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## **Developing the room experience. Case: Scandic Hotel Laajavuori**

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### **Abstract**

The aim of the thesis was to map out the customers room experience in Scandic Laajavuori. The thesis was development research with the purpose to point out elements to be development points in the room experience. Scandic Laajavuori was the commissioner for this thesis. Scandic Laajavuori is a SPA hotel which belong to the Scandic Group Oy hotel chain. Scandic Group Oy is the largest hotel chain in the Nordic countries.

The research was implemented by using qualitative research method. The data collection method chosen for the thesis was a survey, which is not very well known as a qualitative research method. The survey was conducted at the turn of the year 2022-2023.

The results of the survey gave a versatile understanding of the customer's needs and expectations towards hotel room experience. In total to the survey 60 responders. The customers are looking for place where they can escape from their daily life. The bed as a core service of the hotel room was consider the most important factor of the hotel room. Besides the bed also quietness and room size were highlighted in the results.

### **Keywords/tags (subjects)**

Hotel room, Trends in the hotel industry, Customer experience, Qualitative research, Hotel room experience

### **Miscellaneous (Confidential information)**

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# 1 Introduction

In this thesis, the objective was to gain a deeper understanding of the customer experience in Scandic Laajavuori and identify areas for improvement. The focus is on the customer's perception of the hotel rooms and the goal is to understand what the customers think about their room experience. This thesis aims to uncover what aspects of the room experience are important to customers and what their expectations are. Additionally, the thesis seeks to identify any potential pain points in the room experience and what can be done to improve it.

The research problem was formulated based on Scandic Laajavuori's wishes. As the commissioner of this thesis, Scandic Laajavuori played a crucial role in defining the research objectives. This research was topical since Scandic Laajavuori is starting to renovate their hotel rooms. Specifically, the research problem aimed to investigate the customer's experience in the hotel room setting, with a view to mapping out their different needs and expectations.

Through this research, the aim was to gain a comprehensive understanding of the various types of customer preferences and expectations when it comes to hotel room experience. The research question was how to develop the room experience in Scandic Laajavuori. The ultimate goal was to provide recommendations and insights that would enable Scandic Laajavuori to enhance their hotel room offerings and deliver a more satisfying customer experience.

## 1.1 Structure of the thesis

The structure of this thesis can be divided into three primary categories, which include theory, research and its results, and conclusion and development.

In the theory section, a comprehensive overview of the hotel industry and its current trend. Additionally, the concept of hotel room service is examined, along with a discussion on customer experience and its impact on overall satisfaction.

This thesis is based on qualitative research methodology, which aims to gather insights and opinions about the room experience at Scandic Laajavuori. To achieve this objective, a hard print survey was utilized, consisting of open-ended questions that allowed participants to express their

thoughts and experiences freely. The survey was distributed from mid-December to mid-January, ensuring a diverse range of responses from a varied sample.

The research section of the thesis presents the findings of the survey, highlighting critical insights into the customer experience at Scandic Laajavuori. The results are presented in a detailed and organized manner, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of the data. In this section, the critical factors that influence the customer experience are identified, enabling the development of targeted solutions and improvements.

Finally, the conclusion and development section of the thesis provides an overview of the research findings, highlighting the critical takeaways and their implications for the hotel industry. Additionally, this section includes recommendations and proposed solutions for enhancing the customer experience at Scandic Laajavuori. These proposals are grounded in the research findings, ensuring their relevance and practicality. Overall, this thesis provides valuable insights into the customer experience and presents actionable recommendations for enhancing satisfaction and loyalty in the hotel industry.

## **1.2 Research-based development assignment**

The thesis is focused on research-based development work, with the main goal of promoting working life development through the application of research-based approaches. Its primary objective is to promote the development of working life through practical and hands-on activities that are informed by research methods and data analysis. The core characteristic of this work is its emphasis on practicality and its reliance on research-based approaches to guide the development of solutions for the operating environment. (Jamk University of Applied Sciences, n.d.)

Throughout the thesis, the researcher has employed a research-based approach to address these practical problems. This approach involves the use of research methods to collect and analyze data, which is then used to inform the development of practical solutions that can be applied in the workplace. By combining concrete development activities with rigorous research methods, the thesis aims to provide practical solutions that are grounded in sound research. (Jamk University of Applied Sciences, n.d.)

## 2 Hotel industry

Hotel industry is part of the hospitality industry. The hospitality industry has existed for thousands of years across the globe. Even though the hospitality industry has developed over time, it still has preserved its main idea: providing services for guests.

The hotel industry refers to the business of providing temporary lodging facilities to guests, typically in the form of a hotel room. It is a diverse and dynamic industry that encompasses a wide range of accommodation options, including luxury hotels, budget hotels, resorts, motels, and extended stay hotels, among others. The hotel industry operates globally and is a major contributor to the economy, providing employment opportunities and generating revenue through the sale of rooms, food, and other related services. (RevFive, 2021)

The hotel industry has undergone significant changes in recent years, driven by technological advancements, changing consumer behavior, and shifting economic conditions. Some of the key trends shaping the industry include the growing use of online booking platforms, an increased focus on sustainability and environmentally friendly practices, the use of technology to enhance the guest experience, and the emergence of new forms of accommodation such as home-sharing platforms. (Hotel Management, 2021)

### 2.1 Scandic Hotel

Scandic is Nordic's largest hotel chain. They have in total 280 hotels in six different countries. Those countries are Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Poland, and Germany. 53 of those hotels are located in Finland.

