities are below expectation as agreed by 1.90 respondents while the room temperature was excellent and recorded as 2.61 respondents. The telephone services assessment was excellent as shown by 2.51 respondents.

It was found that a least mean score of 2.22 of the respondents opined that the lighting of the rooms are below expectation which gives the customers a negative experience and less satisfied while in the environment. This is in line with Walter and Edvardsson (2012) who stated in their study that when lighting in rooms is not adequate, the physical environment is perceived as negative experience and rarely or never create extreme positive experience that bring customer satisfaction.



It was found that a mean score of 2.63 of the respondents agreed that interior design of hotel rooms affect positively the perception of services received from the hotel. This is in line with Bitner, (1992) and Lovelock (2009) that the total experience of a service cape includes the customers' general perception, behavior, satisfaction and respectively a mixture of the three dimensions: ambient conditions, spatial layout and signs, symbols and artifacts. All those three dimensions of the services cape may influence customers' behavior in a service environment. It is crucial for the success of a services cape that designers and developers look at it from a customer's perspective to get a holistic view of the service environment.

Table 3 shows the effect of hotel room interior decoration on guests where a mean score of 3.12 agreed that there was repeat patronage by guests due to the interior design of the hotel rooms, a mean score of 2.85 respondents agreed they were comfortable and a mean score of 2.81 respondents agreed that it will reduce patronage if the interior is poor. A mean score of 2.51 respondents agreed to having the will to spend more, a mean score of 2.59 respondents agreed that it will make them to have sense of safety. A mean score of 2.86 indicates that a good interior design can influence them to recommend the hotel to others while a mean score of 2.88 respondents agreed to rating the hotel very high and 2.63 mean score respondents agreed that interior design of hotel rooms affect positively the perception of services received from the hotel.

**Table 2:** Effect of Hotel Room Interior Decoration on Guest Choice  
*Mean Response of how Guests' experience in the Hotel Room Interior Design affect their choice*

S/N	ITEM	X	SD	REMARK
1.	Repeat patronage	3.12	1.30	AGREED
2.	Comfort	2.85	0.91	AGREED
3.	Reduced patronage	2.81	0.86	AGREED
4.	Willingness to spend more	2.51	0.79	AGREED
5.	Sense of safety	2.59	0.80	AGREED
6.	Recommend the hotel to others	2.86	0.87	AGREED
7.	Rate the hotel very high	2.88	0.80	AGREED
8.	Affect positively your perception of services Received from the hotel	2.63	0.92	AGREED

**Source:** Field Study, 2017

N = Number of Guest = 150; X = Mean Response of Guests; SD = Standard Deviation

Table 4 shows extent of influence that interior design of hotel rooms has on income generation.

A mean score of 3.04 agreed that increased patronage thereby leading to better income generation, a mean score of 2.93 agreed that proper interior design reduces constant maintenance due to wear and tear, a mean score of 2.81 agreed that the comfort of customers makes them to spend more, respondents agreed that proper interior reduces cost of maintenance, a mean score of 3.22 shows it, respondents agreed that interior design of

hotel rooms increases return on investment (ROI) to the hotel owners, a mean score of 2.77 respondents shows it, a mean score of 2.81 respondents shows that the more revenue from rooms the more the salaries of the staff are improved.

**Table 4:** Extent of influence that interior design of hotel rooms have on income generation  
*Mean response of extent of influence that interior design of hotel rooms have on income generation.*

S/N	ITEM	X	SD	REMARK
1.	Increased patronage thereby leading to better income generation	3.04	1.87	AGREED
2.	Proper interior design reduces constant maintenance due to wear and tear	2.93	0.91	AGREED
3.	Comfort of guests thereby making them willing to spend	2.81	1.96	AGREED
4.	Proper interior design reduces cost of maintenance	3.22	0.99	AGREED
5.	It increases return on investment (ROI) to the hotel owners.	2.77	0.90	AGREED
6.	The more revenue from rooms the more salaries of the staff are improved	2.81	0.87	AGREED

**Source:** Field Study, 2007

N= Number of guests; 150, x = Mean response of guests, SD = Standard Deviation.

A mean score of 3.04 of the respondents opined that increased patronage from satisfied customers due to interior design leads to better income generation. There is a very high tendency that the customers may not patronize the hotel again if they are not satisfied. This is in line with Gerson (1993) satisfied customers are likely to be loyal and continue patronizing than dissatisfied customers because the satisfied customers tend to advertise through word of mouth thereby leading to increased patronage and better income generation.

From the findings, 2.93 mean score of the respondent revealed that proper interior design reduces constant maintenance due to wear and tear. It was found that a mean score of 2.81 agreed that the comfort of the guest makes them willing to spend more. This agrees with Puccinelli, Goodstein, Grewal, Price, Raghubir and Stewart (2009) who said that a store atmosphere that meets customer expectation and feeling satisfied will create a comfortable setting within which the customer can make purchasing decisions.

A mean score of 2.77 respondent agreed that interior design leads to an increase in return on investment. This is in line with Doyle (2004), Turley and Chebat (2002) regarding retail design which shows that retailers incorporate retail design in their strategic planning where it assists with allocating resources to optimize the return on investment made in retail stores.

From table 5, a mean score of 3.13 respondents agreed that interior design is maintained by the purchase of quality furniture and fittings, periodic maintenance of facilities is a strategy for maintaining the interior design of rooms as agreed by 2.89 respondents, respondents agreed that the involvement of a professional interior decorator in the planning process is a strategy to maintaining the interior design of the hotel rooms, as agreed by the mean score of 3.31, informing guests on how to use the installed furniture and fittings helps to maintain the interior design of hotel rooms as agreed by a mean score of 3.20 respondents, a mean score of 2.84 respondents agreed that carrying out preventive maintenance helps in maintaining the interior design of hotel rooms.

**Table 5:** Hotel Strategies of maintaining good Interior Design of Rooms  
*Mean response of the hotel strategies of maintaining good interior design of rooms.*

S/N	ITEM	X	SD	REMARK
1.	Purchase of quality furniture and fittings	3.13	0.96	AGREED
2.	Periodic maintenance of facility	2.89	0.92	AGREED
3.	Involvement of a professional interior decorator in the planning process	3.31	0.88	AGREED
4.	Informing guests on how to use the installed furniture and fittings	3.20	1.09	AGREED
5.	Carrying out preventive maintenance	2.84	0.91	AGREED

**Source:** Field survey, 2017

N= Number of guests; 150, X = Mean response of guests, SD = Standard Deviation.

From the finding of this study, a mean score of 3.13 of the respondent agreed that the purchase of quality furniture and fittings helps in the maintenance of interior design in the hotel rooms.

A mean score of 3.31 of the respondents agreed that a professional interior decorator should be involved in the planning process. This is in line with Ransley and Ingram (2004) which noted that a designer needs to work together with the owners, managers, or organizations of the property, as well as with the design and brand management teams. It is essential for the designer to know the framework, the conditions, and any standardized branded design element before the planning process to be able to meet customers' expectation to get them satisfied.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

In conclusion, interior design of hotel rooms is a key factor to income generation and this increases the owners return on investment through increase in level of patronage, reduction of wear and tear maintenance cost thereby saving the income generated and purchase of quality furniture and fittings as a strategy of maintaining good interior design. The management should adopt the use of proper interior design so as to make the customers

comfortable and willing to spend more and increase patronage as well as reduce the cost of maintenance of wear and tear in the hotel. This is because there is a correlation between the design and the income of or demand for hotels.

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