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MOTIVATIONS FOR ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS OF HOTEL LOBBIES PREFERENCES

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ABSTRACT

The lobby is the first space guests will encounter and possibly the first impression they will form of the hotel's physical environment. Various literatures suggest that a stimulating physical environment has the potential to make a positive impact on customers' perceptions and behavior. However, there is scarcity of data pertaining to the physical environment that emphasizes attractiveness of hotel lobbies. This paper examines hotel lobby architectural elements preferences and the expected motivations for these preferred elements attributes. A structured questionnaire survey was first administered to 200 hotel lobby users in Yola, Adamawa State, Nigeria, followed by laddering interviews of the Means-End Chain (MEC) methods. The result shows that three (3) distinct architectural elements namely; hard material (tiles/slate/terrazzo) for floor finishing, stucco for wall finishing and sofa/seat/chair arranged in group were preferred and the most emphasized attributes elements are artful, beauty, comfort, appropriate, high quality and hygienic. Five (5) motivating user values of "stimulation", "security", "benevolence", "hedonism" and "achievement" were found to be drivers for these preferences.

Key words: Lobby's architectural element attributes, means-end chain, laddering interviews

INTRODUCTION

The physical design of a building has been proven to restrict people's behavior (Wakefield & Blodget, 1996) and has the power to influence people's reaction to particular environments (Farmer, 1993). An appropriate physical environment helps produce quality performance; if the environment is unsuitable, people often leave and seek one that aligns more closely to their tastes and preferences (Pulgram, 1979). For this reason, it is important for business firms to identify the desirable behaviors of their customers and to then set goals that reinforce these behaviors, especially hospitality centered businesses like hotels.

A Hotel is defined as a place where meetings, important to the community's progress and welfare are held and where civil clubs regularly meet million of people associate features of this type with high points in their lives (Lawson, 1976). Hotels can be described as establishments that offer temporary accommodation

on payment (Lundberg, 1994). Hotel design is a result of socio-cultural changes, technological advancements, economic and political circumstances, and environmental factors. Those elements generate the macro-environment of a hospitality business and powerfully pressure the customer's demands, wishes, and desires (Bowie & Buttle, 2004).

Measuring consumer preferences is a major part of developing new products and determining the success of existing products (Cohen & Orme, 2004). Market researchers often measure preferences for colors, brands and flavors and the importance of certain product features in order to make recommendations about marketing strategy and product design (Cohen & Orme, 2004). New products are designed in an effort to fulfill the needs or wants of some population.

The proper design of these new products is perhaps the most critical factor that determines whether or not the product, and in turn the developing company, thrives or fails. A hotel lobby, and perhaps any developed space, can ultimately be seen as a product. Likewise, the process of designing spaces can be compared to the new product design process. A space will not be successful if it does not meet the needs of its users, just as a new product will fail in the marketplace if consumers do not respond well to it.

The lobby is the primary space customers will encounter, and possibly the first impression visitors will form of the hotel, based on the physical surroundings (Braun, 2011). "A large amount of attention can be diverted by a lobby's uniqueness, making a lasting first impression if designed well" (Miller, 1995). Many older hotels are redesigning their lobbies to meet the needs of travelers by balancing aesthetics and design while also providing guests with the services they require (Andorka, 1995). Both the rational—price, location, service qualities—and emotional considerations—happiness, excitement—are customers' motivating factors when choosing hospitality products (Kwortnik, 2003). Moutinho (2000) define motivation as a state of need or a condition that drives an individual toward certain types of actions that lead to satisfaction. Mook (1996) also defined motivation as the cause of human behavior.

Understanding guest's motivation towards design of lobby space is a critical issue which researchers have elaborated contemporarily from various and diverse angles; this makes it difficult for the reader to combine it to an overall picture and understanding (Collins, 2001). As a result of this exploration, better information about the physical elements of lobbies and how the relationships between these

elements help its guests' perceptions of the hotel will take place. motivations for architectural elements of hotel lobbies preferences is the thrust of this paper. In this backdrop, the paper examines which variations of three (3) architectural elements are preferred by hotel guests and the expected motivations for these preferred elements attributes. To explore this, data collected from five (5) prominent hotels in Adamawa State, Nigeria viz: Meridian hotel, Alheri Royal hotel, Homtel Suites and Derivatives, City green hotel and Muna hotel are analyzed and the results are reported.