Scandic was founded on 1963 in Laxå, Sweden. At that time, they operated under the name Esso Motor Hotel. Esso Motor Hotels was a subsidiary of Esso which is the American oil company. The hotel concept idea was to offer roadside hotels for a consumer. The hotels were built alongside the highways, so they were easier for travelers to reach since it was along their journey. In those hotels there was TV in the rooms and a pool for the guests to use. Both of those factors were rare in the hotels (Scandic Hotel Group, n.d.).

In 1984 Esso Motor hotels were sold and they got a name Scandic. After that Scandic Hotels started to expand and already in 2000 it became the largest hotel operator in Nordic countries. In Finland the Scandic's latest expansion was in 2017 when Scandic bought Restel's hotel increasing that way their hotel amount in Finland with 40 hotels. With this deal Scandic became the leading hotel operator also in Finland (Scandic Hotel Group, n.d.).

### **2.1.1 Scandic Laajavuori**

Scandic Laajavuori was built on 1969. At that time, it was owned by Rantasipi. At the beginning the hotel was much smaller compared to this day. The owner of the building changed twice. In the 90s Rantasipi chain were bought by Restel. In the end of the 2017 Scandic bought the hotels from the Restel and the name became Scandic Laajavuori (Mannermaa, 2017).

Scandic Laajavuori is located five kilometers away from the city center. Next to the Scandic Laajavuori is located Jyväskylä's biggest outdoor center Laajis. Customers can enjoy amazing nature trails and other outdoor options while staying in Laajavuori.

Since the Scandic Laajavuori is a SPA hotel it has variability its customers. During the weekends and holidays hotel is usually full of the families and other leisure travelers. During the business days the main customers group is business travelers.

The building has four floors. From the building can be found spa and wellness section, restaurant, cafeteria, bowling, 21 meeting and conference rooms and 196 hotels rooms. The hotel rooms are currently divided into eight different room categories. Besides Scandic Laajavuori's own services in same the building is located escape room and AK studio hairdresser services.

### **2.1.2 Hotel rooms**

In Scandic Laajavuori there are currently eight different room categories, but most of the rooms are still different from each other even though they are in the same room category. In every room there are wooden floors, desks for working, TV, hair dryer, FACE Stockholm products and bathrobes. In superior rooms besides the previous equipping customer gets slippers, tray with hot drinks, ironing set and minibar. There is also an ironing room for those to use how are not staying

in the superior rooms. The majority of the rooms have only a shower but there is an exception in two rooms which have a bathtub. Minibar can also be found from most of the Standard rooms but there will not be quarantine that every room has it. Some rooms just have a small fridge. The rooms in Scandic Laajavuori do not room-specific air conditioning.

Pet rooms are located on the second floor. There are 40 rooms where the guests can stay with pets. If needed some of the guests can also be located on the third floor with the pet, but Scandic Laajavuori is focusing to keep pets on the second floor. The fourth floor is an allergy friendly floor. The fourth-floor guests are not allowed to go with the pets.

Into every room price is included the breakfast and the use of spa and the wellness area. Under 12 years old children sleeps for free of charge with their parents.

### **Standard rooms**

In Scandic Laajavuori there are two types of basic Standard room. In total Scandic Laajavuori has 15 Standard rooms with a queen bed and 73 Standard rooms with a twin bed. Rooms are from the 15 square meters to 26 square meters.

Into a Standard Queen room cannot fit more than two persons or two adults and child in the parents' bed. Most of the rooms have minibars except for two of them. The view from each room is to the inner yard. These rooms can only be found on the third and fourth floor. The queen beds in these rooms are 140-160 centimeters wide.

Standard rooms with a twin bed can mostly fit three people. This is the largest room type in Scandic Laajavuori. There are eight rooms which can only be with two people and four rooms where they can fit up to four people. Most of the rooms have minibars except four of them. In this room category is currently the only room where there is an air heat pump. In this category there are rooms with an inner yard view and with a forest and lake view.

Besides the normal Standard room there are two other standard room categories in Scandic Laajavuori. Another one is with the balcony and the other one is Standard family four. Standard balcony room type can only fit two people and a crib. In this room category there are only twin



beds. These rooms are 20 square meters. All rooms are located on the fourth floor, so pets are not allowed into this room type. Like the name says, these rooms have a balcony. Smoking is forbidden on the balcony. These rooms do not have minibars. There are only 15 rooms in this room category.

Standard family four room type can fit up to four persons. The room includes two 90 centimeters wide beds. Extra two beds can be done from the sofa bed or housekeeping can bring two individual extra beds into the room. The biggest rooms in this room type are 42 square meters but most of the rooms average are 26 square meters. There are 34 rooms in this room class. Some of these rooms have a minibar, some of them have a small fridge and some of the rooms do not have minibar or the fridge at all. This is the biggest room type of the Standard rooms.

### **Superior rooms**

In total Scandic has only 26 rooms in the whole Superior category. In normal Superior room type they have one Superior Queen room and 13 Superior Twin rooms. Into the Superior queen there can fit only two persons. It is 20 square meters with 160 centimeters wide bed. Since the room is so small it cannot fit an extra bed. There is a possibility for a child to sleep in their parents' bed. The room is located on the second floor, and it has a view to the forest.

Superior rooms with twin beds are 42 square meters. The room can fit up to four people. Most of the views from these rooms are to the woods or city. The extra beds can be made from the sofa bed or housekeeping can bring two extra beds into the room.

