

# Room guest satisfaction towards guestroom physical environment quality in the theme hotel

Atikah Shahira Mohd Ali <sup>1</sup>, Shahirah Shah Nurin <sup>2</sup>, Zurinawati Mohi <sup>3^</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> *Universiti Teknologi MARA, Selangor, Malaysia*

\*Corresponding authors' email: [zurin979@gmail.com](mailto:zurin979@gmail.com)



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## ABSTRACT

Guestroom design is essential in any hotel industry that can attract potential new guests. One of the advantages of a unique and memorable pleasant guestroom design is increasing revenue and profit for hotel operations. Today, many guestroom designs can merge with room guest satisfaction. Many themes and colors can enhance guest preferences to stay in the hotel. This study investigates the relationship between guestrooms' physical environment quality dimensions (i.e., guestroom ambiance, guestroom layout, guestroom cleanliness, guestroom furnishing, and guestroom lighting) towards room guest satisfaction. One hundred forty-five questionnaires were collected from the guest who stayed at a theme hotel; however, only 136 met the preliminary screening and were acceptable to test hypothesized relationships among the physical environment quality dimensions towards room guest satisfaction. The data were analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The study's result indicated significant relationships between guestroom ambiance, guestroom layout, guestroom cleanliness, guestroom furnishing, guestroom lighting, and room guests' satisfaction. The outcome of this paper suggests that the hotel industry improve their design in hotel guestrooms and the hotel designers for upcoming build new hotels.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This study was conducted in Malacca (Melaka in Malay). This study focuses on small hotel owners who turn their hotels into unique concepts and themes. Theme Hotel is an underlying concept that turns service into an experience (Forsgren & Franchetti, 2004). This study chose Malacca because of the historic building that Malacca still preserves and many theme hotels located there.

The uniqueness of Malacca's main attraction attracted international and domestic tourists. In 2008, Malacca City was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, recognizing the Malaysian government's efforts to preserve the country's important historical

assets (Hanafi et al., 2018). The Central Tourist District (CTD) includes the UNESCO World Heritage Site, a buffer zone, trading districts, museums, shopping centers, hotels, and lodging facilities (Jais & Marzuki, 2019). It is worth noting that Malacca is unquestionably a heritage city (Md Khairi et al., 2020). After the industrial sector, tourism is the second most important industry in Malacca's economic development (Zainal Abidin et al., 2021). Malacca City, known for its cultural legacy, is a famous tourist destination in Malaysia. Approximately 7,275,000 tourists visited Malacca in 2020, and the Malaysian Association of Hotels states that Melaka has approximately 141 theme hotels (Kadir et al., 2020; Statistic, 2020; Yee et al., 2020).

Historically, prior to 1400, Malacca was a small fishing village. Parameswara, a fleeing prince from Sumatra, founded Malacca in the 14<sup>th</sup> century; developed into an important harbor for ships from India and China traders. As Malacca flourished, many countries were interested in invading Malacca to control the economy. The Portuguese conquered Malacca in 1511. Later, the Dutch took over in 1641 until the British Empire ruled the Malaya States or Tanah Melayu (Malaysia). The Malaya States finally obtained independence in 1957. Today, many remnants of the glorious past dating back more than 500 years can be seen in Malacca (Vann, 2014).

The theme hotel differs from a traditional hotel; the difference is not only about the product offered but also about the ideas, culture, and personalized service to satisfy each customer emotionally during consumption. The traditional hotel focuses on the culture, specificity, and experience characteristics based on the customer experience and creating value through service (Sun et al., 2019). Sadhale and Sathe (2021) reported that 85.3% of people said they would like to stay in a themed hotel because, nowadays, people travel for relaxation or business purposes in other regions; thus, they are excited to know and experience the culture.

The hotel's amenities and services are essential factors in determining guest satisfaction (Oktavio et al., 2023). Others 'wow' guests with unusual guestroom themes and contemporary designs; some provide clients with unique amenities and services (Gumaste, 2019). Theming refers to applying design principles to hedonic consumer environments such as theme parks,

hotels, restaurants, and museums (Åstrøm, 2018). Theming can obtain a competitive edge in the hotel business (Wassler et al., 2015), where a theme orientation makes it easier to create distinctive theme experiences (Xiao et al., 2013). Besides, a theme hotel is an underlying concept that turns service into an experience (Forsgren & Franchetti, 2005). These new hotel types result from continuously developing market segmentation trends in the lodging industry. The unique experience created by a theme hotel is the hotel's critical competitive advantage and differentiator (Xiao et al., 2013).

Customer satisfaction (hereafter referred to as room guest satisfaction) is a rating that a product or service's features or service itself receive from customers. The discrepancy between expectations and experiences might be considered room guest satisfaction (M Ariffin & A Aziz, 2012; Wei & Kim, 2022). Oliver (1981) described it as an emotional response to the consumption of a given product or assistance guest happiness is traditionally measured using a disconfirmation method. Guest satisfaction or dissatisfaction is a notion that suggests the results from a guest's expectations before making a purchase or interacting with the product itself; therefore, this assessment follows the purchase (M Ariffin et al., 2018). Guests are often satisfied when their experiences meet or surpass their expectations; nevertheless, dissatisfied results occur if their experiences fall short of their previous expectations.

