

# Role of Hotel Design in Perception of Hotel Ratings

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**Abstract**—Hotel design can be said to be one of the interesting and unique streams of architecture as it provides opportunities for design explorations. These explorations induce perceptions about the hotel standards and ratings. Hospitality forms an important aspect of hotel designs. The commerciality of a hotel primarily rests with its design and delivery of services. Various aspects like architectural character, indoor ambience, and amenities are responsible for people's experiences. Choice of hotel is usually decided by its reviews and ratings in today's times which is mostly governed by services and amenities provided. The standards do not give an idea of the architectural character of the hotel which is also of prime importance.

The paper aims to establish a relation between the hospitality standard ratings with the design aspects of the hotel. A gap in user's perception of the rating from the actual mark can be observed through his interpretation of space and design. This gap becomes a crucial factor of design for the commercial establishment of the hotel. The study uses participant observations, questionnaires to understand perceptions of visitors about the star ratings. These perceptions are then compared against the actual ratings to understand the gaps in perception. The study concludes that architectural character is significant in creating perceptions about standards of high star rated hotels.

**Keywords**—Hotel Star Rating, Visitors' Perception, Hospitality, Décor, Hotel Design

## I. INTRODUCTION

The hotel industry is one of the most promising industries of any region. They represent the socio-cultural background of that region and also are a node to meet the outside world through exchange of cuisines and décor ideologies. Hotel design hence becomes an important arm of architecture. Along with proper functionality, its interiors play a vital role in customers' choice and satisfaction.

In India, the HRACC (Hotels and Restaurants Accreditation Committee) under Ministry of Tourism governs the standards for hotels [4]. All hotels across India have been classified into various standards according to the services provided and thus economics. This rating of hotels termed as star rating is assigned by the HRACC. They include one star as basic occupancy to five stars with luxury and amenities available with occupancy. The committee issues detailed guidelines for the hotels to comply with the ratings, last revised in 2014 [5].

These guidelines talk about the facilities and area requirements of the hotels but do not give an idea of their architectural character and décor [4]. Hotel design is an

important factor in establishing its hospitality to the visitor. The entrance porch and lobby are first impressions of hotel to the visitors. Further the rooms and toilets and dining spaces catch the visitors' attention to comment on the hotel standards. There is always a running trend in interiors for their design style, material palettes, choice of colours in the society and people perceive the spaces through the lens of these parameters. Although the trends change, certain variables are constant. This standard of hotel from visitors' perception may not match the actual star rating of the hotel. The paper hence tries to bridge this gap and serve as a base for designing hotels as per star rating to coincide with the perspective of people for a better hospitality and experience. It is also an attempt to stress on the significance of architectural design in generating perceptions.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Hotel Design

Hotel design has major two aspects to it namely – service quality and experiential quality. The design needs to be workable with the more complex sets of user activity matrices and provide the ambiance desired by the customer [6]. The visitors' apprehension is thus result of the combination of these two qualities.

### B. Factors Affecting the Perception of Hotel Space

The star ratings of hotel give an idea of the services and amenities provided by them. These facilities become the first criteria of choosing the hotel for stay. Every space is a resultant of various parameters like volume, lighting and ventilation, décor, etc. These factors affect the ambiance of the room creating a mood for the space. This mood defines the customers' satisfaction of the hotel. Along with the interiors, connection to outdoors, spill outs and relaxing points in the hotel campus are also important [7]. Following are the factors affecting the perception of spaces [8] [3].

1. *Visual composition of space*: The factor talks about the colours, textures used for the faces. The patterns and texture lines and their orientation drives the viewers' eye making the rooms appear visually vertical, horizontal, congested or spacious. The visual composition also includes furniture arrangements and spaces created for movement.

