



Increasing guest satisfaction through the Customer Journey

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International Tourism Management



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Declaration of own work

I hereby declare that:

- I am fully informed about the Thesis C assessment criteria;
- all the work I have conducted to fulfill these criteria is entirely my own;
- I have not been assisted by any other person, except the coaching offered within HBS guidelines.

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Preface

The report presented is the result of my thesis semester at the Hospitality Business School which concludes my study of International Tourism Management at Saxion University of Applied Sciences. The report is written for my client, The Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London, from February 2020 until June 2020 and presents the advice of increasing Guest Satisfaction through the Customer Journey.

During my management internship at the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London from August 2020 until February 2020, I was in contact with the General Manager and received the possibility to continue working in my current role whilst also writing the thesis report for the hotel. I would like to thank the General Manager, Suat Binkaya for providing me with an interesting topic and overall support, as well as the support of Hotel Manager, Ross Paton. Their knowledge and experience is admirable and even in these unprecedented and busy times, their door was always open for me.

After facing several (personal) challenges during the proposal phase, my first examiner Jan-Willem Meijerhof has been of countless support and helped me to achieve a sufficient proposal. His assistance, support and knowledge really helped me to see a more simplified thesis project, which has allowed me to proudly present the end result in time. I would like to offer sincere thanks for all his help. My research teacher, Rienk van Marle, for emailing back so quickly and providing me with the guidance I needed. This was very much appreciated. Almudena González Gutiérrez de León, I would like to acknowledge for all of your support and being my 'safety net' during the past 4 years of my bachelor's degree. The ride has not been easy at times due to my insecurities, but you were always there for me and showed that I have great qualities that I could rely on. Unfortunately, my second examiner, Maureen Numan, is not able to read the end result, but I would like to thank you for your feedback during the proposal defence. Inge Gijsbers, a sincere thank you for being my second examiner accessing this report on short notice.

Finally, my special appreciation is for the overall support of my partner, Sam Hankss, and my parents. For always being there for me when I needed support at difficult moments during my study and the thesis semester.

London, June 15th, 2020
Marliek van den Belt

Summary

The Travel and Tourism industry is one of the fastest-growing industries in the world and with a service economy moving to an experience economy, sustaining Guest Satisfaction and possessing a competitive advantage is crucial for organisations. The Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London is facing the problem of sustaining Guest Satisfaction as seen in ReviewPro, which is based on Online Guest Reviews and the hotel's Guest Satisfaction Survey. During 2019, 37.1% of the 17,266 responses received were negative responses. This is a rise of 4.9% compared to 2018 with the two leading components being 'Service' and 'Experience'. With the Hospitality & Tourism industry becoming even more challenging and competitive during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to anticipate and manage customers' expectations. Therefore the problem can be translated into the following management question:

“How can Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London increase the satisfaction of the hotel leisure guest through Front of House Teams of the on-property phase in the Customer Journey, considering past and future guest needs?”

The research objective is to increase the overall Guest Satisfaction of the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London, using Front of House Teams by focussing on the 'on property' phase of the Customer Journey to optimise the guest experience. Both desk and field research were executed.

The thesis project starts with a review of the 2 core concepts Customer Journey and Guest Satisfaction to create a substantial theoretical foundation in order to conduct research. After defining different perspectives of academic authors, the Guest Satisfaction model of Thomassen (2007) and the Customer Journey visualisation of Richardson (2010) are chosen. These two core concepts are combined within an operationalisation which is applied to the desk and field research.

The research begins with desk research, analysing current trends and developments relating to Guest Satisfaction of the hotel leisure guests in the hotel industry. Next to that, the 'ups' and 'downs' of hotel leisure guests of the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London are reviewed through ReviewPro. The 'ups' and 'downs' are defined to specified Front of House Teams: 'Welcome & Check-in', 'Breakfast', 'Guest Services', 'Concierge' and 'Farewell & Check-out'. After this, the field research is carried out starting with an interview with the Hotel Management of the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London, to define the perception of service delivery towards hotel leisure guests. The data retrieved is analysed with open coding and axial coding. The field research concluded with the results of an online questionnaire carried out by the researcher. This online questionnaire aims to understand the guest needs and expectations of a hotel visit after the COVID-19 pandemic and the results were analysed through SPSS.

The findings demonstrate that currently Guest Satisfaction can be increased through implementing technology and personalisation in the guest experience, but that staff empathy and professionalism is essential for the future of the hospitality industry. Respondents of the online survey carried out by the hotel, found that the aspects of 'Efficiency' and 'Friendliness' were the most 'down' in their experience with 'Welcome & Check-in' as the most mentioned improvement. The Hotel Management argues that 'Friendliness' and 'Communication' are important factors which contribute to Guest Satisfaction, but do believe that guests will be more critical once they return. They also believe that room rate and cleanliness will be main indicators of Guest Satisfaction. The expectations of hotel leisure guests when returning to a hotel visit after COVID-19 pandemic are also related to 'Efficiency' and 'Friendliness'. The majority of participants would make use of an online check-in and 'key drop off point' with the preferred time to consume breakfast in the restaurant is 30 – 45 minutes. The majority of respondents demonstrated that the most satisfactory breakfast option would be to 'take away'. Furthermore, the results demonstrated that there is not yet a clear consensus of how people would approach the 'new normal'.

The result found that there is a foundation which can be built upon to increase guest satisfaction through the Customer Journey. Two advice alternatives are presented: 'implementing technologies' and an 'action hotel re-opening plan'. After weighing both alternatives based on criteria, it was found that the 'action hotel re-opening plan' is most suitable to increase Guest Satisfaction. In addition, this advice has priority seeing the current rapid development of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The advisory chapter answers the management question. The advice is making use of the PDCA-cycle which describes the implementation per Front of House Team. The 'Welcome & Check-in' will start working with a 'check-in route', implementing two hosts to create efficiency. It is essential to provide a 'first class service'. When the full check-in capacity has been reached, guests would start their Park Plaza Westminster Bridge Experience in the Ballroom with an 'English Welcome Tea'. When the guest has checked in, he or she will be welcomed by a personalised television message in the room. In addition, visible protection shields and signage displays stating the hotel's safety measures are advised. The breakfast will make use of time slots and the current opening hours are advised to be extended to serve all hotel leisure guests and ensure safe seating. Furthermore, the option for a 'take away' breakfast would be introduced. A 'key drop off point' is advised for the 'Farewell & Check-out' together with an 'exit route'. Overall, general safety measures consisting of the availability of PPE materials and card-only payments would also be introduced. Finally, the advice takes time, people and financial aspects are taken into consideration and it concludes with an overview of the action plan.

The presented advice will assist the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London to understand guests' wishes and expectations during a hotel visit in these unprecedented times and therefore, provide the possibility of increasing Guest Satisfaction using the Front of House Teams.

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1| Introduction

The economy has increasingly moved from a service economy to an experience economy and the focus is no longer on what organisations deliver, but how they deliver their services (Pine and Gilmore, 1999). With recent developments relating to a worldwide pandemic and the Hospitality & Tourism industry on hold, it becomes even more important to focus on how organisations are delivering their services. This also applies to Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London, which would like to increase the guest experience and the Guest Satisfaction. In this thesis project, an action plan is created which will serve as a guideline for the Front of House Department, which will support the Front of House Teams to understand guest needs and expectations. This action plan also functions as the foundation between 'the old', before the COVID-19 pandemic, and 'the new'.

1.1 Background information of the client

Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London is a four-star hotel situated on South Bank London, United Kingdom. The hotel opened in March 2010 and totals 16 floors, including 1,019 bedrooms and suites, of which there are 800 double bedrooms. Besides accommodation, the hotel offers 32 conference rooms, including the signature 1,200-square-metre pillar-free Westminster Ballroom, which can host 1,350 diners or 2,000 delegates theatre-style, a 15-metre swimming pool, a 24-hour fitness centre and Europe's first Mandara Spa. Likewise, there is an Italian coffee bar, an award-winning French Brasserie, a Sushi & Sashimi Bar and the Primo Bar, which allows guests to enjoy live music. The design of these restaurants and the hotel interior is influenced by the cities of Dubai and Las Vegas which was chosen to stimulate a confident business aura.

The hotel is part of the larger PPHE Hotel Group, an international hospitality real estate company founded in 1989 by Eli Papouchado which benefits from having a license from the Radisson Hotel Group. The PPHE Hotel Group operates under two distinct brands; Park Plaza Hotels & Resorts and Art'otel. This multi-branded approach enables PPHE Hotel Group to develop in various segments of the hospitality market (PPHE Hotel Group, 2019). With a total of 8,800 rooms and 8 campsites, offering 6000 units, the PPHE Hotel Group is one of the largest owner/operators of hotels in central London (PPHE Hotel Group, 2019). The PPHE Hotel Group is listed on the London Stock Exchange and is a constituent of the FTSE 250 Index, which is a capitalisation weighted index of the largest companies listed on the London Stock Exchange. Being part of the FTSE 250 means it is public listed and is therefore audited. The PPHE Hotel Group needs to be transparent and all numbers are real, persuading investors and gaining their trust.

1.2 The reasons and relevance for the thesis project

The PPHE Hotel Group, and therefore the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London, strive to differentiate from competitors by offering guests a unique experience through a strong service delivery culture. By employing teams of experts to exceed the guest expectations and achieving the set goal which shows in their vision: "To create valuable memories for our guests and value for our assets" (PPHE Hotel Group, 2019), their purpose, and the company blueprint is to place the guest experience at the heart of everything. This guest experience and value is of high importance since the PPHE Group would like to build trusted relationships with guests in order to create 'ambassadors' for their brand (PPHE Hotel Group, 2019). **This will be done through exceeding expectations and creating meaningful and memorable experiences with their individuality and passion. Specifically, the vision is guest focussed. Each team is focussed on searching and analysing the guests' feedback and discussing their action plan with the Hotel Manager to ensure the guests' experience is at the heart of everything (PPHE Hotel Group, 2019).**

Serving both business and leisure guests, Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London welcomes over 600,000 hotel guests per year, of which 40% are business guests and 60% are leisure guests. To monitor the overall Guest Satisfaction, the hotel is making use of an online platform named 'ReviewPro'. This platform enables Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London to obtain a deeper understanding of reputation performance as well as their service strengths and weaknesses. It is

important to recognise and to anticipate customers' needs in order to achieve customer satisfaction and brand loyalty, which will become even more important when tourism resumes.

The thesis project is carried out because of a decrease in customer satisfaction seen in ReviewPro which is based on Online Guest Reviews and the hotel's Guest Satisfaction Survey. During 2019, Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London received a total of 17,266 responses taken from all Online Guest Reviews and the Guest Satisfaction Survey. From these responses, 37.1% were negative, a rise of 4.9% compared to 2018. The 2 leading negative components are 'Service', with a percentage of 31.9%, and 'Experience', with 37.3%. The Net Promoter Score, a metric used to measure the customer satisfaction based on the question: "How likely are you to recommend this hotel?", received a Net Promoter Score of 40.41 over 2019 compared to 46.79 in 2018, a decrease of 6.38. The areas with the most negative trends concerning their survey score can be linked to the Front of House Department and are related to the following areas: "Welcome/Check-In, Staff, Food & Beverage and Welcome & Farewell" (ReviewPro, 2020).

At first, the General Manager mentioned to the researcher that The Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London wanted to improve the guest experience so that their stay would be remembered and spoken about for a lifetime. The General Manager himself experienced a memorable stay several years ago, where the hotel experience was personalised and full with "elements of surprises", and would like to implement this in the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London (S. Binkaya, personal communication, December 3, 2019). However, the priority of 'personalising the guest experience' has moved to 'stabilise and increase Guest Satisfaction', creating new Standard Operating Procedures for the 're-opening' of the hotel after the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 (S. Binkaya, personal communication, May 8, 2020).

Likewise, focussing on the guest experience is more challenging since the experience a guest has with a brand or business consists of all touchpoints, emotions, thoughts and feelings associated with the brand or business, and even before the service or product is being used. Guest satisfaction on the other hand, measures how satisfied with a service, product or experience customer is, and refers to the overall Guest Satisfaction with the service provided (Hospitality Net, 2018). As guest experience is a 'real time measure' relating to the most recent touchpoint, it should preferably have to be analysed 'on the spot'. Guest satisfaction is captured as 'a point in time measure' relating to a range of time over a product or service procured and allows the researcher to collect data afterwards. Taking into consideration that the hotel is not accommodating guests at the moment, the focus of the thesis project will be on Guest Satisfaction.

The Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London not only accommodates leisure and business hotel guests, but it also hosts events. For this thesis project, hotel leisure guests have been chosen to be the focus, whilst business and event guests have been omitted. This is because the leisure guest segment accounts for the majority of the hotel's clientele making them salient to increasing Guest Satisfaction.

The motivation and relevance of writing a thesis project for the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London can be adhered to anticipating and managing customer expectations. This is due to the Hospitality & Tourism industry becoming ever more competitive and challenging, especially due to the COVID-19 pandemic where gaining the guests' trust may be tougher than before.

1.3 The management problem and products of the advisory part

As seen in the reasons for the thesis, the hotel has seen a decrease in customer satisfaction in 2019 compared to 2018 related to specific survey areas. To solve the management problem of Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London and to increase the Guest Satisfaction, it is essential to focus on the Front of House Department, selecting specific Front of House Teams, as these are the top 'trending down' areas (appendix V). Not only are these the areas with the most negative trends related to Front of House, the Front of House Teams are interacting with guests on a daily basis and can be actively

managed to increase Guest Satisfaction. Likewise, the Front of House Department will have a key role when welcoming guests back to the hotel after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The following Front of House Teams are the scope of the thesis project:

- **Reception** (Welcome & Farewell, as per seen in ReviewPro)
- **Breakfast**, inclusive in room rate (Food & Beverage, as per seen in ReviewPro)
The hotel offers 4 F&B outlets and monitoring all F&B outlets will not provide substantial information concerning the time limit of the thesis project. ReviewPro shows 'Breakfast' as one of the lowest scoring areas which is why this area has been chosen for the thesis project.
- **Guest Services**
This team is not shown as part of the lower scoring areas, but Guest Services is one of the key teams concerning guest contact and cooperates with the Reception and Concierge Team on a daily basis and is part of the general 'Staff'.
- **Concierge**
Similarly, it is not related to a low scoring area, yet concierge are one of the key teams interacting face-to-face with guests and cooperating with Reception and Guest Services on a daily basis and is also part of the general 'Staff'.

To increase the overall Guest Satisfaction using different teams of the Front of House Department, an internal action plan will be created. The action plan will be written on a departmental level, involving the Front of House Teams. The action plan will serve as a guideline for the Team Managers and employees and will be tailor-made and divided into sections e.g. "Welcome & Check-in", "Breakfast", "Farewell & Check-out", consisting of 4 columns ('What?', 'How?', 'Who?' and 'Estimated costs') and should be read as a check-list.

The advice will be based on research where the 'perceived service' of past hotel leisure guests will be analysed through data collection in ReviewPro against the current vision of the Hotel Management perceived from an interview and against the outcomes of an online survey measuring the expectations of guests are planning to travel after the COVID-19. The advice will be in line with the mentioned reasons since the action plan will enable the Front of House Department to adapt to individual customer needs and apply this to a specific Front of House team. This will help to create more efficient operations. The 'Action Plan' will allow Team Managers and employees to understand specific guest needs, but will also create recognition on the developments when 're-opening' the hotel after the pandemic.

All this considered, the advice will consist of an 'Action Plan' for the Front of House Department and will serve as an internal guideline document to increase the guest experience and Guest Satisfaction in order to create valuable experiences for guests, maintain their trust and obtain a competitive advantage.

1.4 The Objective

As established hospitality operators, the PPHE Hotel Group is aiming for operational excellence (PPHE Hotel Group, 2019). The aim for Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London is to provide a hotel experience that is tailored to the individual and their needs in order to increase the overall Guest Satisfaction. This will be realised through the Front of House Teams and by focussing on the 'on property' phase of the Customer Journey to optimise the guest experience.

The measurable objective is therefore: "The surveyed customer satisfaction score of hotel leisure guests based on the Net Promoter Score is to be improved by 10% by 2021."

1.5 The management question

To provide Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London with suitable advice which has arisen from the above-mentioned challenge, the following Management question has been prepared. This question

will be answered within the advisory part of the thesis report.

“How can Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London increase the satisfaction of the hotel leisure guest through Front of House Teams of the on-property phase in the Customer Journey, considering past and future guest needs?”

1.6 Research questions

In response to the management problem, central research and linked sub-questions have been formulated. These research questions serve as a base to gather relevant information as the basis of answering the management question to provide acceptable advice.

- What are the trends and developments relating to Guest Satisfaction of hotel leisure guests in the hotel industry?
- What is the perception of the hotel leisure guests of the touchpoints relating to the 4 Front of House Teams of the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London?
 - a. What are the ‘ups’?
 - b. What are the ‘downs’?
 - c. What is the perception of service delivery towards leisure guests from the Hotel Management point of view?
- What are expectations and what is the level of importance of various elements of the 4 Front of House Teams for the hotel leisure guests when returning to the hotel?

1.7 Required information for the advice

In order to answer the stated management question and create suitable advice for Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London, additional information is required. Firstly, the core concepts of this research need to be defined, namely: **Guest Satisfaction** and **Customer Journey**. Additionally, the core concepts need to be reviewed through academic literature to create a theoretical base for the research. After definitions and theoretical base have been defined, further research needs to be carried out to create desirable advice.

The trends and developments regarding Guest Satisfaction need to be identified through literature. Likewise, it is essential to understand the perception of past and future experiences of hotel leisure guests regarding the “ups” and “downs” in the ‘on-property’ phase in the Customer Journey considering the 4 Front of House Teams. Combining literature review of current trends and developments and the perception of past and current experiences of hotel leisure guests will create a solid framework which will assist to the desired advice.

The research will lead to insights of Guest Satisfaction and the perception of past and current experiences of hotel leisure guests during the ‘on-property phase’ of the Customer Journey concerning the Front of House Department. Developing insights of both literature and the industry will support to tailor the end advice.

1.8 Reading guide to the remaining thesis project

In order to understand the meaning of the concepts, the definition of ‘Guest Satisfaction’ and ‘Customer Journey’ will be given at first. Hereafter, a literature review will be given in which the core concepts of ‘Guest Satisfaction’ and ‘Customer Journey’ will be elaborated on. Afterwards, the approach of the research will be discussed. These sections include an overview of the central and sub research questions and research strategy. Based on the literature review and research strategy, the approach to the advisory part will be given for Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London in order to answer the management question of this thesis project: “How can Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London increase the satisfaction of the hotel leisure guest through Front of House Teams of the on-property phase in the Customer Journey, considering past and future guest needs?”

2| Theoretical framework

The core of this thesis is comprised of how the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London can increase Guest Satisfaction using Front of House Teams by focussing on the 'on property' phase of the Customer Journey to optimise the guest experience. The theoretical framework functions as the scientific foundation to answer the management question. The theoretical objective is to contribute to the research and advice, by writing a literature review about the core concepts of Customer Journey and Guest Satisfaction. Therefore several search engines have been consulted to find scientific literature. As these sources must provide reliable and useful information, it is therefore crucial to use reliable search engines and databases. The search results used were assessed based on the AAOCC-criteria (Kapoun, 1998) in order to evaluate whether the source is qualitatively useable. The complete search process of literature and an example of examining the AAOCC-criteria can be found in appendix I.

Likewise, the snowball method has been used several times. This method uses literature that has been used for a source found via the search engine (Verhoeven, 2015). An example of this is when "Guest Satisfaction" was searched in Google Scholar. One of the results cited other literature which was then used (after further investigation) for the theoretical framework.

2.1 Literature Review of the Core Concepts

To situate the thesis project, it is important to use academic theory to define and evaluate the core concepts: **Guest Satisfaction** and **Customer Journey**. Defining these core concepts will set boundaries and guide the direction for the thesis project which will set a solid theoretical base for the project advice.

2.1.1 Core Concept Customer Journey

The first component to be discussed is **Customer Journey**. Understanding the Customer Journey will create awareness on how the customer is experiencing the product or service.

First of all, Lemon and Verhoef (2016) state that "A major consideration when studying the customer experience is an understanding of the Customer Journey and "conceptualise customer experience as a customer's 'journey' with firm overtime during the purchase cycle across multiple touchpoints". The definition states that the process incorporates past experiences (*pre-purchase*), customer interactions during the event itself (*purchase*) and post-purchase. It also includes interactions (*touchpoints*) with the environment and brand following the actual purchase. The Customer Journey will assist the understanding of the customer experience within a company which is of high value when it comes to customer loyalty.

Additionally, Buijtendijk and Van de Mosselaer (2014) state that the customer journey consists of all the activities and events related to the supply of a product or service seen from the consumer's perspective, in which the experience is the main point of focus. This journey consists of a series of touchpoints and can provide insight into which decisions are made by consumers, and in which phase these decisions are made.

Furthermore, Veldhoen and Slooten (2014) view the Customer Journey not only as a reproduction of the moments, but as an 'analysing method' that organisations can custom to create more knowledge and awareness of the experiences of the consumer. They claim that the Customer Journey comes with 'pain' and 'pleasure' points and that analysing these points will create insight into the functional and emotional experiences of the customer. This systematic approach is designed to investigate how current touchpoints are being experienced. In short, it aims to create an optimal experience that meets and perhaps exceeds the expectations of the customer and positively influences the Guest Satisfaction. In its simplest form, a Customer Journey is an analysis of the contact moments that a customer has with the company, with the focus on functional and emotional analysis.

Richardson (2010) argues the Customer Journey consists of a number of phases which can be separated into: engage, buy, use, share and complete. The first essential step of improving the experience what a company delivers is mapping out the customer journey and to understand where the “ups” and “downs” are. The model illustrates the steps the customer is going through whilst engaging with the company, whether it is a product, an online experience, retail experience, or a service or any combination.

Nonetheless, a Customer Journey is at no time that unpretentious. After the phases have been determined, it is important to define what is happening in each phase in order to find potential shortfalls.

Richardson (2010) visualises and elaborates the Customer Journey (figure 2.1.1.1) whilst also making use of the ‘ups’ and ‘downs’. This is why Richardson (2010) has been chosen to serve as the basis for the thesis project and not Lemon and Verhoef (2016) who simplify the customer journey and do not conceptualise the journey into a theoretical framework.



Figure 2.1.1.1: Customer Journey Model of Richardson (2010)

2.1.2 Core Concept Guest Satisfaction

Guest satisfaction has numerous definitions in literature. Many of these definitions are similar and are often demonstrating an overlap between the ‘expectations of a service’ and the ‘actual performance of a service’. Some of the researched definitions are as follows:

Grönroos (1990) states that “Guest Satisfaction is a business philosophy which tends to the creation of value for customers, anticipating and managing expectations and demonstrating ability and responsibility to satisfy their needs. Quality of service and customer satisfaction are critical factors for the success of any business” (as cited in Gandolfo, 2010, p.3). According to Grönroos (1990), businesses need to provide high-quality service and manage expectations of customers to satisfy their needs in order to obtain customer satisfaction. Gandolfo (2010) agreed and mentions that, to obtain loyalty and to outweigh competitors, it is crucial to acquire high levels of customer satisfaction for the given service.

Thomassen (2007) argues that “Customer satisfaction is the perception of customers that arises by comparing the experiences of a company with the wishes one has. If the customer’s experience does not meet his wishes, the customer may be dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. If the customer experience is the same as the customer’s wishes, he or she is satisfied, however if the experience exceeds the wishes, the customer is very satisfied”.

Furthermore, Angelova (2011) considers customer satisfaction as the customer perception of the service received. Customer satisfaction does have a positive effect on an organisation’s profitability. Satisfied customers form the foundation of any successful business since customer satisfaction leads to repeat purchases, brand loyalty, and positive word of mouth.

Finally, Kotler (2009) discusses that “Satisfaction is a person’s feelings of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product’s perceived performance (or outcome) in relation to his or her expectations”.

As a conclusion, it becomes clear that there are several definitions of ‘Guest Satisfaction’, where overlap is apparent. The above-mentioned authors approve that Guest Satisfaction develops from the quality of service and experiences perceived. Customer satisfaction is the starting point of building customer loyalty and outweighing competitors (Gandolfo, 2010). For this project, the definition of Thomassen (2007) has been chosen. The author takes the comparison between the experiences of

the company and the desired experience of the guest into consideration. This definition applies to the project since the final advice is meant to impact the desired guest experience and relates to the vision of the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London: “To create valuable memories for our guests” (PPHE Hotel Group, 2019).

2.2 Model of Thomassen

The literature research has shown that Guest Satisfaction is an end result of the perceived experiences. One of the models focussing on Guest Satisfaction found in literature is the SERVQUAL-model. This model measures service quality and represents areas in which the company may fall short. However, the SERVQUAL-model does not fit the scope of this project since it is focussing on a deeper understanding of the organisation management as well.

Another mentioned model is the Guest Satisfaction model of Thomassen (2007). This model distinguishes 3 factors on which customers assess an organisation: The product/service, service and the price. Customers will have expectations about these factors and according to Thomassen (2007), the mentioned factors are influenced by 4 aspects: Personal needs, past experiences, word of mouth and marketing- and public relations. The experiences that customers gain within the factors of product/service, service and price are set against the expectations of the customer. The difference between these expectations and the experiences determines the level of satisfaction as demonstrated in Figure 2.2.1.



Figure 2.2.1 Guest Satisfaction Model of Thomassen (2007)

The three factors that measure customer satisfaction are explained below:

- **Product or service:** This is what the customer receives. The main product Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London offers is hotel accommodation.
- **Service:** This is how the service is provided. It is a broad concept that differs per organisation. Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London wants to keep its guests satisfied and happy. Therefore the service needs to be sufficient.
- **Price:** This is the amount the guest pays for the service given. The price on average for one night at the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London is approximately 350 pound (€400).

The theoretical framework has thus shown that the customer experience and the Customer Journey are essential in measuring Guest Satisfaction. To measure Guest Satisfaction, not only is identifying customer needs important, but also customer expectations and experiences. The project is based on the model of Thomassen (2007) since it demonstrates that Guest Satisfaction is built on the

expectations and experiences of a service. The model also takes influencing factors into consideration. This is of importance as individual guests are having their own needs, wishes and expectations.

From the above mentioned elements, 'Service' is the most important element that can be managed in order to increase the experiences and customer satisfaction. This is because the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London cannot change the 'Product or Service' since it is a hotel and the main product is the accommodation. The 'price' can be managed, but will not increase Guest Satisfaction on its own as 'price' is a small part of a whole experience. Therefore, the 'service' element has been chosen as the scope of the thesis.

2.2.1 Element of 'Service'

When customers are asked about the 'why' of choosing a specific organisation, the answer is most often the image of the organisation (Thomassen, 2007). The customer is in need of receiving 'a good feeling' and must be able to identify, or identify with, the business or organisation. Also, the 'opinion of others' is mainly important when choosing an organisation or business, for example popularity or reading online reviews.

