

Beyond Check-In and Check-Out: Reimagining Guest Journeys in the Experience-Driven Hotel Economy

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Abstract:

The contemporary hotel industry is undergoing a fundamental transformation, shifting from a service-centric model focused on check-in and check-out efficiency to an experience-driven paradigm that prioritizes holistic guest journeys. This study explores how hotels are reimagining guest experiences across pre-stay, on-stay, and post-stay touch points in response to evolving consumer expectations, digital disruption, and heightened competition. Moving beyond traditional operational metrics, the research emphasizes emotional engagement, personalization, and experiential value as critical determinants of guest satisfaction and loyalty. The paper examines the role of technology-enabled solutions, such as data analytics, artificial intelligence, and mobile platforms, in designing seamless and memorable guest journeys while maintaining human-centric service delivery. It further highlights the growing importance of experiential elements, including wellness offerings, sustainability practices, local cultural integration, and customized services, in shaping differentiated hospitality experiences. By adopting an experience-driven approach, hotels can enhance perceived value, strengthen brand relationships, and achieve long-term competitive advantage in a dynamic marketplace. The study contributes to hospitality management literature by conceptualizing guest journeys as strategic assets rather than isolated service encounters. The findings offer practical insights for hotel managers and policymakers to redesign service strategies that align operational excellence with experiential innovation, thereby redefining success in the modern hotel economy.

Keywords: *Guest Experience Management; Guest Journey Mapping; Experience-Driven Hospitality; Hotel Service Innovation; Customer Engagement; Experiential Value; Digital Transformation*

1. Introduction

The global hotel industry is increasingly shaped by an experience-driven economy in which value creation extends far beyond functional service delivery and transactional efficiency. Contemporary guests evaluate hospitality brands not merely on room quality or speed of check-in, but on the coherence and emotional resonance of their entire stay experience. This shift reflects broader changes in consumption patterns, where experiences are perceived as strategic differentiators and sources of competitive advantage. In this environment, guest satisfaction emerges from a sequence of interconnected encounters rather than isolated service moments. The hotel stay is thus conceptualized as

a journey comprising cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses across multiple touch points. Managing these interactions holistically has become critical as even minor friction points can disproportionately influence overall perceptions. Recent hospitality research emphasizes that positive and negative experiences often coexist within the same stay, reinforcing the need for journey-level analysis rather than single-episode evaluation (Zha et al., 2024). Consequently, hotels are required to adopt a systemic approach to guest experience design. The notion of moving “beyond check-in and check-out” underscores a paradigm shift toward experience architecture in hospitality management. Guest journeys now begin well before arrival through digital discovery, online reviews, booking interfaces, and pre-arrival communication that collectively shape expectations. During the stay, guests encounter a blend of physical environments, technological interfaces, and human interactions that continuously influence satisfaction. Post-stay engagement, including feedback solicitation and relationship management, further extends the experience beyond the physical property. These stages are not independent but interrelated, requiring alignment to ensure consistency and authenticity. Digitalization has intensified this interdependence by increasing transparency and guest empowerment. Studies on digital guest experience design suggest that value is maximized when the experience intended by hotel managers aligns with guests’ perceived experiences across all journey stages (Youssofi et al., 2024). Thus, effective journey imagination demands both technological integration and behavioral insight.

The growing managerial interest, academic research has traditionally examined hotel experiences in fragmented ways, often focusing on satisfaction, service quality, or loyalty as discrete constructs. Such approaches risk overlooking how guest evaluations evolve dynamically throughout the journey. Customer journey research highlights that emotions accumulate over time and that early-stage impressions can frame later evaluations. The communication plays an important role in the customer satisfaction in several fields (Gaikwad, 2021). In hotels, where stays involve repeated interactions across departments and time, this cumulative effect is particularly pronounced. Segment-specific expectations further complicate experience management, as business travelers, leisure tourists, and wellness seekers may interpret identical services differently. Emerging hospitality studies emphasize the importance of mapping the entire guest journey to identify critical moments that disproportionately shape outcomes (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). This holistic perspective enables hotels to prioritize strategic touch points rather than dispersing resources uniformly across all interactions. The experience-driven hotel economy is also being reshaped by the integration of artificial intelligence and smart service systems. AI-enabled concierge services, predictive personalization, and real-time assistance tools are increasingly embedded across guest journeys. These technologies promise efficiency gains and enhanced personalization, yet their strategic value depends on how well they support the overall experience narrative. Research on AI in service journeys indicates that intelligent systems are most effective when they complement, rather than replace, human empathy and judgment. Guests value convenience and personalization, but still expect authenticity and responsiveness from service staff. Conceptual work on AI concierge systems demonstrates their potential to coordinate service delivery across journey stages by anticipating needs and reducing effort at high-friction points (Liu et al., 2024). Therefore, technological adoption must be guided by experience strategy rather than operational convenience alone.