Hotel strategy seeks profit and revenue from guests and builds trust from regular customers. The physical attributes and services in the hotel room are vital to the guest's satisfaction and are crucial in determining whether or not guests will return (Gumaste, 2019). Pursuing customer loyalty is a continuous task and is more of a journey than a destination (Gustavsson & Lundgren, 2005). The hotel management has to provide good service, better accommodations, and meet room guest satisfaction to get loyal guests; that may enhance their products and services and attract potential new guests. The hotel provides a variety of amenities and facilities to entertain its guests, such as exclusive services and treating them like Kings and Queens. When guests meet their expectations toward the hotels' products and services, they repeat purchasing and tell others using word of mouth (WoM) or social media (eWoM) (Nugroho, et al., 2023; Sudarmayasa et al., 2022; Turkel, 2009).

## Problem Statement

Theme hotels differentiate their products and services with unique concepts compared to traditional hotel products. It said there asked for more than just a room among the guests today. When choosing a hotel, most guests prioritize the following features: rooms, restaurant, lobby-reception area, leisure area, and hallways. Hotels that emphasize a warm and comfortable atmosphere in their rooms tend to receive better ratings and reviews from their guests. As a result, there may be greater customer loyalty and positive word-of-mouth, both of which are essential to the success of a hospitality business. Due to the tremendous growth in the hotel industry and the number of hotels, healthy competition forces every hotelier to pursue more aggressive marketing plans to attract customers (Mohamed Idris et al., 2020). As a result, hotel owners and the management would benefit from paying more attention to tourist-oriented locations. However, several condition problems occur while guests stay in the Malacca Hotel. Table 1 indicates one of the guest reviews from TripAdvisor.

**Table 1. Review Guest from TripAdvisor**

Dimensions	Hotel Name	Illustrative Quotations
Guest Ambience	Hotel Puri Melaka	"Hotel Puri attracts you with its nice inviting decor, and calming vibes. It smelled of moth balls, the sheets were tattered, the bathroom was not that clean".
Guest Cleanliness	The Baba House Melaka	"The pillows were like concrete and the towels were old, stained and threadbare. The bathroom was the size of a matchbox and not to clean". It means that hotel did not concern about the cleanliness in the guest room and the guest felt disappointed."
	City Theme Hotel Melaka	"bed looks kinda dirty, bed side table and stuff got cig burnt marks, there is a weird smell coming out from the aircon, bathroom was the most horrifying. stains and rust on the roof. sink has got those black colour stains, shower head got those stains too".
Guest Furnishing	The Baba House Melaka	"Small room, dusty, stains in the bathroom tiles, old furniture, old big tv with very few channels, air conditioning leaks then stopped working"
Guest Layout	1825 Gallery Hotel Melaka	"The rooms are in dire need of a spacing."
Guest Lighting	The Baba House Melaka	"The room is well themed... But the room is without windows. The room is very moist and condensation caused the floor very wet".
	The Baba House Melaka	"The only thing I didn't like was there were no windows in the room. I felt claustrophobic and wondered how I would exit if the door was barred". From the guest statement it means that the room has insufficient lighting."

Source: Adapted from Trip Advisor , 2019)

In conclusion, from Table 1, while the theme hotel provides a positive overall experience to its guests, some issues still arise throughout their stay. As Raja Omar et al. (2020)

mentioned, according to the feedback, some clients were dissatisfied with the restroom condition of this theme hotel. Some bathrooms were not adequately maintained, and some guests complained about ants in the restroom. Customers expressed dissatisfaction with the staining and dullness of the hotel room, window, and carpet. As the total number of hotel guests in Malacca has increased, there is a growing demand for rooms; therefore, the competition in the hotel business has intensified (Ju, 2019; Lim et al., 2017).

Regarding guest experience and satisfaction with the physical environment, many aspects of detail usually need to be considered for hotel properties, as travelers in Melaka have been attracted to a new hotel trend, particularly boutique or lifestyle hotels. The aspects of hotels, such as public spaces, rooms, ambiance, social aspects, and environmentally friendly practices, contribute to the satisfaction of guests who come to a themed hotel (Chang & Lin, 2022; Ju, 2019; Padma & Ahn, 2020; Sukhu et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2021). Previous studies in the hospitality industry have primarily focused on quality aspects of the physical environment; however, few published empirical studies address guest satisfaction with the physical environment quality of the themed hotels. Hotels with themes that primarily appeal to the physical environment are narrow niche markets and must be conscious that their market segment will be smaller and more clearly defined (Wassler et al., 2015). This paper focuses on a small hotel that the owner turns into a theme hotel's unique concept. In response to the problem stated, one research objective is formulated: to examine the physical environment quality dimensions in the guestroom (i.e., guestroom ambiance, guestroom layout, guestroom cleanliness, guestroom furnishing, and guestroom lighting) toward the room guests' satisfaction in Melaka.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Guestroom Physical Environment Quality Dimensions**

The physical environment of a hotel relates to the layout and design of the building, ambiance, décor, and cleanliness (Al-Gharaibah, 2020). The physical and spatial aspects of

the environment surrounding a consumer activity, such as the firm's interior, furniture layout, décor, and artefacts, are examples of the physical environment (Raghavendra et al., 2019). Guests may experience stimulus, arousal, pleasure, and emotions due to these physical environmental elements, or they may be satisfied and rethink their intention. Bitner (1992) stated that *SERVICESCAPE* refers to the man-made physical environment. The physical environment where enterprises offer services and interact with clients is called *SERVICESCAPE* (Arifin & Mohammad, 2019).