The image of an organisation or business is determined by the previously mentioned three factors of the Model of Thomassen (2007), where the factor of 'service' was chosen as the scope of the thesis project. In order to conduct thorough research, it is essential to understand this 'service' factor. In the hotel industry, 'service' is the level of assistance provided by the hotel staff (Montgomery, 2016) and according to Thomassen (2007), 'service' can be divided into sub-factors, namely:

- **Material (and service) aspects:** the physical and tangible matters.
For example: employees who give training or the cleanliness of the room.
- **Reliability:** Compliance with agreements regarding the service and the careful act of the organisation.
- **Efficiency & Helpfulness:** The willingness to help customers quickly and on time.
For example: The time between requesting a reservation and sending the quotation.
- **Ability:** Having the necessary knowledge and skills for the service provided.
- **Friendliness:** The ability to address and treat customers with the necessary courtesy and kindness.
- **Credibility:** The confidence that an organisation and its employees radiate.
- **Safety:** Indemnify the customer from risk, danger or doubt.
For example: Preserve the privacy of the customers.
- **Accessibility:** The physical accessibility of an organisation and how easy it is to get in touch with the organisation, or individual employees.
For example: Telephone accessibility.
- **Communication:** Keeping customers informed; listen to the customers.
- **Understanding:** Empathise with the customer's situation to get to know their needs and then take these needs into account.

All factors are important for the thesis project since they are related to how the service is provided, however, "Accessibility" is the only sub-factor which will not be taken into consideration. The thesis project is focussing on the "on-property" phase of the Customer Journey and whilst "Accessibility" measures how easy it is to get in touch with the organisation and the physical accessibility of the property, it is not related to the "on-property" phase of the Customer Journey because the guests have already accessed the building. Also, the thesis project is focussing on Front of House Teams, and not on "individual employees" as mentioned by Thomassen (2007).

2.3 Application within the research

The Model of Thomassen (2007) will be applied in the interview with the Hotel Management (appendix XVI) and the conducted online questionnaire relating to the return of guests to hotels after the COVID-19 pandemic (appendix XXIII). Likewise, the analysed results of ReviewPro will be compared to the model of Thomassen (2007).

The Customer Journey is of relevance since the thesis project is focussing on the guests' stay which is the "user phase". The model of the Customer Journey, the 'on-property' phase will be used only during this thesis project as besides the time limit, the reason for the thesis project has thus shown that the focus needs to be on the Front of House Department, with the selected teams of Reception (Welcome & Farewell), Breakfast (Food & Beverage), Concierge and Guest Services. The Customer Journey Model will be used within the advisory section of the thesis project, but the "on-property areas" will be illustrated through the ReviewPro results and the conducted online survey.

2.4 Relationships of the core concepts

As described above, the two mentioned core concepts are naturally intertwined. Guest Satisfaction is the indication of the ability of a business to provide the expected experience. Thomassen (2007) mentions that Guest Satisfaction is the perception of customers that arises by comparing the experiences of a company with the wishes one has. If the customer's experience does not meet the wishes, the customer is dissatisfied which will lead to a negative Guest Satisfaction. If the customer experience is the same as the customer's wishes, the customer is satisfied resulting in positive Guest Satisfaction. The Customer Journey provides an insight into the customer perspective and visualises the obstacles and shortcomings in a company. It is apparent that to increase Guest Satisfaction it is essential to understand the improvements the business can make and visualise which areas of the Customer Journey need to be addressed.

2.5 Operationalisation of the core concepts

In order to prepare and design the field research, the core concepts have been operationalised based on Thomassen (2007) and Richardson (2010) (appendix II).

As previously seen in the discussed literature, the Customer Journey is particularly intertwined with Guest Satisfaction. Exceeded experiences in the Customer Journey will lead to satisfied guests which will provide loyal customers for the business. In its simplest form, a customer journey is an analysis of the contact moments that a customer has with the company. The project is 'service focussed' and is based on the earlier mentioned model by Thomassen (2007).

The scope of this thesis project is the 'on-property' phase (user phase) of the Customer Journey and will be making use of the Front of House Department, focussing on 4 specific Front of House Teams. Nonetheless, the chosen factor of 'service' will be the same for all Front of House Teams.

3| Methodological justification

As the theoretical framework and operationalisation discussed in Chapter 2 demonstrate, it is essential to understand the Customer Journey to measure Guest Satisfaction. In this chapter, the methodological approach of the research will be explained. First of all the research approach, followed by the research strategy and then finally, a plan of the research approach per research question will be described.

3.1 Research approaches

Before starting a research project, it is important to understand the theory in order to make coherent choices. 'Doing research' can be seen as a journey where several choices have to be made and where the foundation, the assumptions, objectives, research questions and methods will make the journey 'smooth' (Verhoeven, 2015). The main type of research that will be used for the thesis project is applied research. This is because the thesis project is focussing on solving the 'problem' of a decrease in Guest Satisfaction at the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London in 2019 compared to 2018.

3.1.1 Qualitative versus Quantitative

Applied research was chosen as the main type of research for this thesis project due to the practical management 'problem', the second step in 'doing research' is to choose the focus on research type. Theory shows that there are two distinct types of research: quantitative and qualitative research.

- **Quantitative research** is based on numerical information which represents objects, organisations and people. To describe the results and to test the assumptions that the figures represent, statistics are used (Verhoeven, 2015).
- **Qualitative research** is mentioned in theory and will be used when the researcher carries out the research in the 'field'. This type of research is mainly focussing on the meaning a person attaches to an experience or situation (Verhoeven, 2015). The research subjects (the participants) are studied in the environment and which is not seen as an independent entity, but as part of the perception of a person's life. The information gathered by this type of research is flexible and open and is not recorded in numbers, but in everyday language (Verhoeven, 2015).

As stated in section 1.5, the management question for this thesis project is as follows:

"How can Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London increase the satisfaction of the hotel leisure guest through Front of House Teams of the on-property phase in the Customer Journey, considering past and future guest needs?"

Choosing the right type of research depends on the choice of the management question (Verhoeven, 2015) however, it also depends on the research question. Several research questions are needed in order to answer the management question. The research questions applied to the thesis project will be elaborated on in section 3.5.

To create a solid advice for this management question, information about a large group of people is needed to represent the hotel leisure guests of the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London. The results will be presented in figures and statistics and as the theory mentioned, hence quantitative research will be the core research type of this thesis project.

3.2 Research strategy

As the research type of applied and quantitative research has been defined, it is important to define the research strategy. In theory, two research strategies can be found: desk research and field research.

3.2.1 Desk research

Desk research does not involve conducting investigations 'in the field'. It exists of literature sources

and constructs the foundation for the field research. Theory shows several kinds of desk research, for example Content Analysis (*where the meaning and relationship of words are analysed*) and Case Study (*which is using a combination of data collection for one organisation*). However, these two types of desk research are not relevant for this thesis project.

After choosing the definition related to 'Guest Satisfaction' of Thomassen (2007) as a foundation for the theoretical framework, additional information relating to trends and developments needed to be found. This has also been formulated into the following research question: "*What are the trends and developments relating to Guest Satisfaction of hotel leisure guests in the hotel industry?*" In order to answer this research question, 'Literature Research' will be used.

Literature research exists of literature sources and takes place at all levels. For example, searching for documents on macro level (reports), but also on micro level, also known as individual level, like a biography (Verhoeven, 2015). Within literature research, sources that already include research interpretations such as books, articles and texts are analysed and may be used for several reasons which include:

- To address descriptive and/or comparative questions (e.g.: 'What characteristics are prominent in the literature on the subject of..?')
- For orientation into a problem area.
- As theoretical support for the research project. (Verhoeven, 2015).

This type of desk research consists of literature sources and will create theoretical support for the field research, orientation into the problem area of 'Guest satisfaction of hotel leisure guests' and answer the research question. Online investigation into articles in Google Scholar and Saxion Library will also be conducted.

Nonetheless, the following research question was supposed to be answered via 'Field Research', but due to the current circumstances related to COVID-19, the researcher decided to answer this research question through desk research:

What is the perception of the hotel leisure guests of the touchpoints relating to the 4 Front of House Teams of the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London?

a. *What are the 'ups'?*

b. *What are the 'downs'?*

This research question is related to the 'ups' and 'downs' in the 'on-property' phase of the Customer Journey and was meant to be answered via field research, following the hotel leisure guests' visit of the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the hotel is not accommodating guests at the moment, therefore to gather relevant data the choice was made to use quantitative desk research and to analyse secondary sources, specifically the survey results in ReviewPro. Data from ReviewPro will be analysed, but this does not belong to 'field research' as the data already exists and has not been collected by the researcher.

3.2.2 Field Research

The field research in this thesis consists of both qualitative research and quantitative research, where qualitative research covers a small part of the research project. As previously seen in 'Qualitative versus Quantitative', qualitative research is not about figures, but is identified with experiences, interpretations, aims for the 'why' and 'how' and underlying arguments and motives (Verhoeven, 2015). Qualitative research will be used to gain in-depth information about the underlying motivations and reasons of individuals, in this case an interview with the Hotel Management. The end goal is to develop a deep understanding of the topic or problem from an individual perspective (Survey Monkey, n.d.).

In this thesis project, the research design used is an interview. This was chosen because the one-on-one setting of an interview can provide more in-depth content which can be used to create a better understanding of the perception of the hotel management relating to the management 'problem' (Verhoeven, 2015).

Besides the interview (qualitative research), an online survey will be carried out which is a commonly used quantitative data collection method. It is used to gather numerical information about attitudes, opinions and knowledge from a large group of people (Verhoeven, 2015). An elaboration will be given in section 3.4; "Research approach per research question".

	Desk research	Field research
Trend & Developments	X	
Ups & Downs	X	
Hotel Management perception service delivery		X
Level of importance various elements FoH		X
Teams for hotel leisure guests		

Figure 3.2.2.1: Overview of research questions divided by type of research

3.3 Research approach per research question

Q1: What are the trends and developments relating to Guest Satisfaction of hotel leisure guests in the hotel industry?

Research strategy: Qualitative desk research → This has been chosen for qualitative research since this question is not about numerical data, but is recorded in 'words' (Verhoeven, 2015).

Research method: Literature review, secondary sources → According to Verhoeven (2015), there are four levels in which literature can be searched and analysed. For this research question, secondary sources have been used. Secondary literature makes use of existing literature, because the subject is not new and has already been researched (Verhoeven, 2015).

Sampling plan: Trends and developments of hotel leisure guests in the hotel industry.

Guest satisfaction is a popular definition for marketers and organisations and many articles were available. However, not all articles were specified to 'trends and developments relating to Guest Satisfaction of hotel leisure guests', consequently only 14 articles have been reviewed.

Data analysis: The found literature was intensively studied with the help of the AAOCC-criteria.

Q2: What is the perception of the hotel leisure guests of the touchpoints relating to the 4 Front of House Teams of the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London?

2A. What are the 'ups'?

2B. What are the 'downs'?

Research strategy: Quantitative desk research → This research strategy is based on numerical information which represents objects, organisations and people. Statistics are used to describe the results and to test the assumptions that the figures represent (Verhoeven, 2015).

Research method: Secondary sources → According to Verhoeven (2015), there are four levels in which literature can be searched and analysed. For this research question, only secondary sources have been used, because it makes use of existing data (Verhoeven, 2015). The survey has already been carried out by the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London and not by the researcher. **Online reviews have not been taken into consideration since the Hotel Management would like to focus on their own survey. This because online reviews do not show the guests' real name and therefore could not be entirely reliable. The survey conducted by the Hotel Management is sent to all past hotel leisure guests and is therefore seen as a reliable and valid method for data collection.**

Sampling plan: Hotel leisure guests → From January 1st, 2019 until December 31st, 2019, 11,856 ReviewPro survey responses were received. These responses have been filtered with the research focus of this project, the hotel leisure guests. From the 11,856 responses, 8,195 are therefore applicable (appendix XXI)

Data analysis: The data has been downloaded from ReviewPro (2020) and statistics, figures and

numbers were taken from the ReviewPro report.

Q2C. How is the perception of service delivery towards leisure guests from the Hotel Management point of view?

Research strategy: Qualitative field research → This has been chosen since it mainly focusses on the meaning a person attaches to an experience or situation (Verhoeven, 2015). The information gathered by this type of research is flexible, open and is not recorded in numbers. Instead, it is recorded through everyday language (Verhoeven, 2015).

Research method: Interview, open interview → It is important to create insight within the hotel management perception as this will gather current and practical information about the hotel and the industry. It will also help explain the “why” behind chosen implementations regarding Guest Satisfaction and the Customer Journey. According Verhoeven (2015), when investigating underlying motives or the perception of the respondent, the open (in-depth) interviews are needed. Open interviews make use of a question list, but the respondent has a great deal of freedom to contribute and mention what they feel is important (Verhoeven, 2015) which is why the method of an open interview has been chosen. **Sampling plan:** Hotel Management, x1 interview → The sampling will be chosen by the non-probability method by means of purposive sampling. Since the members of the hotel management share the same vision and perception, only 1 interview was conducted with the Hotel Manager.

Data analysis: The interview has been recorded and was written afterwards into a transcript. The transcript is encoded with open (Atlas.it) and axial codes in order to create a clear overview and connections to the research question.

Q3: What are the expectations and what is the level of importance of various elements of the 4 Front of House Teams for the hotel leisure guests when returning to the hotel?

Research strategy: Quantitative field research → This research strategy is based on numerical information which represents objects, organisations and people. Statistics are used to describe the results and to test the assumptions that the figures represent (Verhoeven, 2015).

Research method: Questionnaire → A questionnaire can be used to gather numerical information about attitudes, opinions and knowledge from a large group of people and is researched on some predetermined characteristics. The data is generally collected at one point in time (Verhoeven, 2015). An online questionnaire has been chosen to reach a wider network. The online questionnaire is carried out to acquire more insight into the current development of COVID-19, which was found doing desk research for Q1, and is related to Guest Satisfaction. This online questionnaire mainly focusses on expectations in the specified touch point areas.

Sampling plan: Non-probability sampling + convenience sampling: Leisure guests in general → There were 8,195 responses ‘analysed’ in Q2A+B.

The research intended to focus on the past hotel leisure guests of Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London since they have experienced the hotel. However, due to the new privacy law introduced within the Radisson and PPHE Hotel Group, there was no list of respondents available to contact. The online questionnaire used (appendix XXIII) was aimed at a wide-range of hotel leisure guests and was conducted based on non-probability sampling due to no frame (*no list of respondents*) and convenience sampling quota (*use of own network*). The snowball effect was in place because the survey was shared on social media channels, for example: LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram. The targeted audience are hotel leisure guests, aged 18 – 65+ and from all nationalities. With a research population of 8,195 (ReviewPro) and an industry standard confidence level of 95%, but with a margin of error of 10%, 95 responses are needed in order to be statistically valid.

Data analysis: Qualtrics for conducting the online survey and SPSS for the analysis.

4| DESK RESEACH RESULTS

In this chapter, the desk research results will be discussed. Desk research is undertaken to contribute to the management question. As stated in chapter 3, the following research questions are answered in the desk research results:

Research question 1: What are the trends and developments relating to Guest Satisfaction of hotel leisure guests in the hotel industry?"

Research question 2: What is the perception of the hotel leisure guests of the touchpoints relating to the 4 Front of House Teams of the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London?

a. What are the 'ups'?

b. What are the 'downs'?

4.1 Trends and developments relating to Guest Satisfaction of hotel leisure guests

Tourism is an important economic sector worldwide, having experienced rapid continuous growth. In 1950, tourist arrivals accounted 25 million, whereas 2018 saw 1.4 billion tourists arriving worldwide (UWNT0, 2019). This is expected to continue to grow, reaching 1.8 billion international tourist arrivals by 2030 (UWNT0, 2019).

'Tourism' and 'tourism demand' are influenced by various elements, such as terrorism, economic problems or consumer changes. It is therefore essential to analyse two dimensions: the trends emerging from the external environment and on the consumer level (Costa and Buhalis, 2006a, 2006b). Fesenmaier and Gretzel (2004) argue that the future cannot be predicted and cannot be fully prepared for, but preparations can be made by taking current experiences into consideration.

4.1.1 Trends

4.1.1.1 "Personalisation"

The reviewed literature indicates individualisation and personalisation as "an essential aspect for the future of the hotel industry" (Amadeus, 2010; Yeoman, 2012). According to Pine and Gilmore. (2007), guests know exactly what they want and will not easily be satisfied with mass customisation which includes luxurious hotel facilities.

Breda and Dinis (2019) mention that 'personalisation' was the most mentioned category among hotel guests during their research. Respondents specified that a hotel visit needs to be built on pleasant surprises through details and emotions (Breda and Dinis, 2019). This is in line with the mentioning of the General Manager of Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London, as seen in the 'Introduction' of this thesis project, who experienced a memorable stay several years ago where the hotel experience was personalised and full of "elements of surprise"(S. Binkaya, personal communication, December 3, 2019).

Furthermore, to create a memorable experience and improve Guest Satisfaction, it has been suggested by Lo (2012) that positive elements (like surprises) need to be integrated. In other words, hoteliers need to fulfil the psychological needs of their guests (Lo, 2012).

4.1.1.2 "Technology"

According to Neuhofer (2015), personalisation comes alongside technology. Breda and Dinis (2019) discuss several 'technology trends' such as a digital room key and using face recognition instead of a physical room key. This research also discovered that replacing the traditional room key to one using technology has to do with 'safety' and 'ease', which can be combined with the advantage of not losing the physical key (Breda and Dinis, 2019).

Besides the 'safety and ease', an additional characteristic discovered by Breda and Dinis (2019) is higher quality of the Guest Satisfaction with greater enjoyment and implementation of technology. Customers expect technology to facilitate and streamline the processes. For example, customers would like to be in control of the light and temperature in the room. Importantly, Breda and Dinis

(2019) also highlight that hotel guests do not intend to see the human aspect of the hotel being neglected.

Likewise, Amadeus (2018) believes that due to technological advances in the future of the hotel industry, a more flexible and faster check-in and check-out will be achieved.

4.1.1.3 “Staff empathy and professionalism”

The research results of Herjanto and Gaur (2019) show that the perceived hospitality (attitude, staff professionalism and behaviour) is the highest perception of a memorable hotel stay. This is supported by Pizam (2010) who discusses that high quality service maintains a positive ambience and will lead to a memorable stay and Guest Satisfaction.

This is also supported by Breda and Dinis (2019), who believe that the future of the hotel and hospitality industry depends on the professionalism and empathy of staff members.

4.1.1.4 “Destination identification”

Besides ‘Personalisation’ and ‘Technology’, the third factor to increase Guest Satisfaction of hotel leisure guests is the ‘Destination identification’.

Research results of Breda and Dinis (2019) show that guests want to have an immersive experience and future hotels need to offer more cultural aspects and opportunities to participate. This is supported by Oh et al. (2007), who discuss that tourism essentially sells experiences. On the other hand, Pine and Gilmore (2011) argue that guests have the desire and need to experience and do not only require services or products.

4.1.2 Developments

4.1.2.1 “COVID-19 pandemic”

Whilst writing the thesis project, the worldwide outbreak of COVID-19 has brought the world to a standstill. According to the UNWTO (2020), the tourism industry has been the worst affected of all major economic sectors.

With the full impact of COVID-19 on international tourism being too early to estimate, the UNWTO (2020) compares the current COVID-19 against the SARS scenario of 2003 as a benchmark, and estimates that international tourist arrivals could decline between 58% and 78% throughout the year. This would result in 67 million fewer international tourist arrivals and with a translated loss of \$80 billion lost in exports which would put 100 to 120 million direct tourism jobs at risk (UNWTO, 2020).

Section 4.2 argues that *“tourism’ and ‘tourism demand’ are influenced by various elements, such as terrorism, economic problems or consumer changes”*. Fesenmaier and Gretzel (2004) argue that the future cannot be predicted and cannot be fully prepared for, but preparations can be made by taking current experiences into consideration. However, a pandemic with the impact of COVID-19 has not occurred before and past experiences cannot be taken into consideration.

With the COVID-19 pandemic also comes ‘the new normal’. This will most likely affect the future experiences and the perception of ‘Guest Satisfaction’, which is unknown for the moment. Discussed in Chapter 5, an online questionnaire has been conducted which aims to understand the guests’ needs and wishes compared to past experiences related to ‘Guest Satisfaction’ when hotels re-open.

4.2 The “ups” and “downs” of the hotel leisure guest in the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London

It is essential to understand the ‘ups’ and ‘downs’ during the ‘on-property’ phase in the Customer Journey of the hotel leisure guests of Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London. **There will be a focus on the Front of House Teams in order to create an advice that increases the overall Guest Satisfaction of hotel leisure guests.**

As thus shown in Chapter 2, the model of Thomassen (2007) demonstrates that Guest Satisfaction is built on expectations and experiences of a service. The research into the 'ups' and 'downs' focusses on the past experiences of the hotel leisure guests during their visit in the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London and will make use of ReviewPro to analyse the survey, conducted by the hotel.

4.2.1 Introduction to the research

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the focus of the thesis project is the "on-property" phase of the Customer Journey specifying hotel leisure guests and using 4 Front of House Teams.

First of all, it has to be clarified that the thesis project intended to follow the hotel leisure guests during their 'on-property' visit within the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London where observations and "on the spot" surveys would take place. This was to research the experience of the touchpoints relating to the 4 Front of House Teams and to clarify the wishes and needs of guests in accordance with the model of Thomassen (2007). However, due to the recent COVID-19 development the hotel is not accommodating guests and the research had to be rethought. In order to create an understanding of the experience and to analyse the 'ups' and 'downs' of hotel leisure guests, data taken from ReviewPro in 2019 has been compared to 2018.

ReviewPro is a platform used to send out online surveys after the guests check-out. The survey is created by the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London to generate awareness of performance levels and to recognise where potential improvements can be made. From 1st January 2019 until 31st December 2019, the hotel delivered 70,591 surveys to guests; 16,917 surveys bounced back and 60,000 surveys were opened by guests. Overall, the hotel received a total of 11,856 survey responses during 2019 (appendix XX).

These responses were filtered to meet the research focus of this project into 'leisure family stay', 'leisure romantic stay', 'leisure group' and 'other leisure stay'. 'Business' and 'Event' stays have been omitted. From the 11,856 responses, 8,195 were applicable for this project (appendix XXI). The 'Leisure Family' is the largest respondent group with 59.37%. Followed by 'Romantic Leisure' (20.52%) and 'Other Leisure' (13.14%) (appendix III).

To meet the focus of the 'on-property' phase relating the Front of House Teams, the elements of 'Welcome/Check-In' (*Reception*), "Food & Beverage" (*Breakfast*), "Farewell/Check-Out" (*Reception*) and "Guest Services" (*Business Centre*) will be analysed. It was realised that no survey questions are related to the Concierge department and cannot be analysed.

4.2.2 The ups

To identify the 'ups' of hotel leisure guest in the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London, the survey questions analysed have been specified to 'Welcome', "Breakfast", Business Centre', "Farewell" and 'Exceptional service comments' (appendix XXII). The additional survey questions are connected to the 'on-property' phase of the Customer Journey, yet do not meet the criteria of being linked to the Front of House Teams. Likewise, 'age' and 'gender' are not taken into consideration since the thesis project is not specifying hotel leisure guests on 'age' and 'gender', but as one group.

ReviewPro shows the hotel areas which are 'trending up' in relation to the survey responses. The 5 areas with the highest positive trend in their score are not linked to the Front of House Teams, but are related to Housekeeping (hotel cleanliness), Organisation (Responsible Business), Staff (English), Sleeping (Sleeping) and Destination (United Kingdom) (appendix IV). The current score is compared to the previous period (2018) and is shown as a positive number, for example: 'Responsible Business' increased by 0.14% in 2019 compared to 2018, thus guests are more satisfied with the Responsible Business provided by the hotel in 2019. The 3 areas which have seen the highest improvement are Responsible Business, English and United Kingdom. From these, the hotel will have most interest in

Area	Aspect Thomassen (2007)	Explanation
Hotel Cleanliness	Material	The material aspects are the physical and tangible matters. Cleanliness of the hotel or rooms belong to this aspect of Thomassen since 'Cleanliness' is a physical matter.
Responsible Business	Reliability	Thomassen (2007) mentions that reliability is the compliance with agreements regarding the service and careful act of the organisation. The following statements is shown at the PPHE website: "At PPHE Hotel Group our aim is to deliver responsible business in everything we do and our Responsible Business Strategy helps us do this (PPHE, 2020)." Thus, a compliance regarding service of the organisation.
English	Ability	Ability is having the necessary knowledge and skills to provide the service. 'English' could be listed under 'Communication' as well however, Thomassen (2007) states that communication is keeping the customers informed and listening to the customers. English will therefore be listed under 'Ability' since speaking the language is a skill to provide the expected service.
Sleeping	Material (and service)	Same as 'Hotel Cleanliness', the material aspect are the physical and tangible matters. A good night of sleep belongs to the physical matter of Thomassen (2007).
United Kingdom		Destination is not linked to the hotel operations, but then can be linked to the 'Destination Identification', section 4.2.1.4. Within this paragraph, it was mentioned that Pine and Gilmore (2011) argue that guests are having the desire and need to experience, not just services or products and that tourism sells experiences (Oh et al., 2007).

'Responsible Business' and 'English' since these two elements can be managed by the hotel to increase the Guest Satisfaction over the new year.

The areas are not linked to the focus of the thesis project. Nonetheless the areas can be linked to the model of Thomassen (2007), as discussed in Chapter 2.

Figure 4.2.2.1:
"The Ups"

4.2.3 'The Downs'

During the Desk Research, it has been concluded that not many 'ups' can be analysed. The Hotel Manager, Mr Paton, argues that the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London receives a lot more positive feedback than negative feedback, but this is not recorded on emails or surveys (R. Paton, personal communication, May 29, 2020), instead it is given verbally to members of staff.

According to Rensink (2013), the three top motivations to respond to online surveys, or leave an online review, are: venting negative feelings, concern for other consumers (negative or positive) and self enhancement. This is also supported by Mr Paton, who argues that most of the time people fill in a survey when they have something to say, generally from a negative perspective (R. Paton, personal communication, May 29, 2020).

To research the "downs", the same questions have been as seen ticked as seen in the "ups" (appendix XXII): 'Welcome', 'Farewell', Business Centre' and 'Breakfast'. However, 'Exceptional service comments' have been unticked since this question indicate 'ups', instead 'Improvement comments' have been ticked. Where section 4.3.2 discussed and analysed the 'trending up' areas, it demonstrated that they were not linked to the Front of House Team, instead the 'trending down' trends are heavily associated with the Front of House Team (appendix V).

The 'top-4' of trending down areas consist of "Welcome/Check-in", Food & Beverage", "Staff" and "Welcome/Farewell". These down trends are related to the Front of House Teams of Reception (Welcome & Farewell) and Food & Beverage (Breakfast). However, it is important to note that 'Food & Beverage' also includes the other food outlets (Room Service and Restaurants) and cannot be taken into full consideration for the thesis project. The same applies to 'Staff', which includes the Front of House Teams.