2. *Lighting*: Lighting brings the space to life. It directly affects the mood of the space. For hotels, proper lighting sets the ambiance for the guests. Various types of lightings and their correct application in the room is important. Natural lighting is generally preferred by many for a relaxing and radiant atmosphere. On the contrary, dim lighting creates a cozy atmosphere which many people desire as part of privacy while dining.
3. *Materials used for furnishing and cladding*: Furniture helps set a style to the space. The main objective of the furniture is making the acquaintance comfortable but in the visual composition, they play crucial role. The materials can be chosen as per the hotel’s ideologies to make the spaces modern looking, luxurious, minimalistic, ornamental, antique, etc. This language of design is the primary element of interpretation of hospitality of the hotel.
4. *Entrance and lobby space*: The entrance and lobby are the face of the hotel. They should be grand and welcoming. Lobby is a multifunctional space where there is reception work being processed and guests relax while waiting. It is also the last place a guest sees while leaving the hotel. Hence the space needs to be designed to create a good lasting memory for the visitor. The lobby should instigate motivation values of stimulation, security, benevolence, hedonism and achievement [8].
5. *Amenities*: Amenities in a hotel is a preference of visitors while at selection stage. They are dictated by the rating guidelines and a hotel of particular star rating has to strictly adhere to them. But a designer can make these amenities more experiential in terms of their locations, interiors, fenestrations to top up the satisfaction quotient of the guest.
6. *Décor*: Décor includes the choice of furniture, artifacts, wall paintings, etc. It gives a sense of luxury to the interiors. Small artifacts, motifs or even the choice of peculiar wash basins, mirrors, chairs also impact the viewer. The trend of compiling antique arts in the interiors never goes out of fashion. When used judiciously they enhance the quality of spaces [3].
7. *Connection of indoors and outdoors*: People always like to have a connection to the outside even when indoors. This connection may be visual, physical or including some outdoor elements in the interiors. Here, facades and fenestrations play an important role along with planning of amenities. Landscaping also helps establish this connect since hotel is viewed as a campus than just a building; some open and green pockets enhances the quality of design [7].
8. Other factors affecting the hotel space are inclusion of services necessary for smooth working of the hotel. Also, innovation in terms of technology, material, structure and form of building has also become a judging criterion in recent times.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted by participant observation and through questionnaires to understand the perception of people about the star rating of hotel only through its design. The researcher identified variables through participant observation. The photographs showcasing these variables were used in questionnaires circulated to the respondents. Three hotels with star ratings of 3-star, 4-star and 5-star were selected and studied for their design. The names of hotels have not been mentioned due to confidentiality. The main areas of hotel namely – entrance porch, lobby, dining area, banquet hall, room and toilet we documented through photographs and used for preparing questionnaire.

The factors identified from the literature review were taken as variables for the study. The questionnaire was prepared based on these factors and respondents were asked to rate the hotel through the pictures of the spaces. The aim was to analyze how the same space is perceived differently by people as compared to their star ratings. The actual star ratings of the hotel were not shared with the respondents to get more accurate results. Following are the three hotels taken for study-

TABLE I. FIVE STAR HOTEL

Dining Space	
Room	
Entrance Porch	
Banquet Hall	
Lobby	
Toilet	

<sup>a</sup> Images of the main areas of hotel under study

TABLE II. FOUR STAR HOTEL

Dining Space	
Room	
Entrance Porch	
Banquet Hall	
Lobby	
Toilet	

<sup>b</sup>. Images of the main areas of hotel under study

TABLE III. THREE STAR HOTEL

Dining Space	
Room	
Entrance Porch	
Banquet Hall	
Lobby	
Toilet	

<sup>c</sup>. Images of the main areas of hotel under study

The first level of analysis was by visiting the hotels and studying them. The respondents were from various age groups and socio-cultural background. 26 respondents participated in the study and the analysis is based on their results. Following is the questionnaire used for study along with the general information questions. Following is the questionnaire used during study:

*Q1. Describe ambience of the Dining Space*

- 1. Luxurious      3. Cozy      5. Relaxing      7. Pleasant
- 2. Too Dark      4. Congested      6. Unnerving      8. Loud