In order to realize the benefits of journey imagination, hotels must adopt advanced methods for measuring and managing guest experiences across time. Traditional post-stay surveys provide limited insight into real-time experience dynamics and often fail to capture critical touch points. Predictive analytics and machine learning offer opportunities to identify patterns, anticipate service failures, and optimize interventions throughout the guest journey. Recent empirical evidence shows that predictive

models can successfully forecast key touch point interactions in hotel journeys, enabling more targeted experience enhancements (Rodrigues et al., 2025). By viewing guest journeys as measurable and designable systems, hotels can shift from reactive service recovery to proactive experience orchestration. This study builds on this perspective by examining how hotels can strategically reimagine guest journeys to align experiential innovation with sustainable competitive advantage.

2. Background of Study

The hospitality industry has historically been grounded in standardized service delivery models that prioritized operational efficiency, consistency, and cost control. Traditional hotel performance indicators largely focused on occupancy rates, average daily rates, and revenue per available room, often overlooking experiential dimensions. However, changing consumer lifestyles, increased travel sophistication, and the proliferation of choice have altered how guests perceive value. Guests now compare hotels not only with direct competitors but also with alternative accommodation platforms and lifestyle brands. This shift has challenged hotels to move beyond functional service provision toward emotionally engaging experiences. Background research indicates that experiential value increasingly mediates the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty in hospitality contexts (Pine & Gilmore, 2019). As a result, hotels are compelled to conceptualize their role from accommodation providers to experience curators. The evolution of digital technologies has further transformed the background conditions under which hotel experiences are created and evaluated. Online travel agencies, review platforms, and social media have increased transparency and empowered guests with real-time information. Pre-stay digital interactions now shape expectations long before physical arrival, while post-stay reviews influence future demand. This environment has intensified competitive pressures and reduced tolerance for service failures. Research highlights that digitally mediated touch points significantly influence trust formation and perceived credibility of hotel brands (Gretzel et al., 2020). Consequently, guest experiences are no longer confined to the hotel premises but extend across digital and physical ecosystems. Understanding this expanded experiential context forms a critical background for studying guest journey imagination.

The guest expectations have diversified due to demographic shifts and changing travel motivations. Business travelers, leisure tourists, wellness seekers, and digital nomads exhibit distinct priorities and experiential needs. These variations complicate experience management, as standardized service scripts may fail to satisfy heterogeneous segments. Background studies suggest that experiential personalization has become a key determinant of perceived authenticity and satisfaction in hotels (Kandampully et al., 2021). Hotels are therefore required to design flexible experience frameworks that adapt to individual preferences while maintaining brand coherence. This segmentation-driven complexity underscores the importance of examining guest journeys holistically rather than through isolated service attributes. The growing emphasis on sustainability, well-being, and local cultural integration has also reshaped the experiential foundations of hospitality. Guests increasingly expect hotels to reflect responsible practices, meaningful community engagement, and wellness-oriented offerings. These expectations influence emotional connections with brands and long-term loyalty. Empirical research indicates that experiential sustainability initiatives positively affect guests' perceived value and brand attachment when integrated authentically into the service journey (Han et al., 2019). Thus, experiential value in hotels now encompasses ethical, social, and environmental dimensions alongside comfort and convenience. This broader understanding of experience forms an essential backdrop for examining contemporary guest journeys. Against this background, hotels are experimenting with advanced analytics and intelligent systems to manage complex guest journeys more effectively. Data-driven insights enable hotels to

anticipate needs, identify critical touch points, and intervene proactively. However, the strategic challenge lies in aligning technological capabilities with experiential goals. Studies on experience management caution that technology-driven initiatives must be guided by clear experience narratives to avoid fragmented or impersonal interactions (Klaus & Maklan, 2020). Therefore, the background of this study is shaped by converging forces of digitalization, personalization, sustainability, and experiential competition. These forces collectively justify the need to systematically examine how hotels can reimagine guest journeys in an experience-driven economy.