Although these teams have "face-to-face" contact with the guests and will be reviewed by the survey respondents, 'Staff' is a general definition and includes other outlets and Teams (restaurant, bar and Engineering) which cannot be taken into consideration for this thesis project.

Figure 4.2.3.1 is reviewing the "trending down areas" of the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London linked to Thomassen (2007) and provides a detailed elaboration of the areas linked. To create a better understanding of the guests' needs and expectations in relation to the Front of House Teams, the areas which have been chosen as scope of the thesis project will be investigated further to understand the "downs" that create dissatisfaction by hotel leisure guests of the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London.

Area	Aspect	Explanation
Welcome & Check-in	Helpfulness, ability, friendliness, communication and understanding.	Helpfulness stands for the willingness of the Reception Team to help the customers quickly and on time (no long waiting lines) and ability for the necessary knowledge and skills to provide the service (for example work with the check-in system). Also, friendliness is the ability to address and treat the guests with the necessary courtesy and kindness (being friendly and hospitable), communication is related to listen to the guests and provide them with the correct information (providing guests with important hotel information) and finally, understanding is to empathise with the guests and understand, or want to know, their situation (for example when a guest has travelled many hours due to a delayed flight).
Staff	Material and Service	The physical matters of providing a suitable and sufficient service.
Food & Beverage	Safety (hygiene standards)	
Welcome & Farewell	Helpfulness, ability, friendliness, communication and understanding.	Helpfulness stands for the willingness of the Reception Team to help the customers quickly and on time (no long waiting lines) and ability for the necessary knowledge and skills to provide the service (work with the check-out system for example). Also, friendliness is the ability to address and treat the guests with the necessary courtesy and kindness (being friendly and hospitable), communication is related to listen to the guests and provide them with the correct information (providing guests with the correct invoice) and finally, understanding is to empathise with the guests and understand, or want to know, their situation (for example, when the guest did not have a pleasant stay).
Room	Material	The material aspect are the physical and tangible matters: a suitable and pleasant room

Figure 4.2.3.1:
“Trending down
areas”

4.2.3.1 “Research results”

Figure 4.2.3.1.1 demonstrates the ‘top-3’ of most mentioned improvements of the different target groups per researched area. It is notable that the area improvements are identical to all target groups, except two analysed differences. Within ‘Breakfast Service’, romantic leisure stay mentioned ‘staff level’ (16.94%) instead of ‘Friendliness’ as mentioned by ‘Family’ and ‘Other’. In ‘Breakfast Food & Drink’ family leisure stay found ‘coffee’ (30.60%) important instead of ‘taste’ as mentioned by the other two target groups.

Target Group Leisure Stay	Welcome & Check – In	Breakfast Service	Breakfast Room	Breakfast Food&Drink	Farewell & Check-out
Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efficiency (44.73%) Long check-in line (34.02%) Friendliness (27.45%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wait time (35.52%) Food supply (35.0%) Friendliness (16.45%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Size/crowded (54.84%) Noise (44.19%) Comfort (35.38%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food variety (58.88%) Coffee (30.60%) Freshness/quality (27.31%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efficiency (34.78%) Friendliness (27.54%) Long check-out line (27.54%)
Romantic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efficiency (39.84%) Friendliness (32.42%) Long check-in line (30.49%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food supply (33.22%) Wait time (31.60%) Staff level (16.94%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Size/crowded (50.91%) Noise (40.91%) Comfort (35.0%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food variety (48.94%) Freshness/quality (33.74%) Taste (30.40%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efficiency (32.43%) Friendliness (28.38%) Long check-out line (24.32%)
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efficiency (41.73%) Long check-in line (31.10%) Friendliness (30.31%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food supply (45.83%) Wait time (30.21%) Friendliness (22.92%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Size/crowded (52.94%) Noise (43.38%) Comfort (35.29%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food variety (51.03%) Freshness/quality (29.90%) Taste (27.84%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efficiency (30.63%) Friendliness (29.73%) Long check-out line (29.73%)

Figure 4.2.3.1.1: Research improvement results

The total amount of survey responses of hotel leisure guests during 2019 were 8,195 responses. From this, 8,174 respondents rated the ‘Welcome/Check-in’. This means that only 21 respondents have not answered the survey questions relating to the ‘Welcome/Check-in’ and can therefore be seen as reliable. The average rating of the ‘Welcome’ is scored as 8.32/10 (appendix VII). This can be seen as sufficient; however the survey provides room for respondents to mention improvements per area as well. The improvements relating ‘Welcome/Check-in’ have not been answered by all the respondents, but by 1,819 out of 8,174 (appendix VIII). This highlights that almost a quarter of the responding hotel leisure guests (22%) were unsatisfied with the experience at “Welcome/Check-in”.

“Farewell/check-out” belongs to the Front of House Team Reception and received the second highest of total responses, after “Welcome/check-in” (7,968 out of 8,195 responses) (appendix XIII). Where “Welcome/Check-in” received 1,819 improvement responses, “Farewell/Check-out” received 708 responses (38.92% less). From this result, it could be inferred that not all of the hotel leisure guests are checking out face-to-face, instead guests could be making use of the “Express check-out”

(Personal Experience, Management Internship, 2019 – 2020).

The research outcomes demonstrate that “Welcome & Check-in” and “Farewell/Check-out” do have the same improvement points. It is not surprising that the same aspects for improvement were mentioned for “Welcome/Check-in” and face-to-face “Farewell/Check-out” as they occur in the same areas of the hotel, yet due to the constraints of check-in times, contextual factors have to be taken into consideration when looking at the differences between the two. It can be concluded that the majority of the respondents find the areas of “Welcome/Check-in” and “Farewell/Check-out” important during their stay. Therefore “Efficiency”, “Long check-in and out lines” and ‘Friendliness’ are essential to improve guest satisfaction.

Another Front of House Team analysed is ‘Breakfast’, which received a rating of 7.67/10 with a Guest Satisfaction increase of 0.02% from 2018 to 2019, yet, the average rating is the lowest of the analysed areas (appendix IX).

The ‘supply of food kept replenished’ (food supply) within the ‘Breakfast Service area’ has been mentioned twice, from Romantic and Other Leisure Guests, as the most important improvements. Another a significant improvement that needs to be made, is the aspect of ‘waiting time’. Waiting directly influences the guest’s mood and will affect the perception of the service quality (Alsumait, 2015) and is also mentioned twice in the top three improvement points for Romantic and Other Leisure Guests.

The hotel leisure guests agreed with a significant percentage that the breakfast restaurant is too small, or the room too crowded for the room size. Next to that, the noise level is reviewed as being too high. With an increase of +6.04% of total responses compared to 2018 (appendix XI), the noise level has to be actively reviewed and managed by the Hotel Management. However, it must be mentioned that the noise level is intertwined with the room being overcrowded, the most mentioned improvement aspect by all types of Leisure Guests. Too many people in a room will increase the noise level.

The last aspect regarding the breakfast improvements is the element of “Food & Drink”. From the 1,877 responses, the characteristic of ‘Food & Drink’ had the highest response rate of the three ‘Breakfast’ aspects. It received 3.32% more responses (+644) than during 2018 (appendix XII).

The feature of Breakfast which received the highest responses was the lack of variety of food at breakfast by all types of Leisure Guests. With such a high response rate the hotel has to actively manage this to keep their guests satisfied. “Coffee” is important for families staying in the hotel however, romantic leisure and other leisure guests agreed that ‘freshness and quality’ are of secondary importance followed by taste. Considering the percentage compared to ‘Food supply’, both are significantly less important than the variety of food available, yet it is still a considerable percentage for the hotel to take action against.

In addition, the improvements for the Business Centre received a very small amount of responses over the whole year (35 in total). This is an average of 2.92 responses of hotel leisure guests per month. This could indicate that the guests are either very satisfied with the service provided, not using the business centre or are unaware of who they are communicating with on the internal telecommunications. Due to the insignificant amount of responses, this thesis will omit Guests Services from the study.

Likewise, the survey sent out by the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London to guests who have checked-out, does not include questions concerning the “Concierge Team”, thus ReviewPro does not show any results for this particular Front of House Team. Since there are no guests in the hotel at the moment and no results in ReviewPro, the “downs” mentioned by the guests during their ‘on-property’ phase of the Customer Journey cannot be analysed for the “Concierge Team”.

5| FIELD RESEACH RESULTS

In this chapter, the field research results will be discussed. The research questions mentioned in chapter 3 will be answered in the field research results and will contribute towards the answering of the management question.

The questions are:

Research question 2C: What is the perception of service delivery towards leisure guests from the Hotel Management point of view?

Research question 3: What are expectations and what is the level of importance of various elements of the 4 Front of House Teams for the hotel leisure guests when returning to the hotel?

5.1 What is the perception of service delivery towards leisure guests from the Hotel Management point of view?

5.1.1 Introduction

In Chapter 2 several definitions of 'Guest Satisfaction' were discussed. The definition of Thomassen (2007) was chosen for the thesis project because the author takes the comparison between the experiences of the company and the desired experience of the guest into consideration.

In the earlier stages of this thesis project, the experiences of the hotel leisure guests of the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London were analysed. Besides researching the guests' experiences and satisfaction level, it is important to create insight into the perception of the Hotel Management. This analysis will gather current and practical information about the hotel and might find gaps between the service delivery perception of the hotel's guests and that of the Hotel Management. **The interview was held with the Hotel Manager, Ross Paton.**

5.1.2 Guest satisfaction and perception

The hotel experiences extremely high occupancy levels during the year. Where Meeting & Event business receives the peak from September through December, the hotel accommodation, specifically family leisure, experiences its peak during school holidays, in particular the six week summer holiday (R. Paton, personal communication, May 29, 2020). High occupancy levels give possibility for online reviews which may influence future guests. According to Prashar (2016), 97.7% of the customers are reading online reviews from other travellers. It is therefore important to understand the guest's wishes and needs to manage Guest Satisfaction.

Mr Paton argues that all guests have different needs and perceptions, yet every guest wants to feel welcome. A "first class" service needs to be delivered from start to finish, which includes a big smile upon arrival and departure, and in between that, every interaction with the guest needs to make a difference (R. Paton, personal communication, May 29, 2020).

"Hospitality", "Friendliness", "Feeling welcome", and "Information delivery" are factors of Guest Satisfaction according the Hotel Management (R. Paton, personal communication, May 29, 2020). These factors can be applied to the Guest Satisfaction model of Thomassen (2007). "Friendliness" is already one of the sub-factors of 'service' within the Model. It stands for the "ability to address and treat customers with the necessary courtesy and kindness" (Thomassen 2007). According to EHotelier (2020), it is essential to provide a friendly and welcoming environment for the guests to create a memorable experience. "Feeling welcome" and "friendliness" are therefore connected to each other and linked to the same sub-factor from Thomassen (2007) "friendliness".

Another Guest Satisfaction factor mentioned by the Hotel Management is "information delivery". According to Thomassen (2007), "keeping customers informed, listening to the customers" does belong to the aspect of "communication". Therefore "information delivery", as mentioned by the Hotel Management, will be translated into "Communication" to fit the Guest Satisfaction model of Thomassen (2007).

~~The Oxford Learner's Dictionary (2020) defines "Hospitality" as: "friendly and generous behaviour towards guests (Oxford Learner's Dictionary, 2020) but also as "food, drink or services that are provided by an organisation for guests, customers etc." (Oxford Learner's Dictionary, 2020). Concerning the interview with the Hotel Management, "Hospitality" will be linked to the act of being friendly and welcoming and therefore will be classified to the sub-factor of "Friendliness" of Thomassen (2007).~~

Overall, the perception of Guest Satisfaction by the Hotel Management and essential factors within the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London are "Friendliness" and "Communication".

5.1.3 Managing Guest Satisfaction

The Hotel Management are aiming for every guest to feel welcome and comfortable, and have mentioned that "Friendliness" and "Communication" are essential factors towards Guest Satisfaction.

The Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London offers a "Westminster Park Plaza Experience" "because of the iconic view (Big Ben and Westminster Bridge) from the lobby, but also due to lobby theming around special holidays or occasions" (R. Paton, Personal communication, May 29, 2020). The Hotel Management considers it important "to make the guest experience very special" (R. Paton, Personal communication, May 29, 2020). To create a special experience, planning is essential, for example, by "making sure that everything is there in terms of decor around themed events" (R. Paton, personal communication, May 29, 2020).

Besides sufficient planning to increase the guest experience, most hotels, including the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London, are working with a hotel audit to manage Guest Satisfaction. An audit enables hotels to check compliance with company standards and to evaluate any risks towards the business or Guest Satisfaction (Hospitality Audit Services, 2020). Paton (2020) argues that the hotel audit is fairly insignificant, since the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London welcomes over 600,000 guests a year and a hotel audit is one individual only. It is seen as not a true reflection of the overall guest experience.

To generate guest satisfaction, the Hotel Management desires customer service from start to finish with the factors of "Friendliness" and "Communication" as key factors. However, managing Guest Satisfaction also includes resolving potential issues. This has to be done quickly and the service delivery has to be over and above of what the guests are expecting, in terms of resolving the occurred issue (R. Paton, personal communication, May 29, 2020).

Another element in managing Guest Satisfaction is to identify and empathise with the guests: "How would you feel", "What would you like as part of the experience" and "What would you expect (from the paid rate)" are the questions asked by the Hotel Management, when implementing or re-thinking procedures (R. Paton, personal communication, May 29, 2020).

Additionally, the analysed survey results shown in Chapter 4 demonstrate that "Communication" is one of the most mentioned problems during 2019. "Friendliness" appeared in the 'top 3' of welcome improvements upon arrival with 28.92%. However, the factor of "Friendliness" occurred not only within the "Welcome/check-in" area, but also as an improvement for the 'Farewell/check-out' (27.97%). "Breakfast Service" (16.99%) and in the "Business Centre" (34.29%), are all within the "top-3" of needed improvements. This concludes that "Friendliness" and "Communication" are essential to generate Guest Satisfaction within the Hotel Management, but the overarching perception of hotel leisure guests from the survey is negative.

5.1.4 Managing Guest Satisfaction after COVID-19

Chapter 5 discussed the recent worldwide outbreak of COVID-19, which has brought the world to a standstill. With the tourism industry as the worst affected sector of all major economic sectors

(UNTWO, 2020) and the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London closed to the public, in exception of the NHS key workers, it is important to realise that the tourism industry will not be the same once the world will open up again. This has also been taken into consideration when talking about Guest Satisfaction.

The Hotel Manager believes that guests will be more critical once the tourism industry re-opens and that Guest Satisfaction will depend on the room rate. If the rate is high and the guest does not have as many amenities as during previous experiences, they might be disappointed (R. Paton, personal communication, May 29, 2020). This perception can be seen as logical, since the model of Thomassen (2007) demonstrates that Guest Satisfaction depends on firstly, wishes and expectations and secondly, on previous experiences. However, previous experiences will be challenging to exceed with new procedures and regulations in place. Paton (2020) discusses that to generate Guest Satisfaction and deliver a special experience, making the right type of service delivery is important. The basics, offering a big smile on arrival and departure, will be essential.

In addition, section 4.1.1 discussed that “cleanliness” is the important factor for influencing satisfaction for hotel business guest, yet according to **the Hotel Manager** “cleanliness” will be more important to all guests once the hotel industry has re-opened (R. Paton, personal communication, May 29, 2020).

Finally, it is about “understanding and adapting to the situation”, “seeing where inroads can be made” and “trying to stay ahead of the competition” (R. Paton, personal communication, May 29, 2020).

5.2 What are expectations and what is the level of importance of various elements of the 4 Front of House Teams for the hotel leisure guests when returning to the hotel?

5.2.1 Introduction

In the earlier stages of this thesis project, the experiences of the hotel leisure guests and the perception of the Hotel Management of the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London towards Guest Satisfaction were analysed. However, Guest Satisfaction is not only based on experiences, but also on wishes and expectations. The following sections are focusing on the expectations and importance of various elements of the Front of House Teams.

With the assumption of guests being more critical ‘after’ COVID-19 and the challenge of exceeding past experiences due to the new procedures and regulations in place within the tourism industry, it is essential to understand the guest perception and to identify their needs and wishes and to what extend these may have changed.

There were 206 respondents, 111 respondents more than aimed for. From the 206 respondents, 142 were female (69,6%) and 62 male (30,4%) (appendix XXV). The majority of the respondents were between 25 – 34 years old (46,1%) (appendix XXVI) and the main reason for a hotel visit was a romantic stay (37,7%), followed by ‘other leisure stay’ (37,3%) and lastly family leisure stay (25,0%) (appendix XXVII). Out of the 206 respondents, 187 respondents completed the questionnaire; therefore the analysis will be based on 187 respondents.

As mentioned previously, the thesis project is not taking any background characteristics into consideration when analysing the results. This is because the new regulations and procedures relating to COVID-19 will affect everyone and will not make any distinction between age, gender or nationality.

5.2.2 Results pre-stay

The pre-stay is linked to the ‘Engage’ and ‘Buy’ phase (Richardson, 2010) of the Customer Journey. Where the thesis project is focussing on the ‘on-property’ phase, it is important to understand the needs and expectations of the (potential) guest to send out the correct message. This will reflect the ‘Reliability’ (Thomassen, 2007) of the organisation.

The majority of respondents would do research to see if the hotel has new safety measures in place,

before booking the accommodation. The minority of the respondents would not be disappointed if there would be more safety measures in place upon arrival than was researched during the 'pre-stay' phase. However, the analysis demonstrates that the standard deviation is high which shows the respondents had widely varying answers (appendix XXVIII). This demonstrates that higher safety measures relating to COVID-19 are a new concept and there is not a clear consensus of how people would approach the 'new normal' once hotels reopen once the pandemic has passed.

It was mentioned that the thesis project is not taking any of the participants' characteristics into consideration however, the respondents were asked which sources they would use to research the new safety measures (searching online, phoning or emailing the hotel). The majority (92,6% of 190 respondents) mentioned to research online (appendix XXIX) which is not surprising, since the largest group of respondents is aged between 25 – 34 years old. Stoddard (2016) substantiates this claim by stating that Millennials (born between 1981 and 1995) are using the internet on an average of 35 hours a week to buy and research products or read online reviews.

5.2.3 Results Welcome & Check-In area

The majority of respondents agreed that "Friendliness" during the 'Welcome & Check-In' is the most important factor. This factor is followed by "Professionalism of Staff" and "Efficiency". Moreover, the extent to what people disagree, is the lowest for "Friendliness" and means that the opinions between participants differs the least and that "Friendliness" is most important when it comes to 'Welcome & Check-in' (appendix XXX).

Chapter 4 showed that "Efficiency" and "Friendliness" were accessed as two of the most mentioned "downs" of past hotel leisure guests of the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London. Taking the results of the survey into consideration, the researcher can assume that the hotel leisure guests of Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London also had high expectations of "Friendliness" and "Efficiency". Overall, the Hotel Management and hotel leisure guests agree that "Friendliness" is important to achieve Guest Satisfaction regarding check-in and has to be priority for the Hotel Management.

When it comes to "Efficiency", a significant percentage of the respondents (68,2%) would make use of an online check-in. An online check-in can assist the 'Efficiency' of checking-in and may shorten the queue and waiting time as well as starting the guest experience sooner, as both factors were given as "downs" by the hotel leisure guests of Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London. Likewise, the majority of respondents would not mind waiting a little longer than previous check-in experiences if the guidance (information provision) is increased. However, the expectation is that the average waiting time to check-in should be between 5 – 10 minutes.

To create more efficiency, the researcher asked the respondents for potential "check-in timeslots". The question also included the possibility of the preferred time slot not being available and the guests not being able to go straight to the hotel after arrival at the destination. There were mixed responses to this question, with 41,1% of the respondents agreeing against 23,3% disagreement: 35,6% of the respondents was not entirely sure (appendix XXXIV). With a large group of respondents not being entirely sure, the researcher could have introduced a different question to create a deeper understanding of the uncertainty among the respondents. For example: the possibility of a luggage drop off point when arriving earlier at the destination than the booked time slot. Nonetheless, if the hotel introduced time slots, 89,9% of respondents would like to book the time slot instead of the hotel providing a time slot (appendix XXXII). In addition, the minority of respondents are prepared to pay for an early check-in, when the check-in time would be 3pm (appendix XXXV) with an average amount of £13.36 (appendix XXXVI). There is a wide range of division between the respondents when it comes to the amount willing to pay for an early check-in. This would allow the hotel to choose an amount without losing the trust of the hotel leisure guests, since there is no clear agreement between the respondents.

It is surprising that new safety measures (“displayed signage expressing new measures” and visible protective shields at check-in”) are two of the lowest scoring factors considering the current COVID-19 pandemic. However, the extent that people disagree can be considered high and this means that the range of different opinions is also high compared to the other factors (appendix XXX). It can be concluded that the hotel leisure guests share different opinions regarding new possible safety measures, however Thomassen (2007) argues that “safety”, indemnify the customer from risk, is one of the sub-factors leading to Guest Satisfaction. In addition, the ‘Pyramid of Maslow’ (appendix XLVII) shows that “Safety needs” is the second important layer to each individual. With a changing world and people being frightened, the Hotel Management needs to take safety measures seriously.

5.2.4 Results Breakfast Area

The majority of hotel leisure guests would still make use, when returning to a hotel, of breakfast provided in the restaurant over room service (appendix L). The preferred time for breakfast service is between 30 – 45 minutes (appendix XXXVII).

The researcher posed 4 statements indicating new safety measures which consisted of “take away food options”, “being prepared for longer waiting times than past experiences”, “pre-booking of breakfast time slots” and “avoiding of food handling by guests at all times”. There were mixed responses and 3 of the 4 statements had an average of “somewhat agree”, which cannot be seen as convincing.

It was found that the respondents would be most satisfied with a “Take away breakfast option (appendix XXXIX). The Hotel Management needs to make sure that the “freshness/quality” and “food variety” will be met when offering a take away package because these two factors received the highest response rate of past hotel leisure guests as seen in Chapter 4. Past experiences will be taken into consideration during the new hotel visit which is demonstrated by the respondents highlighting that they would be willing to wait longer than during previous hotel visits. Not only is the average respondent score for ‘Waiting’ second highest after the “take away option”, but the extent to respondents disagreeing is lowest from all four statements. The respondents disagreed about pre-booking breakfast time slots to accommodate safe seating and distancing, however the difference between the first two statements is very little. It can be surmised that certain changes to Breakfast service will be accepted by hotel leisure guests and booking time slots for breakfast could be considered.

5.2.5 Results Check-Out area

Responses of past hotel leisure guests of the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London, as previously analysed in Chapter 4, showed that Check-In and Check-Out scored the same improvement points. “Efficiency” was the most important factor. The results of the online survey carried out by the researcher, concluded the same: “Efficiency” is a priority when it comes to Checking-out. With a majority of 64,2%, respondents prioritised checking out via a “key drop off point” over “face-to-face” contact at the Reception Desk (12,1%) (appendix XL). Also, 80,9% preferred to receive the invoice by email (appendix XLII).

However, when there would be an outstanding bill, the majority of respondents (69,4%) would prefer “face-to-face” contact instead of checking-out via the television in the room (appendix XLI). This can be seen as surprising since the majority of respondents can be categorised as Millennials. This is also a contradiction with the trends as seen in Chapter 4 and is emphasised by Amadeus (2018) who argues that technological advances will lead to a more flexible and faster check-out. Breda and Dinis (2019) highlight that guests do not intend to see the human aspect of the hotel being neglected. With the online survey scores, the researcher can assume that hotel leisure guests would like to have “face-to-face” contact when money is involved which may be linked to Thomasson’s (2007) sub-factor “safety”. Doubts may be taken away when settling the bill “face-to-face” instead of technology being the sole provider of the service.

5.2.6 General Hotel Principles

Considering General Hotel Principles, the researcher asked the respondents if card payments should be the only payment option throughout the hotel. The majority of the respondents agreed (appendix XLIII). With the majority of the respondents categorised as 'Millennials', it can be stated that "Technology" and "Efficiency" are at the forefront of their requirements. The handling of cash payments has also been scrutinised during the COVID-19 pandemic which may be another contributing factor to why the majority of respondents agreed that card payments should be the only option.

Additionally, the 4-star etiquette (holding doors or taking bags for example) demonstrated very mixed responses with the average response being "neither agree nor disagree". Without a definitive answer, the hotel management can make decisions regarding the service delivery without worrying about how this would affect the guests' perception of the hotel. On reflection of the questionnaire the researcher has identified that a clearer understanding of the different etiquettes undertaken throughout the hotel should have been clarified by using sub-questions in the questionnaire.

Relating to personal protection materials, 53,7% of the respondents expect protection materials to be provided by the hotel. Nonetheless, the researcher enquired how much respondents were willing to pay for protection materials. The responses vary between 0 and 40 pounds (appendix XLVI), with an average of £7 (appendix XLV). However, it must be mentioned that only 111 respondents filled out this question which may be because respondents may not want to wear or purchase protection materials during their leisure stay as it is a holiday and government advice is constantly changing.

6| Research Conclusion

The research conclusion provides the answers to each research question based on the desk and field research of the thesis project.

6.1 What are the trends and developments relating to Guest Satisfaction of hotel leisure guests in the hotel industry?

6.1.1 Trends and development relating to Guest Satisfaction of hotel leisure guests

Personalisation is “an essential aspect for the future of the hotel industry” (Amadeus, 2010; Yeoman, 2012) and relates to “fulfil the psychological needs of guests” (Lo, 2012). Furthermore, the guests will not be easily satisfied with mass customisation (Pine et al., 2009). This is in line with the research of Breda and Dinis (2019) who demonstrate that the trend of “personalisation” was the most popular mention among the respondents.

Along with personalisation, comes technology (Neuhofer, 2015). Breda and Dinis (2019) provide several examples of technology trend such as a digital room key or face recognition. This research discovered that the element of “safety” and “ease” can be related to a digital room key as these cannot be lost (Breda and Dinis, 2019). It is also believed that the advances of technology will bring a more flexible and faster check-in or check-out (Amadeus, 2018).

Breda and Dinis (2019) believe that staff empathy and professionalism is the future of the hotel and hospitality industry. This is supported by the research results of Herjanto and Gaur (2019) where attitude, staff professionalism and behaviour were shown as the highest perception of a memorable hotel stay. Not only is a memorable stay perceived by “staff empathy and professionalism”, hotel leisure guests want an experience. In order to increase guests’ satisfaction, future hotels need to offer cultural aspects and opportunities for hotel leisure guests to participate in. This can be identified as the trend of “Destination identification”.

The above mentioned trends are all relating to increasing Guest Satisfaction, however during the research the world was brought to a standstill due to the worldwide pandemic of COVID-19. The tourism industry has been the worst affected sector and international tourist arrivals may decline between 58% and 78% for the year (UNWTO, 2020). The pandemic brings “the new normal” and will most likely affect future tourism experiences and the perception of Guest Satisfaction

6.2 What is the perception of the hotel leisure guests of the touchpoints relating to the 4 Front of House Teams of the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London?