CONCEPTUAL FRAME WORK

The Means-End Chain (MEC) Model

The Means-End Chain (MEC) Model was used. The Means-End Chain (MEC) model (Gutman, 1982) originally developed by Jonathan Gutman for merchandized products, which application in the field of architecture and urban design has been very useful and successful in the past few Decades (Tania & Marcos, 2006) is the framework within which this research work is anchored. Gutman (1982) first introduced the concept, with a focus on qualitative in-depth understanding of consumer motives. Reynolds and Gutman (1988) made MEC model well-accepted by providing a hands-on description of how to conduct, analyze and use MEC interviews (Weijters & Muylle, 2008). Kaciak & Cullen (2006) asserted that MEC has been a popular and ever-evolving research domain since its introduction. Gutman (1982) defined MEC as a model that seeks to explain how a product or service selection facilitates the achievement of desired end states. The variables or constructs of the original structure of MEC model (Gutman, 1982) are attributes, consequences and values.

This qualitative approach was used to identify and represent the content and structures of consumer models for products and brands. Gutman's MEC theory (1982) was inspired by research from Rokeach (1968), and Yankelovich (1981) who showed that values direct people's behavior in all aspects of their lives (Boer de & McCarthy , 2004). Although MEC original purpose was for linking consumers' values to their choice behavior in marketing and consumer research, it is becoming popular in other areas (Tania & Marcos, 2006) like architecture, urban design, advertising, information technology, and organizational management (Rugg et al., 2002).

The conceptual model of MEC theory can be abridged in the following suggestions (Pieters, et al., 1991): firstly, that the subjective familiarity about consumers' goods and services is ordered in associative set of connections; secondly, that the ideas

in these set of connections that are pertinent for consumer decision-making are characteristics of products, benefits from these products after use, and consumers' values; thirdly, that characteristics of products, benefits from these products and values are ordered hierarchically; and fourthly, that the cognitive structures of consumers about products and services determine appropriate consumer behavioral actions (Pieters et al., 1991; Coolen & Hoekstra, 2001). MEC utilizes the laddering technique for data collection, analysis and interpretation (Jusan, 2007; Coolen & Hoekstra, 2001).

Laddering Technique

Laddering refers to an in-depth one-on-one interviewing technique used to develop an understanding of how consumers translate the attributes into meaningful associations with respect to self, following means-end theory (Gutman, 1982; Reynolds, 1988). Reynolds & Whitlark, (1995) describe it as an interviewing technique that can be used to elicit means-end connections and attribute-consequence-value networks people use when making decisions about life's endeavors. It is qualitative in nature – utilizing a semi-structured interviewing tool aimed at eliciting responses from respondents' perception on the attribute consequence-value (A-C-V) elements (Jusan, 2007). Reynolds & Gutman (1988) assess that laddering involves a tailored interviewing format using primarily a series of directed probes, typified by the "why is that important to you?" question, with the express goal of determining sets of linkages between the key perceptual elements across the range of attributes (A), consequences (C), and values (V). Costa et al., (2004) describe it as face-to-face, individual, in-depth, semi-structured interviews aiming at the elicitation of the attribute-consequence-value associations consumers hold regarding the object(s) under study (Costa et al., 2004). Laddering, which is unquestionably a useful technique for identifying the relevant attributes and life values in a particular product domain, and for studying the complexities of consumers' cognitive structures with respect to that domain, can fruitfully be combined with a questionnaire technique in eliciting responses from hotel lobby users to establish their choice behavior (Zinas & Jusan, 2014).

METHODOLOGY

Elicitation of Lobby Attributes

Three (3) sets of architectural elements attributes namely; floor finishing, wall finishing, and seating type and arrangement were chosen based on observation of Meridian hotel lobby, Alheri Royal hotel lobby, Homtel Suites and Derivatives lobby, City green hotel lobby and Muna hotel lobby in Yola, Adamawa State,

Nigeria. A structured questionnaire survey was first administered to 200 hotel lobby users (40 for each hotel), followed by a semi-structured interview called 'laddering' was conducted with twenty two (22) lobby users. Opposing variations of each element were looked at during the data collection. The selection criteria for the respondents were on two levels; firstly desire of the respondent to stay for a while within the lobby space and; secondly, willingness to oblige an interview. The laddering interview with each of the respondents was conducted. Each of the interviews was digitally voice recorded. These free responses voice recorded interviews were transcribed and content analyzed.