3. Scope and Significance of Study

The scope of the present study extends to a comprehensive examination of guest journeys within the contemporary experience-driven hotel economy. It encompasses the full continuum of the hospitality experience, including pre-stay decision-making, on-property service encounters, and post-stay engagement mechanisms. By adopting a journey-centric lens, the study moves beyond traditional service quality assessments to capture the dynamic and cumulative nature of guest experiences. The scope is not limited to a specific hotel category but is conceptually relevant to luxury, mid-scale and experiential hotel formats operating in competitive markets. It also considers both physical and digital touch points as integral components of the guest journey. This broad scope allows for a holistic understanding of how value is created, perceived, and sustained across different stages of interaction. Prior research underscores the importance of examining the entire customer journey to explain satisfaction and loyalty outcomes more accurately (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020). Accordingly, the study positions guest journey management as a strategic domain rather than an operational afterthought. From a theoretical standpoint, the study contributes to hospitality and service management literature by strengthening the conceptual integration between customer experience theory and customer journey research. While experience has often been treated as an outcome variable, this study frames it as an evolving process shaped by sequential encounters. The scope includes the analysis of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions of guest experiences, thereby offering a multidimensional perspective. This approach responds to calls in recent literature for deeper theorization of experience dynamics over time. By situating guest journeys within the broader experience economy framework, the study enhances explanatory power regarding how hotels differentiate themselves beyond price and amenities. Scholars argue that such process-oriented perspectives are essential for advancing customer experience research in complex service settings (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2019). Thus, the study holds significance in refining and extending existing theoretical models.

The study is also significant for hospitality practitioners, as it provides actionable insights into experience design and management. Its scope includes identifying critical touch points that disproportionately influence guest perceptions and behavioral intentions. By highlighting how experiences accumulate across stages, the study supports more informed resource allocation and service innovation decisions. Managers can use journey-based insights to align departmental functions around a shared experience narrative. This is particularly important in hotels, where fragmented service delivery can undermine overall perceptions. Empirical evidence suggests that strategically managed experiences can generate measurable improvements in customer engagement and brand advocacy (Hollebeek et al., 2022). Therefore, the study offers practical relevance by linking conceptual understanding with managerial application. The study holds significance in the context of digital transformation and intelligent service systems. Its scope includes examining how technology-enabled tools support or hinder seamless guest journeys. Rather than focusing solely on technology adoption, the study emphasizes experiential alignment and value creation across journey stages. This perspective is critical

as hotels increasingly deploy AI-driven personalization, mobile interfaces, and data analytics. Research indicates that digital transformation initiatives deliver superior outcomes when guided by experience-centric strategies (Verhoef et al., 2021). By integrating technological considerations into journey analysis, the study contributes to more balanced and human-centered digitalization approaches in hospitality. The study is significant for policy makers, educators, and future researchers concerned with the sustainable development of the hospitality sector. Its scope supports the design of training frameworks that emphasize experience orchestration skills alongside operational competencies. The findings can inform curriculum development in hospitality education by foregrounding journey thinking and experiential innovation. Moreover, the study provides a foundation for future empirical research across regions, hotel categories, and guest segments. By articulating the strategic relevance of guest journeys, the study underscores their role in long-term competitiveness and resilience. Contemporary research highlights that experience-led strategies are central to sustainable value creation in service industries (Wirtz et al., 2023). Hence, the study's scope and significance extend across academic, managerial, and institutional domains.

4. Objectives of Study

- To examine the evolving concept of guest journeys in the experience-driven hotel economy by analyzing how value creation extends beyond traditional check-in and check-out processes
- To identify and analyze critical touch points across pre-stay, on-stay, and post-stay phases that significantly influence guest perceptions, satisfaction, and overall experience
- To explore the role of digital technologies and intelligent service systems in reimagining and enhancing seamless, personalized, and emotionally engaging guest journeys in hotels
- To assess the impact of experiential elements such as personalization, well-being, sustainability practices, and local cultural integration on guests' perceived value and loyalty intentions
- To develop strategic insights for hotel managers on designing and managing integrated guest journeys that align experiential innovation with operational effectiveness and long-term competitive advantage

5. Review of Literature

A study by Mele et al. (2025) provided a complementary lens by conceptualizing the guest experience as a process that unfolds across stages and touch points in “physical” environments. Recent synthesis work highlights that customer journey scholarship has expanded rapidly but remains fragmented across conceptualizations, methods, and theoretical assumptions. A key contribution of this literature is the structuring of journey research into distinct themes such as customer experience linkage, customer behavior mechanisms, journey-based design, smart technology integration, and social media influence. This consolidation supports hospitality scholars by offering an integrative foundation for mapping how guest evaluations emerge before, during, and after the hotel stay. It further clarifies that journey attributes are not only touch point-specific but also shaped by contextual and relational conditions that interact across time. As hotels increase investment in digital orchestration, journey research suggests that success depends on coherence across touch points rather than excellence at a single “moment of truth.” This work also strengthens methodological pathways by advocating multi-method approaches to capture temporal evolution and interdependencies. Consequently, the customer journey literature legitimizes hotel guest journeys as analytically tractable systems that can be modeled and improved through design principles.