6.2.1 “What are the ups?”

With the trends and developments being researched, it is essential to analyse the current guest satisfaction of hotel leisure guests of the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London. The areas analysed have a focus on the Front of House Teams. However, the areas who had the highest trends (related to survey score) during 2019, are not connected to the Front of House Teams, but refer to the Back of House Department, PPHE Hotel Group, staff and the destination. These areas can be linked to the Guest Satisfaction model of Thomassen (2007) with the sub-factors of: material, reliability, ability, material (and service).

6.2.2 “What are the downs?”

Mirroring the ‘trending trends, the downward trends have also been linked to the model of Thomassen (2007) and the same sub-factors of service have been analysed. The “Check-in”, “breakfast”, “communication” and “overall service” are the highlighted downward areas of the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London and in comparison to the ‘ups’, are related to the Front of House Teams.

The results have been analysed per target group and it is notable that the area improvements are identical, except within ‘Breakfast Service’. Within this area, romantic leisure stay mentioned ‘staff level’ (16.94%) instead of ‘friendliness’ as mentioned by ‘Other’ and ‘Family’. In addition, ‘Breakfast Food & Drink’ the ‘coffee’ (30.60%) was found as most important by family leisure stay whereas ‘taste’

is mentioned by the other two target groups.

Almost a quarter of the respondents were unsatisfied with the “Welcome & Check-in” experience with “Efficiency” as the most mentioned improvement among all target groups. The same improvements were mentioned for the “Farewell & Check-out” which is not surprising as both check-in and check-out occur in the same area of the hotel.

Another Front of House Team analysed is “Breakfast” and scored the lowest average rating of the Front of House Teams. The ‘supply of food kept replenished’ (food supply) within the ‘Breakfast Service area’ was mentioned by Romantic and Other Leisure Guests as the most important improvements. Furthermore, a significant growth was seen within “waiting time”. Also, the hotel leisure guests agreed that the size of the restaurant is too small, or the room too crowded which subsequently resulted in the noise level being too high (ReviewPro, 2020). Besides service and room improvements, the respondents rated the variety of food insufficient, followed by the quality of coffee and the freshness and quality of food and beverages (ReviewPro, 2020).

The Front of House Teams of Business Centre and Concierge are omitted due to insignificant responses. Overall, the analysis demonstrated that the essential improvements to be considered to increase guest satisfaction are ‘Efficiency’ and ‘Friendliness’

6.2.3 “What is the perception of service delivery towards leisure guests from the Hotel Management point of view?”

The previous sections discussed the trends and development relating to guest satisfaction and the analysed survey results of past hotel leisure guests of the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London. With ‘Friendliness’ and ‘Efficiency’ as the two essential aspects to increase guest satisfaction, it is vital to understand the Hotel Management point of view considering guest satisfaction.

The Hotel Management argues that each individual guest will different needs and perceptions, yet all guests want to feel welcome and a “first class” service needs to be delivered from the start to finish. This includes smiling staff upon arrival and departure and all interaction during the stay needs to make a difference (R. Paton, personal communication, May 29, 2020).

Furthermore, service delivery should include “Hospitality”, “Friendliness”, “Feeling welcome”, and “Information delivery”. These factors contribute to Guest Satisfaction and are linked to the model of Thomassen (2007) within the sub-factors: “Friendliness” and “Communication”.

The Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London offers a “Westminster Park Plaza Experience” and aims for special experiences resulting in planning being essential. To manage the Guest Satisfaction, it is essential to resolve issues quickly and provide a service that exceeds guest expectations. Additionally, it is important to identify and empathise with the guests (R. Paton, personal communication, May 29, 2020).

With the world currently on hold and the hotel closed to the public, it is important to understand, adapt to the situation and try to stay ahead of the competition (R. Paton, personal communication, May 29, 2020). The Hotel Management believes that guests will be more critical once they return and that the room rate and the cleanliness will be the main indicators of Guest Satisfaction. However, in order to generate Guest Satisfaction and delivering a special experience, providing the correct service is important, yet it is the basics that will be essential and the focus needs to be on ‘Friendliness’ and ‘Communication’.

6.2.4 What are expectations and what is the level of importance of various elements of the 4 Front of House Teams for the hotel leisure guests when returning to the hotel?

With the improvements within the 'user-phase' (Richardson, 2010) of the Customer Journey analysed and the vision relating guest satisfaction of the Hotel Management clear, it is important to understand the needs and expectations of hotel leisure guest after the located development of COVID-19.

The online questionnaire results demonstrated that before booking a hotel, the majority of the respondents would conduct online research about the hotel's new safety measures. If there are more safety measures in place than mentioned, the minority of the respondents would not be dissatisfied, however the results demonstrate that increased safety measures relating to COVID-19 are a new concept and there is not a clear consensus of how people would approach the 'new normal'. Furthermore, displayed signage expressing new safety measures and visible protection shields at the reception desk received mixed responses. The respondents shared different opinions regarding new possible safety measures, but the aspects were scored as two of the lowest during the questionnaire. In addition, personal protection materials are expected to be provided by the hotel, yet if the respondents had to pay for the materials, an average of £7 would be satisfactory.

The respondents expect an efficient check-in with an average waiting time of 5 – 10 minutes as well as a friendly welcome. This last aspect is considered the most important as well by the Hotel Management however, it is analysed as an essential improvement aspect of past hotel leisure guests. Also, the majority of participants would use an online check-in. A possibility of providing check-in time slots was questionable since 35,6% of the respondents would chose 'agree/nor disagree'. In addition, the majority of respondents would not pay for an early check-in, but the average amount for an early check-in would be priced at an average of £13.16

Where respondents would like to see an efficient check-in with short waiting times, the preferred time for breakfast service is 30 – 45 minutes at the restaurant. The results demonstrated disagreement about the pre-booking breakfast time slots to accommodate safe seating and distancing. However, "take away" options are considered as the most satisfying option to hotel leisure guests.

The option for card payments only throughout the hotel, was agreed by the majority of the respondents. This could not be confirmed for providing the same 4-star etiquette (holding doors, taking bags for example), which received very mixed responses.

The check-out area did not receive many mixed responses and the majority of the respondents agreed that "efficiency" is the most important factor when checking-out: 64,2% would check-out via a "key drop off point". With the majority of the respondents agreeing on 'Efficiency', this is an essential aspect to focus on since this is mentioned as an improvement aspect by past hotel leisure guests. In the case of an outstanding bill, technology is not preferred and most people (69,4% of respondents) would prefer to settle the check-out face-to-face at the reception desk.

7| Validity and Reliability

This chapter discusses the validity and reliability of the thesis project research. The validity of the research is about accuracy of the research results; “measuring what we intend to measure” (Verhoeven, 2015) and to check whether systematic errors have been made (Verhoeven, 2015). It is about looking at the credibility of the research; checking if the research is a true reflection of reality. The validity can only be measured after the reliability has been assessed and the reliability of the results is an indication of the degree to which the research is free from random errors (Verhoeven, 2015).

7.1 Reliability

According to Verhoeven (2015) a research is reliable when the research is repeatable and when this leads to the similar results. The reliability of the research results indicate to what extent the research is free from random errors. Verhoeven (2015) discusses a few ways to enhance the reliability of the research.

- **Sample size:** The sample size for the questionnaire was set at first at 95 respondents (confidence level of 95% and with a margin error of 10%), based on the population size of 8,195. The questionnaire received 187 valid responses which a margin of error of 7% with a confidence level of 95%. With 3% in margin of error less and with 92 responses more than indicated, the sample size would be large enough to draw a stable conclusion. However, the population size of 8,195 was based on the retrieved responses in ReviewPro of hotel leisure guest during the year 2019. The Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London receives over 600,000 guests a year, with 60% leisure guests. To draw stable conclusions, the researcher should have taken a population size of 360,000 (60% of 600,000). With a confidence level of 95% and margin of error of 10%, the sample size for the true reflection of the population would be 97 respondents. Therefore it can be concluded that the sample size is large enough to draw stable conclusion.
- **Test-retest:** The questionnaire has been taken once per individual. Whilst all the respondents took the questionnaire online, the conditions may have varied (for example, different areas or noise levels). Also, the questionnaires have been taken at different points in time which reduces the reliability, but over a short time period, which increases the reliability. The reliability can be considered as moderate. To create a higher reliability, the questionnaire could have been taken twice per person or all at the same point in time.
- **Standardisation:** A standard questionnaire was designed using mostly the Likert Scale (Swanborn, 2009). The questionnaire was the same for all respondents: the same instructions and same questions. The conducted open interview made use of an interview guide with a topic list and was conducted to one interviewee only. Both aspects increase the reliability of the research.
- **Pilots:** The research has not been making use of a test questionnaire or test interview. This decreases the reliability of the research.
- **Peer feedback:** Besides the researcher, one other person working in the Tourism & Hospitality Industry has read through the findings, but is not connected to the research. However, since the individual has been working with the same analysis programme and understands how to interpret the findings, this can be seen as an increase to the reliability of the research.
- **Reporting and justification:** There has not been any use of a research logbook; however interim notes have been made of the various research actions.
- **Intersubjectivity:** Not applicable. The research did not make use of observations.
- **Triangulation:** This is applicable for the qualitative part of the research: different sources have been taken into consideration and the interview was with the Hotel Management of the organisation the thesis project is carried out for. The researcher assumed that the Hotel Management shares the same perception and opinions, however the Hotel Management functions as a team as well each individual having their own thoughts and ideas. To create a

higher reliability, the researcher should have also interviewed the General Manager with the same interview guide.

In response to the above points, the research is reliable, but could be improved. The sample size is sufficient and another individual, besides the researcher, has re-read the results. Also, the questionnaire was standardised and conducted within a short period of time. The interview made use of a topic list, but the interview could have been conducted to the whole Hotel Management Team to compare the perceptions and to see if the Hotel Management, as a Team, differ. The chance of “random errors” is increased through the perception of the respondents which are constantly fluctuating (Verhoeven, 2015).

7.2 Validity

The validity of the research “means the extent to which the systematic errors occur” (Verhoeven, 2015). Validity is a true reflection of the reality. Construct validity, internal validity and external validity are reviewed.

7.2.1 Construct validity

Construct validity measure the extent to which instruments are used. Concepts should be formulated as specifically as possible and should be built on the theoretical framework and operationalisation. The theoretical background of the thesis project demonstrated the core concepts of “Guest Satisfaction” and “Customer Journey”, which are based on qualified literature and evaluated by the AAOCC criteria (Kapoun, 1998). It can be concluded that the foundation of the thesis project is sufficient. The questionnaire contains the right items, but consists mainly of questions relating the COVID-19 pandemic. This could have included more in-depth questions relating to the sub-factors of service according to the Guest Satisfaction model of Thomassen (2007). Also, the interview asked for the perception of Guest Satisfaction of the Hotel Management, however did not focus on the perception of service delivery towards leisure guests. Likewise, the concepts of Guest Satisfaction and Customer Journey are not defined and explained to the interviewee. This means that the interviewee did not know what the literature definitions of the concepts. This is a major component that decreases the construct validity. Overall, most of the aspects have been measured, but there could have been more in-depth research, therefore the construct validity has decreased.

7.2.2 Internal validity

Internal validity is the extent to which correct conclusions can be drawn. This means that the drawn conclusions can withstand and uphold criticism from other researchers (Verhoeven, 2015). Within internal validity, it is important that the research is consistent. The procedures supported correct measurements: the questions in the questionnaire have not been changed over time (all respondents did have the same questions) and the respondents did have enough time to fill out the questionnaire, since it was completed done online. The respondents could stop at any time during the questionnaire to continue in a later moment if need be. The questions were all anonymous allowing respondents to feel safe enough to provide their opinion which increases the internal validity. Likewise, the date of the interview with the Hotel Management was set beforehand. During the introduction of the interview, the researcher was introduced and the interviewee was asked if a recording device was allowed to be used. It was also asked if the details (name and position) were allowed to be included within the research paper which also increased the internal validity. The questionnaire took an average of 8 minutes and included 37 questions. This could have been improved as respondents may have found this too long and could have filled in the questions quicker at the end than at the start of the survey. A number of participants did not complete the questionnaire demonstrating that it may have been too long. This decreases the internal validity. It could be argued that the research has not been consistent throughout. As mentioned in the construct validity, the online questionnaire and interview omitted some elements. Furthermore, the research intended to observe and question the hotel leisure guests of the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London about their (current) experiences during their hotel visit. Due to COVID-19 however, some of the field research had to be altered to desk research which could

prompt the argument of the current research being superficial, therefore decreasing the internal validity.

7.2.3 External validity

External validity is the extent to which the sample is a correct reflection of the population. The sample must resemble certain characteristics of the population (Verhoeven, 2015). The characteristics help to be confident enough to provide a solid conclusion or advice. As discussed in “internal validity”, the researcher intended to conduct the research by following and observing the hotel leisure guests of Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London. However, the current research is making use of data from 2019, compared to 2018. This is not giving a true reflection of the population and decreases the external validity. By not observing the hotel leisure guests of the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London, the ‘on-property’ phase of the Customer Journey could not be visualised. Likewise, the online questionnaire was shared on social media (Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn) instead of observing and questioning the hotel leisure guests of the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London. The questionnaire was shared within the Hospitality Business School and spread by respondents via social media (snowball effect). With generalising the hotel leisure guests and not specifying the hotel leisure guests of the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London, the external validity decreases. Furthermore, the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London is a 4-star hotel. The questionnaire was aiming for hotel leisure guests in general and not taking the characteristic of a 4-star hotel leisure guest into consideration. The characteristics of the population are not a true reflection and being able to provide a confident conclusion or advice has been reduced. This decreases the external validity.

Since the development of COVID-19 is affecting the entire world and will not make any distinction between age, gender, nationality or type of hotel, the population gives a correct reflection. This increases the external validity. The interview held was with one individual of the Hotel Management who shares the same vision and mission for the organisation which increases the external validity.

7.3 Conclusion

Overall, theoretical framework and operationalisation are based on qualified literature. Not all aspects have been defined in the questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire and interview could have been more insightful and could have followed Thomassen’s (2007) model closer. Furthermore, the sample for the research was of sufficient size, but was generalised to all hotel leisure guests and not specifically the hotel leisure guests of Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London. This complies with the COVID-19 developments that are affecting the world population as the pandemic is not making any distinction between characteristics. To conclude, it must be taken into consideration that although the reliability and validity of the research is moderate and could be improved, the research conducted was optimal due to the current circumstances. With the retrieved results, the research can be seen as reliable and valid.

8| Advice

8.1 Introduction

This chapter configures as the advisory part of the thesis project and will provide an answer to the management question of the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London: *“How can Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London increase the satisfaction of the hotel leisure guest through Front of House Teams of the on-property phase in the Customer Journey, considering past and future guest needs?”*

The advice was formed on the basis of a theoretical framework and research results. Through the answers of the research questions it has been identified that the decrease in Guest Satisfaction is mainly influenced by the service sub factors of Thomassen (2007) “Friendliness” and “Efficiency”. Since the research results are showing a variety of advisory alternatives, criteria will be applied to select the most suitable advice for the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London.

8.2 Purpose, Mission and Vision

The purpose of the PPHE Hotel Group, and therefore Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London, is “to create valuable memories for our guests and value for our assets” (PPHE Hotel Group, 2019). The hotel strive to differentiate from competitors by offering guests a unique experience through a strong service delivery culture by employing teams of experts to exceed the guest expectations and achieving the set goal. Valuable memories for guests and value for assets are achieved by the two-pillar integrated owner/operator business model and is continuously investing to add value to assets which enable to delight guests every day through inspirational quality and service attractive locations (PPHE Hotel Group, 2019).

The strategic agenda of the PPHE Hotel Group is divided into two sub-categories which drive to growth and long-term value named ‘property’ and ‘operations’: However, the advice will be based on one of the three “highlighted” (bold) values within ‘Operations’

- **Consistently deliver the refreshed intended guest experience across the properties**
- **Maintain high operating margins**
- **Leverage the scale and inter-regional synergies** (PPHE Hotel Group, 2019).

The mission of Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London for 2020 is to be more focussed on personal development and gaining new skills and experiences where the vision is guest focussed: each team is focussed on searching and analysing the guests’ feedback and discussing their action plan with the Hotel Manager to ensure the guests’ experience is at the heart of everything (PPHE Hotel Group, 2019).

8.3 Advice alternatives

According to the research results, “Efficiency” and “Friendliness” are the most important service sub-factors (Thomassen, 2007) to be focussed on in order to increase Guest Satisfaction through the on-property Customer Journey. This can be achieved through one aspect of the mentioned strategic agenda: *“Consistently deliver the refreshed intended guest experience across the properties”* (PPHE Hotel Group). In addition the, development of COVID-19 has created “the new normal” which has led to the important service factor of “Safety”, which is also a service sub-factor argued by Thomassen (2007). Therefore the following two advice alternatives will be explored:

8.3.1 Advice alternative 1: Implementing technology

The results illuminated that “efficiency” is an essential service sub-factor in order to obtain Guest Satisfaction, especially during the check-in. Almost a quarter of the past hotel leisure guest who completed the hotel’s online survey of the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London were unsatisfied and “efficiency” was mentioned as the most important improvement. Alsumait (2015) argues that waiting time directly influences the guest’s mood and will affect the perception of service quality. It is therefore advised to implement technology within the ‘user-phase’ (Richardson, 2010) of the Customer Journey in order to meet the wishes and expectations of hotel leisure guests.

8.3.1.1 Online check-in and check-out

Amadeus (2018) believes that a faster and more flexible check-in and check-out can be achieved by making use of technology. The results of the online questionnaire conducted by the researcher among hotel leisure guests demonstrated that the majority of the respondents would make use of an online check-in. Making use of online check-in and check-out may shorten the queue and waiting time and thus influence the guest's mood in a positive way. This will consequently influence the perception of the service quality of the hotel (Alsumait, 2015).

8.3.1.2 Digital room key

The hotel is currently working with a physical room key. A problem that arises when using physical room keys is losing the key **which may lead to 'inefficiency'**. Using digital room keys will combat this, yet it may create other problems, for example running out of battery when using a mobile device. Fingerprints on the other hand, are not making use of a battery and will not get lost. Furthermore, using a fingerprint will increase the aspect of feeling at ease and feeling safe. No other individual will have the same fingerprint and no "stranger" who for example, found a mobile device on the street, is able to check-in or access another guest's room at the hotel.

8.3.1.3 The guest experience mobile app

The last aspect to be advised within the technology advice alternative is the "guest experience app". The app can be downloaded once the booking is confirmed. The homepage will show the countdown to the arrival date and guests will be asked to provide the check-in details (passport number, date of birth etc.) two days prior to arrival. The guest is able to check-in online and once this has been completed, it would then be possible for the guests to request specific items or requirements, for example extra pillows on the bed or a shaving kit to be ready in the room. Furthermore, the application will send notifications such as important safety measures or upgrade possibilities, but also about enjoyable events or things to do in area during the visit. **The app** is for all guests who have booked a stay at the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London and will increase **the service sub-factors of "efficiency", "communication" and "helpfulness" (Thomassen, 2007).**

Once the guest has arrived at the hotel, the application will provide possibilities to send requests to Housekeeping such as notifying the department about issues in the room or ordering food to take away, or room service. Likewise, time slots for breakfast or the restaurant can be booked via the application. ** The application has possibilities to be combined with the finger print room key. Once the guest has checked-in in the application, a bar code will be visible. On arrival, the guest can scan the barcode on the "pillar" and scan the fingerprint.*

8.3.2 Advice alternative 2: Action plan hotel re-opening

The Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London is currently closed to the public as a result of the worldwide pandemic COVID-19. There will be 'the new normal' once the hotel, and the industry, resumes which may affect the future experiences of hotel guests, resulting in a new perception of 'Guest Satisfaction'. Chapter 5 demonstrated the results of the conducted online questionnaire which was aiming to understand the guests' needs and wishes during the '**user-phase**' (Richardson, 2010) of the Customer Journey. Understanding the expectations of the hotel leisure guests will create awareness towards influencing Guest Satisfaction factors once the hotel re-opens.

8.3.2.1 Safety measures action plan

The first aspect is operational focussed and is related to the implementation of new safety measures **during the 'user-phase' (Richardson, 2010) of the Customer Journey and** is relating to the service factor of "safety" (Thomassen, 2007). As seen in the results, "safety" is one of the essential fundamentals of individuals (Maslow, 1943). Not only will safety measures (materials) protect the health of hotel guests and hotel staff members, showing that the organisation cares for its customers' wellbeing, it will increase the guests' perception of the reliability (Thomassen, 2007) of the hotel and

could lead to an increase in Guest Satisfaction during the new guest experience in the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London.

Likewise, the Front of House Teams will provide an essential role towards guest interaction (touchpoint of the Customer Journey) and Guest Satisfaction when the hotel re-opens. Especially the Reception Team (Check-in & Farewell) who have to safeguard 'Efficiency' and 'Friendliness'. The reliability of the hotel will mostly excel the service delivery of guest interaction from the Front of House Teams. The interview with the Hotel Manager showed that the hotel believes that guests will be more critical. In order to generate Guest Satisfaction and deliver a special experience, delivering the correct delivery is important and an essential factor is planning (R. Paton, personal communication, May 29, 2020). In order to safeguard the researched improvement "Friendliness" and "Efficiency", it is important to establish an action plan for the specified Front of House Teams of Reception and Breakfast. This will ensure a safe opening and more importantly will increase the understanding of expectations, needs and wishes of hotel leisure guests within the teams. This may lead to a positive guest experience and ultimately increase Guest Satisfaction.

8.3.2.2 Optimising service delivery

It is not only important to focus on the hotel re-opening, but it is essential to also focus on the future. The "new normal" will vary significantly when compared to past travel experience and it will be important to provide a service where not only "safety" is crucial, but where "helpfulness", "friendliness" and "understanding" are key drivers for the Front of House Teams in order to increase the guest satisfaction on the 'user-phase' (Richardson, 2010) of the Customer Journey. The Hotel Management desires "first-class" customer service from start to finish with "Friendliness" and "Communication" as key factors (R. Paton, personal communication, May 29, 2020). It is therefore essential to provide the correct service to guests that incorporate the crucial basics: "helpfulness" and "friendliness" and "understanding" (Thomassen, 2007). However, with "Friendliness" as one of the most mentioned improvements, it is crucial to monitor the provided service through a 'committee'.

8.4 Advice alternative comparison

To select the most suitable advice for the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London, it is essential to compare the two alternative advices. The alternatives were assessed on the following criteria:

1. The extent to which the alternative advice connects to the management question (reason)
2. Financial effort (finance)
3. The estimated time it takes to implement the alternative advice (time frame)
4. The importance to implement the alternative advice to the organisation (importance)

Symbols	Meaning	Allocation of points
--	Not meeting criteria at all	-2 points
-	Does not meet criteria mostly	-1 point
+/-	Neutral	0 points
+	Meets criteria mostly	1 point
++	Meets criteria completely	2 points

Figure 8.4.1: Alternative advice criteria

8.4.1 Scoring and prioritising alternative advice

	Advice alternative 1: Technology implementation			Advice alternative 2: Hotel re-opening	
	Online check-in and out	Digital room key	Guest experience app	Safety measures action plan	Optimising service delivery
Reason	++	+/-	++	--	++
Finance	-	-	--	+	+
Time frame	-	-	--	+	-
Importance	+	--	+	++	++
TOTAL	1	-4	-1	2	4
COMBINED TOTAL POINTS		-4		6	

Figure 8.4.1.1: Scoring and prioritising of alternative advices

8.5 Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London re-opening

The previous section has highlights that the “re-opening action plan” has priority. No combination of alternative advices will be made since technologies will take longer to implement and it is essential to react quickly and sufficiently to the current ‘COVID-19’ pandemic. The action plan is making use of the PDCA-cycle (Bulsuk, 2009) which is a method for problem solving , quality management and will assist to start the implementation of the advice for the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London. The four-stages of the PDCA-cycle are explained in appendix XLVIII. The previously analysed ‘problem areas’ of past hotel leisure guests (efficiency and friendliness) and the identified expectations, wishes and needs (Thomassen, 2007) of hotel leisure guests through the online questionnaire, will be taken into consideration.

8.5.1 Elaborated advice

8.5.1.1 Part 1 – Safety measures action plan

As mentioned in the online questionnaire result results, the majority of questionnaire respondents would like to have an online check-in available as well as a ‘key drop-off point’ for the check out, as this may shorten the queue and waiting time. This relates to ‘Efficiency’, to the sub-factor of service of Thomassen (2007). The Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London is currently not working with an online check-in system. Due to the time limitations before the re-opening of the hotel, it is important to create a check-in system that is as efficient as possible. To create an efficient and safe check-in environment, it is advised to work with a “check-in route” (appendix LI) and ‘check-out route’ (appendix LIII). The detailed ‘check-in route’ can be found in appendix LV.

Likewise, The online questionnaire results showed that the majority of the hotel leisure guests would make use of restaurant breakfast with a breakfast service time of 30 – 45 minutes. To serve all hotel leisure guests and to ensure safe seating, the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London is advised to make use of time slots by extending the current opening hours. The availability needs to be communicated to guests at the entrance and in front of the restaurant and needs to be updated every hour. This relates to the communication service sub-factor of Thomassen (2007). Likewise, ‘take away’ options are advised. This may help to decrease the amount of people wanting to eat in the restaurant and increase Guest Satisfaction relating to noise level as this was mentioned by all hotel leisure groups as most improvement for the breakfast area. Moreover, ‘take away’ was the most satisfied option among respondents of the questionnaire and aims for ‘Efficiency’ (Thomassen, 2007). The Park Suites may be used as pick-up point since these are located close to the exit and Room Service kitchen, to guarantee food quality and freshness.

In addition, visible protection shields at the reception desks and signage displays stating the hotel’s safety measures are advised. This may have been the lowest scoring areas within the questionnaire, but it relates to the service factor of “safety” which is the second layer of the “Hierarchy of Needs” (Maslow, 1943) and will increase the reliability and credibility (Thomassen, 2007) of the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London.

8.5.1.2 Part 2 – Optimising service delivery

The base for increasing Guest Satisfaction, and to create valuable memories for guests, starts with an exceptional service delivery. This will be reached through the ‘Operations pillar’ as mentioned in section 8.2, namely: “Consistently deliver the refreshed intended guest experience” (PPHE Hotel Group, 2019).

Chapter 5 discusses the perception of Guest Satisfaction by the Hotel Management and demonstrated that essential factors for the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London Management are “Friendliness” and “Communication”. However, both hotel survey and the online questionnaire results demonstrated that ‘Friendliness’ and ‘Efficiency’ are the two leading service sub-factors (Thomassen, 2007) of a decrease in Guest Satisfaction within the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London. Therefore is it essential to optimise the service delivery within the ‘user phase’ (Richardson, 2010) of the Customer Journey.