Like in Standard rooms there are also Superior rooms with the balcony and Superior family four rooms. In total there are six rooms in both of these room categories.

The Superior rooms with the balcony are from 35 to 41 square meters. All the rooms have either a forest or lake view. Customers can enjoy those views from their own balcony. The balcony is a nonsmoking area. In these rooms there are two 90-100 centimeters wide beds and possibility to maximum two extra beds. In this room type can be found only two rooms where there is bathtub. Some of the rooms can be divided into two separate areas with the communication door.

Superior family four room type has the biggest rooms in Scandic Laajavuori. There can be found for example a room which can fit up to ten people. However, most of the rooms in this room type can fit 5 people on average. Most of the rooms can be divided into two separate rooms with sliding doors. There are only seven rooms of this room type. These rooms range from 38 square meters up to 46 square meters. These rooms also have a sitting area so families can spend time together.

## **2.2 Current trends in the hotel industry**

Trends are showing the direction to where something is developing. According to the Cambridge Dictionary (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.) "a trend is a general direction in which something is developing or changing".

The hotel industry experiences major impacts from shifts in customer behavior, technological advancements and the introduction of new business theories. These factors have a crucial impact on the trends and direction of the industry. The current trend in the hotel industry, which also affects the customer experience in hotel rooms, involves the integration of smart technology, promotion of sustainability and creation of unique experiences. The use of smart technology in the hotel sector is becoming more widespread and includes automation systems for improved efficiency and personalization. Sustainability is also increasingly important, with hotels taking steps to reduce their environmental impact. Providing unique experiences to guests is another key factor that is shaping the industry, as hotels aim to create distinct and memorable moments for their customers (Siteminder, 2021).

The Ministry of Employment and the Economy has published Finland's tourism strategy. The core of Finland tourism strategy is "Achieving more together – sustainable growth and renewal in Finnish tourism"(Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, 2022. p.6.). The strategy highlights that sustainability, and digitalization and technology development will be the cornerstones of tourism field development in upcoming years (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, 2022). Those megatrends in tourism field need to be taken that the company can maintain its competitiveness especially during post pandemic time.

## **Sustainability**

The hotel industry is experiencing a significant shift towards sustainability, which is expected to have an even greater impact in the future. Customers are becoming more conscious of the climate and energy crisis, and they are looking to make a difference through their travel choices. They are seeking out destinations that have taken concrete steps towards addressing environmental issues. (Siteminder, 2021). This trend is only set to grow as customers are becoming increasingly aware of the pressing issues facing our planet and are looking to make a positive impact through their travel decisions. They want to ensure that their choices align with their values and are seeking out destinations that are taking meaningful action on environmental and sustainability issues. The hotel industry must respond to this demand and strive to offer sustainable travel experiences to meet the evolving expectations of travelers.

Sustainability in Scandic Hotels can be seen many ways. With sustainability Scandic Hotels Group is one of the leading chains in the Nordic Countries. 80 percent out of all Scandic Hotels Group's hotels have the Nordic Swan Ecolabel. The Nordic Swan Ecolabel is a recognized and well-respected sustainability label in the Nordic countries and is widely used by both public and private sector organizations. By choosing to use the label, hotels can demonstrate their commitment to sustainability, which can help to attract environmentally conscious guests, and can also help to improve the overall sustainability of the hospitality industry. Scandic's goal is to receive the Nordic Swan Ecolabel to every hotel in 2023 (Scandic Hotels Group, n.d.)

Scandic is committed to following the goals outlined in Agenda 2030 to create a more sustainable future for both their customers and the environment. In particular when we are talking about hotel rooms, they are focused on following the 12th goal of Agenda 2030, which is responsible consumption and production. To achieve this goal, Scandic is taking steps to make their hotel rooms as sustainable as possible. They renovate their rooms averagely every 15 years and tend to use as much as possible eco-labeled furniture and products during these renovations. By doing so, they aim to create long-lasting spaces that will have a minimal impact on the environment. (Scandic Hotels Group, n.d.)

## **Technology**

Technology development is going forward all the time. In the future customers are expecting the companies to follow the development of the digitalization. If the company cannot keep up with the development, it might affect to the customer satisfaction.

Technology provides a possibility for a customer to personalize their hotel experience. Since every person has difference opinions and preferences so same things are not going to provide the same satisfaction to every customer. Technology such as voice-activated controls, temperature, lighting customization and other advanced technology provides for customer a possibility to customize their room experience to be exactly how they personally what it to be. The implementation of this system could significantly enhance guest comfort and satisfaction, but it also presents some challenges, such as data privacy and security concerns. (Leonidis, A., Korozi, M., Margetis, G., Grammenos, D., & Stephanidis, C., 2013).

Artificial intelligence is one of the results of the technology development. Great example of that is Amazon's Alexa. It is voice service assistant. Amazon has developed version of it for the hospitality industry use, especially for hotels called Alexa Smart Properties for hospitality. Alexa makes many tasks easier such as calling front desk, ordering room service and controlling in-room temperature. Even though the discussion with Alexa is possible Alexa does not record them so guest's privacy will be protected (Amazon, n.d.).

## **3 Customer experience**

Customer experience is the most important factor when it comes to the hotel industry since the industry is based on customer service. It is the impression the customer gets during the whole service process. Like Meyer, C. and Schwager, A. states "Customer experience is the internal and subjective response customers have to any direct or indirect contact with a company" (Understanding Customer experience, 2007. p.2).

