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BACHELOR THESIS

Customer experiences for senior guests: challenges and opportunities for the hospitality industry

Keywords: Customer experience, elderly travellers, servicescape design, multisensory marketing, physical evidence, hospitality industry

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MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

This thesis investigates the challenges and opportunities for the hospitality industry in targeting the growing market of senior guests. Previous studies have shown that life expectancy and health after retirement are increasing, resulting in more seniors travelling. A qualitative approach with eight interviews is used to determine how to enhance the customer experience for those elderly guests. The data is collected in the research process from senior customers as well as hotel employees. Results are analysed using a mix of a deductive and inductive three-level coding process to identify correlations and derive suitable measures for the hospitality industry. The customer experience during the pre-service phase is influenced by motivation and constraints. Simultaneously, the servicescape design and multisensory marketing strategies are crucial in the during-service phase. It also highlights the importance of considering the health status of seniors in both stages. Concrete diseases, like dementia and their effects on customer satisfaction, are not investigated due to restrained responses. However, this would be an exciting field of further research.

The following research identifies challenges in assessing the character of seniors and a tendency to underestimate their health limitations. Hotel staff often lacks experience dealing with elderly guests, so training and keeping logs can help overcome obstacles. Despite these challenges, hotels that develop unique service strategies for new-age and traditional seniors are opening numerous opportunities. Seniors are loyal and often return when they feel comfortable and welcome. Findings suggest that minor adjustments to the servicescape design, such as using laminate flooring instead of carpet, can improve the well-being of senior guests. Additionally, multisensory experiences, particularly for sight and hearing, are crucial in shaping psychological comfort. Hotels can build customer loyalty by adapting services to meet individual needs while categorising seniors based on cognitive abilities, not chronological age. For optimistic seniors, there is also the problem of assessing up to what point travelling is still reasonable. Often people still travel when it is no longer responsible.

This research provides insights into enhancing the customer experience for seniors in the hospitality industry. Hoteliers should prioritise creating a pleasant servicescape and offering unique multisensory service strategies to create positive experiences among senior guests. Addressing challenges like assessing the character of seniors and training hotel staff to deal with elderly guests can help hotels succeed in this growing market.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Activities
AD	Accommodation
BE	Behaviour
BO	Booking
CO	Constraints
CX	Customer experience
CXM	Customer experience management
Dr	Doctor
EHL	École hôtelière de Lausanne
et al.	and others
EX	Experience
FL	Flexibility
FU	Furnishings
(-H-)	Hotel
HE	Health
H_x	Hypothesis
(-I-)	Interviewee
ID	Identification
IN	Insurance
LA	Language
MO	Motivation
MS	Miss
p.	page
PL	Place
RE	Review
RO	Room size
SE	Services
SI	Sight
SM	Smell
SC	Social contacts
SO	Sound
TA	Taste
TO	Touch
ZHAW	Zurich University of Applied Sciences

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research question and scope

With this bachelor thesis, I will investigate how the customer experience of seniors in hotels can be improved. For this, opportunities and challenges are elaborated to analyse the customer experience in two phases. The focus is on the design of the servicescape, which is an environment made by people. Servicescape refers to such physical environments that do not match the natural environment (Bitner, 1992, p. 58). Furthermore, implementing multisensory marketing strategies to optimise the customer experience is discussed. This research could provide important insights for the hotel industry to achieve customer retention and long-term success. The field of study is customer experience, specifically geared towards older people. First, I will point out typical behaviours and look at the needs of this target market. Specifically, the question arises what the motivation of ageing consumers is to go on holiday in a pre-service stage. What distinguishes older people from younger generations when it comes to planning vacations? Are there main psychological differences and consequences? I will also analyse which role age plays precisely and whether there are significant differences in chronological or cognitive age. As a second step, I intend to find out how the needs of older people can be adapted explicitly through adjustments to the hotel design. For this, I will deal with multisensory marketing strategies, as well as the physical evidence of servicescapes in the hotel facilities. Research should explore the influence of the environment on the loyalty and well-being of elderly customers. This second part includes a more detailed examination of which measures are particularly relevant during the service. How can a hotel, through simple adjustments, try to reshape and redesign the environment so that the elderly customers feel more comfortable and find psychological comfort within the defined servicescape? What role does physical evidence truly play? Is there a primary influence multisensory marketing has on well-being, and what effects does it have on creating a unique customer experience? To focus on concrete measures for the hotel industry, which should increase the number of older customers, only the first two phases, pre-service and during-service, are within the scope of this thesis. The after-service phase is not part of this scientific research. However, this could provide a good opportunity for future research. The specific question addressed in the context of this paper is defined as follows: How can the customer experience in the hospitality industry be improved, particularly for senior guests? - What are the opportunities and challenges?