During unprecedented times it is essential to provide a 'first class' service: "Friendliness, "Understanding" and "Personal experience" are the key factors according (R. Paton, personal communication, May 29, 2020). As discussed in the 'Trends and Developments', service delivery can be optimised through 'Personalisation', 'Destination Identification' and 'Staff empathy and professionalism'.

8.5.1.2.1 "Personalisation"

Breda and Dinis (2019) mention that respondents specified that a hotel visit needs to be built on pleasant surprises through details and emotions. This will be reached at first through a personal room television message: a personalised message by each individual reception staff member. When the guests leaves the check-in desk, the staff member will adjust the template with the guest first name and/or specific details such of 'I am sorry to hear that your flight was delayed' and will send it via the check-in system to the room. When the guest will enter the room, a personal message, from the staff member they just have spoken to welcomes them. This increases the 'Friendliness' (Thomassen, 2007) and demonstrates empathy for the guest's situation which relates to 'Understanding' (Thomassen, 2007). The Hotel Management will not have to worry since the majority of questionnaire respondents highlighted that waiting between 5-10 minutes is acceptable for check-in. Likewise, it is important that the Reception Team addresses the guests by their (last)name. This will increase the personalised feeling and not being a number. In addition, signals of 'special occasions' needs to be noticed by the Reception Team. Since the Reception Team is the first touch point within the 'user-phase' (Richardson, 2010) of the Customer Journey, it is essential to locate any special occasions such as an anniversary or birthday. When analysing this within the first touch point, the guest experience within the 'user-phase' (Richardson, 2010) of the Customer Journey can be personalised.

This last aspect is related to an internal document being received by the hotel: 'Reservations Made Yesterday' and which relates to the 'buyer-phase' of the Customer Journey (Richardson, 2010). This document shows the guests name, arrival date, adults and children but also reservations comments. These comments may show guest wishes for example, a birthday and the question for a bottle of bubbles in the room or early check-in. This document is currently not used to locate guests' wishes and needs, but it is advised to start using the document to locate the guest wishes and needs and to create 'surprise' and 'personalisation' within the 'on-property'-phase of the Customer Journey.

8.5.1.2.2 Destination identification

Chapter 4 demonstrated that a trending aspect to increase Guest Satisfaction of hotel leisure guests is 'Destination identification'. The research of Breda and Dinis (2019) showed that future hotels need to offer more cultural aspects and opportunities to participate, and Gilmore (2011) argues that guests have the desire and need to experience and not only require the service or products.

Since the core business of the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London is to provide accommodation which relates to a service, it is important to meet the needs of hotel leisure guests of providing an experience within the 'user-phase' (Richardson, 2010) of the Customer Journey. Appendix LV elaborates the detailed 'check-in route' which advises to prepare the 'Ballroom' for an 'English welcome tea'. This 'English welcome tea' will provide English tea and English scones (included clotted cream and jam) and will increase the guest experience within 'user-phase' (Richardson, 2010) of the Customer Journey, as the guest will not only experience the core business of 'accommodation', but will also experience an English welcome tea, which will provide identification with the destination.

Since the economy is currently declining and many businesses facing an uncertain future, the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London is advised to cooperate with (small) local businesses and organise a fair within the hotel. This may require permits which can be arranged with the relevant authorities. To plan the fair, a team needs to be formulated. Within the team clear communication and division of tasks is important. Since guests are seeking for 'Destination Identification', the theme must be related to London. An online questionnaire can be send out via Social Media, 'engaging-phase' (Richardson, 2010) or during the reservation process, 'buyer-phase' (Richardson, 2010) to identify the needs and

wishes of the (future) guests (Thomassen, 2010) and a promotion plan can be prepared. It is advised to organise the fair once a week in peak season. Likewise, when local businesses are arranged it is essential to have a detailed script with an overview of tasks and actions, including a phone list of all parties and employees involved and an end evaluation is essential when planning the following fair.

Organising a local destination fair may increase the guest experience during the 'buy-phase' (Richardson, 2010) and increase the guest satisfaction. Likewise, hotel leisure guests may share their positive experiences via Social media or Word-of-Mouth which can attract new customers. This is related to the 'share-phase' of Richardson (2010).

8.5.1.2.3 Staff professionalism

Desk research showed that the perceived hospitality (attitude, staff, professionalism and behaviour) is the highest perception of a memorable stay (Herjanto and Gaur, 2019). Research results demonstrated that 'Friendliness' is one of the leading improvements mentioned by past hotel leisure guests and an important aspect for a future hotel leisure stay given by the online questionnaire respondents. Thomassen (2007) states 'Friendliness' as: "The ability to address and treat customers with the necessary courtesy and kindness."

To improve 'Friendliness' within the 'user-phase' (Richardson, 2010) of the Customer Journey, it is advised to provide hospitality- and communication training to the Front of House Teams since they are interacting with the guests (touch point). It is also advised that the Reception Manager will provide the hospitality training to the Reception Team, but also the Breakfast Team. With this, both Front of House Teams are trained the same and will therefore provide the same service. Garten (2012) argues that communication training will change the participant's behaviour and mind-set and will therefore work long-term. According to Garten (2012), Kirkpatrick uses 4 level of training evaluation:

Level 1 - the reaction of participants on the communication training

Level 2 – measurements on growth of knowledge participants

Level 3 – evaluation of changed behaviour on-the-job

Level 4 – measurements on business results

A basic hospitality- and communication training relating to level 1 & 2 will most likely have a positive result however, to provide the desired service for the long-term, level 3 & 4 need to be implemented as well. This will optimise the provided service and may lead to an increase in Guest Satisfaction. The hospitality- and communication training will take place once every two months, yet it will also be

provided in the first week of new team members. Level 3 will be evaluated every month with the individual team member. Level 4 will be evaluated by the Hotel Management.

8.6 Plan

Objective	What?	Who?	When?
Within a period of 1 month, the 'safety measure action plan' is realised in order to prepare the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London for returning customers.	Ordering ground stickers and visible shields, communicate with M&E Team for the red carpet, plan rota accordingly, updating staff, prepare additional check-in and out desks, Ballroom and 'key drop-off point', prepare new check-in and exit route Extend breakfast opening hours, order breakfast boxes, prepare 'take away options' - order forms and pick-up point, display signage of available time slots Creating safety route throughout the hotel, ordering hand sanitiser and PPE materials	The responsibility of this objective is with the responsible persons written in the action plan: Reception Manager and Reception Team Leader & Hosts. F&B Manager and waiters. However, the overall responsibility is with the Hotel Management.	As soon as possible. The hotel is re-opening at the 4rd of July and therefore it is crucial to have the safety measures in place before the majority of guests return.
Within a period of two months, all individual Reception Team Employees have sent 50 personalised welcome messages to arriving hotel leisure guests.	Creating 'personalised welcome message' template, template has to be checked, staff members knowing how to send personalised messages to guests' TV	Reception Hosts and Team Leaders to prepare and send template Reception Team Leaders to check knowledge on sending templates from Reception Manager to check template	The templates have to be created by the individual Reception team members within the first three days of returning at work. The Team Leaders have to provide the knowledge check within these first three days and Reception Manager to check the template the moment the team member is finished
Within a period of two months, a long-term action plan relating the cooperation with local businesses is released.	(Online) questionnaire to be send out to (previous) guests with wishes and needs, local (small) businesses to be approached, 'Fair Team' to be created	Hotel Management to appoint 'Fair Team'. The 'Fair Team' to create the online questionnaire or to communicate with the Marketing Team and to approach local businesses. Hotel Management communicate long-term wishes to 'Fair Team'.	Hotel Management to appoint 'Fair Team' within two weeks after a selection process. 'Fair Team' to create online questionnaire as priority or communicate this to Marketing Team. This online questionnaire needs to be send out within one month and results being gathered and analysed after two months. After this, approach local businesses.

Within a period of six months, the first 'Destination Identification fair' is realised in the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London.	Local business are approached, fair being promoted on (social) media and towards (future) guests, a script for the day has to be created including staff being appointed	The 'Fair Team' in combination with the Marketing Team. Additional staff on the day of the fair.	The aim is to realise the first fair during the Christmas period since this is one of the peak seasons of the hotel. It is advised to organise a minimum of two fairs during this period and to have an evaluation afterwards.
Within a period of two months, the Reception Manager provides the hospitality and communication training with all staff members of Reception and Breakfast Team to help optimise guest satisfaction.	Providing hospitality- and communication training, measure the growth of employees after the training, evaluation with individual employees and team.	Reception Manager provide training to the Reception- and Breakfast Team, conduct evaluations and measure growth of individuals. The Hotel Management to measure business results.	Training once every two months. Yet, it will also be provided within the first week of new team members. Evaluation will take place every month. Hotel Management to measure business results two months after the first provided training.
In a period of 12 months, the guest satisfaction of surveyed hotel guests is improved by 5%.	Guest Satisfaction in ReviewPro is improved. Take action and review new implementations when guest satisfaction decreases.	Hotel Management to review the received responses and to analyse results. Communicate results to Departmental Managers.	Review of received responses and analyse results once a week, communication to Departmental Managers once a week.

Figure 8.6.1: Plan-phase of the PDCA-cycle (Bulsuk, 2009)

8.7 Do

During the “do-phase”, the action plan, **fair and hospitality and communication training** will be realised. Results will be gathered to analyse efficiency and if the implemented action will lead to the desired result. To safe guard the data collection and the same interpretation of results **of the action plan**, it is advised to create a ‘COVID-19 Reflection Team’. This Team will observe, map the current ‘**user-phase**’ (Richardson, 2010) **of the Customer Journey** and attach the current ‘downs’ and ‘ups’ of hotel leisure guests.

8.8 Check

The ‘check-phase’ will function as an evaluation opportunity **for the safety measure action plan**. Evaluation meetings will be every week and held between the Hotel Management, Reception, Breakfast Managers and the ‘COVID-19 Reflection Team’. Results and thoughts will be shared and discussed. If necessary, the Hotel Management can choose to invite relevant Departmental and Team Managers. **Likewise, the (current) results will be compared to the objectives stated in the ‘plan-phase’.**

8.9 Act

The final phase will indicate if the current action plan, **and provided training**, is leading to the desired results. The results from the ‘check-phase’ will be taken into consideration and if necessary, adjustments to the action plan can be made. It is advised the ‘act-phase’ will commence two weeks after the ‘Do-phase’ begins. This is because it is crucial to build a relationship of trust with guests in order to increase Guest Satisfaction and create ambassadors for the Park Plaza Brand. The ‘act-phase’ will lead to refining the results.

8.10 Financial data

The Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London is part of a larger PPHE Hotel Group. The total revenue of the PPHE Hotel Group over the year 2019 was £357.7 million, with £122.9 million EBITDA and £40.7 million normalised profit before tax (PPHE Hotel Group, 2020). This revenue stream for the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London is unknown to the researcher Appendix XLIX shows the key financial aspects of the PPHE.

8.10.1 Explanation of Costs

To improve guest satisfaction through the Customer Journey, various costs (direct and indirect) have to be taken into consideration. The advice will directly influence one of the KPI's used by the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London.

The ‘Safety measures action plan’ consist of the following estimated costs: The hourly minimum UK wage is of £6.45 for people aged 18-20 (GOV, 2020). The majority of the reception staff are aged

between 18 – 20 years old. ‘Google’ showed a variety of options for ground stickers, all between £15.50 and £20.00. Therefore an average price of £17.75 per sticker has been taken. An estimate of 20 stickers is needed (4 stickers for 4 lobby check-in desks and 1 ground desk).

A variety of websites for ‘take away boxes’ has been consulted, however prices are on request. The website Catering24 (2020) sells breakfast boxes for £520 per 2880 boxes. That is £0.8 per breakfast box and it is advised to order a trial first. Also, compostable paper cups for £34.29 (per 500) and recyclable paper plates cost £14,26 (per 1000). The tableware will be estimated on 500 arrivals a day, for two weeks. The protective shields are offered for an estimate of £130.00 per shield on various websites, with 6 shields being needed (lobby check-in desk x4 + Cloakroom + ground desk) and hand sanitizer is being sold with an estimate of £60 per 5L (personal communication). PPE materials vary per wholesaler however, with an estimate of £3.00 per mask. Overall, this will come to an estimated total cost of: £2,589.82 without hand-sanitizer, PPE materials and excluding the staff wages and Food & Beverage (take away food and ‘English Welcome Tea’). Furthermore, it has to be taken into consideration that the protective shields will last and do not have a repeat purchase in the near future. Stickers may wear out and a repeat purchase during the first 3 months is possible. Other repeat purchases will be: breakfast boxes, PPE materials and cleaning materials. Staff hours vary on the occupancy of the hotel.

Next to the materials for the ‘Safety measure action plan’, the hospitality and communication training needs to be provided. At first, this will be conducted by the Reception Manager and no outsourcing costs will be applicable. According to Hofstede (2001), the additional costs are dependent on several factors: Where will the training be conducted? Do you need a meeting space? How long does it take for the individual to adapt to the learning curve? What is the expectation of the training and can this be reached within one day? Are there materials needed during the training and after the training? However, if the training needs to be outsourced due to lack of results, the yearly costs of a communication programme is estimated at \$13,000 (±£10,000) per person according to Grove and Hallowell (2002).

Moreover, the location of the local business fair will not be outsourced so no additional costs are added, the ‘fair space’ cannot be outsourced for other Meeting & Events and may lead to revenue opportunities being missed. The Hotel Management could consider asking a small fee for the local businesses involved, which will cover any additional resource expenses.

The revenue of the fair and the hospitality and communication training are difficult to estimate and the rewards will be only earned in the long-term through guest satisfaction. Optimising the service delivery will increase guest satisfaction which will result in better ratings and more bookings. This may positively influence the revenue stream of the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London.

8.11 Conclusion

The management question of the thesis project is as follows: “How can Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London increase the satisfaction of the hotel leisure guest through Front of House Teams of the on-property phase in the Customer Journey, considering past and future guest needs?” The result findings make it clear that “Efficiency” and “Friendliness” are key factors to increase Guest Satisfaction of hotel leisure guests of the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London. The advice demonstrated two alternative advices, however, the elaborated advice has priority since the current guest expectations will differ from previous experiences. The Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London is advised to take “Efficiency”, “Communication”, “Friendliness” and “Safety” into high consideration when re-opening the hotel to the public. The following plan/overview may assist with implementation:

What? (<i>advice</i>)	How? (<i>implementation</i>)	Who? (Team)	Estimated Costs
Reception Team - Welcome & Check-in <i>Elaborated in 8.4.1.1</i> Feeling welcome Efficiency Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Placing of red carpet at entrance (<i>indoors</i>) Implementing “Ground and Lobby host” (on rota) and explain the role within the team Providing personal television message Overall “hospitality training” Placing of colour ground stickers for check-in efficiency and safety Creating additional check-in desk at ground level Repetition staff training on check-in system Updating and instructing staff on the (new) information need to be provide on check-in Placing of visible protection shields at desk Placing of displayed signage stating the hotel’s safety measures Prepare ‘Ballroom’ for ‘English Welcome Tea’ 	Reception Manager to provide hospitality training, guidance of personal message template, ordering of ground stickers, decision making in opening ground check-in desk, guidance of Lobby & Ground hosts, communication to Meeting & Events Team for red carpet, open and clear communication towards Hotel Management and Team Managers Reception Team Leader and Hosts: knowledge of check-in and out systems, being hospitable and making sure of clear communication towards guests and colleagues, asking for guidance when necessary to supervisor/manager, empty “key-drop off point”	<u>Additional staff</u> +/- £6.45 per hour <u>Ground stickers:</u> +/- £17,75 per sticker (x15) <u>Protective shields:</u> +/- £130 per item shields (x6)
Reception Team - Farewell & Check-out <i>Elaborated in 8.4.1.3</i> Efficiency Feeling welcome Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating ‘key drop-off’ point at ground level only Preparing Cloakroom for ‘face-to-face’ check-out desk Creating of ‘exit route’ 		
Food & Beverage – Breakfast Team <i>Elaborated in 8.4.1.2</i> Time slots Take away Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extending breakfast opening hours Communication of time slot availability on displayed signage Communication with Reception about available time slots Designing/ordering of breakfast boxes Preparation of Park Suites for ‘take away’ pick-up Discuss with chef on ‘take away’ options Creating ‘take away’ order forms Transforming seating area into “safe seating” area Cleaning tables after every “bubble visit” 	F&B Manager to arrange ‘cleaning training’ with Housekeeping for waiting staff in order to maintain the cleanliness of the restaurant, brainstorm about new safety seating and “take away menu” (with chef), extend opening hours, order take away boxes, making sure Park Suites are prepared Waiters to make sure safe seating and cleaning is carried out,	<u>Additional staff hours</u> <u>Breakfast boxes:</u> +/- £520,00 for 2880 large boxes <u>Extra cleaning materials</u>
Overall Safety measures <i>Elaborated in 8.4.1.4</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating safety route throughout the hotel Providing of hand sanitiser throughout the hotel Making sure PPE materials are available 	Hotel Management to create safety route and ordering PPE materials, safe guarding Team Managers	<u>PPE materials</u>

Afterword

Managing the thesis

The thesis semester has been very different from what I had imagined. The start of the thesis semester overlapped with my management internship resulting in a very tough few months that did not allow me to have the start I had hoped for. During my management internship, I came across some challenges which flowed into my thesis semester. I had to finish the 'management reports' in the same time period as my thesis proposal, whilst also was managing/leading the Team I was working in because the managers had left. This consequently led me to not being able to focus as strongly as I would have liked on the thesis proposal. Also, because the initial thesis proposal was graded highly, I did not realise what was expected from the official thesis proposal. When my first examiner, Jan-Willem Meijerhof, mentioned that I failed and that it was missing a lot of essential parts, I was disappointed. Not with the fact I failed but disappointed with myself. During previous studies I had undertaken, I have realised that I am a perfectionist and if I fail, it can be very hard to accept, especially when it comes to failing a report, since writing is one of my key attributes. The feedback given during the thesis proposal mentioned that I was too ambitious and I needed to 'downsize'. It was difficult for me to visualise the expected thesis project, but with the help of Jan-Willem I managed. It felt I had to wait quite a long time for the retake of my thesis proposal and due to my first proposal missing key characteristics; I could not start the thesis project. Finally, on May 8th, I had the retake and passed, however the grade was a bit disappointing for me and showed I still had a lot of work to do.

After the Thesis Proposal Defence, the thesis semester still did not allow me to give my full attention to the project. During the thesis semester, the COVID-19 pandemic started and with the world and tourism industry coming to a standstill, there was no need for the hotel to have its full employee capacity. The majority of employees were sent home, but not me. I was needed in the 'Core Team' and worked 12-hour shifts, from 8 – 8, 4 days a week. I was living in the hotel, away from my family and boyfriend, for many weeks and during the night I started to work on my thesis. I became exhausted, physically and emotionally, and with the help of Jan-Willem and Jos Poth, I could leave the hotel on May 14th. The General Manager, Suat Binkaya, had some very nice words for me and I started to understand why I was chosen for the 'Core Team'. His words motivated me and created some extra energy.

With only 4 weeks to go and with a whole thesis to write, I was starting to feel the pressure. However, I know that to deliver something of quality, I need that extra pressure. My classmates were always laughing when I said 'Diamonds are made under pressure', but a thesis is not a normal report and it takes a lot of time to deliver quality. I made myself a day – to – day plan and the majority of the days I could tick off all the boxes. The desk and field research both went well, but a learning point for next time is to place the used sources in the text straight away, because unfortunately my laptop did 'crash' one morning, losing all the webpages and information I had gathered. This resulted in a large part having to be rewritten. Looking back at the research carried out, I realise that both the interview and the online questionnaire could have been based more on the model of Thomassen (2007). Since COVID-19 is unprecedented it became a key focal point of the research, and in hindsight I felt that overall Guest Satisfaction could have been concentrated upon more.

This was unfortunate and I was, again, disappointed with myself. As a perfectionist, I want to provide quality. I also wanted to analyse every detail, no matter how small, which led to my analysis being too broad. Besides this, I needed confirmation that I was progressing correctly with my project, but with the current situation and everyone occupied, I did not receive feedback which made me feel insecure. When speaking to Jan-Willem he mentioned that I should have called him instead of emailing once an answer is outstanding, yet I feel that it is not my place to do so. Everyone is busy, other students are

working on their thesis, I did fail my proposal at first and I felt it was 'too much' to ask for more time. This is also a learning point for me, because I am also entitled to supervision and I need be more confident and assertive at times. Receiving this feedback would have helped me to know if I was on the correct path or that I needed to change a significant amount and would have increased my chances of passing first time. At the moment, I do not know if my research and advice is adequate or if I should have used my time differently, which also makes me insecure. The same can be said for working full time during my thesis project. I am however, extremely proud of myself that I have finished my thesis on time considering the small period of time. I have been working every day from 9 until 6 and where I usually do not have any focus during the day, I made sure I did, which shows that I can really achieve something if I want to.

Communication with the client

Before the thesis semester officially started, I did have several meetings with my client, Suat Binkaya. This was because I was already working in the hotel and had easy access to converse with Hotel Management. These meetings always provided me with extremely useful information and knowledge. During the official thesis semester I did not have contact with Suat, but with the Hotel Manager, Ross Paton. This communication was fantastic and I had the feeling that I could always ask for help, even during these unprecedented and busy times for the hotel. This was highlighted when I created my online questionnaire and felt I had to update my client straight away. I decided to send the questionnaire to Suat and Ross immediately. Ross also made time and phoned to go through the questionnaire. This was the same for when arranging the interview. I am extremely thankful for the support I have received from Suat and Ross, but knowing they are excited to read the findings of my thesis project, makes me feel insecure as I do not want to disappoint them.

Communication with the first examiner

When creating the planning, I made the plan to have Skype meetings at least once a fortnight, but with my busy schedule and the delayed thesis proposal and a small amount of time to finish the thesis project on time, this did not happen. However, Jan-Willem has been of extremely good support during my thesis proposal period. He showed me a more simplified thesis project and provided me with helpful information when I had confused myself. Even I did not receive the full feedback I was hoping for because of COVID-19, I am very pleased with the overall support of Jan-Willem.

Value for the industry

The theoretical framework showed that 'Guest Satisfaction' and the 'Customer Journey' are popular topics among researchers. The majority of articles are about how 'Guest Satisfaction' can be increased and because of sufficient knowledge available; a suitable advice would be possible. However with the recent COVID-19 development, the Tourism & Hospitality industry is unsure of what the future may hold, this is an unprecedented occurrence and it is unknown what guests may expect on their next hotel visit. This makes the thesis project research and end advice valuable for the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London. To create more value for the industry, more in-depth questions (based on the Guest Satisfaction of Thomassen (2007)), should have been asked. I do believe that with the current developments and the changing Tourism & Hospitality industry, many researchers will research the topic of 'Guest Satisfaction' and a desirable 'Customer Journey' based on the new expectations and how they do differ from previous experiences. To create an overview and the 'real expectations and experiences', research should continue once the Tourism & Hospitality industry has reopened and hotels are welcoming guests. This would assist in visualising the 'on-property' Customer Journey which would increase the understanding of current expectations and experiences with an end result of increasing Guest Satisfaction.

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Appendices

Appendix I: AAOCC application

	Dalla Pozza (2014)	Gandolfo (2010)	Lemen & Verhoef (2016)
Authority	Names are clearly stated, publisher known,	Names are clearly stated,	Names are clearly stated,
Accuracy	Informative purpose, published in a journal	Informative purpose, published in a journal	Informative purpose, published in a journal
Objectivity	Different insights reviewed, no personal opinion	Different insights, no personal opinion, research outcomes	Different insights, no personal opinion
Currency	2014, information not outdated	2010, information not outdated	2016, current source. Information not outdated
Coverage	PDF free to read	PDF free to read	PDF free to read

Figure I: AAOCC application

Search methods

It is important to increase insight into the core concepts of this research in order to establish the theoretical framework. Therefore several search engines have been consulted to find scientific literature. As these sources must provide reliable and useful information, it is, therefore, crucial to use reliable search engines and databases. 'Google Scholar' has been used for establishing the theoretical framework.

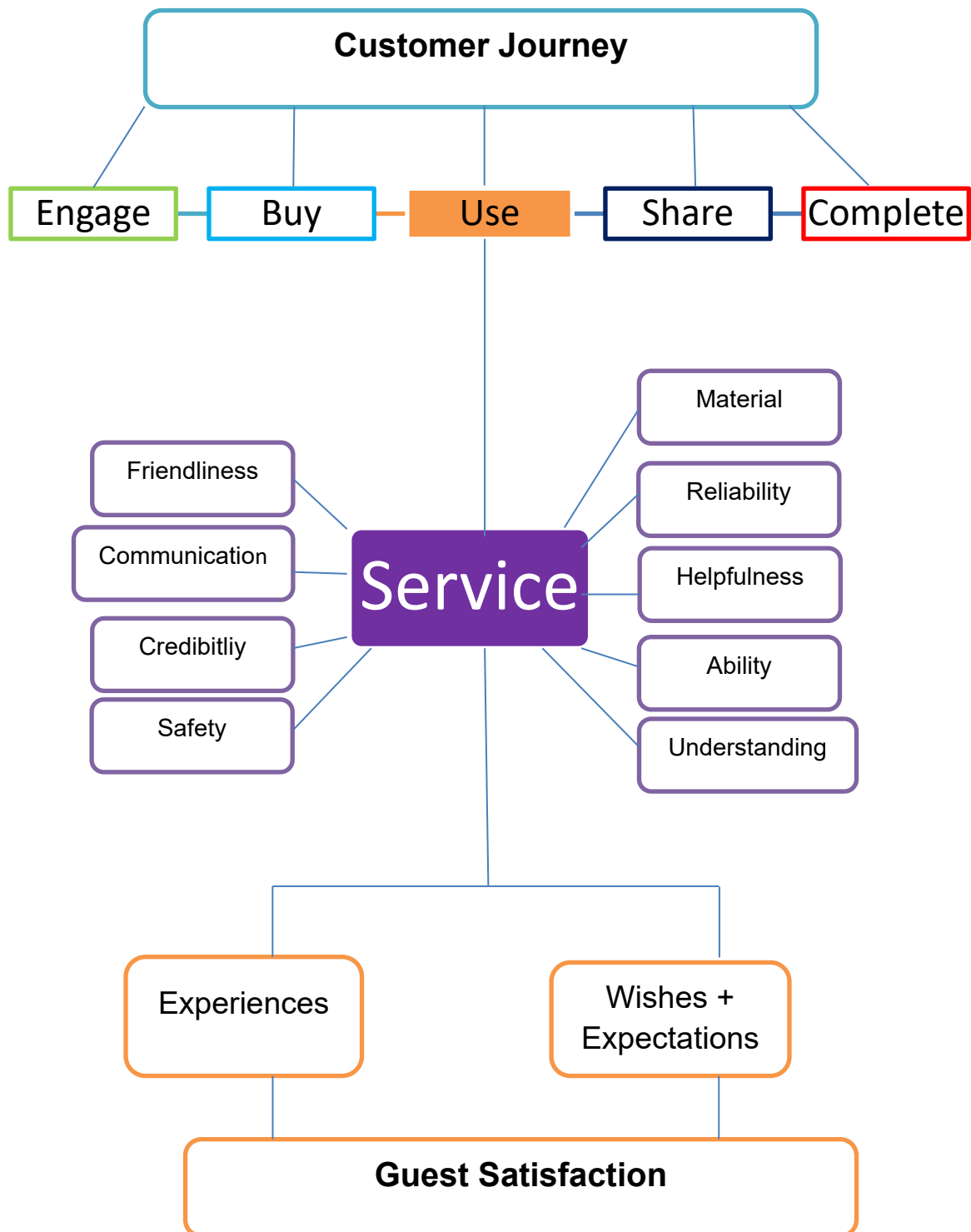
The search results used were assessed based on the AAOCC-criteria (Kapoun, 1998) in order to evaluate whether the source is qualitatively useable. Figure 2.1 lists the search engines, search terms and the criteria used to evaluate the search results. The two aspects of the source being an academic article and readable without a fee were the most important. Some of the consulted sources do not meet the criteria 'Currency' since these criteria are not always corresponding with the actual publishing year, but it was realised that these sources are not outdated and information provided is still accurate. Thus the source and definitions were included. The search process of literature and an example of examining two sources according to the AAOCC criteria is found in appendix I.