When the customer gets a positive customer experience it promotes customer loyalty and improves the brand image (Bordeaux, 2021). Customer starts to create customer experience from the moment they have their first interaction with the company. It's important to note that the

customer experience begins long before the customer sets foot in the hotel. In nowadays digital age, the first interaction often takes place online when the customer is researching and comparing hotels. This means that a hotel's website, social media presence, and online reviews are all critical components of the customer experience.

### **3.1 Hotel room as a service**

Hotel room is a service. Hotel room as a service refers to a type of accommodation that provides lodging facilities for guests in exchange for a fee. The hotel room service typically includes a variety of amenities such as a bed, bathroom, TV, room service, and other comforts and conveniences. This type of service is often used by travelers for short-term stays, for business or leisure purposes. With the advent of technology, booking a hotel room has become more convenient and accessible, with various online platforms and mobile apps offering easy-to-use booking systems and options for customizable stays. Overall, hotel room as a service offers a convenient and comfortable solution for travelers seeking temporary lodging arrangements.

The hotel room itself is a tangible aspect of the service, however, the room experience itself is intangible and unique to each individual. The experience can be different every time, and it is difficult to create two similar experiences. The hotel room as a service is composed out of three service types. Those three are core service, supporting service, and facilitating service. (Rautiainen & Siiskonen, 2021, s. 166)

#### **Core, supporting and facilitating services, and amenities**

Every company in the hospitality industry has been built around the core service. Hotel room has the biggest impact to the hotel's price-quality ratio which is why the hotel room is hotels' core service for customer. The core service of the hotel room itself is the bed. A hotel room is not the only service hotels often have to offer. Core services often have a layered service surrounding it. Those services are supporting and facilitating services. Supporting and facilitating services are meant to bring more value to the core service (Rautiainen & Siiskonen, 2021, s. 166).

Supporting services are meant to make the use of the core service easier. Also, some of the additional services are necessary parts of the service and the service cannot be produced without

those. In the hotel room supporting services are, for example, wi-fi connection and working facilities in the room. Other examples of supporting services would be check-in and check-out situations, without those the core service could not be used. (Rautiainen & Siiskonen, 2021, s. 166)

Facilitating services are essential components of any service industry, including the hotel industry, as they add value to the core service being offered. When it comes to hotel room support services, their primary task is to enhance the guest's experience by making their stay more enjoyable and comfortable. These supporting services can include amenities such as room-specific air conditioning, customized room decorations, or the provision of ironing facilities (Rautiainen & Siiskonen, 2021, s. 167).

Hotels can offer amenities for the customers. Amenities are products or services which are provided for guests often free of charge. The purpose of the amenities increases the attractiveness or value of the hotel room. Amenities have a positive impact on a customer's experience. Also, for some amenities customers might want to pay a little bit extra to get them. There are two types of amenities, intangible and tangible. Intangible amenities can be for example nice view from the window and tangible can be hot drink tray, small hygiene products or slippers. Tangible amenities customers can usually take home. That way they get a memory of their stay. (This Hotel Amenity Is One Guests Can Take Home , 2019)

### **3.2 Room experience as a part of the customer experience**

Room experience is part of the experience the customer gets while staying at the hotel, but it has a huge impact on the customer experience since it is the core service they are paying for. In the hotels the customer's experience is not just interaction with customer service personnel and customer. Other main factors which are part of forming the customer experience are food, beverage, and service. In the hotel industry the room experience plays an important part in the whole picture when it comes to customer experience.

When a customer arrives at a hotel, their interactions with hotel staff and the environment significantly influence their overall experience and satisfaction. Although the customer journey at a hotel consists of multiple touch points, housekeepers play a crucial role when it comes to ensuring customer satisfaction and customer experience in the hotel room (Himanshu, 2020).

As guests settle into their hotel room, they yearn for a profound sense of carefree bliss. The quest for relaxation at home is often overshadowed by the constant reminders of unfinished chores and lingering responsibilities that permeate the familiar surroundings. However, the hotel room serves as a sanctuary, offering a respite from the demanding routines of daily life and igniting a liberating sensation of unfettered freedom. This desire for freedom resonates throughout the room, influencing various facets, including the careful cleanliness that engenders a refreshing ambiance (Van Lennep, 1987).

Hotel room cleanliness is one of the most critical factors that impact room experience. A clean and well-maintained room is a fundamental aspect of guest comfort, and it is an essential part of the overall experience that customers expect when they stay at a hotel (Himanshu, 2020).

The room's scent significantly impacts the customer's experience. If there is a bad smell, such as a stale drain or remnants from previous guests, it hinders the new customer from feeling a sense of ownership over the room. To create a welcoming atmosphere, the room should have a neutral scent that makes the customer feel like they are the first to occupy it, regardless of previous occupants (Van Lennep, 1987).

Customers often evaluate the cleanliness of their hotel room immediately upon arrival. The state of cleanliness is an integral part of the first impression that customers receive when they enter their room. If the first impression is negative, it can significantly impact the customer's perception of the hotel and their stay, even if other aspects of their visit are perfect.

## **4 Research**

The thesis focused on the Scandic Laajavuori's desire to investigate the issue of customer satisfaction and room experience in Scandic Laajavuori hotel rooms. However, the scope of the problem extended beyond mere satisfaction and sought to identify the factors that are critical to customers' hotel room experiences. The goal was to take a user-centered approach to gain insights into problem areas and develop solutions.

## 4.1 Implementation of the research

The selection of the research method is based on the research problem. Research methods can be divided into two categories: qualitative and quantitative. It is important to understand the distinction between the two and how each method functions in order to find the best method for this research.