*Q2. Rate the Entrance Porch of Hotel*

Least Liked - 1 To Most Liked – 5

*Q3. Describe the Lobby of Hotel*

- 1. Welcoming      3. High Ornate      5. Depressing
- 2. Over Powering      4. Minimalistic      6. Other, Specify

*Q4. Describe Toilet Space*

- 1. Congested      3. Luxurious      5. Satisfactory
- 2. Spacious      4. Not Satisfactory      6. Other, Specify

*Q5. Rate the Room of Hotel*

Least Liked - 1 To Most Liked – 5

*Q6. Describe Banquet Hall*

- 1. Luxurious      3. Too Simple      5. Spacious
- 2. Pleasant      4. Over Whelming      6. Other, Specify

*Q7. What did you like about the Interiors?*

- 1. Colours      2. Room      3. Décor      4. Furniture      5. Other, Specify
- Arrangement

*Q8. Determine the Star Rating of the Hotel from its Pictures*

1-star to 5-star

IV. RESULTS

The results show that there is a variation in the actual star rating and rating as perceived by the visitor from its design. The prominent factors influencing this differentiation are lighting, décor and colours of the spaces. The utility areas like toilets were also evaluated by the respondents for its design values. Thus, it can be observed that as a visitor, one wants to see the quality of rating right to the smallest rooms and not only for the major areas. For example, a 5-star hotel should look luxurious right from its entrance to the corridors and toilets, being workable and spacious is not a satisfactory criterion for the group regularly visiting these hotels.

Similarly, even if the décor and finishes of the hotel are well designed, insufficient or low lighting defies their hospitality rating from the customers. Also, the spaces should feel welcoming and humane to the visitor and not overpower

them with over designing them. A balance of intricate décor and subtle colour palette with enough lighting makes even a low rated hotel preferable over higher rated hotels.

A. Case Study One (Five-Star)

Following are the responses recorded from questionnaire



Fig. 1. Charts showing the responses for questions 1 to 6. The sequence of variables is as shown in questionnaire

The Fig. 2 show the responses for the hotel regarding overall interiors. The five-star hotel has been rated well in all factors of colour, room arrangement, décor and furniture. Though décor is still lacking in the chart, the workability of the rooms and choice of furniture has worked in its favor.

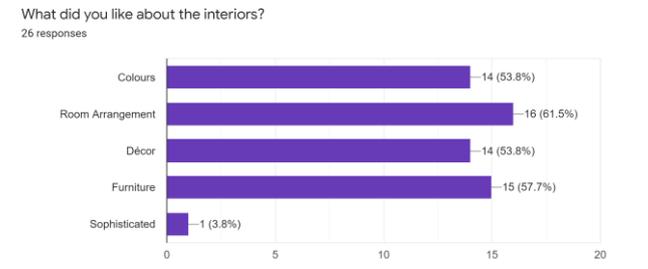


Fig. 2. Chart showing results from the questionnaire

The Fig. 3 shows the star rating as perceived by the respondents from the pictures. It can be seen that most of the people find the hotel to be a 4-star due to the simplicity in its interiors. The entrance porch is not designed well for a five star and the rooms too are designed like a 4-star hotel. The respondents who visit five stars very regularly and its part of their daily lifestyle have marked it as a 3-star and even 2-star hotel.