1.2 Field of research

1.2.1 Customer experience management as a field of research

Customer experience management is a vital part of being successful as a company and, therefore, also offers itself as a relevant field of research. Focusing on a good customer experience is essential to assert itself in the competitive market. In recent years, this area has become increasingly relevant. This is the case because hotel employees often have many points of contact with customers, directly contributing to customer satisfaction (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016, p. 69). Affective commitment, as well as loyalty to the company's brand, is defined by the customer experience. If retailers want to develop these values, customer experience should be seen as a critical driver (Khan et al., 2020, p. 6). As consumers long for well-known processes and services, mainly because the environment nowadays is constantly changing and adaptability is increasingly in demand, this area of research is of great importance. Technology is evolving rapidly, so improving touchpoints with customers is essential to provide an optimal experience for both the customer and the employee (Kuppelwieser & Klaus, 2020, p. 3). Previous studies have found that perceived emotional attachment has a more significant impact on the customer experience than functional attachment. This finding suggests that emotional brand relationships with customers promote the growth of customer loyalty more effectively than brand relationships based on logical, practical benefits (Khan et al., 2020, p. 5).

1.2.2 Customer experience for elderly customers as research niche

Notably, humankind's life expectancy is growing as civilians are more resilient to severe illnesses and enjoy superior physical health. There is also an extreme improvement in mental abilities. Nevertheless, healthy post-retirement ageing is still recent (Bateson, 2021, p. 7). Despite these changing circumstances regarding health in old age, it has been widely known that the retiring boomers will be a more influential segment, possibly even one of the strongest in the market. Elderly people not only tend to have more money at their disposal but are more loyal than younger generations, which ensures that they are an ideal group of customers for hotel companies. Furthermore, it was found that the loyalty of seniors is not necessarily tied to a brand but is comparatively more substantial than that of people of working age (Karani & Fraccastoro, 2010, p. 82). Although the behaviour and condition of older people are often seen as stereotypical, science has found that the picture has changed over the past twenty years (Bateson, 2021, p. 7). However, the results are not always as clear-cut. Research has also shown that being older is often viewed as

a negative stereotype. People often see the last stage of life as a period with poor health, impaired memory, and diminishing mental and physical functioning (Wu et al., 2021, p. 31). Therefore, it is important to remember what exactly the customer's wishes are. It has been shown, for example, that with higher age, people increasingly strive for more well-being and security. To generate this well-being, it makes sense to design customer experiences to resemble home so that the body unconsciously feels familiar with the environment (Chathoth et al., 2013, p. 17). A dramatic deterioration can be observed when looking at age-related visual and hearing impairments, leading to several behavioural changes. This change has resulted in the classic marketing measures needing to be more effective (Wu et al., 2021, p. 31).

Although some research has already been carried out in this area, there is not enough literature focusing on the needs of the elderly. The economic gap is, on the one hand, that there are still many uncertainties about the behaviour of this age group (Huang, 2022, p. 31). On the other hand, it shows a lack of age-appropriate marketing strategies to respond to needs in a targeted manner (Kuppelwieser & Klaus, 2020, p. 3). Much of the research focuses on chronological age, but little is known about the effects of cognitive age and the extent to which research in this area can provide potential new insights (Wu et al., 2021, p. 37). Surveys in the field of customer experience have increased significantly in recent years, but the interaction between customer experience and customer loyalty is still relatively unexplored. Indeed, regarding the elderly as an object of investigation, further research is needed to draw better conclusions (Khan et al., 2020, p. 1).