Visual aspects of the service become essential since assessing the quality of the services before their purchase is crucial. Crouse (2010) states that the visual elements influence the overall guest experience. For example, first-time guests might choose tangible or physical environment features such as furniture style, finishing style (e.g., walls' color, color schemes, and décor), layout, and lighting in the guestroom that affects the guest's prospect of the hotel.

The physical environment is one of the crucial elements in distinguishing service organizations and shaping the nature of customer experiences (Bitner, 1992). The physical environment is characterized as the material surroundings of a place. The physical environment consists of ambiance, decoration, and layout. In addition, the physical appearances of the hotels' exterior and open spaces are viewed as two of the most attributes that are identified with having a choice for choosing a hotel to remain (Dubé & Renaghan, 2000; Lee & Jeong, 2012; Mat Nawi et al., 2019; Pizam, 2005). Color, light, brightness, contrast, size, shape, and space organization are all included in the visual sensory channels (Hoffman & Turley, 2002). It explained that various information resources, office equipment, the color of the walls and curtains, wallpapers, window size, staff uniforms, and other interior design components hold possible proof of future service quality.

This study suggested five dimensions of guestroom physical environment quality, i.e., guest ambiance, guest cleanliness, guest furnishing, guest layout, and guest lighting. Overall, guestroom ambiance is the general feeling of a person's environment when sitting in a location or the presence of people with a specific design or decor. The guestroom ambiance is also

about quality, for example, the appropriate color mix, good lighting, and high-end finishes. Guestroom cleanliness is essential to the room guests. The cleanroom enhances the guest experience and increases the level of satisfaction. The guest layout should be precise, and the furniture and fixture arrangement should parallel the spacious room. Guest furnishing is the arrangement of furnishing and decorations that can provide valuable and unique opportunities for the cultural experience. Lastly, guest lighting in the context of the floor bathroom can make the guest feel safe and secure; thus, the turnover of guests will increase.

### ***Guestroom Ambience***

The ambience is the general feeling of a person's environment when sitting in a location or the presence of people with a specific design or decor. It is due to quality, the appropriate color mix, good lighting, and high-end finishes (Sadhale & Sathe, 2021). Attractive visual appearance and the like for higher classes are pleasant when staying at a hotel. The so-called scene illusions by accomplishing physical stimuli are based on symbolic value. The colors and furniture combinations used when arranging the hotel interior, pleasant sounds, and smells can influence individual stimulants with feelings ranging from enthusiasm to disappointment (Stojanović & Đenadić, 2019). Besides, the ambience or physical aspects in the hospitality industry are the focus of interest of tourist and hotel product creators and management structures in the tourism and hotel industries. There is no universally accepted definition of ambience since each individual has their impression and experience during staying in a hotel (Stojanović & Đenadić, 2019).

Additional host of hotel aspects have also been examined within the following contexts: hotel designs (access, space, and use); and the physical environment in which service takes place or atmospherics (décor and artifacts, spatial layout, ambient conditions, color, lighting, style, and furnishings) (Sepula & Bello, 2019). Color is an element in interior perception, which is a solution to painting walls, floors, and finishing materials (Ćurčić et al., 2019). For example, if the guestroom is small, the bright colors make it look bigger and more comfortable, and the choice of color should be suitable for the theme or the hotel itself.

***Guestroom Layout***

Concerning the layout of various objects within the hotel property, one of the most common errors is noticed in the design of a hotel lobby, where the front reception desk is not visible at once as the guests arrive at the hotel and also a lack of smooth traffic between the front desk and elevators (Tlapana, 2009). Spatial layout refers to the arrangement of objects, such as furniture and equipment, according to the needs of the service delivery process (Nguyen & Leblanc, 2002). The guestroom layout should be precise, and the furniture and fixture arrangement should parallel the spacious room. Thus, the room will not look narrow and crowded.

The layout of the interior objects should minimize crowding to create a favorable impression among the hotel guests. Bowie and Buttle (2004) study found that the internal layout consists of a front desk and lobby area, elevators, rooms, bathrooms, a restaurant and bar, conference rooms, a gym or swimming pool, and other leisure areas. Bowie and Buttle (2004) also found that space layout and social interaction interconnect and influence each other. Otherwise, it is crucial in the overall management process to define if the design is appropriate for the needed social interaction.

Besides that, the layout brings comfort whereby guests can get their satisfaction through an excellent layout in the room. In many hotel developments, one of the essential aspects is the comfort of the hotel guest. A hotel guest is our priority, and comfort should be the primary concern during their stay to satisfy the guest. Maeng and Park (2015) stated that amenity refers to psychological states in the human body blending with the spirit to feel good. It can also be said that a specific place can bring the comfort of a given place.