Determine the star rating of hotel from the pictures  
26 responses

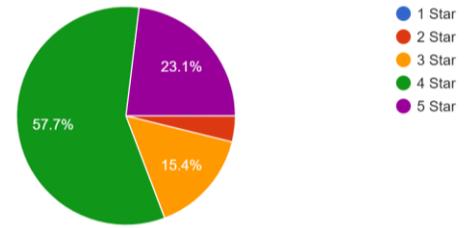


Fig. 3. Chart showing the perceptive rating of the hotel by respondents

B. Case Study Two (Four Star)

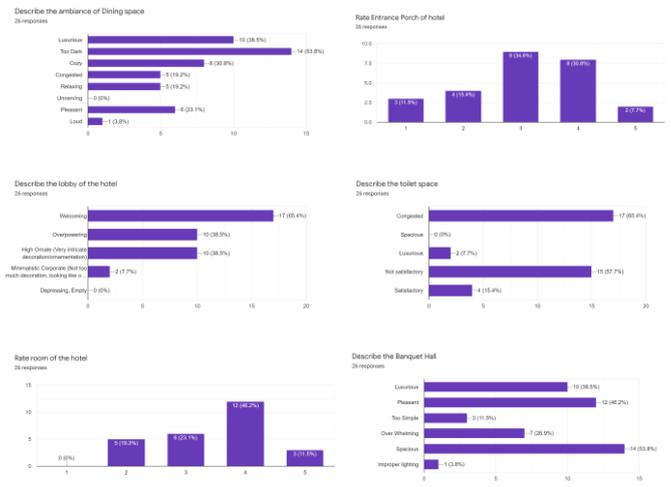


Fig. 4. Charts showing the responses for questions 1 to 6. The sequence of variables is as shown in questionnaire

Fig. 5 shows the results for similar question as for case one. The hotel has an elegant décor style which was appreciated by the respondents but the lack of lighting proved to be a setback for the same. The entrance porch was again too simple ad similar to case one. The lobby however is very overpowering in terms of its volume. The entire façade is curtain wall making the lobby space uncomfortable during late afternoons and thus consume more energy for conditioning.

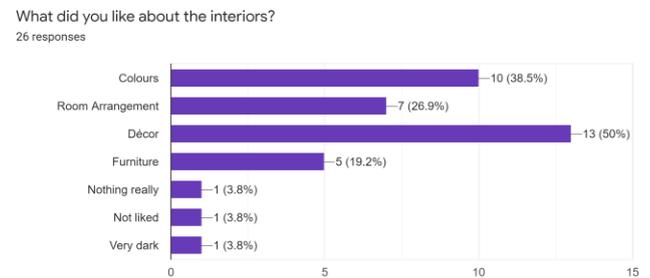


Fig. 5. Chart showing results from the questionnaire

Fig. 6 shows the star rating for this hotel. The major problem with the interiors is lighting. Still the design has a distinct look of luxury to it hence has been rated as five-star

too. Though the rooms are good, the toilet spaces are rated as not acceptable by most respondents and hence been rated as a 3-star. There is no consistency in the design and ambience seen through the different spaces i.e. the dining and banquet hall are very luxurious but the rooms and toilets are not upto the mark, hence it can be seen that the perceptive ratings vary right from one and two stars to five-star.

Determine the star rating of hotel from the pictures  
26 responses

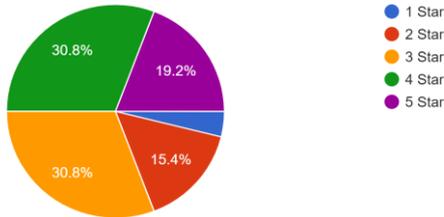


Fig. 6. Chart showing the perceptive rating of the hotel by respondents

C. Case Study Three (Three Star)

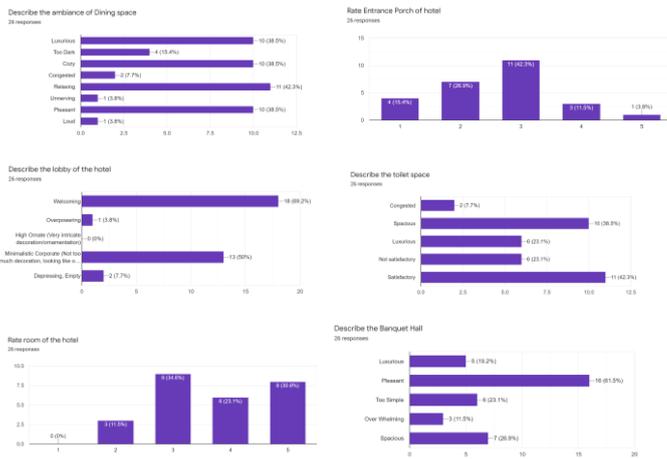


Fig. 7. Charts showing the responses for questions 1 to 6. The sequence of variables is as shown in questionnaire