Content analysis was used as the method for analyzing the data generated from the laddering 'interviews. Weber (2004) describes content analysis as a research 'method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from texts. The content analysis of the transcribed data was done within the context of that outlined by the traditional MEC methods (Reynold, et al., 1988) and Weber's (2004) methods. The basic elements of analysis of the study is "word", "sense of sentence" and "sense of phrases" as posited by Jusan (2010). Identifying unique pathways linking main attributes to user values provides the interpretive observation for the hierarchical value map (HOM) as revealed by Jusan (2007). Reynolds & Gutman (1988) assess that identification of unique pathways permits a more meaningful identification of the important attributes, Consequences (or functional affordances), and motivating user values. This is usually done by tabulating the items or elements integrated in the pathways and calculating the frequency of direct and indirect relation of linkages among them. These pathway linkages are derived from the summary of implication matrix (SIM). The higher the relation scores of the pathway, the more important the items. The pathway is of significance to the choice and important processes for interior architectural elements to the respondents.

Architectural interior elements abstract attributes choice and motivations

Floor finishing

The result shows preference for the use of hard material (tiles/slate/terrazzo) with 63.6% (14) over soft material (carpet/wood) for floor finishing of hotel lobby with 36.4% (8) (see table 1). The emphasized abstract attributes linked with this floor finishing are "artful", "beauty", "comfort", "appropriate", "high quality" and 'hygienic" with a cumulative mentioned elements of twenty two (22) (see table 2).

Table 1: Preferred hotel lobby architectural elements

Concrete attributes	Frequency mentioned elements	Percentage (%)
Floor finishing		
Hard (tiles/slate/terrazzo)	14	63.5
Soft (wood/carpet)	8	36.4
Wall finishing		
Tiles	2	9.1
Paints (emulsion/dulux)	5	22.7
Stucco	9	40.9
Wall paper	6	3
Seating type and arrangement		
Sofa/seat/chair; group	15	68.2
Sofa/seat/chair; individual	7	31.8

Source: field survey, 2016

Table 2: Abstract attributes linked to floor finishing

Code	floor finishing abstract attributes	Frequency of mentioned elements
AF	Artful	1
BT	Beauty	4
CF	Comfort	1
AP	Appropriate	2
HQ	High quality	8
HG	Hygienic	6
	Total	**22**

Source: field survey, 2015

The attributes "artful" of one (1) was characterized by "style", "rhythm" and "texture". The attribute "beauty" of four (4) cumulative elements was associated with the attributes elements as "beautiful", "impressive", "refined" and "current". The attribute "comfort" of one (1) cumulative element was associated with the attribute elements such as "comfortable" and "homey". The attribute "appropriate" 'of two (2) cumulative elements was associated with the attribute element such as "proportionate" and "inviting". The attribute "high quality" of eight (8) was linked to "can last long". The attribute

"hygienic" of four (6) was linked to "easy to clean", "easy to wax" and "does not hide dust".

Wall finishing

The MEC result shows that the interior wall finishing of lobby with stucco 40.9% (9) was preferred over wall finishing of lobby with tiles 9.1% (2), paints (emulsion, dulux) 22.7% (5) and wall paper 27.3% (6) (see table 1). The emphasized abstract attributes linked with this wall finishing are "Artful", "Beauty", "Comfort", "Appropriate", "High quality" and "Hygienic", with a cumulative mentioned elements of eighteen (18) (see table 3)

Table 3: Abstract attributes linked to wall finishing

Code	Wall finishing abstract attributes	Frequency of mentioned elements
AF	Artful	4
BT	Beauty	4
CF	Comfort	2
AP	Appropriate	1
HQ	High quality	2
HG	Hygienic	5
	Total	**18**

Source: field survey, 2015

The attribute "artful" of four (4) was characterize by smooth, precise design pattern and light, the attribute "beauty" of four (4) cumulative elements was associated with the attribute elements as "beautiful", "glamour" and pleasant. The attribute comfort of two (2) was associated with the attribute elements such as "comfortable", and cool feeling. The attribute "appropriate" of one (1) was associated with the attribute elements such as "suitable", "inviting" and "positive". The attribute "high quality" of two (2) elements linked to high quality attribute was "can last long" and "easy to clean". The attribute "hygienic" of five (5) elements liked to "it's clear" and "does not hide dust".

Seating type and arrangement

The result shows that sofa/seat/chair arranged in group with 68.2% (15) was preferred over sofa/seat/chair arranged individually with 31.8% (7) (see table 4). The emphasized abstract attributes linked with this are 'artful", "beauty", "comfort", "appropriate", "high quality" and "hygienic" with a

cumulative mentioned elements 'of eighteen (18) (see table 4).