When deciding on the research method, it is important to consider the type of data that is required for the research. Quantitative research methods rely heavily on statistical analysis, using pre-determined questions with closed-ended responses. On the other hand, qualitative methods provide a deeper understanding of the needs and experiences of the target population. This method employs open-ended questions and the data collected is analyzed through text and image analysis, giving a more comprehensive view of the subject. (Creswell, 2014, p. 45)

Choosing the appropriate research method depends on the research problem, the type of data required, and the goals of the research. Both qualitative and quantitative methods have their own strengths and limitations, and the researcher must weigh these factors carefully before deciding.

This thesis is implemented by qualitative method. It serves the best for purpose of this thesis research. Qualitative research is a valuable approach for examining customer experience as it provides a rich and versatile understanding of how customers perceive and interact with a product, service, or brand. It provides a more human-centered approach to understanding customer experience, as it seeks to understand the experiences and perspectives of customers in their own words. Qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews, open-ended surveys, and ethnographic observation, allow researchers to explore customers' subjective experiences, feelings, and attitudes in a more detailed and meaningful way. (Creswell, 2014, p. 46)

While starting the thesis process, I considered the option to implement the research by quantitative method but since the research problem is based on people's experiences and opinions the qualitative research was clearly better option and was way to provide more useful and versatile data for the research.

The survey was conducted in Finnish, so the responses has been summarized and translated.



## 4.2 Research method

### Survey

The research of this thesis is implemented by qualitative questionnaire. A questionnaire can be used as a quantitative method or qualitative method. When questionnaire is used as a quantitative method the questionnaire includes scalable questions and questions are close-ended questions. Instead, when a survey is used as a qualitative data collection method, questions in the survey are open-ended questions. The main purpose of qualitative survey is to reveal people's opinions and experiences. To the qualitative survey responder can answer more deeply and open their experiences (Jansen, 2010).

Qualitative surveys, although less commonly recognized compared to quantitative surveys, are a popular method of data collection in survey research. The method is suitable especially for students and less experienced researchers. For students, conducting a qualitative survey can be a more cost-effective and time-efficient way to gather data compared to other methods, such as conducting interviews or focus groups. Additionally, qualitative surveys can also be seen as less intimidating for participants as they provide a degree of privacy and anonymity, making them more likely to respond openly and honestly. (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 136)

The survey has one major strength which is collecting data from large amounts of people. To achieve this strength surveys must be created in a way that they do not lead people in the direction the researcher is thinking that the answer would be. It is important to be able to create a survey as neutral as possible so that the responder is not able to start thinking that this would be the answer what the researcher would have wanted. The best result survey gives to the researcher when the responders are honest and are not thinking how they are expecting to respond. (Botterill & Platenkamp, 2012, p. 173).

The hard copy format survey was selected because it is something customers can always come back to. It is with the customer during their whole stay, and they can fill it in every time something comes up related to the survey questions. I considered creating an online survey, but I ended up with the hard copy since Scandic has diverse customers so hard copy as a survey format is an option which is easy and accessible to everyone.

The survey was printed and given out to the customers at reception during their check-in to the room. The survey was shared from Christmas until mid-January for selected guests. Guests were selected based on their room selection and party's size. This way was able to get as versatile answers as possible since during Christmas there was more bigger parties and families staying in the hotel and in turn beginning of the January the workers came from their Christmas break, so it was important to get answers also from them since they are one of the biggest consumer groups what Scandic Laajavuori has. The questionnaire was distributed from the reception.pp On the questionnaire paper was instruction for those who wanted to participate to the research to return the filled paper to the reception when they check out.

### **4.3 Research ethics**

The Finnish National Board on Research Integrity, or TENK, has written a guideline for conducting ethical research involving human subjects in Finland. These guidelines are intended to provide a framework for researchers, research institutions, and ethics committees to ensure that research is conducted in a responsible and ethical manner. These guidelines are an important resource for anyone involved in conducting research involving human subjects in Finland, and they serve to promote ethical practices and protect the welfare of research participants (Finnish National Board on Research Integrity, 2012).

The guidelines emphasize the importance of informed consent, privacy, confidentiality, and respect for research subjects. Researchers are expected to provide clear and understandable information to participants about the nature and purpose of the research, as well as any potential risks or benefits involved. Participants must be able to provide informed consent to participate in the research, and they must be allowed to withdraw their participation at any time (Finnish National Board on Research Integrity, 2012).

The hard print survey was distributed from the reception during the check-in process. If customer wanted to participate to the survey at the beginning of the survey was an instruction to return the survey to the reception during check out. The customer could make the choice themselves whether they wanted to participate in the research or not.

The guidelines also address issues related to data collection, storage, and use. Researchers must take steps to protect the privacy and confidentiality of research subjects, and they must ensure that any data collected is used only for the purposes of the research and is securely stored (Finnish National Board on Research Integrity, 2012).

The research survey was implemented completely anonymously. At the beginning of the survey was asked of the hotel room's number when the customer was staying. Since these was not asked the date of the accommodation it is impossible to connect customer date to specific answer, so all the answers were able to retain anonymous.

#### **4.4 Research reliability**

Every research method has its own issues which cause problems with research's reliability. The task of the researcher is to reduce the amount of reliability issues related to the research. The reliability issues depend on a lot about the topic, structure, research methodology. The research is important to build in the way that the reliability issues would be minimized (Alasuutari 2011, p. 149-150)

Often a researcher might have own intuitions and expectations towards the research subject. These intuitions and expectations might have an effect to the structure of the research (Alasuutari 2011, p.149-150). While creating the survey was important to create it that way that customer was able to share their own thought. Questions were kept very simple that they did not lead the responder to any direction while they were answering. That guaranteed that answers were truly customer's own opinion.