***Guestroom Cleanliness***

Hygiene and sanitation in hotel rooms can significantly impact the hotel's overall quality. The main things are the cleanliness and tidiness of the room space; quality includes applying hygiene and sanitation in the room (Sudarmayasa et al., 2022). Zemke et al. (2015) study indicated that guestroom cleanliness is essential to the guests. The cleanroom enhances the



guest experience and increases the level of satisfaction. Guests' and customers' perceptions of cleanliness were significant and vital in many service industries and well-focused hospitality disciplines. Harris and Ezeh (2008) found that cleanliness is vital in creating a positive physical environment for service providers (Arifin & Mohammad, 2019). In previous studies, apropos to the findings of a Malaysian hotel study, women guests prioritized 'Hotel cleanliness' (Gumaste, 2019).

### ***Guestroom Furnishing***

Hotels are places where the guest spends at least one night. Therefore, the arrangement of furnishing and decorations can provide valuable and unique opportunities for cultural experience (Chen, 2018). Lighting, the color of the walls, and the furniture style in the hotel guest room are tangible environmental factors. The guest can touch and feel while expecting these elements (Gao, 2016). When choosing a floor finish, it should avoid an established appearance. The floor finishes must be suitable for the rooms and bathroom. Then it will avoid an injury while the guest is staying. A proper floor bathroom can make the guest feel safe and secure; thus, the turnover of guests will increase.

### ***Guestroom Lighting***

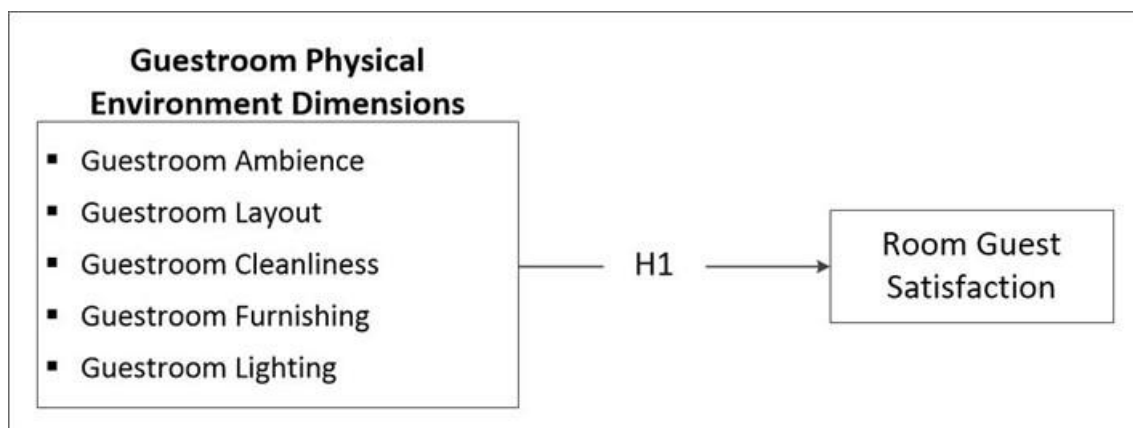
When discussing interior design and décor in the hotel industry, it refers to themes, styles, color schemes, top-quality furniture, flooring, window coverings, artwork, and lighting (Sadhale & Sathe, 2021). Lighting plays a vital role in the overall hotel experience. Furthermore, Yu and Akita (2019) state that the room's ambiance is built in proper locations through the artificial light application. In the hotel's room, guests like the minimized natural lighting element to keep their privacy. Previous studies have shown that natural light has been proven to enhance the guest experience (Sadhale & Sathe, 2021). Covering the windows with curtains has maximized the demand for artificial lighting. A lamp's system illuminates the artificial lighting, sometimes using other devices that can be changed into several themes by applying different applications in a specific room spot (Ratnasari et al., 2020).

## Room Guest Satisfaction

The study by guest satisfaction is an intuition that a service features and product or the product or the service provides a satisfying level of consumption-related fulfillment, including under or over-fulfillment (M Ariffin & A Aziz, 2012). That means fulfillment and pleasurableness response is important to the image of satisfaction. It continues that Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory proposes that customers assess their satisfaction levels by comparing their actual experiences or performances with their expectations (M Ariffin & A Aziz, 2012). If a guest is happy and satisfied, the hotel can repeat business. A satisfied guest will bring new guests to the hotel through word of mouth (Bhatnagar & Nim, 2019).

## Development of Research Framework

Figure 1 demonstrates the relationships of the guestroom physical environment dimensions (i.e., guestroom ambience, guestroom layout, guestroom cleanliness, guestroom furnishing, and guestroom lighting) toward guest satisfaction in theme hotel Melaka.