Table 4: Abstract attributes linked to seating type and arrangement

Code	Seating type and arrangement abstract attributes	Frequency of mentioned elements
AF	Artful	2
BT	Beauty	4
CF	Comfort	5
AP	Appropriate	3
HQ	High quality	1
HG	Hygienic	1
	Total	**16**

Source: field survey, 2015.

The attributes "artful" of two (2) cumulative elements was associated with "proportionate" and "cluttered". The attribute "beauty" of four (4) cumulative elements was associated with "beautiful", "intimate", and "graceful". The attribute "comfort" of five (5) cumulative elements was associated with "homey" and "accommodating". The attributes "appropriate" of three (3) cumulative elements was associated with "it can foster conversation and interaction", "it is cool and soft". The attribute "high quality" of one (1) cumulative element was associated with "can last long". The attribute "hygienic" of one (1) cumulative element was associated with "it is clear", and easy to clean.

Comparative linked abstract attributes finishes.

A cursory comparative summary look at the findings of these attributes finishes space dimensions namely; wall finishing (stucco), floor finishing (tiles/slate/terrazzo), sofa/seat/chair arranged in group reveals interesting scenarios (table 5). A pattern for some of these finishes attributes can be established. Cumulatively, a decremented pattern with increase of the height of location of these space interior elements attributes can be observed. The elements mentioned linking floor finishing (Tiles/slate/terrazzo) attributes decreases slightly when associated with elements for wall finishing (stucco) attributes as well as for the element linked with seating type and arrangement (sofa/seat/chair arranged in group) space dimension. The interpretation of this can be advanced from the domain of height and location of the architectural elements, frequency of daily contact of the users, visual and body perception (Zinas & Jusan, 2014).

Table 5: Comparative linked abstract attributes finishes.

Code.	finishes abstract attribute.	freq. of mentioned finishing element.			Interpretive pattern
		Floor.	Wall.	Seating type & arrangement	
AP	Artful	1	4	2	unclear
BT	Beauty	4	4	4	uniformity
CF	Comfort	1	2	5	incremented
AP	Appropriate	2	1	3	unclear
HQ	High quality	8	2	1	decremented
HG	Hygienic	6	5	1	decremented
	Total	**22**	**18**	**16**	

decremented

Source: field survey, 2015

"Artful" and "Appropriate" attributes elements linkages have unclear pattern with increased of height of location of the architectural elements attribute. Artful: the number of hard material (tile/slate/terrazzo) for floor finishing has less linkage with stucco for wall finishing and also less linkage in number compared to sofa/seat/chair arranged in group. In the same vein, wall finishing (stucco) linkages are higher in number compared to those linked for seating type and arrangement (sofa/seat/chair arranged in group). Appropriate: the number of hard material (tile/slate/terrazzo) for floor finishing has high linkage with stucco for wall finishing and less linkage in number compared to sofa/seat/chair arranged in group. In the same vein, wall finishing (stucco) linkages are lesser in number compared to those linked for seating type and arrangement and floor finishing. Positioning location and frequency of user contact could be the factors responsible for this. This is premise on the fact that the higher located these architectural elements are, the likely frequent contacts are made with them by the user of the lobby space on a daily basis, they more likely the user get used to the existing style and may no longer attract them. Floor and wall finishes has more user contact no wonder less artistic consideration was given and even the little given fade within short time. Therefore, there is need for floor that has smooth finishing, flexible precise current decorative design pattern or style, light seating type and flexible clustered seating arrangement to ease movement and foster interaction respectively for better attraction and motivation. In support of this

McDonough (2001) state that technologies are constantly changing and improving it is critical to implement flexible designs and utilize flexible materials in order to reduce future time, effort, and funds required to update these technologies.

"Beauty" attribute element linked to a given indoor space for all the dimensions have uniformity patterns. The number of the elements for floor finishing (tiles/slate/terrazzo) has more linkages as compared to the elements linked to the wall finishing (stucco) and seating type and arrangement (sofa/seat/chair arranged in group), likewise wall finishing (stucco) linkages are equal in number compared to those linked for seating types and arrangement. Height of location of these finishes attributes and frequency of user contact do not seem to be the determining factors for the attributes elements, visual and body perception may be determinants for the beauty elements pattern for the indoor space dimensions of the elements attributes linked. Beauty and aesthetic pleasant indoor environment can be visually experienced by those in the space (Zinas & Jusan, 2014). This experience can create the desired feeling for the space user, and create a feeling of belongingness and acceptance which Bluyssen (2009) posited may come from a "larger social network or smaller social connection" this may be derived from guests visiting the lobby of the hotel. For this beauty attributes linkages to be uniform for all the space dimensions reinforces the argument that users of hotel lobby attach importance to having a beautiful and an aesthetically pleasant lobby indoor environment.