Likewise, the snowball method has been used several times. This method uses literature that has been used for a source found via the search engine (Verhoeven, 2011). An example of this is when was searched for "Guest Satisfaction" in Google Scholar. One of the results, and therefore the report advised, referred to other literature. This literature was then used (after further investigation) for the theoretical framework.

	Concept: Guest Satisfaction	Concept: Customer Journey
Search Engine:	Google Scholar	Google Scholar
Search Terms:	Satisfaction, Guest satisfaction, Customer Satisfaction, Guest satisfaction in hospitality, Hotel Guest Satisfaction, Customer Experience VS Guest Satisfaction	Customer Journey, Guest Journey, Customer Journey in hospitality, Hotel Customer Journey,
Criteria:	<p>Accuracy & Authority: Author, publisher, verifiable information, free or errors/well written</p> <p>Objectivity: Opinions based on accurate facts and information</p> <p>Currency: Is the information outdated?</p> <p>Coverage: Breadth and/or depth of the topic, no fee to obtain information, ability to read all information</p>	

Figure II: Search Methods Overview

Appendix II: Operationalisation of the core concepts



Appendix III: Visit reason




Appendix IV: Trending up areas

↑Trending Up	Score	
Hotel Cleanliness	9	+0.10
Responsible Business	8	+0.14
English	8	+0.14
Sleeping	9	+0.06
United Kingdom	8	+0.14

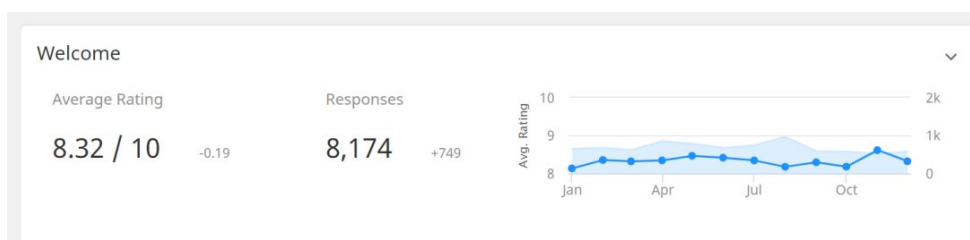
Appendix V: Trending down areas

↓Trending Down	Score	
Welcome / check-in	8	-0.20
Staff	9	-0.12
Food and Beverage	8	-0.15
Welcome & Farewell	9	-0.11
Room	8	-0.08

Appendix VI: Specified downwards trends




 Room	2,615	-32	 -2.8	-0.3	window
 Value	1,173	+45	 -1.8	-0.4	price
 Food and Drinks	2,076	+255	 -1.7	-0.4	breakfast
 Cleanliness	1,024	+116	 -1.5	-0.2	dirty
 Establishment	863	-44	 -1.5	-0.1	hotel
 Staff	781	+69	 -1.4	-0.1	communication
 Reception	751	+170	 -1.3	-0.2	check in
 Service	431	+32	 -1.2	-0.1	service
 Experience	663	+57	 -1.2	-0.2	guest
 Facilities	673	+83	 -0.8	-0.1	elevator

Appendix VII: Responses and average rating 'Welcome'



Appendix VIII: Welcome improvements

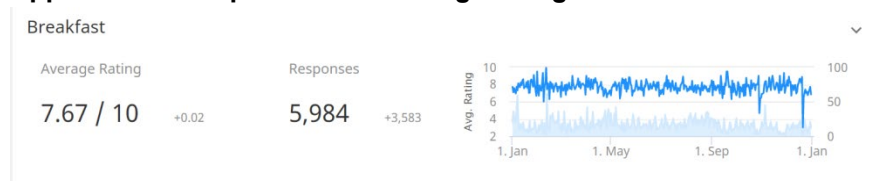
Welcome: Improvements

Largest group	Responses	Efficiency at check-in 43.60%	
43.60%	793 / 1,819	Check in line was long 32.66%	
-1.34	+469	Friendliness of our c... 28.92%	

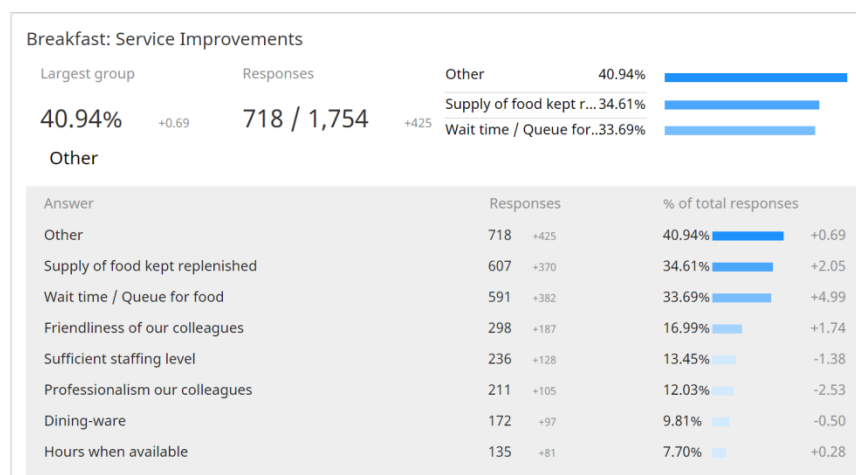
Efficiency at check-in

Answer	Responses	% of total responses	
Efficiency at check-in	793 +469	43.60%	 -1.34
Check in line was long	594 +385	32.66%	 +3.67
Friendliness of our colleagues	526 +312	28.92%	 -0.76
Information provided at check-in	484 +293	26.61%	 +0.12
Room readiness	363 +214	19.96%	 -0.71
Professionalism of our colleagues	361 +202	19.85%	 -2.21
Other	283 +199	15.56%	 +3.91
Early check in was not available	179 +104	9.84%	 -0.56
Room key card issues	107 +65	5.88%	 +0.06
Elevator functionality	78 +68	4.29%	 +2.90

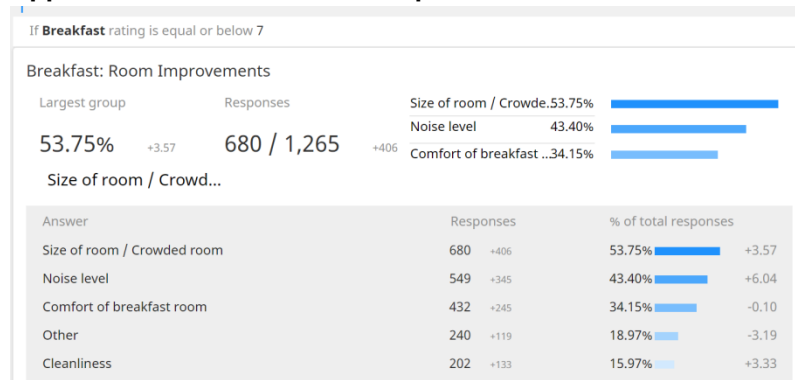
Appendix IX: Responses and average rating 'Breakfast'



Appendix X: Breakfast service improvements



Appendix XI: Breakfast room improvements



Appendix XII: Breakfast Food & Drink improvements

Breakfast: Food & Drink Improvements

Largest group	Responses	Variety of food at br...	55.73%	<div><div></div></div>	
55.73%	+3.32	1,046 /	Coffee	29.68%	<div><div></div></div>
Variety of food at bre...	1,877	+644	Freshness / Quality	28.29%	<div><div></div></div>

Answer	Responses	% of total responses	
Variety of food at breakfast	1,046 +644	55.73%	+3.32
Coffee	557 +330	29.68%	+0.08
Freshness / Quality	531 +327	28.29%	+1.69
Taste	520 +324	27.70%	+2.15
Value for money	499 +306	26.58%	+1.42
Presentation of breakfast	484 +297	25.79%	+1.41
Food served at appropriate temperature	333 +211	17.74%	+1.83
Variety of beverages	297 +166	15.82%	-1.26
Other	203 +134	10.82%	+1.82

Appendix XIII: Responses and average rating 'Farewell'

Farewell



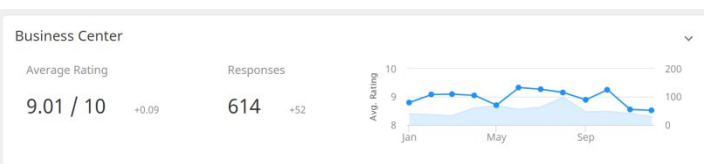
Appendix XIV: Farewell improvements

Farewell: Improvements

Largest group	Responses		Efficiency at check-out 33.33%	
33.33%	+3.82	236 / 708	+151	Friendliness of our c... 27.97%
Efficiency at check-out				The check out lines a... 27.82%

Answer	Responses	% of total responses	
Efficiency at check-out	236 +151	33.33%	+3.82
Friendliness of our colleagues	198 +126	27.97%	+2.97
The check out lines are long	197 +130	27.82%	+4.56
Accuracy of your invoice / folio	178 +109	25.14%	+1.18
Other	161 +98	22.74%	+0.87
Professionalism of our colleagues	159 +88	22.46%	-2.20
Provide a copy of invoice / folio	86 +47	12.15%	-1.39
The late check out was not available	35 +17	4.94%	-1.31

Appendix XV: Responses and average rating 'Business Centre'



Appendix XVI: Interview guide

Introduction

- Introducing interviewer
- Objective of the research
- Use of recording device
- Not anonymous; educational purpose only
- Length of interview

Organisation

- Could you introduce yourself?
- Could you explain what the organisation (hotel) stands for?
- How long have you been working for this organisation?

Guest Satisfaction

- What is your perception of Guest Satisfaction?
- Could you explain what kind of operations you have in place, during their visit, to keep the guests satisfied?
- You are conducting a survey when the guests have checked out. What are you doing with those responses you retrieve and the results?
- In every business or organisation, there are days/weeks/months that the organisation sees a decrease in Guest Satisfaction. How are you reacting to this as a hotel?
- With the recent developments regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, do you think the perception of Guest Satisfaction will change when re-opening the hotel?

Conclusion

- Overview of the given answers
- Questions for the interviewer
- Thank you
- May I approach you later on in my thesis project for further information?

Appendix XVII: Interview transcript I

00:00:00

Marliek van den Belt: Thank you again for helping me. Would you mind introducing yourself?

00:00:06

Ross Paton: So, yeah, I'm Ross Paton and I am the hotel manager at Westminster Park Plaza.

00:00:09

Marliek van den Belt: Thank you. So you work there as the hotel manager. How long have you been working for the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London?

00:00:17

Ross Paton: Since December, twenty nineteen. So just over six months.

00:00:22

Marliek van den Belt: How is it going so far? Are you enjoying the organisation and what is the difference with organisation you have been working for in the past?

00:00:32

Ross Paton: Yeah, yeah. So it's a different business in terms of, well it's a larger hotel, I'm used to, so the last property was about 250 rooms and now it's a thousand. So different in terms of economies of scale and scaling, but also in terms of business. I have worked for Marriott before. Right. While Marriott is very good and very corporate, and it would be because it's American, but very corporate. Park Plaza is, but also slightly more friendly because it's a smaller business in terms of head offices across the road. So, it's a lot it's a lot more family feeling to it. So, yeah, it has its pros and cons to both, but, you know, enjoy it. Right. Right. I love the business. It's a great hotel and great people and say, yeah, that's good.

00:01:13

Marliek van den Belt: That's very interesting and I am very glad to hear that you are enjoying your time so far during the past six months. You already mentioned it for a bit that the Park Plaza is more with families, as well that Marriott is more business wise. Ehm, and could you maybe explain what the organisation, so the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London as an hotel only, stands for?

00:01:35

Ross Paton: So in terms of what it stands for, the Westminster Bridge or Park Plaza? (Marliek): No, just the Westminster Bridge in general.

00:01:43

Ross Paton: Oh, in terms of, well, it's a large corp, as I said, it is a large hotel. So obviously, the volumes vary. I suppose historically, it's aim is from a meeting and event side and where hopefully the majority of the business comes through, which happens during September through to December, but also throughout the other large peaks. But outside that, ehm, tends to be a family business round school holidays, Christmas, Easter, six weeks over the summer. So, I know, certainly around weekends. So it kind of balances from both sides. The occupancy, how corporate in terms of direct percentage is difficult to balance, but about 50/50 corporate 50/50 families so.

00:02:30

Marliek van den Belt: That's a large hotel and because you mentioned it historically came from meetings and events and know it is also with 50 percent business against 50 percent leisure..

00:02:41

Marliek van den Belt: Ehm, my thesis is focusing on leisure guests only, but, ehm, ehm, so what I would say, because, of course, you have like a lot of business and leisure guests there are a lot of

rooms and everyone has a different perception of guest satisfaction. What is your perception of guest satisfaction?

00:03:03

Ross Paton: Eh, what's my perception of guest satisfaction? For me, so for me, it's exactly the same. It's, eh, we all have different needs and different they have different perceptions. For me, it's all the same. Eh, you know, sometimes a lot of hotel companies have audits and the focus is on the audit. But actually, you know, the audit is one person. But when you look at a hotel, that has if you work out a thousand or so, we have 30 that are effectively we could have thirty thousand different guests a month. You multiply three hundred sixty thousand guests a year. So, one auditor doesn't, isn't fairly insignificant when it comes to an audit, and what I appreciate is really important. What's more important is the other three hundred ninety thousand guests that could walk through the door. So, when you look at the occupancy levels, which are extremely high, it's really about getting those customers, is the bread and butter, people coming through the door. That is really what you want. I'm trying to get the repeat customer there, you know, ideally families, because if, you if you look at it from a long term perspective, the younger you get people through the door and the better you make their journey and their experience, the more likely are they are going to come back and use you when they're older. So, that sounds as it's a long term game and some people don't necessarily see that. So the more happy you make the families, the more likelihood that they will use these Park Plaza, not necessarily Westminster Bridge, but the brand or Park Plaza Radisson.

00:04:32

Marliek van den Belt: Ah, that is very interesting. I haven't realised that is what you are aiming for if I can be completely honest. My thesis is focusing on family leisure and what you're saying is actually very interesting. Also, because I have never really seen it from this perspective. So, keeping families happy as well, because, of course, what you already mention, the children are coming and they can come back when they're older. Also, your point about the audit I do understand. It's just one auditor, and that's actually, it's not statistically valid to the whole group.

00:05:05

Ross Paton: Yeah. It's not truly reflective. And if you remember, if you can remember and say you can't. But if you remember the holiday you had the first holiday, the first time you went to a hotel, maybe you can, maybe you can't. Some people most people can remember that. They go, usually for a special occasion, and there may be a treat, maybe a family wedding. You know, you'd normally remember the first hotel. I always remember, the first hotel I ever went to was with my grandfather and it was a special lunch and it was, you know, so I was only about eight or seven or eight, I think. But, you know, I had to dress up smart. We all had to dress up smart. These are all very, you know, it's not necessarily the same these days. But again, if you can make the experience of that person, the child, as much as the family, special they'll likely go to remember and want to come back. And, you know, and it's about the return customer that makes business what it is.

00:05:55

Marliek van den Belt: Yes, exactly. And what do you then have in place to actually make this experience and increase, or stabilise the guest satisfaction in the hotel? Do you have special operations in place?

00:06:08

Ross Paton: Yeah, in terms from what I have experienced so far in terms of how we said, this is really about the planning and making sure that everything is there in terms of the decor around themed events, be at Christmas, Easter, any other special occasion. Outside of that, it is a Westminster Park Plaza experience, primarily in terms of making sure the customer service from start to finish is, you know, standpoints in terms of Park Plaza moments, because of the iconic view from the front lobby or you know, whatever the theming is in the lobby, which helps. But again, it's really about the experience and it should be first class from start to finish. Big smile, big welcoming smile on arrival and a big

welcoming wave, goodbye on departure. And in between that, it's every interaction, every customer interaction there is with every member of staff, because that will make the difference. And if you can, you know, sometimes people may have an issue and that's all good. You know, that happens because every day we are dealing with different people all the time. But if you can make them, if you can resolve it fairly quickly, be whatever or deliver over and above what they're expecting in terms of resolving the issue, then the likelihood is they're going to give you a far better response.

00:07:26

Marliek van den Belt: And do you then also have, um, training in place for staff members to make it extra special or do they have to act within certain brand standards, or how does that work?

00:07:36

Ross Paton: Certainly there's brand standards, Radisson and Park Plaza, and the idea is really that is to standardise it, but also really allow people to go above and beyond to make that difference. Be it by sweets, be it a little gift to the children. But again, it's about, it's about the experience, which is what we need to make really special. And again, it's about balancing it because we need to think about everybody at the same time. You know, someone's had an issue; we need to resolve it as quickly as possible. If they haven't, it's about that big smile making them feel very welcome. Because, you know, the percentage of people from the U.K. they've ever stayed in hotel is fairly, maybe 40 or 50 percent. So for those people coming to London, you may be surprised they've never been in a hotel, or hotel or the style standard or whatever or so large, centrally located. So it's about, sometimes they're in or sometimes it's about making it feel comfortable. So, yes, as a myriad of different opportunities to 'wow' them, to make them happy.

00:08:36

Marliek van den Belt: So what I am hearing in your answer is that is all about helpfulness, willingness to help the customers quickly, on time, friendliness. Ehm, really the 'experience package' you are aiming for?

00:08:48

Ross Paton: Yeah, and again, I say it's the welcome. It's about the friendliness, the hospitality. You know, this is why we're in a hospitality business. People come because they want to experience a different side in terms of different.. ehm,

00:09:03

Ross Paton: they want to enjoy the experience. And certainly, I try and relate it in such a way that if the money you are spending to stay in the hotel, if you are spending what some people pay to stay in this hotel; how would you feel and what would you like as part of that experience? So if it's 150 pounds, what would you expect? Certainly, I would expect someone to smile at me welcoming me and, you know, try and explain everything to me and make me feel very welcome. And I don't think I'm any different to anybody else. Well, I know I am not, so, ha-ha.

00:09:30

Marliek van den Belt: Ha-ha, well, that's actually very true and I also share your opinion. However, within this hotel, or within every organisation or every hotel, and especially in hotel this size, ehm, you also have guests who will complain or are not satisfied. How are you dealing with this?

00:09:46

Ross Paton: Yeah, I mean, in an ideal world, everybody should be able to manage or should be able to resolve a guest issue. Occasionally there's going to be those guests that don't, or aren't, comfortable or wish to escalate because of what they see. The severity may be greater than in certain circumstances. We have a guest relations team, again, a kind of stop gap, really, to help support and support the hotel team, but also try and resolve any, any particular challenges outside of that. Then it becomes a departmental manager, then hotel manager and also the general manager who again, who

we're here to, to accommodate and to resolve and support across the place. Be in the hotel a customer. And they're not always right. Sometimes we just have to sometimes help to educate. As we are educators as well. So In a postive way.

00:10:35

Marliek van den Belt: Because have you ever had then because, you say you are educating as well, ehm, have you ever had a situation and the guest was really not satisfied and he actually had a point and then you were like, okay, we have to implement something else in our, in the Customer Journey, actually? Have you learned from certain situations as well?

00:10:55

Ross Paton: Yeah, I think everybody I think, you know, I look at anything that comes from a customer. Ehm, you learn something every time. Ehm, it may sound quite corny, but actually some people have a different approach, and people need to, you need to, need to go back in a different manner. So, again, for one instance, you know, someone's not very happy. And actually, effectively, all they wanted, irrespective of what we certainly knew, we were not going to go down a particular route. But some some countries, some cultures, prefer a very direct approach and other cultures prefer a very friendly approach. Some people just want the person sacked, now; and that's never going to happen. But sometimes if you know, not know, but sometimes if you are aware of what they're looking for, you can circumnavigate it. Again, that comes from experience, from dealing with similar cultures or similar personalities.

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Marliek van den Belt: Yes, so you don't have like any paper or guideline, for example, for the reception team what says: OK, this culture you have to approach in this way and this culture like this, or are you treating every culture the same in the hotel?

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Ross Paton: I mean, as far as I know, you know, as far as I'm concerned, every business is the same. So. So you know, from my experience dealing with certain cultures, most the majority are fine. There's the odd occasion and it's a rare, it's in a minority rather than majority. So, certain people, I don't think is you know, it's. And if you can write down, you know, because that's not you know, it's just it depends. You know, it varies is so much, so it is nothing's set in stone anyway.

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Marliek van den Belt: Thank you, I understand. Also, because what I'm also aware of is that you conducting a post-survey. When guests are checking out, you will send them a survey from the hotel. What are you actually doing with those responses you retrieve and the results you're getting from there?

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Ross Paton: So the information we get from the guest survey, again it's really about constantly trying to improve the offering we have and getting customer feedback. Now you can guide guests or customer feedback in a certain direction. Some things, again, it's a generic email account or generic information goes out. It's trying to get a gauge response in a way. I think, we could going forward. I think we could try and adapt it a little bit more. So it becomes more personable, eh, depending on the guest visit, you know, and customer surveys these days are still quite laborious, I think. Maybe to have them a bit shorter, snappier and actually have an element of fun in which might get more, garner more responses. Because people usually fill a survey if they got something to say and it's usually from a negative perspective. And I don't mean to say we don't want to hear that feedback, but actually sometimes we get a lot more positive. We have got a lot more positive feedback then we do negative, but we just don't get it captured on emails or, or surveys because it's time consuming. If you were a corporate customer and, you say, you stay in a hotel three nights a week, for two weeks than you're not going to do a survey. Most people tend not to do it. And you tend to get the families that tend to

put more information on that. But you can actually break it down by age group, by family, by culture, eh sorry, by country. So it has a wealth of information, more so than, eh, there is a lot of information we can use and we can drill right down to understand what it would be. Be a male, female, what they prefer, what they don't prefer. So there's a lot more analytical. I'm not sure we actually use it. It was capture as much of it as we can. Well, we capture we don't use it as well as we should do the moment.

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Marliek van den Belt: Okay, well, that's is also good to know, because I in my thesis, I'm also working with ReviewPro and I already have analysed some data, what might be interesting for you and in the end for my report as well. But of course, that is all like data from past guests. And at the moment, you're also aware of the recent developments with the COVID-19 pandemic. Do you think that guest satisfaction, of the perception of guest satisfaction, will change? Will it go.. will be different when the tourism industry will open and when the hotel will open?

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Ross Paton: Eh, I think people will be a lot more, ehm, critical.

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Ross Paton: Eh, they may change. It depends really on how, on how all things start to transpire, business moves forward. But it depends on the rate. When the rate is high and people's perception is, they don't have as much as many amenities in the room. They may be a little bit more critical. If there's an issue in terms of cleanliness, then that will certainly be very high on everybody's agenda. And that will be scored politically more harsh than it has done recently. Ehm, but again, I think this is a kind of understanding the climate going forward and I think, maybe we could do a little bit more pre-emptive work with our clients. Either based the Radisson information that's come from when a guest has stayed in China, what the results have been, ehm, and I'm not sure and again, I'm not sure we're ahead of the game at the moment, but that would be an opportunity. To see if it's, if it's had a marked increase or decrease of the wording or the feedback's been vastly different.

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Marliek van den Belt: I think that is very important as well. So yes, that where most of my questions at the moment. I'm not sure if you can add anything or addressing any important aspects for after the COVID-19. How are you dealing with these or do you have any suggestions, or from your perspective?

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Ross Paton: No, I don't think so. I think the COVID-19 will be interesting once we have the opportunity to fully re-open while the NHS has been good for us. Again, it's a limited market and that we're providing a service for the NHS rather individuals, while we do look after individuals. So but, yes, once we reopen, it will give us a better perspective on how we are and how we're delivering things. But

yeah, I'm always looking for new opportunities. I'm always looking for, I don't think we should sit still. I think we should look at what we can do differently. And it's about challenging ourselves to offer more, do more, see where we can deliver that service. I think your thesis is great. I welcome the opportunity to see and I think what you've done so far is fantastic. So I look forward to seeing the rest of it and I wish you the best with the rest of the project.

00:17:53

Marliek van den Belt: Ah, thank you so much. I very appreciate your words and I really hope I can 'help' a bit as well, because, of course, what I mentioned to you and to Suat as well, my thesis supposed to be very different. I would, I supposed to focus on guest experience, like, only guest experience. But now, because with all the recent developments the thesis is more shifting to guest satisfaction, ehm in the past, but also now looking forward to the future, what are the wishes and needs of guest when returning back to travelling. I really hope that I can shape an advise. It won't be a big advice, but something I can help you with and hopefully it will be interesting to read. So yes, I really hope that we're all going to be fine. Do you have any questions for me so far?

00:18:34

Ross Paton: No, not at all. But if you want anymore feedback or more, you want to collaborate or talk about stuff in the future in the next few weeks, you know where we are and we are more than happy to help.

00:18:43

Marliek van den Belt: Ah, again, thank you very much. That was actually what I wanted to ask, if I still may approach you because I already have approached you on several occasions. I don't want to be a burden in these hectic times, of course.

00:18:52

Ross Paton: Of course, of course you can. Anytime you wanna drop me an email about anything or whatever. Feel free. You're more than welcome and you're always welcome here.

00:18:58

Marliek van den Belt: Ah, thank you so, so much. It really is much appreciated. Thank you very much for your time and help today!

00:19:02

Ross Paton: Pleasure. Well, take care and enjoy your weekend! All the best. Bye!

Appendix XVIII: Interview transcript II

00:00:00

Marliek van den Belt: Thank you again for helping me. Would you mind introducing yourself?