This further research is relevant since the ageing population provides tremendous market potential if the elderly people are addressed correctly as a new additional target market. As the number increases and the health situation tends to improve, this offers the opportunity to acquire and retain more customers (Huang, 2022, p. 31). Therefore, it is highly relevant to analyse the needs and behaviour patterns within the segment of older people so that strategies can be developed specifically tailored to this target market (Chaouali et al., 2021, p. 65). Since it is known that with increasing age, there is a higher loyalty to the brand or the company chain, it is imperative to connect with the customers as early as possible when the retirement age is reached because it is becoming more difficult to win customers over from the competition at a later stage (Karani & Fraccastoro, 2010, p. 82). They offer a promising opportunity because today's seniors have more financial power and more time at hand than people working either part-time

or full-time. Therefore, these are essential characteristics of the senior segment and are of interest to scientists and academics (Chaouali et al., 2021, p. 65).

1.2.3 Multisensory CX-design in the hospitality industry

Studies have shown that the desire to travel and the budget spent on it increases with age. However, this behaviour is only observable in a particular part of life. A turning point occurs for every person at a different time. It can be generalised, however, that the desire to travel decreases again at some point in old age. This pattern of behaviour can be observed after retirement, but it has been observed that financial resources do not necessarily decrease after retirement. Money, therefore, is not the reason for the decrease in travel. The leading cause of the decrease is that travelling becomes more exhausting later in life. Research by the EHL in Lausanne, Switzerland, has shown that this behaviour can be counteracted by making services more specific to older people. Packages offer an excellent opportunity to bundle the needs to make the holiday experience easier to grasp and less stressful (EHL Faculty, 2022, p. 3) In the last decades, many studies in hospitality and tourism have focused on experimental marketing (Kim & Perdue, 2013, p. 246). Assuming that customers who visit a hotel spend much time in the servicescape, this also profoundly influences their general perception of the various elements of the location (Dedeoğlu et al., 2015, p. 42). Influences also arise already in the pre-service phase. It was found that when customers choose a hotel at their holiday destination, they pay attention to cognitive aspects such as service, hotel quality or price, but also affective attributes such as a feeling of comfort or entertainment possibilities. In particular, however, it was noted that so-called sensory technology already plays an important role in the selection process (Kim & Perdue, 2013, p. 246).

Regardless of the importance of sensory marketing, little is known about how these strategies can positively influence customer experience and satisfaction. Very little research has been done specifically for seniors in this field. The impact of sensory marketing on older people is still relatively unknown, and the sub-area multisensory marketing offers great potential to make interesting discoveries in this field of research (M. Lee et al., 2019, p. 4314). Hotel companies still face many difficulties and uncertainties when creating a unique customer experience through environment design and targeted marketing (Chathoth et al., 2013, p. 17). In other words, the existing literature offers little experimental evidence of the effects of sensory marketing measures in the hospitality industry (Kim & Perdue, 2013, p. 246). It can even be argued that the

influence of sensory marketing on the innovation of service experiences is mostly overlooked (M. Lee et al., 2019, p. 4342). Furthermore, regarding the servicescape design in hotels, there is little literature available (Dedeoğlu et al., 2015, p. 54). Only a few studies have been conducted on servicescapes, particularly regarding the ageing population's sensitivity (Bateson, 2021, p. 7).

It is highly relevant to investigate these servicescapes better because an optimised design delivers a very positive and significant effect on well-being, as well as appreciation and image (Dedeoğlu et al., 2015, p. 42). It makes sense to examine the effects of such environmental adjustments specifically on the segment of the elderly because, with the increase in the number of people of retirement age, there is significant market potential, both for tourism and for the hotel industry (hospitality on, 2014, p. 1) Because sensory components are now regarded as a critical research area in service design (M. Lee et al., 2019, p. 4341), focusing more on multisensory experiences is crucial. By creating unique customer experiences and thus differentiation, the customer experience is enhanced, providing a competitive advantage for the hospitality industry (Dzhandzhugazova et al., 2016, p. 10392). In order to generate these competitive advantages, the importance of experiential marketing should not be underestimated. This not only improves the sensorial experience but also strengthens and stimulates the behavioural, emotional, and cognitive bond (Khan et al., 2020, p. 6). It is, therefore, essential for hotel managers to better understand the needs of customers and to better examine the emotional dimensions of the elderly in order to improve the customer experience and exploit a significant market potential (Kim & Perdue, 2013, p. 255).