A growing body of hotel-specific research has re-centered the “tech–touch” debate by examining how human interaction should be embedded across the guest cycle. Rather than arguing for or against

technology adoption, recent empirical evidence focuses on when and for whom “human touch” is most valuable within the customer journey. Findings indicate that the importance of human touch varies by journey stage and by guest segment, suggesting that uniform service scripts are increasingly misaligned with heterogeneous preferences. This literature highlights that the beginning of the relationship especially the booking and early-arrival phases may require stronger interpersonal reassurance, while other stages may benefit from efficient technology-enabled convenience. By using segmentation and service encounter analysis, these studies provide actionable insights on how hotels can design more precise high-touch experiences without abandoning digitalization. This approach reframes personalization as a calibrated balance between human warmth and self-service autonomy. In journey terms, the “human touch” resource becomes a strategic capability to deploy selectively at high-salience encounters. As a result, hotel journey redesign is increasingly viewed as an allocation problem: deciding where human interaction creates the highest experiential return (Lei et al., 2025).

According to Agapito & Sigala (2024), the contemporary hospitality scholarship increasingly treats guest experience as a managed, designed, and socially embedded phenomenon rather than a passive outcome of service delivery. Recent work has emphasized that experience management in hospitality must account for experiential complexity, including co-creation dynamics, experiences capes, and the growing relevance of well-being and societal value in tourism consumption. This stream of literature argues that the field is moving toward a “humanized” perspective, where experiential value is shaped by emotional meaning, relational encounters, and contextual authenticity alongside operational competence. Researchers also note that experience management now operates under intensified digital and environmental pressures, which require hotels to integrate experiential innovation with ethical and sustainable considerations. Such arguments reposition guest journeys as strategic systems that connect multiple actors and service environments rather than isolated service episodes. Importantly, this view encourages hotels to understand experience formation as an evolving process across time and touch points. Within this shift, experience research calls for stronger conceptual clarity on how experiences are intentionally designed and operationalized. These foundations frame guest journey imagination as a managerial imperative rather than a discretionary branding activity.

The sustainability-focused hospitality research extends journey thinking by demonstrating that experiential value also depends on the interaction between sustainable and conventional hotel experience elements. Rather than assuming sustainability uniformly increases satisfaction, recent studies suggest that guests evaluate sustainability through comparative baselines of comfort, convenience, and perceived performance. This literature argues that sustainability is most effective as an experiential enhancer when it is integrated seamlessly into the stay, aligning responsible practices with guest expectations for quality and ease. Where sustainability initiatives are perceived as reducing comfort or adding friction, the net effect can weaken satisfaction, even among environmentally concerned guests. Consequently, sustainability must be designed as part of the experience architecture across the guest journey, not appended as a standalone policy statement. This perspective supports “experience-driven sustainability,” where operational green practices are translated into tangible and meaningful guest benefits. It also implies that hotels should identify journey touch points where sustainability cues are most credible and least disruptive (e.g., room amenities, housekeeping choices, food and beverage). Overall, the sustainability literature strengthens the case for holistic journey design by showing that experiential trade-offs must be managed across multiple encounters (Zhao et al., 2024).

The research on smart services in hotels further advances guest journey scholarship by investigating the psychological gap between what guests expect and what they actually experience when encountering

technology-enabled services. This stream draws attention to expectation–experience discrepancies and the processes through which guests confirm or disconfirm their beliefs about smart encounters (e.g., automated check-in, mobile access, smart-room features). Studies suggest that guest reactions depend not only on functionality but also on perceived control, transparency, and the ease of service recovery when technology fails. This work is particularly relevant to journey imagination because smart service encounters often occur at high-stakes moments such as arrival, access, and problem resolution touch points that strongly influence overall impressions. The literature also indicates that hotels must manage the “service promise” communicated digitally so that it matches on-property performance, thereby reducing negative disconfirmation. Importantly, these findings encourage hotels to embed human fallback options and clear support pathways within smart service journeys. As hotels scale smart services, the literature frames trust and reassurance as core experiential outcomes that must be designed into the journey architecture (Zhou et al., 2025).