"Comfort" attributes elements linkages have incremented pattern with increase of height of location of the building elements attribute. The number of the elements for floor finishing has less linkage with wall finishing likewise walled finishing has more linkages in number compared to seating type and arrangement. Visual and body perception may be determinants for the comfort elements attributes linked. The result shows that the users of the lobby feel more comfortable with the seating type arrangement than floor finishing and wall finishing. This is premise on the fact that the seating type and arrangement is homey and inviting. In this regard Davis (1984) state that Comfort and configuration of furniture in a building may also influence behavior; the seating arrangement not only affects where people sit, but also the character of interaction that can occur between them. The finding showed that side-to-side and corner-to corner seating is associated with greater friendliness, interaction, and intimacy than more distant arrangements. Besides placement, some seats may be deemed uncomfortable because of their design or condition. Seating comfort is

affected by both the physical seat itself and by the space between the seats (Wakefield & Blodget, 1996).

"High Quality" attributes elements linkages decreased significantly with increase in height of location of the building elements attribute. The number of elements for floor finishing has more linkages as compared to the elements linked to the wall finishing, seating type and arrangement. In the same vein, wall finishing linkages are more in number compared to those linked for seating type and arrangement. Positioning location and frequency of user contact could be the factors responsible for this. Weight of users, exposure to the impacts of external environmental elements like rain and heat from the sun rays through openings may have a tendency to have destructive effects to the finishes materials (Zinas & Jusan, 2014). Besides consideration for external environmental elements effect, the consideration against fire breaks through electrical installation and services is also a factor (Zinas & Jusan, 2014). The result shows that the quality of floor finishing has more attraction than wall finishing and seating type and arrangement this is premise on the fact that the floor ceramic tiles can last for a long period of time before need for maintenance. Therefore there is need to improve the quality of seat and wall finishing such that the can resist the effects of any fire out breaks and impacting of environmental elements other to have better impact on the users of the hotel lobby.

"Hygienic" attributes elements linkages also have decremented pattern with increase in height of location of the building elements. The number of elements for floor finishing has higher linkage as compared to the elements linked to the wall finishing and seating type and arrangement. In the same vein, wall finishes linkages are less in number compared to seating type and arrangement. As said earlier, positioning location and frequency of user contact could be the factor responsible for this. This is premise on the fact that the lowly located these building elements are, likely frequent contacts are made with them by the user on a daily basis, the more likely dirty they get, thereby requiring more hygienic attention (Zinas & Jusan, 2014). Floor finishing has more user contact because of their location and therefore attracts more hygienic attention than for wall finishing and seats. Seats on the other hand have more contacts than wall finishing which also require more hygienic attention than wall. This is vital for designer and architects to propose interior architectural elements that require ease for hygienic maintenance, especially when they have structural location that warrant frequent daily contact and use by the user of hotel lobby, by so doing attracts the users.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the lobby space of a hotel building is the first port of call to such a building hence the first interior impression of the building is generated. If the lobby is not fresh, innovative or not special in some way the guest will feel uneasy about the accommodations he or she doesn't see and may elect not to stay or return to your hotel, this research study has produced significant results in an area of study often ignored. It has been determined that there are preferred hotel lobby architectural elements and motivations for the preference. It is also vital to point out that the most emphasized elements attributes for floor finishing, wall finishing, seating type and arrangement are, artful, beauty, comfort, appropriate, high quality and hygienic. Five (5) motivating user values of "stimulation", "security", "benevolence", "hedonism" and "achievement" were found to be drivers for these preferences.

Architecturally, the design suggestions for the hotel lobbies should provide architectural elements for all of the three space dimensions that express and achieve an aesthetically beautiful indoor environment (Zinas & Jusan, 2014). Design emphasis for providing finish materials and seating type that are artistic and quarantine a hygienic indoor space giving importance to height of location, and frequency of daily contacts by the users. The design consideration for quality should be emphasized with increase of height of location of these elements and frequency of daily contacts. This is so because of their tendency of exposure to atmospheric elements of the environment. Frequent design considerations for comfort should be given for better attraction. Finally, Architects and Interior designers must work carefully to ensure a good and lasting memory for hotel guests by giving more attention to their preferences of lobby architectural elements since the first and last experience a guest has in a hotel happens in the lobby, during check in and out. .

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