00:00:06

Ross Paton: So, yeah, I'm Ross Paton and I am the hotel manager at Westminster Park Plaza.

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Marliek van den Belt: Thank you. So you work there as the hotel manager. How long have you been working for the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London?

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Ross Paton: Since December, twenty nineteen. So just over six months.

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Marliek van den Belt: How is it going so far? Are you enjoying the organisation and what is the difference with organisation you have been working for in the past?

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Ross Paton: Yeah, yeah. So it's a different business in terms of, well it's a larger hotel. I'm used to, so the last property was about 250 rooms and now it's a thousand. So different in terms of economies of scale and scaling, but also in terms of business. I have worked for Marriott before. Right. While Marriott is very good and very corporate, and it would be because it's American, but very corporate. Park Plaza is, but also slightly more friendly because it's a smaller business in terms of head offices across the road. So, it's a lot it's a lot more family feeling to it. So, yeah, it has its pros and cons to both, but, you know, enjoy it. Right. Right. I love the business. It's a great hotel and great people and say, yeah, that's good.

00:01:13

Marliek van den Belt: That's very interesting and I am very glad to hear that you are enjoying your time so far during the past six months. You already mentioned it for a bit that the Park Plaza is more with families, as well that Marriott is more business wise. Ehm, and could you maybe explain what the organisation, so the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London as an hotel only, stands for?

00:01:35

Ross Paton: So in terms of what it stands for, the Westminster Bridge or Park Plaza? (Marliek): No, just the Westminster Bridge in general.

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Ross Paton: Oh, in terms of, well, it's a large corp as I said, it is a large hotel. So obviously, the volumes vary. I suppose historically, it's aim is from a meeting and event side and where hopefully the majority of the business comes through, which happens during September through to December, but also throughout the other large peaks. But outside that, ehm, tends to be a family business round school holidays, Christmas, Easter, six weeks over the summer. So, I know, certainly around weekends. So it kind of balances from both sides. The occupancy, how corporate in terms of direct percentage is difficult to balance, but about 50/50 corporate 50/50 families so.

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Marliek van den Belt: That's a large hotel and because you mentioned it historically came from meetings and events and know it is also with 50 percent business against 50 percent leisure..

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Marliek van den Belt: Ehm, my thesis is focusing on leisure guests only, but, ehm, ehm, so what I would say, because, of course, you have like a lot of business and leisure guests there are a lot of rooms and everyone has a different perception of guest satisfaction. What is your perception of guest satisfaction?

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Ross Paton: Eh, what's my perception of guest satisfaction? For me, so for me, it's exactly the same. It's, ehm, we all have different needs and different they have different perceptions. For me, it's all the same. Ehm, you know, sometimes a lot of hotel companies have audits and the focus is on the audit. But actually, you know, the audit is one person. But when you look at a hotel, that has if you work out a thousand or so, we have 30 that are effectively we could have thirty thousand different guests a month. You multiply three hundred sixty thousand guests a year. So, one auditor doesn't, isn't fairly insignificant when it comes to an audit, and what I appreciate is really important. What's more important is the other three engaged fifty nine thousand guests that could walk through the door. So, when you look at the occupancy levels, which are extremely high, it's really about getting those customers. It's the bread and butter, people coming through the door. That is really what you want. I'm trying to get the repeat customer there, you know, ideally families because if, you if you look at it from a long term perspective, the younger you get people through the door and the better you make their journey and their experience, the more likely are they are going to come back and use you when they're older. So, that sounds as it's a long term game and some people don't necessarily see that. So the more happy you make the families, the more likelihood that they will use these Park Plaza, not necessary Westminster Bridge, but the brand or Park Plaza Radisson.

00:04:32

Marliek van den Belt: Ah, that is very interesting. I haven't realised that is what you are aiming for if I can be completely honest. My thesis is focusing on family leisure and what you're saying is actually very interesting. Also, because I have never really seen it from this perspective. So, keeping families happy as well, because, of course, what you already mention, the children are coming and they can come back when they're older. Also, your point about the audit I do understand. It's just one auditor, and that's actually, it's not statistically valid to the whole group.

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Ross Paton: Yeah, it's not truly reflective. And if you remember, if you can remember and say you can't. But if you remember the holiday you had the first holiday, the first time you went to a hotel, maybe you can, maybe you can't. Some people most people can remember that. They go, usually for a special occasion, and there may be a treat, maybe a family wedding. You know, you'd formally remember the first hotel. I always remember, the first hotel I ever went to was with my grandfather and it was a special lunch and it was, you know, so I was only about eight or seven or eight, I think. But, you know, I had to dress up smart. We all had to dress up smart. These are all very, you know, it's not necessary the same these days. But again, if you can make the experience of that person, the child, as much as the family, special they'll likely go to rememberer and want to come back. And, you know, and it's about the return customer that makes business what it is.

00:05:55

Mariek van den Belt: Yes, exactly. And what do you then have in place to actually make this experience and increase, or stabilise the guest satisfaction in the hotel? Do you have special operations in place?

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Ross Paton: Yeah, in terms from what I have experienced so far in terms of how we said, this is really about the planning and making sure that everything is there in terms of the decor around themed events, be at Christmas, Easter, any other special occasion. Outside of that, it is a Westminster Park Plaza experience primarily in terms of making sure the customer service from start to finish is, you know, standpoints in terms of Park Plaza moments. Because of the iconic view from the front lobby or you know, whatever the theming is in the lobby, which helps. But again, it's really about the experience and it should be first class from start to finish. Big smile, big welcoming smile on arrival and a big welcoming wave, goodbye on departure. And in between that, it's every interaction, every customer interaction there is with every member of staff, because that will make the difference. And if you can, you know, sometimes people may have an issue and that's all good. You know, that happens because every day we are dealing with different people all the time. But if you can make them, if you can resolve it fairly quickly, be whatever or deliver over and above what they're expecting in terms of resolving the issue, then the likelihood is they're going to give you a far better response.

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Mariek van den Belt: And do you then also have, um, training in place for staff members to make it extra special or do they have to act within certain brand standards, or how does that work?

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Ross Paton: Certainly there's brand standards. Radisson and Park Plaza and the idea is really that is to standardise it, but also really allow people to go above and beyond to make that difference. Be it by sweets, be it a little gift to the children. But again, it's about, it's about the experience which is what we need to make really special. And again, it's about balancing it because we need to think about everybody at the same time. You know, someone's had an issue, we need to resolve it as quickly as possible. If they haven't, it's about that big smile making them feel very welcome. Because, you know, the percentage of people from the U.K. they've ever stayed in hotel is fairly, maybe 40 or 50 percent. So for those people coming to London, you may be surprised they've never been in a hotel, or hotel or the style standard or whatever of so large, centrally located. So it's about, sometimes they're in or sometimes it's about making it feel comfortable. So, yes, as a myriad of different opportunities to wow them, to make them happy.

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Mariek van den Belt: So what I am hearing in your answer is that is all about helpfulness, willingness to help the customers quickly, on time, friendliness. Ehm, really the 'experience package' you are aiming for?

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Ross Paton: Yeah, and again, I say it's the welcome. It's about the friendliness, the hospitality. You know, this is why we're in a hospitality business. People come because they want to experience a different side in terms of different. ehm,

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Ross Paton: they want to enjoy the experience. And certainly, I try and relate it in such a way that if the money you are spending to stay in the hotel, if you are spending what some people pay to stay in this hotel, how would you feel and what would you like as part of that experience? So if it's 150 pounds, what would you expect? Certainly, I would expect someone to smile at me welcoming me and, you know, try and explain everything to me and make me feel very welcome. And I don't think I'm any different to anybody else. Well, I know I am not, so, haha.

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Ross Paton: No, I don't think so. I think the COVID-19 will be interesting once we have the opportunity to fully re-open while the NHS has been good for us. Again, it's a limited market and that we're providing a service for the NHS rather individuals, while we do look after individuals. So but, yes, once we reopen, it will give us a better perspective on how we are and how we're delivering things. But yeah, I'm always looking for new opportunities. I'm always looking for, I don't think we should sit still. I think we should look at what we can do differently. And it's about challenging ourselves to offer more, do more, see where we can deliver that service. I think your thesis is great. I welcome the opportunity to see and I think what you've done so far is fantastic. So I look forward to seeing the rest of it and I wish you the best with the rest of the project.

00:17:09
Ross Paton: No, I don't think so. I think the COVID-19 will be interesting once we have the opportunity to fully re-open while the NHS has been good for us. Again, it's a limited market and that we're providing a service for the NHS rather individuals, while we do look after individuals. So but, yes, once we reopen, it will give us a better perspective on how we are and how we're delivering things. But yeah, I'm always looking for new opportunities. I'm always looking for, I don't think we should sit still. I think we should look at what we can do differently. And it's about challenging ourselves to offer more, do more, see where we can deliver that service. I think your thesis is great. I welcome the opportunity to see and I think what you've done so far is fantastic. So I look forward to seeing the rest of it and I wish you the best with the rest of the project.

00:17:53
Mariek van den Belt: Ah, thank you so much. I very appreciate your words and I really hope I can 'help' a bit as well, because, of course, what I mentioned to you and to Suat as well, my thesis supposed to be very different. I would, I supposed to focus on guest experience, like, only guest experience. But now, because with all the recent developments the thesis is more shifting to guest satisfaction, ehm in the past, but also now looking forward to the future, what are the wishes and needs of guest when returning back to travelling. I really hope that I can shape an advise. It won't be a big advice, but something I can help you with and hopefully it will be interesting to read. So yes, I really hope that we're all going to be fine. Do you have any questions for me so far?

00:18:34
Ross Paton: No, not at all. But if you want anymore feedback or more, you want to collaborate or talk about stuff in the future in the next few weeks, you know where we are and we are more than happy to help.

00:18:43
Mariek van den Belt: Ah, again, thank you very much. That was actually what I wanted to ask, if I still may approach you because I already have approached you on several occasions. I don't want to be a burden in these hectic times, of course.

00:18:52
Ross Paton: Of course, of course you can. Anytime you wanna drop me an email about anything or whatever. Feel free. You're more than welcome and you're always welcome here.

00:18:58
Mariek van den Belt: Ah, thank you so, so much. It really is much appreciated. Thank you very much for your time and help today!

00:19:02
Ross Paton: Pleasure. Well, take care and enjoy your weekend! All the best. Bye!

Managing guest satisfaction

Managing guest satisfaction

Managing guest satisfaction

Managing guest satisfaction

PPWL guest characteristics

PPWL guest characteristics

Managing guest satisfaction

Managing guest satisfaction

COVID-19

COVID-19 satisfaction change

COVID-19 satisfaction change

COVID-19 management respo...

COVID-19 management respo...

COVID-19 management respo...

Managing guest satisfaction

Managing guest satisfaction

Appendix XIX: Code table

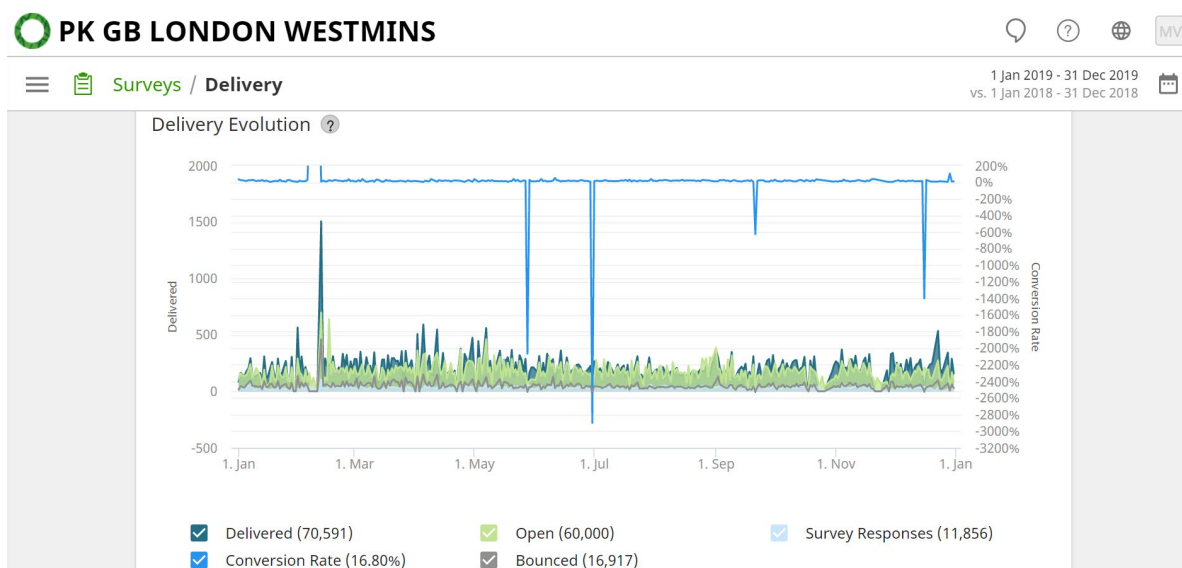
Axial code	Open code
Respondent data	Ross Paton Hotel Manager at Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London since December, 2019. Period of 6 months
PPWL characteristics	Large hotel Thousands rooms Variation of volume Historically aim from Meeting & Events business Majority of Meeting and Events business during September through December Family business during school holidays 50/50 corporate versus families Extremely high occupancy levels Trying to get the repeat customer – ideally families It is about the return customer, that is what the business wants Centrally located
Organisational characteristics	Friendly environment Smaller business (than Marriott) Head offices across the road Family feeling
PPWL guest characteristics	Business, events and leisure guests Families Some cultures prefer a very direct approach Some cultures prefer a very friendly approach Families tend to put more information on the survey than corporate guests
PPWL guest satisfaction perception	All guests have different needs and perceptions The younger you get people through the door and better make their experience, the more likely they are to come back when they are older If you can make the experience of the person, or child, as much as the family special, they'll likely to go remember and want to come back First class from start to finish Big smile, big welcoming smile on arrival and welcoming wave at departure – in between that, every customer interaction with a member of staff needs to make a difference Allow staff to go above and beyond to make the difference Need to "wauw" guests It's about the welcome Friendliness Hospitality Expect staff to smile Explain everything Guest needs to feel very welcome
Managing guest satisfaction	Hotel audit – one auditor is fairly insignificant – not truly reflective Planning and making sure that everything is there in terms of decor around themes events Customer service from start to finish Standpoints in term of Park Plaza moments Resolving issues fairly quickly Deliver over and above what the guests are expecting in

	<p>terms of resolving issues</p> <p>Brand standards – to standardise</p> <p>Sweets, a little gift to children</p> <p>Balancing – need to think about everybody at the same time</p> <p>Making guests feel comfortable</p> <p>How would you feel?</p> <p>What would you like as part of the experience?</p> <p>What would you expect? (from the paid rate)</p> <p>Guest survey</p> <p>Constantly trying to improve the offering we have and getting customer feedback</p> <p>We could going forward; we could try and adapt a little bit more, so it becomes more personable (guest survey)</p> <p>Guest survey still quite laborious; to have them a bit shorter, snappier and actually an element of fun in which might garner more responses</p> <p>People usually fill in a survey if they got something to say; usually from a negative perspective</p> <p>Lot more positive feedback then we do negative, we just don't capture it on emails or surveys; time consuming</p> <p>Capture guest feedback; don't use it as well as we should at the moment</p>
Managing dissatisfaction	<p>Guest Relations Team – kind of stop gap – to help and support the hotel team; is trying to resolve any particular challenges</p> <p>Departmental Manager → Hotel Manager → General Manager (accommodate and to resolve and support across the place)</p> <p>Help to educate (the guests)</p> <p>Look at anything that comes from a customer</p> <p>Sometimes, if you are aware what they are looking for, you can circumnavigate it (comes with experience)</p> <p>The majority is fine, there's the odd occasion, and it's rare. Minority rather than majority</p> <p>No guidelines set, varies so much; it is nothing set in stone</p>
Guest experience	<p>Special occasion (treat/family wedding)</p> <p>Westminster Park Plaza Experience</p> <p>Icon view from the lobby</p> <p>Theming (in the lobby)</p> <p>Need to make the experience really special</p> <p>Fairly 40 – 50% of UK residents have stayed in a hotel before</p>
COVID-19 guest satisfaction changes	<p>I think people will be a lot more critical</p> <p>It depends on the rate: when the rate is high and the guests do not have as many amenities in the room, they will be more critical</p> <p>Cleanliness will be certainly very high on everybody's agenda – will scored politically more harsh</p>
COVID-19 management response	<p>Understanding where the climate going forward</p> <p>Little bit more pre-emptive work with clients; either based on the Radisson information; when guest have stayed in China, what the results have been</p> <p>I am not sure if we are ahead of the game at the moment</p> <p>No, I am not worried: Looking forward to the opportunity and it will be very good to see how it comes through (hotel re-opening)</p> <p>It is about adapting to it; understanding it; seeing where we can make inroads</p>



	<p>Got to try and stay ahead of the competition It is all about delivering the basics; keeping customers happy, making the right type of service delivery Offering big smile on arrival and departure Always looking for new opportunities; not sitting still Challenging ourselves to offer more, do more</p>
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Appendix XX :Survey responses ReviewPro



Appendix XXI: Leisure focus

2 And Visit's Reason

Leisure - Family stay X Leisure - Romantic stay X Leisure - Group X

Other Leisure stay X

Cancel Apply

8,195 / 11,856 Responses

Cancel

Appendix XXII: Specified ReviewPro survey questions

<input type="checkbox"/> All Questions		
<input type="checkbox"/> Recommend?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Visit's Reason	<input type="checkbox"/> Overall
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Welcome	<input type="checkbox"/> Room	<input type="checkbox"/> Bathroom
<input type="checkbox"/> Sleeping	<input type="checkbox"/> Service Housekeeping	<input type="checkbox"/> Hotel Cleanliness
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Farewell	<input type="checkbox"/> Value	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Breakfast
<input type="checkbox"/> Atrium Executive Lounge	<input type="checkbox"/> Ichi Sushi & Sashimi Bar	<input type="checkbox"/> Brasserie Joel
<input type="checkbox"/> espressamente illy coffee shop	<input type="checkbox"/> Primo Bar	<input type="checkbox"/> Service F&D
<input type="checkbox"/> Self Parking	<input type="checkbox"/> Internet	<input type="checkbox"/> Fitness Center
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Business Center	<input type="checkbox"/> Pool	<input type="checkbox"/> Valet Parking
<input type="checkbox"/> Radisson Rewards - Invited to join?	<input type="checkbox"/> Radisson Rewards Members - recognised?	<input type="checkbox"/> Radisson Rewards Members - benefits received?
<input type="checkbox"/> Elite Room?	<input type="checkbox"/> Welcome gift?	<input type="checkbox"/> Free breakfast?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Exceptional Service: Comments	<input type="checkbox"/> Problem?
<input type="checkbox"/> Improvements comments	<input type="checkbox"/> Responsible Business	<input type="checkbox"/> Gender
<input type="checkbox"/> Age		

Appendix XXIII: Online Questionnaire



The economy has increasingly moved from a service economy to an experience economy. The focus is no longer on what organisations deliver, but how they deliver their services. With recent developments relating to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Hospitality & Tourism industry on hold it becomes even more important to focus on how organisations are delivering their services and understanding the customer's perspective on what makes them satisfied, when returning back to travelling.

The following questionnaire is developed for my thesis project, which is focussing on 'Guest satisfaction of hotel leisure guests through specific touchpoints (areas) of the Customer Journey'.

The questionnaire aims to understand guest needs and expectations of a hotel visit after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Your answers will be used for educational purposes and will be anonymous. Completing this questionnaire will only take 5 to 8 minutes.

Thank you for your time and responses.

General Questions

I am a:

Female

Male

Prefer not to say

What is the main reason for a hotel visit?

Family leisure stay

Romantic leisure stay

Other leisure stay

To what age group do you belong?

18 - 24 years

25 - 34 years

35 - 44 years

45 - 54 years

55 - 64 years

65+

On average, how many times do you stay in a hotel per year?

0 - 1 time

2 - 3 times

4 - 6 times

More than 6 times

Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements regarding **Pre-Stay**.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I will do research to see if the hotel has new safety measures in place before booking the accommodation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would be dissatisfied when arriving in the hotel and there are MORE safety measures in place then was stated online/via phone.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



If doing research, I will research the information by:

Online sources (hotel website e.g.)

Phoning the hotel directly

Email the hotel

How important do you consider ... during the Check-In progress?

	Not at all important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important	Extremely important
Efficiency	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Friendliness of staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Information provided	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Professionalism of staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Early check-in available	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Short waiting time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visible protective shields on check-in desk	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Displayed signages expressing new measures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate to what extent you agree relating **Check-In Area**.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I would be prepared to pay for an early check-in when the check-in time is 3pm.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would not mind if the check-in process takes longer than previous experiences of checking-in due to increased guidance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



What would you be willing to pay for an early check-in? (in pounds)

I would make use of:

Online check-in

Check-in at Reception Desk

Not sure

I would understand if the hotel starts working with check-in time slots, with limited spaces available. Even this means that there is a possibility that I cannot go straight to the hotel after arrival at the destination.

Disagree

Maybe

Agree

If the hotel of my choice is working with check-in time slots, my preference would be:

The hotel provides the check-in time (via email e.g.)

I would like to book a time slot myself

The maximum waiting time for check-in would be:

0 - 5 minutes

5 - 10 minutes

10 - 15 minutes

Longer than 15 minutes

Please indicate to what extent you agree with the statements relating to **Concierge Area**.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
A 4-star hotel needs to continue with bringing and collecting luggage to the guests' room.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

When I expect a delivery (parcel/letter) to the hotel, then:

The concierge needs to deliver this to my room

I will collect it from the Concierge Desk

No preference

The information Concierge provides (surroundings and attraction e.g.) I would like to receive by:

Paper brochure

Email

No preference

Are there any other factors important relating the Concierge Team? (After COVID-19)



In general, when booking a hotel visit would you make use of the breakfast offered in the hotel?

Disagree

Maybe

Agree

What statement describes you best?

I would make use of Room Service only

I would make use of Breakfast in the restaurant only

It would depend per day

The time slots for consuming breakfast should take:

0 - 15 minutes

15 - 30 minutes

30 - 45 minutes

45 - 60 minutes

1 hour or longer

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Guest should avoid handling food at all times. A staff member must serve the breakfast.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would be prepared to wait longer than during past experiences for food because of new measures relating to the current circumstances.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would be satisfied when the hotel offers a 'Take Away' breakfast option.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Breakfast should be pre-booked to accommodate safe seating and distancing. Even if this may result in my preferred time slot not being available.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

For the check-out I would make use of:

Checking out at the Reception Desk (face-to-face)

Via a key 'drop-off' point

No preference

In case there is an outstanding bill I would prefer to check-out

In the room (via TV e.g.)

At the Reception Desk

I prefer the invoice to be provided:

On paper

By email

I do not need an invoice

At the moment, the '**Guest Services Team**' provides assistance to the guest by telephone (external and internal). For internal phone calls the team will answer requests for Housekeeping (sending towels, toiletries e.g.), Engineering (defects in the room), Reception (late check-out), Concierge (requesting luggage porter) and Room Service (taking orders).

What would be your expectations of the role of the **Guest Services Team** when the hotel 're-opens' after the COVID-19 period?

To what extent do you agree with the following statements relating to **General Hotel Principles**?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Card payments should be the only payment option through the whole hotel.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The etiquette (holding doors, taking bags e.g.) still needs to remain in a 4-star hotel.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Which statement describes you best relating protection materials (gloves, mask e.g.)?

☐ I expect protection materials be provided by the hotel, free of charge

☐ Guests need to bring their own protection materials when they would to use those

How much would you be willing to pay for protection materials? (in pounds)



Thank you for your time spent taking this survey.
Your response has been recorded.

Please stay safe and healthy.