1.3   Research objectives

The research aims to create a unique experience for elderly customers in the hospitality industry. For this purpose, I will analyse specific behavioural patterns within the target market. In addition, I intend to explain the needs of elderly clients in a gastronomic service environment to get more insights regarding emotional and functional requirements. The objective is to find out how servicescapes in hotel chains can be optimised and how the design can be adequately adapted so that the physical surroundings form a better basis for elderly customers to go more often on holiday despite the decreasing desire to travel in older age. The results should highlight what opportunities hospitality industry companies have to address the elderly as a target market better. In particular, I will investigate how multisensory marketing can increase loyalty and create

psychological comfort within a given environment. This thesis creates dynamic professional profiles in the contemporary marketing industry. These should primarily serve the hotel industry but may also be relevant in other sectors, not just tourism. Results can solve similar problems in other industries, such as fashion or healthcare.

1.4   Structure of thesis

The work structure consists of an introduction, a literature review, an empirical analysis, and a discussion of the results. The theoretical foundation is structured with a funnel approach. The overarching field of research is customer experience. The theoretical part contains theories and previous findings, which are the basis for the analytical claim. The empirical analysis begins with a summary of the theory and a specification of the target group on which the interviews are subsequently based. The methodology describes the research design and how the empirical part came about. In addition, the coded categories are first described without interpretation in the evaluation. In the results, relevance evaluations are made, and correlations are created and interpreted in the discussion. Finally, I will draw conclusions, which will serve as implication suggestions for hotel managers.

The thesis is written within five to six months. In December 2022, I developed my first thoughts and identified my topic. The theoretical foundations and the disposition were worked out in January and February 2023. I conducted interviews between mid-March and mid-April. Conclusions and revisions took place in April and May 2023. The thesis was finalised and submitted by the end of May 2023.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Customer experience management (CXM)

2.1.1 Definition CXM

The concept of customer experience is a challenging construct to define or measure due to its complex structure and individualised personal nature. It is indistinct and elusive. Customer experience does not equate to the time and place of the activity. Two people can do exactly the same thing, yet the experience is perceived differently. This is because people have different expectations, beliefs, and backgrounds (Kandampully et al., 2018, p. 25). The construct contains the customer's response in different areas, including experiences which involve the senses, emotions, thoughts, actions, and social identities (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016, p. 70). The customer experience is, therefore, the internal feeling of customers during several interactions with the company (Kandampully et al., 2018, p. 25), where the company needs to monitor and analyse that behaviour to learn from it and control its customer experience (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016, p. 74). Businesses need to pay attention to the little things that matter greatly to the big picture (Bolton et al., 2014, p. 253) to win over customers and establish an edge over competitors (Kandampully et al., 2018, p. 21).

2.1.2 Customer decision journey

The customer decision journey comprises the individual touch points between the customer and the company. All current information in the customer lifecycle must be integrated to obtain the overall picture of the customer decision journey. A complete understanding of the customer experience and the decision-making processes is a significant challenge for marketing researchers (Kandampully et al., 2018, p. 27). Though emotions are ephemeral and change, they nonetheless influence customers' actions and judgment, making it challenging to develop a general theoretical concept from little information (M. Lee et al., 2019, p. 4319). In addition, as technology changes, the journey becomes more and more complex. Thus, it becomes more important to boost customers' trust with satisfying experiences throughout all the service stages (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016, p. 70). There are different phases in the customer journey, which according to Lemon and Verhoef (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016, p. 77) are called prepurchase, purchase,

and postpurchase. The experiences in the different phases influence emotions (Kim & Perdue, 2013, p. 255). Loyalty is one of the powerful emotions in CXM (Khan et al., 2020, p. 5).