**Figure 1. Research Framework**

## Development of Research Hypotheses

Tangible environmental factors in the guestrooms are lighting, furniture style, and the color of the walls. Layout, color schemes, and lighting in the room are elements of the environment that affect the customer's prospects of the hotel (Huang, 2021; Sepula & Bello,

2019). All these dimensions might satisfy the room guests. In conclusion, the following hypothesis and sub-hypotheses are formulated:

*H1: There is a significant relationship between the guestroom's physical environment and guest satisfaction*

The guests rated cleanliness, comfortable sleeping pads, and high-quality towels as essential qualities, according to the studies by Lockyer (2002). Many studies in the hotel discipline identified that the physical environment quality impacts the guest experience; therefore, the environment's design must be prioritized (Crîșmariu & Țigu, 2019). It is supported that the ambiance of a hotel or restaurant is one of the components influencing consumers' perceptions in creating the experience. The ambiance conditions in the SERVICESCAPE can also influence guest satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Jani & Han, 2014). If more favorable reviews, good WoM, and a positive hotel image will create a comfortable environment for the guests. Hence, the pleasant ambiance will improve guest satisfaction, thus, encouraging guests to spend money and stay longer (Mousavai et al., 2015). As a result, the following hypothesis is formulated:

*H<sub>1a</sub>: There is a significant relationship between guestrooms' ambiance and room guest satisfaction*

In many hotel developments, the guestroom's layout, the furniture arrangement, and the choice of multi-use furniture play an important role when a guest chooses a hotel (Gumaste et al., 2019). One of the essential aspects is comfort for the hotel guest. A hotel guest is our priority, and comfort should be the primary concern during their stay to satisfy the guest. Amenity refers to psychological states in the human body blending with the spirit to feel good (Maeng & Park, 2015). It can also be said that a specific place can bring the comfort of a given place. Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

*H<sub>1b</sub>: There is a significant relationship between guestrooms' layout and room guest satisfaction*

Room cleanliness is a prime factor for hotel guests (Bhatnagar & Nim, 2019). It is revealed that clean and well-maintained rooms and physical environment notably impacted apparent corporate image and guest satisfaction. Customers' perceptions of the cleanliness of the items typically found in a hotel were researched. In this study, respondents were asked to think about their last hotel stay and indicate their perceptions of the cleanliness of different items in a hotel room, including the bathroom sink, toilet, towels, bed linens, light switches, and the telephone. A cleanroom will enhance the guest experience and increase the level of satisfaction. Thus, the following hypothesis is formulated:

*H<sub>1c</sub>: There is a significant relationship between guestrooms' cleanliness and room guest satisfaction*

The guest rooms are the hotel's heart unless its décor is appropriate, the air odor free, and the furnishing. Thus, the physical and tangible dimensions of the hotel room are important to the guest's satisfaction and a prime consideration for return patronage. It is said that the guest room attributes influence the decision of the customer to stay in the hotel (Gumaste et al., 2019). A bed is essential for every bedroom, and people make them softer by using blankets, bed linen, and soft pillows (Ergüden, 2012). Every guestroom needs this furnishing to complete their enjoyable experience staying in the hotel; then, it will increase satisfaction due to the room rate. Unlike the room's lower and higher rates, hotel organizations must ensure their guests get better sleep and service. Gao (2016) identified furniture style as an important tangible environmental factor leading to a better experience. Thus, the following hypothesis is formulated:

*H<sub>1d</sub>: There is a significant relationship between guestrooms furnishing and room guest satisfaction*

Lighting, the color of the walls, and the furniture style in the hotel guest room are tangible environmental factors; these can be touched, and guests can feel (Gao, 2016). When choosing a floor finish, it should avoid an established appearance. The floor finishes must be

suitable for the rooms and bathroom. Then it will avoid an injury while the guest is staying. A proper floor bathroom can make the guest feel safe and secure; thus, the turnover of guests will increase. Thus, the following hypothesis is formulated:

*H<sub>1e</sub>: There is a significant relationship between guestroom lighting and room guest satisfaction.*

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This is a cross-sectional study; data were collected once. The data was collected in Malacca, Malaysia. The unit analysis for this study is the business and leisure travelers (international and local tourists) aged 18 years and above who stayed in the theme hotels. The selected theme hotels are; Hotel Puri Melaka, City Theme Hotel Melaka, The Baba House Melaka, 1825 Gallery Hotel Melaka, Fantasy Hotel, and Rosa Melaka. This study was completed before the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) affected worldwide.

Self-administered questionnaires were distributed face-to-face adapting the intercept-convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is used because the data were collected from the conveniently available population (Bougie & Sekaran, 2016). Intercept sampling is a classic example of convenience sampling, consistent with several studies' data collection methods (for example, Clemes, Brush, et al., 2011; Clemes et al., 2018; Dabholkar et al., 1996; Mohd Noor et al., 2014). The intercept sampling method is also best for sampling potential respondents to location-based services such as stores, amusement parks, and museums in which, in this study context, hotel guests of theme hotels in Malacca City. The main advantages of the intercept sampling method of data collection include (1) less expensive, (2) greater control, (3) high response rate, (4) provides accurate data in a face-to-face manner, (5) represents the correct respondents, and (6) the respondents were able to supply an authentic experience in the theme hotel.

One hundred sixty sample size is required for this study, calculated as 32 items x minimum of five respondents (Hair et al., 2010; Pallant, 2007). It is recommended that the

minimum sample size of 100 or extra with at least five times the number of measured items be analyzed and more good ratios of 10:1. Multiple items seven-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) were used in the measurement scale to measure related constructs in this study. Questionnaires were adapted from the existing studies (see Table 2) and tailored to the setting. The draft questionnaires were through validity and reliability procedures. Once the draft questionnaires were completed and corrected, a pilot study was conducted using 30 sample room guests staying in the hotel in Malacca. Cronbach alpha values range from 0.799 to 0.952, showing internal consistency. Each dimension's values are significant as the Cronbach alpha's value exceeds 0.70 (Cronbach, 1951; Hair et al., 2010).