6. Discussion and Analysis

The findings of this study reinforce the argument that guest experience in the contemporary hotel economy must be understood as a continuous journey rather than a series of isolated service encounters. Analysis indicates that guest perceptions are shaped cumulatively across pre-stay, on-stay, and post-stay phases, with early-stage interactions often exerting a disproportionate influence on overall evaluations. Pre-arrival communication, digital transparency, and expectation-setting emerge as foundational elements that frame how subsequent experiences are interpreted. When expectations are clearly managed, guests demonstrate greater tolerance toward minor service lapses during the stay. This supports experience-economy logic, which emphasizes that value creation begins before consumption and extends beyond the physical service encounter. Empirical insights from hospitality research suggest that hotels capable of orchestrating coherent journeys achieve stronger emotional engagement and brand differentiation compared to those focusing narrowly on operational efficiency (Pine & Gilmore, 2019). Thus, the discussion highlights the strategic necessity of managing the guest journey as an integrated experiential system. The analysis further reveals that touch point salience varies significantly across journey stages, underscoring the importance of prioritization rather than uniform service enhancement. Arrival, first-room entry, and service recovery moments consistently emerge as critical “experience peaks” that strongly shape guest memories. Conversely, routine interactions, while necessary, contribute less to overall satisfaction unless they fail dramatically. This pattern aligns with journey-based theories suggesting that peak and end moments disproportionately influence retrospective evaluations. Hotels that allocate disproportionate resources to non-critical touch points risk inefficiency without commensurate experiential gains. Research on customer journey prioritization indicates that strategic focus on high-impact encounters leads to more effective experience management and resource optimization (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020). Accordingly, the analysis suggests that guest journey imagination should be driven by experiential leverage rather than operational symmetry.

Technology-enabled services play a complex but pivotal role in shaping guest journeys, as evidenced by the study’s findings. Digital tools such as mobile check-in, smart room controls, and AI-driven recommendations enhance convenience and personalization, particularly for time-sensitive or repeat guests. However, the analysis indicates that technology alone does not guarantee positive experiences; its effectiveness depends on contextual fit and perceived ease of use. Guests respond negatively when technology increases cognitive effort or reduces perceived control, especially during high-stress moments such as arrival or problem resolution. This reinforces the view that digital transformation in hospitality must be experience-led rather than technology-led. Prior research demonstrates that

successful digital customer journeys balance automation with intuitive design and human support to maintain trust and satisfaction (Verhoef et al., 2021). The discussion therefore emphasizes that technology should function as an enabler of seamless journeys, not as a substitute for thoughtful experience design. Another significant analytical insight relates to the growing importance of experiential differentiation through personalization, sustainability, and local integration. Guests increasingly evaluate hotels based on how authentically experiences align with their values, lifestyles, and travel motivations. The study indicates that sustainability initiatives and wellness-oriented offerings positively influence guest perceptions when embedded naturally into the journey rather than presented as standalone features. Similarly, localized experiences contribute to perceived authenticity and memorability when they are curated and contextualized. These findings support the argument that experiential value is multidimensional and extends beyond functional satisfaction. Contemporary hospitality research highlights that experiential differentiation rooted in meaning and relevance enhances emotional attachment and repeat visitation intentions. Thus, the analysis positions experiential coherence as a key determinant of competitive advantage in the experience-driven hotel economy. The discussion underscores the managerial implications of adopting a journey-centric perspective. Hotels that conceptualize guest journeys as strategic assets are better positioned to shift from reactive service recovery to proactive experience orchestration. Data-driven insights, when aligned with experiential goals, enable managers to anticipate friction points and intervene before dissatisfaction escalates. This proactive orientation requires cross-functional coordination, shared experience metrics, and leadership commitment to journey thinking. The analysis suggests that journey governance defining ownership, accountability, and feedback loops is as important as journey design itself. Research on experience management confirms that organizations embedding journey-centric practices into their strategic frameworks achieve more consistent and resilient performance outcomes (Wirtz et al., 2023). Consequently, the study's discussion affirms that reimagining guest journeys is not merely an operational adjustment but a strategic transformation imperative.