2.2 Needs and behavioural patterns of the elderly

2.2.1 Chronological and cognitive age characteristics

Ageing is associated with typical characteristics. One feature is that, while getting older, it becomes more and more difficult to process information quickly (Guido et al., 2020, p. 23). Hearing problems and diminished vision are expected to increase (Wu et al., 2021, p. 31). However, not all changes are necessarily negative. A significant advantage is a more extended life experience. Knowledge and learning experience contribute to the fact that older people have a more pronounced emotional intelligence, which helps them to make decisions more easily (Chaouali et al., 2021, p. 66). It was found that age cannot always be described with the actual age respectively chronological age. Age tends to be seen more as a state of mind (L. G. Schiffman & Sherman, 1991, p. 188). A cognitive age variable was considered beneficial to describe the state of mind. This state of mind includes factors like how older adults feel, look, and behave (Barak & Schiffman, 1981, p. 189). However, age should not solely be described cognitively. It makes sense to take chronological age as a basis but to allow influences of cognitive age to play a part (Bae et al., 2020, p. 41). Cognitive age is more sensitive to changes in life satisfaction than chronological age is and therefore offers a good complement (L. G. Schiffman & Sherman, 1991, p. 191). It has also been shown that chronological age alone cannot explain precisely why older consumers rate products and services differently (Park et al., 2020, p. 89). The precise definition is crucial as it impacts older people's purchasing behaviour (Guido et al., 2020, p. 22).

2.2.2 New-age elderly

The so-called new-age elderly differ from the typical stereotypes of the elderly. This group consists of older people who feel significantly younger, are self-confident, have control of their lives and are less worried. They have a taste for personal challenges and are adventurous (L. G. Schiffman & Sherman, 1991, p. 187). It has been found that the new-age elderly people are an important target group, as they are masters of their opinions, they are open to brand changes, they are also often able to handle the new technologies and above all do more, for example, go out to eat, or like to do sports (Barak & Schiffman, 1981, p. 24). The new-age elderly can also be referred to as silver surfers.

Silver surfers have the same characteristics according to Hauk (Hauk et al., 2018, p. 304). They are retired people who enjoy life and have no great difficulty with technological change.

2.2.3 Behavioural differences with younger counterparts

Various behavioural differences can be observed if older people are compared with younger people. Even if only the elderly people are considered as one segment, it is not homogeneous (Chaouali et al., 2021, p. 72). One of the most important distinguishing features is flexibility. Due to retirement, seniors have much more time to dispose of themselves freely (Bai et al., 2009, p. 65). The new-age elderly are experienced customers with many skills and precise requirements (L. G. Schiffman & Sherman, 1991, p. 190). In contrast, those older people who think that ageing is seen as unfavourable are the ones who limit themselves. They usually believe they own fewer skills than younger people and are, therefore, less innovative (Bae et al., 2020, p. 41). Suppose the segment of the elderly is considered as a chronological delimitation, as it is usually the case in the literature. In that case, it can be observed that the majority of the elderly are not afraid to make wrong purchase decisions. Thanks to accumulated customer experiences, there is higher consumer confidence (L. G. Schiffman & Sherman, 1991, p. 189), as well as increased brand loyalty for older customers (Khan et al., 2020, p. 6). Although evidence suggests that as people get older, it is increasingly challenging to process information, it is not clear what impact the ability to process information has on consumers' senses (Guido et al., 2020, p. 23). Despite that, it was found that older people process information more rationally than younger people, who tend to process information more emotionally. This is also why it makes sense in the marketing field to focus more on functionality if the elderly should be addressed (Khan et al., 2020, p. 6). However, this does not indicate that emotions are irrelevant. It turns out that older people also like to be among their peers, especially those who are emotionally close (Wu et al., 2021, p. 30).

Although it is difficult to generalise the behaviour of the elderly, some patterns can be observed. They tend to be less good at controlling their emotions in unexpected situations. The problem for service providers is dealing with these emotions. It has also been noted that older people do not like to complain about unpleasant situations. Generally, complaints are only made if it is assumed that this does not make the situation more difficult and complicated than it already is (Chaouali et al., 2021, p. 72). Furthermore, some of the elderly need social support. Only those who need particular assistance benefit

from the corresponding additional offers (J.-E. Lee & Severt, 2017, p. 215). Moreover, they prefer to avoid making mistakes in front of others, which is why new offers are often not tried at all (Bae et al., 2020, p. 48). This behaviour also became evident in other studies, where it has been found that older people defend themselves against change by staying true to themselves and resisting change (Park et al., 2020, p. 89). In addition, cost-effectiveness should not be underestimated. It has been shown that the older generation does not spent money wherever wanted (Backman et al., 1999, p. 21).