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 2. Demographic Profile (N = 136)**

Category	Items	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	58	42.6
	Female	78	57.4
Age Group	18-27 Years	83	61.0
	28-37 Years	27	19.9
	38-47 Years	20	14.7
	48 and above	6	4.4
Marital Status	Single	82	60.3
	Married	54	39.7
Highest Education	High School	44	32.4
	Undergraduate	51	37.5
	Postgraduate	41	30.1
Occupation	Employed	60	44.1
	Self Employed	22	16.2
	Retired	2	1.5
	Student	52	38.2
Frequently Travel A Year	Once A Year	62	45.6
	Twice A Year	29	21.3
	3-5 Times A Year	33	24.3
	More Than 5 Times	12	8.8
Purpose Of Travelling	Business	18	13.2
	Leisure	118	86.8
Region	Malaysia	125	91.9
	South-East Asia	11	8.1

One hundred seventy questionnaires were distributed; however, only 145 were returned. Nine questionnaires that were partly filled out or not suitable in content were excluded from the data analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). After the preliminary data process, thus, 136

useable questionnaires met the preliminary screening requirements, representing a response rate of 80%. One hundred thirty-six useable questionnaires larger than 100 and less than 500 are appropriate for most research; therefore, the 136 sample size was deemed acceptable for this study (Bougie & Sekaran, 2016). The summary of demographic profiles is summarized in Table 2.

Table 3 provides the means and standard deviation distribution of all items. The mean and standard deviation are the most common descriptive statistics for interval and ratio scaled data. The means is an average measure of central tendency that offers a general picture of the data, while the standard deviation measure of dispersion for interval and ratio scaled data offers the distribution spread in the data (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Table 3 also itemized the source of the measuring items used in the questionnaire.

**Table 3. Descriptive Statistics (N = 136)**

Item Coding	Statements	Authors	Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>Guestroom Ambience</b>				
A1	A nice ambiance	(Bellizzi et al., 1983;	5.29	1.155
A2	Provide enough air conditioning	Guilford & Smith, 1959;	5.62	1.136
A3	Good scent smell in the room	Kandampully &	5.32	1.114
A4	A nice decoration	Suhartanto, 2003; Ryu	5.36	1.052
A5	Suitable color design	& Jang, 2008;	5.30	1.042
A6	Create cheerful feelings	Stojanović & Đenadić, 2019)	5.36	0.979
<b>Guestroom Layout</b>				
B1	Easy access layout	(Abercrombie, 2018;	5.39	0.960
B2	Attractive layout	Countryman & Jang,	5.29	1.025
B3	Mattress and pillows are comforts	2006; Jysmä, 2012;	5.50	1.082
B4	Selection & quality of bath amenities	Maeng & Park, 2015;	5.35	1.138
B5	A layout that creates customer attention	Ryu & Han, 2010;	5.22	1.133
B6	Clear and readable signage	Tlapana, 2009)	5.34	1.137
<b>Guestroom Cleanliness</b>				
C1	Free odor	(Barber & Scarcelli,	5.28	1.066
C2	Cleanliness and condition of bedding	2010; Clemes, Gan, et	5.48	0.966
C3	Clean guestroom	al., 2011; Jysmä, 2012;	5.35	1.044
C4	Clean floor	Seung, 2012)	5.52	1.154
C5	Clean bathroom		5.49	1.089
<b>Guestroom Furnishing</b>				
D1	Safety furniture to use		5.55	0.965
D2	Easy to access electrical switch		5.45	1.067
D3	Suitable furniture with a theme	(Chen, 2018; Gao,	5.35	1.079
D4	Good physical condition of furniture and fixtures in the guestroom	2016)	5.43	0.971
D5	Necessary furniture and equipment for the guestroom		5.51	0.894
<b>Guestroom Lighting</b>				
E1	Sufficient lighting	(Baron et al., 1992;	5.46	1.003
E2	Provide suitable lamp	Boray et al., 1989;	5.39	.936
		Heerwagen & Orians,		

Item Coding	Statements	Authors	Mean	Std. Deviation
E3	Natural daylight	1986; Jaber & Ajib,	5.44	.987
E4	Provide feeling safe for window	2011; Pae, 2009;	5.54	.988
E5	Proper selection and lighting in the bathroom	Sanib, 2014; Sharma & Stafford, 2000; Veitch et al., 1991)	5.43	.933
<b>Room Guest Satisfaction</b>				
F1	Overall, this hotel gives me an excellent room ambience		5.51	0.894
F2	I am satisfied with the cleanliness of the hotel room	(Arifin & Mohammad,	5.59	0.931
F3	Overall, the layout of the room is accessible and comfortable for guests	2019; Carev, 2008;	5.65	0.907
F4	This hotel provided the good condition furniture	Clemes, Gan, et al., 2011)	5.51	0.896
F5	Overall, the design of this hotel has sufficient lighting in the room		5.68	0.875