Appendix XXV: Gender

I am a:					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	142	68,9	69,6	69,6
	Male	62	30,1	30,4	100,0
	Total	204	99,0	100,0	
Missing	System	2	1,0		
Total		206	100,0		

Appendix XXVI: Age group

To what age group do you belong?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18 - 24 years	64	31,1	31,4	31,4
	25 - 34 years	94	45,6	46,1	77,5
	35 - 44 years	23	11,2	11,3	88,7
	45 - 54 years	14	6,8	6,9	95,6
	55 - 64 years	8	3,9	3,9	99,5
	65+	1	,5	,5	100,0
	Total	204	99,0	100,0	
Missing	System	2	1,0		
Total		206	100,0		

Appendix XXVII: Reason for a hotel visit

What is the main reason for a hotel visit?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Family leisure stay	51	24,8	25,0	25,0
	Romantic leisure stay	77	37,4	37,7	62,7
	Other leisure stay	76	36,9	37,3	100,0
	Total	204	99,0	100,0	
Missing	System	2	1,0		
Total		206	100,0		

Appendix XXVIII: 'Pre-stay'

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements regarding Pre-Stay. - I will do research to see if the hotel has new safety measures in place before booking the accommodation.	191	4,44	1,785
Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements regarding Pre-Stay. - I would be dissatisfied when arriving in the hotel and there are MORE safety measures in place then was stated online/via phone.	187	3,45	1,760
Valid N (listwise)	187		

Appendix XXIX: Doing research

If doing research, I will research the information by:

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Online sources (hotel website e.g.)	176	85,4	92,6	92,6
	Phoning the hotel directly	5	2,4	2,6	95,3
	Email the hotel	9	4,4	4,7	100,0
	Total	190	92,2	100,0	
Missing	System	16	7,8		
Total		206	100,0		

Appendix XXX: Welcome and Check-in

Welcome & Check-In

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
How important do you consider ... during the Check-In progress? - Friendliness of staff	182	4,42	,641
How important do you consider ... during the Check-In progress? - Professionalism of staff	182	4,12	,679
How important do you consider ... during the Check-In progress? - Efficiency	184	3,98	,750
How important do you consider ... during the Check-In progress? - Information provided	182	3,96	,692
How important do you consider ... during the Check-In progress? - Short waiting time	183	3,48	,889
How important do you consider ... during the Check-In progress? - Displayed signage expressing new measures	183	3,37	1,061
How important do you consider ... during the Check-In progress? - Early check-in available	183	2,98	1,084
How important do you consider ... during the Check-In progress? - Visible protective shields on check-in desk	182	2,98	1,082
Valid N (listwise)	179		

Appendix XXXI: Check-in preference

I would make use of:

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Online check-in	122	59,2	68,2	68,2
	Check-in at Reception Desk	45	21,8	25,1	93,3
	Not sure	12	5,8	6,7	100,0
	Total	179	86,9	100,0	
Missing	System	27	13,1		
Total		206	100,0		

Appendix XXXII: Check-in time slots

If the hotel of my choice is working with check-in time slots, my preference would be:

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	The hotel provides the check-in time (via email e.g.)	18	8,7	10,1	10,1
	I would like to book a time slot myself	161	78,2	89,9	100,0
	Total	179	86,9	100,0	
Missing	System	27	13,1		
Total		206	100,0		

Appendix XXXIII: Maximum check-in waiting time

The maximum waiting time for check-in would be:

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0 - 5 minutes	24	11,7	13,3	13,3
	5 - 10 minutes	87	42,2	48,3	61,7
	10 - 15 minutes	58	28,2	32,2	93,9
	Longer than 15 minutes	11	5,3	6,1	100,0
	Total	180	87,4	100,0	
Missing	System	26	12,6		
Total		206	100,0		

Appendix XXXIV: Perception of check-in time slots

I would understand if the hotel starts working with check-in time slots, with limited spaces available. Even this means that there is a possibility that I cannot go straight to the hotel after arrival at the destination.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	42	20,4	23,3	23,3
	Maybe	64	31,1	35,6	58,9
	Agree	74	35,9	41,1	100,0
	Total	180	87,4	100,0	
Missing	System	26	12,6		
Total		206	100,0		

Appendix XXXV: Waiting time & early check-in payment

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Please indicate to what extent you agree relating Check-In Area. - I would not mind if the check-in process takes longer than previous experiences of checking-in due to increased guidance.	182	5,13	1,344
Please indicate to what extent you agree relating Check-In Area. - I would be prepared to pay for an early check-in when the check-in time is 3pm.	184	3,56	1,668
Valid N (listwise)	182		

Appendix XXXVI: Average price early check-in

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
What would you be willing to pay for an early check-in? (in pounds)	116	13,36	17,038
Valid N (listwise)	116		

Appendix XXXVII: Breakfast time slots

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
The time slots for consuming breakfast should take:	177	2,92	,779
Valid N (listwise)	177		

Appendix XXXVIII: Check-out preference

For the check-out I would make use of:

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Checking out at the Reception Desk (face-to-face)	21	10,2	12,1	12,1
	Via a key 'drop-off' point	111	53,9	64,2	76,3
	No preference	41	19,9	23,7	100,0
	Total	173	84,0	100,0	
Missing	System	33	16,0		
Total		206	100,0		

Appendix XXXIX: Statements Breakfast Area

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements relating to Breakfast Area. - I would be satisfied when the hotel offers a 'Take Away' breakfast option.	175	5,53	1,426
Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements relating to Breakfast Area. - I would be prepared to wait longer than during past experiences for food because of new measures relating to the current circumstances.	173	5,32	1,161
Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements relating to Breakfast Area. - Breakfast should be pre-booked to accommodate safe seating and distancing. Even if this may result in my preferred time slot not being available.	174	5,22	1,489
Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements relating to Breakfast Area. - Guest should avoid handling food at all times. A staff member must serve the breakfast.	175	4,81	1,690
Valid N (listwise)	173		

Appendix XL: Check-out preference

For the check-out I would make use of:

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Checking out at the Reception Desk (face-to-face)	21	10,2	12,1	12,1
	Via a key 'drop-off' point	111	53,9	64,2	76,3
	No preference	41	19,9	23,7	100,0
	Total	173	84,0	100,0	
Missing	System	33	16,0		
Total		206	100,0		

Appendix XLI: Outstanding bill payment preference

In case there is an outstanding bill I would prefer to check-out

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	In the room (via TV e.g.)	53	25,7	30,6	30,6
	At the Reception Desk	120	58,3	69,4	100,0
	Total	173	84,0	100,0	
Missing	System	33	16,0		
Total		206	100,0		

Appendix XLII: Invoice preference

I prefer the invoice to be provided:

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	On paper	13	6,3	7,5	7,5
	By email	140	68,0	80,9	88,4
	I do not need an invoice	20	9,7	11,6	100,0
	Total	173	84,0	100,0	
Missing	System	33	16,0		
Total		206	100,0		

Appendix XLIII: General Hotel Principles

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
To what extent do you agree with the following statements relating to General Hotel Principles? - Card payments should be the only payment option through the whole hotel.	172	5,12	1,641
To what extent do you agree with the following statements relating to General Hotel Principles? - The etiquette (holding doors, taking bags e.g.) still needs to remain in a 4-star hotel.	170	4,15	1,639
Valid N (listwise)	170		

Appendix XLIV: PPE Materials

Which statement describes you best relating protection materials (gloves, mask e.g.)?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I expect protection materials be provided by the hotel, free of charge	88	42,7	53,7	53,7
	Guests need to bring their own protection materials when they would to use those	76	36,9	46,3	100,0
	Total	164	79,6	100,0	
Missing	System	42	20,4		
Total		206	100,0		

Appendix XLV: Average payment PPE Materials

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
How much would you be willing to pay for protection materials? (in pounds)	111	7,06	7,401
Valid N (listwise)	111		

Appendix XLVI: Specified average costs PPE Materials

How much would you be willing to pay for protection materials?
(in pounds)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	20	9,7	18,0	18,0
	0	1	,5	,9	18,9
	0	1	,5	,9	19,8
	0	1	,5	,9	20,7
	1	4	1,9	3,6	24,3
	2	4	1,9	3,6	27,9
	3	3	1,5	2,7	30,6
	4	1	,5	,9	31,5
	5	30	14,6	27,0	58,6
	7	2	1,0	1,8	60,4
	8	2	1,0	1,8	62,2
	9	2	1,0	1,8	64,0
	10	29	14,1	26,1	90,1
	15	2	1,0	1,8	91,9
	20	5	2,4	4,5	96,4
	30	2	1,0	1,8	98,2
	40	2	1,0	1,8	100,0
	Total	111	53,9	100,0	
Missing	System	95	46,1		
Total		206	100,0		

Appendix XLVII: Maslow Pyramid



Image XLVII: Reprinted from: *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*. McLoad (2007).

Appendix XLVIII: PDCA-cycle

Plan: During this phase, goals are identified and work delegated. Likewise, a clear action plan need to be documented.

Do: In the do-phase, the plan is implemented. The plan may not be perfect yet and therefore data is collected and will be analysed in the act phase. the process is executed and the product is made. Also, data is collected to chart and analyse the check and act phase.

Check: The check-phase is there to analyse the results and to compare these to the expected results. When problems occur, the '5-why' need to be asked.

Act: If the check-phase shows improvements, these improvements will be become the new standard. If there are no improvements located, the 'old standard' will remain.

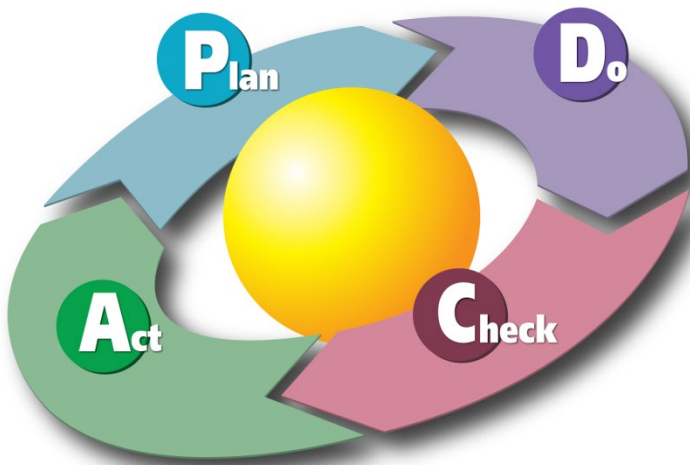


Image XLVIII: Reprinted from: *Taking the First Steps with the PDCA-cycle*. Bulsuk (2009)

Appendix XLIX: Key financial statistics

Key financial statistics

	Reported in GBP (£)		Like-for-like GBP ¹ (£)	
	Year ended 31 December 2019	Year ended 31 December 2018	Year ended 31 December 2019	Year ended 31 December 2018
Total revenue	£357.7 million	£341.5 million	£355.8 million	£338.3 million
EBITDAR	£124.7 million	£120.7 million	£124.2 million	£120.3 million
EBITDA	£122.9 million	£113.2 million	£117.4 million	£113.6 million
EBITDA margin	34.4%	33.1%	33.0%	33.6%
Reported PBT	£38.5 million	£46.4 million	-	-
Normalised PBT	£40.7 million	£37.7 million	-	-
Reported EPS	80p	90p	-	-
Dividend per share	37p	35p	-	-
Occupancy	80.6%	79.4%	80.7%	79.4%
Average room rate	£128.5	£123.1	£128.5	£124.3
RevPAR	£103.6	£97.7	£103.7	£98.7
Room revenue	£250.6 million	£236.6 million	£249.1 million	£234.3 million
EPRA NAV per share	£25.46	£24.57	-	-
Adjusted EPRA earnings per share	128p	115p	-	-

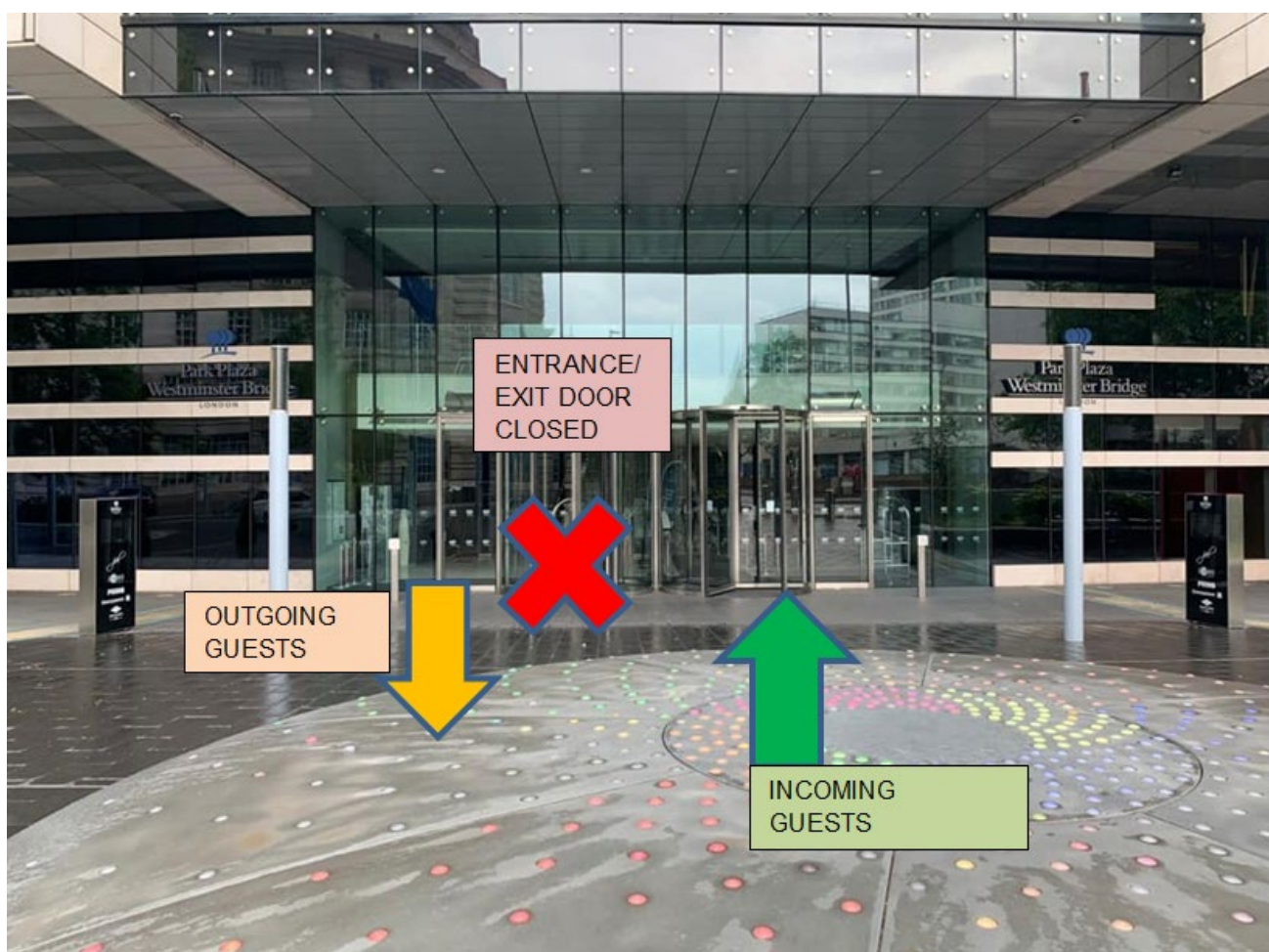
¹ The like-for-like comparison for 2019 excludes the influence of IFRS 16, which was issued in January 2016 and applies to annual reporting periods beginning on or after 1 January 2019. Furthermore, the like-for-like figures for the year ended December 2019 exclude the operation of Park Plaza Vondelpark, Amsterdam from August to December (the property was temporarily closed for renovations during this period in 2018). The like-for-like figures for the year ended December 2018 exclude the first three months of operation for Park Plaza Vondelpark, Amsterdam (the property was temporarily closed for renovations during this period in 2019). Furthermore, the like-for-like figures for the year ended December 2018 exclude the operation of artotel Dresden (the lease of which was terminated on 31 July 2018).

Appendix L: Perception of breakfast usage

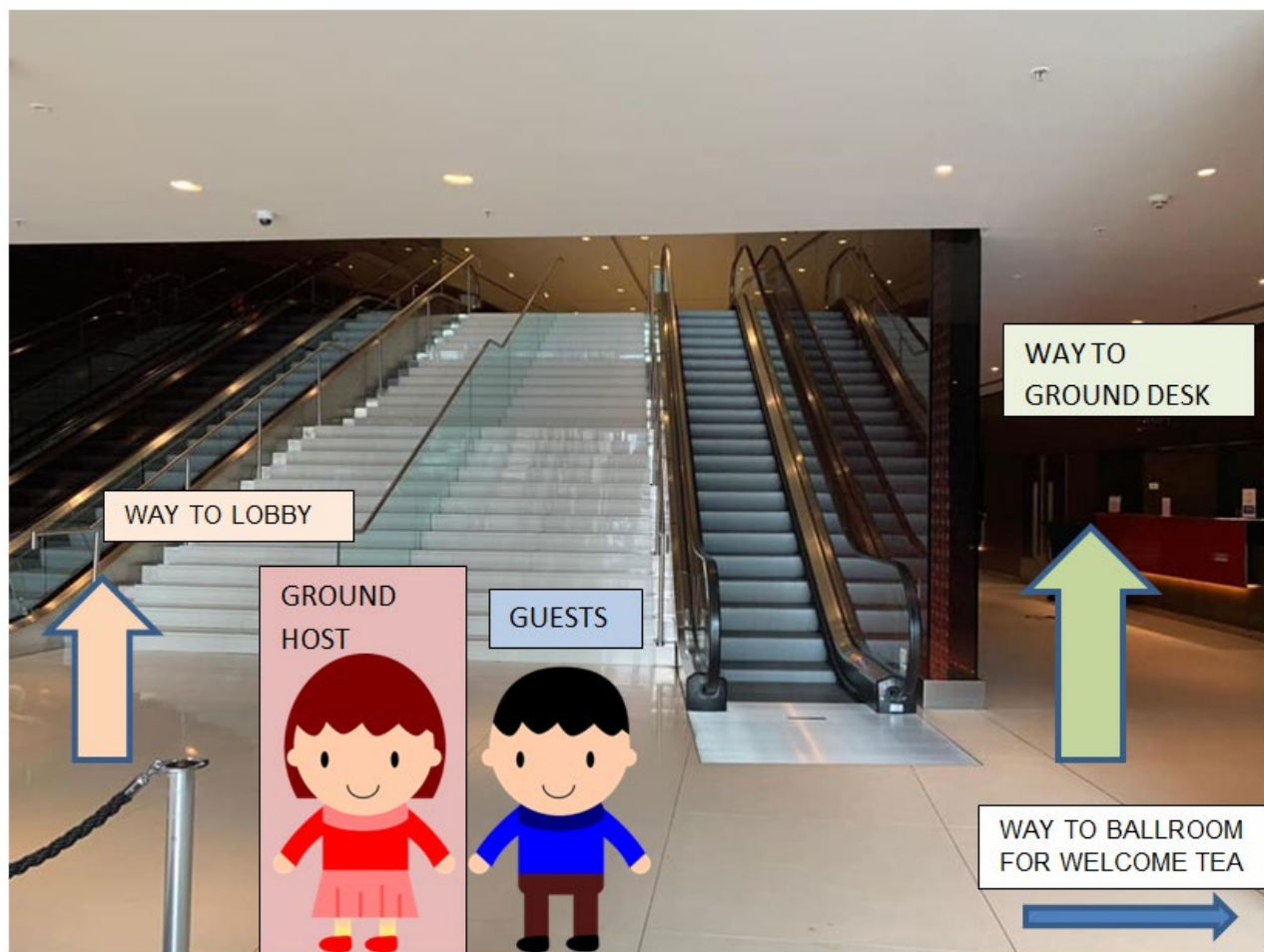
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
In general, when booking a hotel visit would you make use of the breakfast offered in the hotel?	177	1	3	2,66	,584
Valid N (listwise)	177				

Appendix LI: Visualisation entrance outside



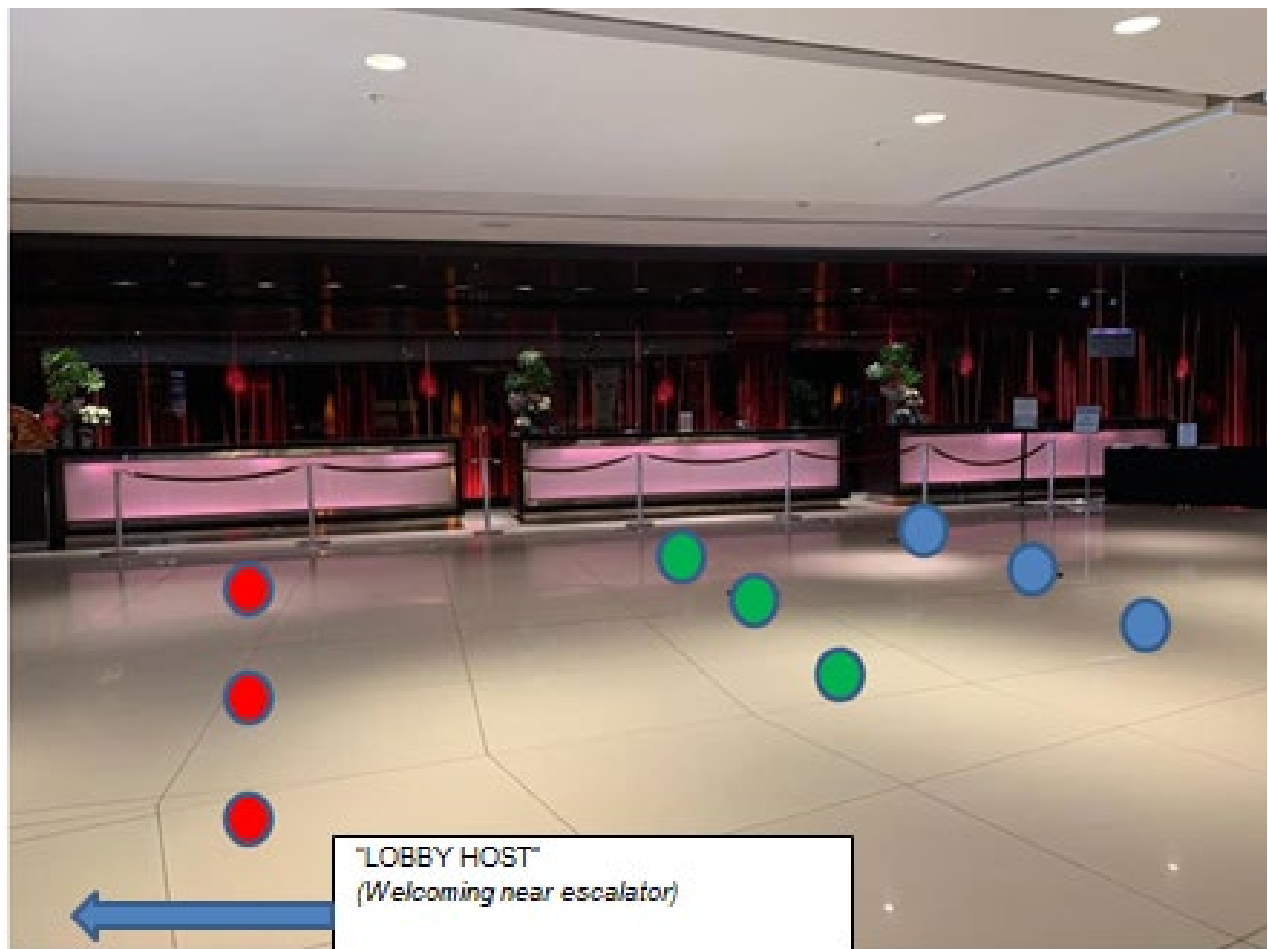
Appendix LII: Visualisation check-in



Appendix LIII: Visualisation ground desk and exit route



Appendix LIV: Visualisation Check-in stickers



Appendix LV: Detailed check-in and out route

Reception - “Welcome & Check-in”

The majority of questionnaire respondents would like to have an online check-in available as this may shorten the queue and waiting time, however the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London is currently not working with an online check-in system. Due to the time limitations before the re-opening of the hotel, it is important to create a check-in system that is as efficient as possible.

To create an efficient and safe check-in environment, it is advised to work with a “check-in route” (appendix LI). The lobby will have coloured floor stickers in front of the check-in desks (appendix LIV). When entering the hotel, the guests will walk over a red carpet, increasing the guest experience through the connotations surrounding red carpets, before being welcomed by the “Ground host”. This host will be working closely with the staff member upstairs in the lobby: the ‘Lobby host’ and they will be communicating via a radio. The ‘Lobby host’s’ main tasks are: providing information on the availability of check-in ‘spots’ and communicating this information to the ‘Ground host’, providing information to the ‘Ground host’ which check-in colour (sticker) are available and how many ‘bubbles’ (individuals that belong to the same check-in) can come upstairs. When the Lobby has reached full capacity and no check-in colours are available, the “Ground host” will send the guest to the check-in desk at ground level (appendix LIII). This is to shorten waiting times and to improve the guests’ mood (Alsumait, 2015). The main task for the ‘Ground host’ is guest interaction and clear (guest) communication. In addition, it is important to work with time slots or providing the possibility of a friendly welcome once both check-in desks have reached full capacity. The ‘Ballroom’ can be set up for an ‘English welcome tea’ when the guest has to wait to check-in: with scones and tea, both served in/on recycled paper tableware.

Furthermore, during unprecedented times it is essential to provide a ‘first class’ service: “Friendliness, “Understanding” and “Personal experience” are the key factors. This will be reached through a personal room television message: a personalised message by each individual reception staff member. When the guests leaves the check-in desk, the staff member will adjust the template with the guest first name and/or specific details such of ‘I am sorry to hear that your flight was delayed’ and will send it via the check-in system to the room. When the guest will enter the room, a personal message, from the staff member they just have spoken to welcomes them. This increases the ‘friendliness and demonstrates empathy for the guest’s situation. The Hotel Management will not have to worry since the majority of questionnaire respondents highlighted that waiting between 5-10 minutes is acceptable for check-in.

Reception - “Farewell & Check-out”

Guests are advised to make use of the ‘key drop off point’, located at ground level. The Cloakroom is available for guests who prefer to check out ‘face-to-face’, for example when settling an invoice. Both items were prioritised by the majority of respondents.

“Overall safety measures”

The ‘safety route’ will be introduced: one door to enter and one door to exit the building. The aforementioned ‘Ground host’ will welcome arriving guests: guests checking-in are sent to the lobby or ground desk, before taking the ground elevators (walk alongside the Concierge Desk). Guests leaving the premises (checking-out or personal time) will take the elevator to ground level and will walk alongside the Cloakroom (appendix LIII). In both situations; the 13th, 14th and 15th floors which house the VIP guests are exceptions.

PPE materials are expected to be obtained by the guests before entering the hotel, however should the guests require, they can purchase a PPE material package during their check-in which would be valued at £7.

To reduce the contact between employees and guests, implementing card-only payments throughout the hotel will help ensure the safety of both parties. With cash payments removed, this will reduce the chances of virus transmission and increase the overall safety of guests and staff.

Appendix LVI: Detailed elaboration on 'ups'

Area	Aspect Thomassen (2007)	Explanation
Hotel cleanliness	Material	The material aspects are the physical and tangible matters. Cleanliness of the hotel or rooms belong to this aspect of Thomassen since "Cleanliness" is a physical matter.
Responsible Business	Reliability	Thomassen (2007) mentions that reliability is the compliance with agreements regarding the service and careful act of the organisation. The following statement is shown at the PPHE website: "At PPHE Hotel Group our aim is to deliver responsible business in everything we do and our Responsible Business Strategy helps us do this (PPHE, 2020)." Thus, a compliance regarding service of the organisation.
English	Ability	Ability is having the necessary knowledge and skills to provide the service. 'English' could be listed under 'Communication' as well however, Thomassen (2007) states that communication is keeping the customers informed and listening to the customers. English will therefore be listed under 'Ability' since speaking the language is a skill to provide the expected service.
Sleeping	Material (and service)	Same as 'Hotel Cleanliness', the material aspect are the physical and tangible matters. A good night of sleep belongs to the physical matter of Thomassen (2007).
United Kingdom		Destination is not linked to the hotel operations, but then can be linked to the 'Destination Identification', section 4.2.1.4. Within this paragraph, it was mentioned that Pine and Gilmore (2011) argue that guests are having the desire and need to experience, not just services or products and that tourism sells experiences (Oh et al., 2007).

Appendix LVII: Detailed Elaboration on ‘downs’

Area	Aspect	Explanation
Welcome & Check-in	Helpfulness, ability, friendliness, communication and understanding.	Helpfulness stands for the willingness of the Reception Team to help the customers quickly and on time (no long waiting lines) and ability for the necessary knowledge and skills to provide the service (for example work with the check-in system). Also, friendliness is the ability to address and treat the guests with the necessary courtesy and kindness (being friendly and hospitable), communication is related to listen to the guests and provide them with the correct information (providing guests with important hotel information) and finally, understanding is to empathise with the guests and understand, or want to know, their situation (for example when a guest has travelled many hours due to a delayed flight).
Staff	Material and Service	The physical matters of providing a suitable and sufficient service.
Food & Beverage	Safety (hygiene standards)	
Welcome & Farewell	Helpfulness, ability, friendliness, communication and understanding.	Helpfulness stands for the willingness of the Reception Team to help the customers quickly and on time (no long waiting lines) and ability for the necessary knowledge and skills to provide the service (work with the check-out system for example). Also, friendliness is the ability to address and treat the guests with the necessary courtesy and kindness (being friendly and hospitable), communication is related to listen to the guests and provide them with the correct information (providing guests with the correct invoice) and finally, understanding is to empathise with the guests and understand, or want to know, their situation (for example, when the guest did not have a pleasant stay).
Room	Material	The material aspect are the physical and tangible matters: a suitable and pleasant room