While hard copy qualitative surveys may have their benefits, they also have their drawbacks. One of them was the ease of skipping questions. Unlike an online survey, with a hard copy survey participants can easily choose not to answer certain questions, leading to an uneven distribution of responses and potentially compromising the validity of the data collected. Utilizing an online survey platform would have eliminated this issue, as it would not have allowed participants to submit the survey without answering all of the required questions. But like stated in chapter 7.2. in the second last paragraph the use of hard copy format provides easy access to the customers to be able to come back to the survey anytime something came up in their minds during their stay.

Another issue with the hard print qualitative survey is its lack of flexibility in asking probing questions (Braun & Clarke, 2013. p.137). Even though the questions may be open-ended, the survey taker is limited to the questions that are provided. They cannot ask follow-up questions or seek clarification, which can limit the depth and breadth of the responses received.

## **5 Results**

The aim of the survey was to map out how Scandic Laajavuori's customers feelings and thoughts about the hotel rooms and how Scandic Laajavuori could develop the room to respond more to the customer's needs. The questionnaire collected 60 answers.

For this research for the background information were only asked that in which room are they staying so they responses was able to separate according to the room category. Other background information was the company, with who they were travelling since families for example has more different needs that for example someone how is travelling alone. There were versatile selection of the responders participating to the survey. Majority of the responders who stayed in the Superior room were travelling with their families in turn majority of the responders who were staying in the Standard room were staying alone or with their partner or friend.

### **5.1 Customer's impression of the hotel room**

To starting to develop the customer's room experience it is important to figure out how customers currently feel about the room. The first impression matters a lot. It is something customers cannot get twice. In the survey customers were asked what their first impression of their hotel room was and how they would describe their room by using three words.

The majority of the responders who stayed in the superior room had a positive first impression of their room. The rooms were described as spacious and practical. Also, responders mentioned the word clean often. It could be considered that the housekeeping had done their task so well that the customer.

In addition to these positive aspects, some respondents also noted that the rooms appeared to be basic and outdated, using neutral language to describe this observation. Furthermore, the room's

smell was mentioned in the feedback. Respondents felt that the fresh aroma of the room created a welcoming atmosphere for guests.

It is worth mentioning that two respondents expressed that the cleanliness of the room did not meet their expectations, providing feedback that highlights areas for improvement.

## **5.2 What to develop in the room**

By understanding the customer's needs it is easier to start finding solutions and how the room experience could be developed. Customers were asked to point out factors in the room which they felt were unnecessary and what they were missing from the room.

This section of the survey placed a strong emphasis on the improvement of the overall room experience. The fifth question specifically inquired about any possible exclusions from the room and, if so, what they might be. The sixth question took the opposite approach, asking whether there were any unnecessary elements in the room.

During the survey it became clear that customers held varying opinions and offered diverse feedback concerning their experiences with both the Standard and Superior room options. The majority of respondents identified common elements that they considered unnecessary or expressed wishes for additional features to be included in the room.

The most often responders brought up the lack of technology. One of the most often brought up was the missing outlets especially near the bed. Nowadays almost every person has a cell phone and often for example customers need to charge their laptop while they are working there might not be enough outlets to charge all the devices which need to be.

Air conditioners were also brought up often as a factor what they would want in their room. Customers want to be able to determine the temperature of their hotel room since general ventilation is not adjustable for each room.

There were not many factors in the room which customers felt unnecessary. Only two factors were brought up that felt unnecessary. Those two were the in-room tablet for the internal calls and mini bar content. Most of the responders who felt that the in-room tablet was unnecessary said that it was a weird device for the purpose of internal calls. The content of the minibar was also felt unnecessary. All the responder who mentioned the minibar said that they would have rather had just an empty minibar in the room. This was reasoned since the products in the minibar are considered very expensive.

One responder pointed out the accessibility of the trash cans in the room. The trash can is black with red and green recycling boxes in it. The boxes can be placed either way, but in front of the trash can is color coded guidance what goes in which recycling boxes. If the boxes are on the other way around than in the guidance sticker, a person who is green-red color blind is not able to see which of the boxes is the correct one. Overall, also accessibility of the room was mentioned by few responders. There are not any allergy free accessible room, and those rooms are not completely accessible. Those creates challenges towards those who would be in need of the accessibility.

Few of the responders got a room where extra bed was spread out. They felt that it took away the space from the room and the guest would have gone the have a couch to use so they do not have to spend all the time in the bed. They felt that the room was missing a place to hang out.

### **5.3 Factors affecting to the room experience**

There are a lot of different factors which have a huge impact on customer satisfaction and room experience. When asked about the factors which have the most significant impact for the room experience four factors stood out clearly. It is important to take into consideration that these are collected from individuals' opinions.

For this question responders were asked to list four factors what are are the most important factors which affect to their room experience. There were pre-listed ten different factor as an example, but responders were able to list any factor that comes in their mind. Respondents also had to justify their choices. These answers have been summarized how many people have mentioned those specific factors as an important factor which affect for their room experience instead in which order they mentioned to affect to their experience.

It appears from the survey that the core service of the hotel room, the bed, is the most significant factor which affects the room experience. Clearly over 70 percent of the responders felt that the comfort bed is one of the most important factors when it comes to room experience.