## Hypotheses Testing

The multiple regression analysis results are summarized in Table 4. The guestroom cleanliness beta loading ( $\beta = .353, p < .05$ ) and guestroom lighting beta loading ( $\beta = .322, p < .05$ ) is less than 5% significant level, reflecting that the guestroom cleanliness and the guestroom lighting dimensions are significant to room guest satisfaction with theme hotels' guestroom physical environment. The guestroom furnishing is also significant, with the beta loading ( $\beta = .187, p < .10$ ) at less than a 10% significant level. The results support H<sub>1c</sub>, H<sub>1d</sub>, and H<sub>1e</sub>. Nevertheless, two dimensions, guestroom ambience and guestroom layout are insignificant, thus rejecting H<sub>1a</sub> and H<sub>1b</sub>. Thus, this result addresses RO1 and partially supports H1. Conclusion: Two dimensions are insignificant to the guest experience in theme hotels' physical environment.

**Table 4. Regressions Results of the Dimensions on Guest Satisfaction**

Predictors	Model 1	Sig	Assessment
Dependent Variable: Room Guests' Experience			
a) Guestroom Ambience	$B = .003$	.975	H <sub>3a</sub> rejected
b) Guestroom Layout	$B = -.031$	.781	H <sub>3b</sub> rejected
c) Guestroom Cleanliness	$\beta = .353$	.002**	H <sub>3c</sub> supported
d) Guestroom Furnishing	$\beta = .187$	.091*	H <sub>3d</sub> supported
e) Guestroom Lighting	$\beta = .322$	.001**	H <sub>3e</sub> supported

Note: \*\*\*significant at 1% level; \*\*significant at 5% level; \*significant at 10% level

Note: Adj.R<sup>2</sup> = 0.562; F = 33.350



## Discussion

H1 is formulated to address RO 1, i.e., to examine the guestroom physical environment quality dimensions toward room guest satisfaction. Table 4 shows a significant relationship between the physical environment in the guestroom dimensions (i.e., guestroom ambiance, guestroom layout, guestroom cleanliness, guestroom furnishing, and guestroom lighting) toward room guest satisfaction. The findings show that guestroom cleanliness, guestroom furnishing, and guestroom lighting supported other than two dimensions. Physical environment quality, particularly guestroom cleanliness, was critical in selecting a hotel guestroom. The finding is similar to previous studies' findings (Lockyer, 2003). It is supported by Jiang & Wen (2020) that guests are influenced by sanitation and cleanliness conditions while purchasing in the hotel room's physical environment.

Furthermore, the cleanliness of guestrooms (such as bedrooms and bathrooms) is essential in determining a hotel's reputation (Gu & Ryan, 2008). In much research, general hygiene and cleanliness have been identified as critical factors of tourists' hotel choices Lockyer (2005) in consideration of guest satisfaction. Thus, similar to the previous studies, who choose cleanliness as satisfaction when staying at the hotel. Meanwhile, in a study by Dang (2021), light statistically influences guest satisfaction. The insights also contribute to a better understanding the relationship between the physical environment, enjoyment, and long-term commitment. In addition, lighting is thought to positively impact the guest experience, as demonstrated in recent studies and past research. In particular, lighting helps create a specific mood, tone, and vibe in a location. Furthermore, according to a past study by Alsaqre et al. (2010), the design of a guestroom, including the decor and furniture in the rooms, impacts guest satisfaction. Ogle (2009) supported it, "let us not forget, attractive guestrooms are ultimately what hotels are all about."

## *Guestroom Ambience*

Alsaqre et al. (2010) show that the design of a guestroom hotel, including the decor and furniture, affects guest satisfaction. In this study, the guestroom ambience is defined as

capturing the overall appearance of the facility's design (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996). Therefore, the owners and managers of hotels should pay attention to this issue as it may maintain loyal customers that will be a good source for the profitability of the hotels. It contradicts the result of this study; the result does not support the guestrooms' ambiance. The plausible reason is that the selected hotel is a budget theme hotel.

### ***Guestroom Layout***

The layout of the guestroom is the second dimension.  $H_{1b}$  is not supported. The demographic profiles are a feasible explanation. Ryu and Han (2010) claimed that the layout is more significant for recurring visitors than first-time visitors. However, according to this study, the layout of a guestroom has little bearing on guest happiness. The visitor may believe that the layout depicted on the website is the same as the actual layout. In addition, poor signage detracts from customer satisfaction because it may be influenced by wording from a theme hotel. Other than that, the study took a theme hotel rather than a luxury hotel and resort.

### ***Guestroom Cleanliness***

Cleanliness is a critical dimension of the hospitality industry M Ariffin and Maghzi (2012). This dimension in the context of hotel services refers more to the condition of the guest room, which should provide comfort to the guest. All aspects of the room must be ensured to be in good condition. A part of comfort in the physical environment, comfort in hotel hospitality also refers to the guest's emotional state or feeling of comfort throughout their stay. Comfort will make them feel as if they are staying at their homes while staying at the hotels. Comfort is the tangible aspect of hotel offerings. The quality of emotions created by the qualities of staff performance, hospitality, and fellow diners generate long-term customer satisfaction and loyalty (Lashley, 2008).