Fig. 8 analyzes the design of this hotel. Though being a three star hotel, the design has justified its rating more than the other two hotels. The subtle colour palette, minimalistic design and good lighting with interesting seating arrangements makes it welcoming and pleasant lodging place. The simplicity in its design is appreciated by the respondents.

What did you like about the interiors?  
26 responses

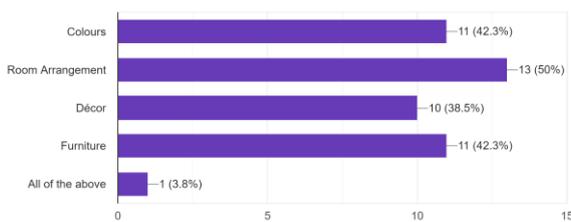


Fig. 8. Chart showing results from the questionnaire

Fig. 9 talks about its ratings. Most respondents have rated it as a three star which coincides with the actual rating. It can be observed that the case two hotel and case three hotel have been rated almost equally. This shows that the hotel need not be designed to look luxurious and high ornate when high rated but experience it provides to the viewer counts more. The choice of colours with proper lighting has made this hotel feel at equal with a four star.

Determine the star rating of hotel from the pictures  
26 responses

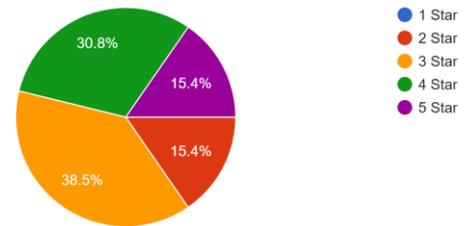


Fig. 9. Chart showing the perceptive rating of the hotel by respondents

V. CONCLUSION

Above results prove that the actual star rating of hotel can be different than perceived by the visitor. They also suggest that this perception is derived from the experiences of other hotels or hotels frequently visited by the respondents. Every design is viewed differently by various consumer groups. Hence knowing the target audience of the hotel is important before the design. The factors which still remain constant are a balanced visual composition with proper lighting and the arrangement of space. The material palettes should be chosen wisely to complement each other and not create any discord in the viewers' observation. Each material can be associated with certain emotions and these emotions need to be in harmony for an effective design [1].

Hotels industry and tourism is a growing sector of country contributing largely to the economy. Hence hospitality sector has gained importance and the industry offers many challenges for the designers to create landmark structures and invite visitors for a sophisticated living quarter. The hotel is the face of its city, an insight into the region's culture and heritage should be encouraged and integrated through the food, décor, motifs, etc. they connect more to the visitors as luxury [2]. The visitor group includes tourists from India and abroad and employees travelling for business looking for a hospitable stay. The hotel design thus needs to take care of the ambience and service quality for maintaining its stand in the dynamic industry.

The star rating of the hotel is a measurable factor of hospitality. The customer expects a discipline followed the hotel of higher rating but also wishes to enjoy the stay. As a product of trends and changes over the time in hotel design, the masses have a prejudiced concept of ratings with the interiors and expect them to match along with the economic statistics paid for that accommodation. Subsequently, the interiors should reflect their bearing as part of consumer satisfaction. Hence study of visitors' perception is important to be compared to the rating of hotel.

The current scenario sees a deviation in the observed rating and actual rating creating a discord between the hotel management and its customers. Understanding the market requirements, choice of materials and finishes and their correlation for an enhanced output should be the priority. Use of lighting and interior scaping to improve quality of indoors too may help in bridging this gap. Lastly, the rating guidelines should include parameters of interior design aligned with the prospect expectations and experiential quality.

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