7. Findings of Study

- The study finds that guest experiences in the contemporary hotel sector are no longer defined by isolated service encounters but by the cumulative effect of interactions across the entire guest journey. Pre-stay touch points, particularly digital discovery, booking transparency, and expectation-setting communication, significantly influence how guests interpret subsequent on-property experiences. Guests who perceive clarity and reassurance before arrival demonstrate higher tolerance for minor service inconsistencies during the stay. This finding confirms that experience formation begins well before physical consumption and reinforces the strategic importance of managing early-stage interactions as part of the overall value proposition (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020).
- Another key finding highlights the uneven impact of touch points across the guest journey. Certain moments such as arrival, first-room access, and service recovery situations emerge as disproportionately influential in shaping overall satisfaction and memory recall. Routine operational encounters contribute to baseline expectations but rarely enhance perceived value unless they fail. This indicates that hotels can achieve greater experiential returns by prioritizing high-impact touch points rather than attempting uniform service excellence across all interactions. The finding supports journey-based experience theory, which emphasizes the role of peak moments in retrospective evaluations (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2019).
- The study also reveals that technology-enabled services enhance guest experiences only when they reduce effort and increase perceived control. Digital tools such as mobile check-in, smart-

room features, and AI-based recommendations are positively evaluated when they are intuitive and reliable. However, when technology introduces complexity or lacks adequate human support, guest frustration increases, particularly at high-stress journey stages. This finding underscores that digital transformation must be experience-led rather than technology-driven. It aligns with recent evidence suggesting that technology adds value to service journeys only when embedded within a coherent experience design (Verhoef et al., 2021).

- Findings further indicate that experiential differentiation increasingly depends on personalization, sustainability, and local integration. Guests respond positively to sustainable practices, wellness offerings, and culturally embedded experiences when these elements are seamlessly integrated into the stay rather than presented as symbolic add-ons. Such integration enhances authenticity and emotional engagement, strengthening guests' attachment to the hotel brand. This demonstrates that experiential value in hotels has expanded beyond functional comfort to include ethical, social, and contextual dimensions, consistent with contemporary hospitality experience research.
- The study finds that hotels adopting a journey-centric management approach are better positioned to move from reactive problem-solving to proactive experience orchestration. The use of data analytics and journey-level insights enables hotels to anticipate friction points and intervene before dissatisfaction escalates. However, this requires cross-functional coordination and clear ownership of the guest journey within the organization. The finding emphasizes that reimagining guest journeys is a strategic transformation rather than an operational adjustment, reinforcing the need for governance structures that align experience design with long-term competitiveness (Wirtz et al., 2023).

8. Conclusion

This study indicates that the contemporary hotel industry is firmly embedded in an experience-driven economy where competitive advantage is increasingly determined by how effectively guest journeys are designed, managed, and continuously refined. Moving beyond the narrow focus on check-in and check-out processes, the research demonstrates that guest experiences are formed through a sequence of interconnected interactions spanning pre-stay, on-stay, and post-stay phases. These interactions collectively shape emotional responses, satisfaction judgments, and loyalty intentions. The findings reaffirm that experience creation begins long before physical arrival and extends beyond departure, making journey-level thinking a strategic necessity rather than a managerial option. By conceptualizing guest journeys as holistic systems, hotels can better understand how value is perceived and remembered over time. It can be said that not all touch points contribute equally to experience formation. High-salience moments such as arrival, room access, and service recovery play a decisive role in shaping overall impressions, while routine encounters mainly reinforce baseline expectations. This insight underscores the importance of strategic prioritization in experience design, enabling hotels to allocate resources more effectively toward moments that matter most. The study also highlights that technology-driven initiatives enhance guest journeys only when they are intuitive, reliable, and supported by appropriate human interaction. Technology should therefore function as an experiential enabler rather than a replacement for empathy and service judgment. These conclusions align with broader service research that advocates experience-led digital transformation in complex service environments. Finally, the study concludes that experiential differentiation in the hotel sector increasingly depends on personalization, sustainability, and contextual authenticity. Guests value experiences that resonate with their identities, values, and travel purposes, particularly when responsible practices and local elements are seamlessly embedded into the journey. Hotels that adopt a journey-centric governance approach

supported by data analytics, cross-functional coordination, and clear accountability are better positioned to transition from reactive service recovery to proactive experience orchestration. Overall, the study affirms that reimagining guest journeys is a strategic transformation imperative that supports long-term competitiveness, resilience, and meaningful value creation in the evolving hotel economy.

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