### ***Guestroom Furnishing***

Results of hypothesis verification, all the established hypotheses were statistically significant (Maeng & Park, 2015). It was found that physical environmental factors such as furnishing. The furnishing was found to impact passengers' perception of quality positively. It was found that those factors related to furnishing in the airline. If furnishing in the airline is important, it is also essential in the hotel guestroom. It is the same as this research has supported  $H_{1d}$ .

### ***Guestroom Lighting***

Alsaqre et al. (2010) finding revealed that lighting was a significant determinant of both first-timers and repeaters because lighting played an essential role in the overall hotel experience. Yu and Akita (2019) stated that the artificial light application built the room's ambiance in proper locations. The room guests like the minimized natural lighting element to keep their privacy in the hotel's room. Hence, it is the same as the results that support our hypothesis  $H_{1e}$ , whereby lighting is an essential part of guest room hotels.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

The interaction between the room and its occupant is qualified by the occupant's mental and physical perceptions. As part of a hotel environment, the guestroom impacts the senses in multiple ways. This study has revealed a partially significant relationship between guestroom ambiance, layout, cleanliness, furnishing, and guestroom lighting towards room guest satisfaction. The results show that three sub-hypotheses (guestroom cleanliness, furnishing, and guestroom lighting) correlate with guest satisfaction in theme hotels. As a result, the hotel's administration must monitor and maintain room guest satisfaction during their stay.

Furthermore, the business traveler stated that the cleanliness of the guestroom is essential. The findings suggest that cleanliness contributes to the other dimensions, while

layout and ambiance own a selective medium. Hotel product satisfaction, rather than room guest contentment with the service experience, has a strong positive influence on guest return intentions; guests are more concerned with the condition of the hotel room.

## Contributions

This paper encourages the hotel industry to aid the hotel sector in better understanding the room guest experience while staying in a hotel. The hotel will receive a significant percentage of guest returns if it provides better service, good room conditions, and physical environments. According to eminent environmental psychologists, they considerably impact people's behavior. In other words, physical settings are important stimuli influencing people's intentions and subsequent behaviors based on their emotional state (e.g., pleasure and arousal). This paper also gives insight into the hotel industry. The unique experience created by a theme hotel is the hotel's key competitive advantage and differentiator from different types of hotels. To add to the authenticity of the concept, hotel managers should consider using local materials and recruiting local workers.

This paper contributes to the knowledge and develops a few approaches for the hotel industry to use to enhance room guest satisfaction by improving the quality of the guestroom. For example, upgrading the furniture, installing the ideal lighting conditions, and creating a pleasant guestroom ambiance might make the guests feel as if they are immersed in a magical world. Moreover, through the use of a theme hotel, this study indicates that the hotel has less intention regarding the physical environment in the guestroom. Guestroom space is also essential; Muslim guests can have sufficient prayer space.

This paper provides academicians with ideas for the guestroom's physical environment with the theme. It also provides an opportunity to change the layout concept in one of the internship hotel's guestrooms, allowing students to learn and guests to experience the real thing. Aside from that, there are currently just a few published empirical research focusing on theme hotel satisfaction with physical environment quality. Previous studies in hospitality disciplines primarily focused on physical environment quality aspects typically used in interior

design, exterior design, hotel building design, facilities, theme parks, resorts, and luxury hotels. As a result, the dimensions are narrowed to merely the guestroom after specific changes from the perspective of hospitality disciplines. This study's outcomes may impact the number of tourists that stay in theme hotels. By achieving the research objective, it is hoped that this study would contribute to the hospitality literature, particularly for theme hotels and other related hotels such as boutique hotels, from both an academic and practitioner perspective.

### **Limitations of the Research**

Recently, the hotel industry has been blooming roses all around the world. Nowadays, a particular hotel decorates the theme for guests to enjoy the new experience. However, some of the hotel designers did not get a chance to observe the guest's preferences regarding the hotel's environment. Hotel designers rarely could observe how guests perceive and interact with environments once they are created; therefore, they may not be fully aware of how some design decisions affect the guest experience. Theme culture be further developed and enhanced in theme hotels. Cultural themes refer to characteristics unique to a country or area, such as history, music, sports, cartoons, celebrities, or high-tech, and cartoons like the "Hello Kitty" hotels. As a result, further research into the design of old buildings in the context of hotels should be conducted and can add a new dimension, such as plant landscapes to make it more interesting and green practices. Other than that, more research may be done on the physical environment in the guestroom and e-sport theme hotel seeing as sport brings people from around the world together.

Another limitation is related to the data collection method. The sampling technique is the focus of this research. The sample size for this study was somewhat small, and intercept-convenience sampling was used only in Malacca City. As a result, this study is geographically constrained, and the respondents are not well-represented, as the study primarily focuses on a few theme hotels in Malacca City. Further research might be undertaken in other Malaysian

states, such as Penang and Terengganu, where culture and design in these states are more prominent.

Furthermore, future research could expand into other dimensions, such as authenticity and safety, such as images, and revisit the intention to understand the theme hotel better. Other hotel categories, including 4-star and 5-star, may also be used. Lastly, for future studies, the researcher could employ a qualitative method, such as an interview with a tourist, to determine the exact aspects contributing to satisfaction with the physical environment in the guestroom.

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