Almost as significant as a comfortable bed is for the customers is quietness. People do not want to hear their neighbors talking in the other room or from the hallway when people walk past the room. They want to enjoy the quietness when they have paid for a hotel room. Quietness was often mentioned in the context that when people come to a hotel they want to relax, that is a really important factor in being able to relax.

The size of the hotel room was also a noticeable factor which clearly stood out in the survey. Especially the size of the room as one of the important factors answered a lot of people who were traveling with their family. Responders who were traveling with the family felt often when they are traveling that the room is just full of beds instead in Laajavuori there is also space to spend time together instead just having room full of beds.

Technology was fourth what stood out from other factors. People need modern technology which is updated and meets today's needs. Technology gives customer a possibility to personalize the hotel experience. Responders felt that they would have wanted to modify the hotel room to be more better fit for themselves.

Besides previous mentioned four factors which clearly stood out from the responses also amenities were mentioned often. Responders stated that it is nice to go on holiday and do not need to worry about carrying shampoos et cetera because they know that they some products waiting already in the hotel room. Also, intangible amenities such as a view from the window were mentioned to increase the room experience.

Out of ten example factors which were placed under the survey question number seven no one of the responders mentioned minibar to be one of the most important factors for their room experience. Customers do not feel minibar to be essential in the room and it does not have an effect to their room experience if mini bar would be missing.

## 5.4 Customers' dream hotel room

In the end of the survey were asked to describe dream hotel room, how does there look like and what is in there. In this question responder had completely free word to express themselves. This question also helps to dig ever deeper into responder's mind.

Based on the responses, the average dream hotel room is one that provides plenty of space for guests to move around comfortably without feeling cramped. It should be designed to offer a calm and relaxing environment that allows guests to sit back and escape from the stresses of their daily lives. This is why most people prefer a room that is not just a small space with beds but rather a spacious one that provides plenty of room to stretch out and relax. In addition, the average dream hotel room should have a soothing color scheme to provide even more calming atmosphere in the room and have good soundproofing to ensure a peaceful night's sleep.

One of the key features that the average dream hotel room should have is a large and comfortable bed with good quality bedding and pillows. A comfortable bed is essential for a good night's sleep, which is what guests are looking for when they stay at a hotel.

The average dream hotel room bathroom has either a jacuzzi or a bathtub for relaxing baths after a long day. It should also have high-quality hygiene products that make guests feel taken care of. The bathroom should be well-lit and spacious.

Guests also appreciate having access to a coffee maker or kettle in their room, so they can enjoy a cup of warm drink whenever they want. In addition, having a television that supports different streaming services is a must-have feature for many guests who want to stay connected with their favorite shows and movies.

Finally, the room should have a nice view that adds to the overall feel of the space. Whether it's a stunning cityscape or a postcard picture landscape, a beautiful view can make a huge difference in the guest's experience.



In addition to all of that most of the responders who were traveling with the family especially younger children mentioned to their dream hotel to be child friendly and there would be child friendly activities in the room. Responders brought up for example have a Disney plus stream service in the television to provide entertainment for the children.

Attachment from 2 to 4 are made to illustrate this.

## **6 Development ideas**

The chapter is presented an overview of the customers preferences, needs, and experiences for the hotel room. It also highlights the specific features that customers value in their hotel accommodations in Scandic Laajavuori. Based on these insights, actionable recommendations have been formulated to support the Scandic Laajavuori's future development with the hotel rooms. The development ideas for Scandic Laajavuori room experience development have been created based on the theory and survey results.

Being a part of the big chain creates a certain expectation towards the room experience. Scandic has a lot of different type of hotels all around in Nordic countries. Customers are loyal to the brand and expecting the certain level from the room experience.

The current trends in the hotel industry involve the integration of smart technology, promotion of sustainability, and creation of unique experiences. Sustainability is increasingly important, with hotels taking steps to reduce their environmental impact. Scandic Hotels Group is an example of a hotel chain that is committed to sustainability and follows the goals outlined in Agenda 2030. In the future, customers are expected to demand more personalized experiences and expect hotels to keep up with technological developments. The use of smart technology in the hotel sector is becoming more widespread and includes automation systems for improved efficiency and personalization. Providing unique experiences to guests is another key factor that is shaping the industry, as hotels aim to create distinct and memorable moments for their customers.

The feedback collected during the survey highlighted the importance of understanding the needs and preferences of customers to ensure their satisfaction and loyalty. Based on the results, the

organization can take actionable steps to improve their offerings and ensure that their customers' expectations are met or exceeded. By taking the feedback seriously and making changes accordingly, the organization can strengthen their relationship with their customers and increase their chance of returning in the future.

Scandic Laajavuori's hotel rooms were described often with a word basic. In Cambridge Dictionary the word basic's definition is (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.) "simple and not complicated, so able to provide the base or starting point from which, something can develop". In this context the word basic can be considered as a positive word. The hotel's customers are expecting certain quality but nothing extra and when they are booking a room from Scandic Laajavuori they can relate to the fact that they will get that quality. Customers feel that all the necessary factors can be found in the room, but they see a lot of potential for development. When talking about customer satisfaction the word basic is not a bad word. Customers have had everything that they needed there to be. The room did not amaze them but on the other hand they were not disappointed with the room. This creates the base of the Scandic's customer loyalty. Customers choose Scandic because they know for sure they will get that certain quality that they are waiting for in the hotel room. They do not want to pay any extra but they want to know that they will not be disappointed with the room.

Understanding the customer's impression of the hotel room, what needs to be developed, and the factors affecting the room experience are all essential to improve customer satisfaction. The survey revealed that the majority of respondents had a positive first impression of the room, and the rooms were described as spacious, practical, and clean. Respondents felt that the bed's comfort, quietness, and size of the room were the most critical factors affecting their room experience.

In order to enhance the overall experience of guests staying at the hotel, it is crucial to prioritize the comfort of the bed since it is the core product of the hotel room. According to the results of a research, customers tend to value a comfortable bed more than any other aspect of the room. Therefore, it would be beneficial for the hotel to invest in high-quality mattresses, soft and comfortable pillows, and clean and fresh linens to ensure a restful and rejuvenating sleep for guests. The importance of the bed is obvious as it was consistently mentioned by guests as one of the first things they described when asked about their dream hotel room, and it was identified as

the most often as a one of the most important factor in the room. While every customer has their own individual preferences, providing a comfortable bed can greatly improve the overall experience of the majority of guests.

Another important factor that can greatly impact customer satisfaction in the room is the ability to personalize the space, such as having control over the in-room temperature and adjustable lighting. Technology was highlighted as area where improvements could be made. To enhance the overall customer experience, the hotel could consider installing more power outlets to meet the needs of guests with multiple electronic devices, and offering better in-room technology, such as improved air conditioning. Even though the hotel as a build might be old, it's important to keep up with technology advancements as they play a significant role in customer satisfaction. The integration of smart technology in hotel rooms can provide guests with a personalized experience, including possibility to adjust the lighting and temperature, smart TVs, and other devices.

The third development idea based on the research results was the improvement to the noise cancelling of the room. To improve the room experience, it is important to prioritize quietness as it has been identified as one of the most important factors. To achieve this, the hotel could take measures such as using soundproofing materials or improving insulation. By doing so, guests will be able to have a peaceful and relaxing stay, which is essential for their overall satisfaction.

By implementing these development ideas, the hotel could improve the overall customer experience, increase customer satisfaction and loyalty, and ultimately improve the hotel's reputation and profitability.

## **7 Conclusion**

The room experience is combination of many different factors. The purpose of this thesis was to gain information of Scandic Laajavuori's customers room experience and find details what customer needs or do not need turning their stay in Scandic Laajavuori. The aim was to find ways to increase the room experience and find the factors what customers want from the customer experience.

In today's highly competitive hospitality industry, providing excellent supporting services can make all the difference in enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty. By offering personalized and tailored supporting services, hotels can create a unique and memorable guest experience, distinguishing themselves from their competitors. For instance, providing room-specific air conditioning ensures that guests can regulate the temperature of their room according to their preferences, creating a comfortable environment for them to relax in. Similarly, customized room decorations such as personalized artwork or unique furnishings can create a sense of warmth and familiarity, making the guest feel at home.

The choice of research method is crucial for any thesis project, and in this particular case, the qualitative survey was considered the most effective approach to achieve the research objectives. By utilizing a qualitative survey, the researcher was able to gather a vast amount of experiential and opinion-based data on the quality of Scandic Laajavuori's hotel rooms. This approach provided a unique opportunity to dig deeper into the perceptions and experiences of the participants, and gather valuable insights that would have been difficult to obtain through a quantitative survey. In comparison, a quantitative survey may have produced more statistical data, but it would not have captured the richness and depth of individual opinions and experiences. Therefore, the choice of qualitative survey was a wise one, as it allowed for a more comprehensive analysis of the research subject.

Scandic also sent out to every customer a quantitative survey after each visit. By using this they collect statistical information about guests' experiences. This survey is customer satisfaction survey. It includes for example net promoter score question. Net promotion score question is typically only one question Net promotion score is important tool to figure out customer satisfaction level.

Since there is already existing one statistical survey about Scandic Laajavuori's customer satisfaction and room experience. I felt that it is time to listen what people actually thinks and what might be the factors why they are or are not satisfied with the room. For that purpose qualitative survey was convenient since statistical survey does not give responders possibility to open their opinions and experiences.

Qualitative questionnaire was little bit challenging since it is not so well known research method as quantitative survey. With interviews would have been possible to gather even more deeper data. The hard copy survey gave to the responder to decide when they wanted to answer to it and they were able to add ideas and opinions at any point during their stay. With the interview the timing of the interview would have become challenging.

Although the research conducted focuses on the issues faced by Scandic Laajavuori, it is important to note that the findings and recommendations can be applied to other hotels as well. The basic theories and principles underlying the study are widely applicable to the hotel industry, and the insights obtained from the research can serve as valuable ideas for other hotels seeking to enhance their room experience.

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## Attachments

### 1. The survey structure

1. In which room are you staying?

2. With who are you traveling?

3. What was your first impression about the room?

4. Describe room with three adjectives

5. Do you feel that the room was missing something? If yes, what?

6. Have you felt during your stay that there is something unnecessary in the room? If yes, what?

7. Choose four out of following factors which have the biggest impact to your hotel room experience and why?

Size of the hotel room, comfortable bed, the view from the room, quietness, the bathroom (hot tub/shower), content of the minibar, amenities (shampoo, conditioner, hot drink tray, bath robes etc.), decoration of the room, technology of the room (wi-fi, tv etc.), something else, what

8. Describe your dream hotel room. How does it look like? What is in it?



## 2. The dream hotel room illustration



## 3. The dream hotel room illustration 2



4. Dream hotel room (floor plan)