2.2.4   Travel constraints of elderly

The demand for tourism depends on many factors that influence the travel behaviour of seniors. In particular, some characteristics severely restrict travel, the so-called constraints. The desire to travel depends on the available time, the financial means and the attractiveness of the destinations. Factors such as political stability and available technologies also influence older people's behaviour (Glover & Prideaux, 2009, p. 35). There are many other reasons why travel is not a priority. Respondents often mention lack of time, money, physical difficulties or emotional disappointments and their health status as a reason not to go on vacation (Chen & Wu, 2009, p. 303). In addition, it has turned out that a clear majority classified a lack of security as an essential constraint (Lindqvist & Björk, 2000, p. 157). Stress, anxiety and worries about healthcare systems are also among the criteria usually considered. Also, the fact that another incomprehensible language is spoken at the chosen destination, a lack of support from the family or other personal reasons may play an important role in why older people do not like to go on holiday anymore. It is feared that during travel, a feeling of discomfort or unease occurs (Chen & Wu, 2009, p. 307). Some people are no longer able to travel with their loved ones. However, this is not always seen as a constraint. In some cases, new relationships are sought, and travellers go on holiday in smaller unknown groups (Kazeminia et al., 2013, p. 91). Looking at the new-age elderly group, it can also be said that they have fewer doubts. Language differences, security and unfamiliar situations are less intimidating (Glover & Prideaux, 2009, p. 35).

2.2.5   Travel motivation in a pre-service stage

Motivation is referred to as a driver, which is based on overall behavioural patterns (Chen & Wu, 2009, p. 302). Vice versa, motivators, why seniors like to go on vacation, influence travel behaviour. Motivation plays a key role because, for example, the fact that older people who lead a happy life much faster find the motivation to go on vacation shows a

strong correlation between motivation, intention, and behaviour (Bai et al., 2009, p. 51). Not only do younger people like to travel nowadays, but also older people prefer to travel more if viewed over the last few decades. Some long for exciting adventures, and others are curious and want to learn new things. Most seniors strive for holidays that are physically not too exhausting, and the conditions should remain manageable (Patterson & Pegg, 2011, p. 177). Both positive and negative experiences influence motivation. However, travel intention for the future is mainly related to positive feelings and confidence (Bai et al., 2009, p. 61). What older people aspire to do during the holidays has also changed. In the past, holidays were mainly there to rest and do nothing. It has turned out, however, that the baby boomers who have retired in recent years want to do more, be it visiting museums, other cultural activities, or even holiday-related activities (Prayag, 2012, p. 676). In studies already carried out, such motivations have been divided into five categories. Novelty seeking, self-esteem, ego-enhancement, socialisation, and relaxation belong to the subdivisions made. Novelty-seeking is one of the most important reasons for motivation. It is about experiencing emotional sensations by collecting new experiences (Bai et al., 2009, p. 67). Discovering new locations while expanding knowledge of new concepts and learning about various civilisations while experiencing various lifestyles belongs to the pursuit of novelty (Chen & Wu, 2009, p. 310). Increased levels of activity contribute to much higher psychological well-being. More positive experiences can be generated, but a distraction from negatives can also be sought (Bai et al., 2009, p. 67). These negative feelings, experiences or situations may have arisen in previous vacations or at home. That is why holidays as an escape have become very popular. It is about getting out of everyday life and diving into a different daily routine for a short time, making new contacts or just revisiting friends or relatives (Chen & Wu, 2009, p. 303). The idea of being able to go shopping in another place attracts holiday guests as well in some cases. Many retired travellers prefer hiking in nature and enjoying local food specialities (Littrell et al., 2004, p. 353). Although relaxation is no longer considered the main reason for a holiday, it is still part of it. Relaxation also includes sitting together with the family or a cosy evening with a book (Chen & Wu, 2009, p. 310). Spending time together with family is very important for seniors. Other factors such as weather, water temperatures or the destination's attractiveness also influence the motivation to travel (Prayag, 2012, p. 676).

2.2.6   The relational theory of third-places

Third-places are an umbrella term for buildings people can go to in order to spend time with others. Places such as cafes, coffee shops, churches, bars, and community centres are included (Rosenbaum, 2006, p. 62). Interaction between visitors and employee socialising is encouraged in such places (Rosenbaum et al., 2007, p. 44). Third-places are becoming more and more critical for older people. Seniors love to visit places with an empathic community environment (J.-E. Lee & Severt, 2017, p. 219). One reason for this is the emotional isolation at home. Many seniors face loneliness due to losing a family member or a divorce. In addition, this can lead to boredom and aimlessness. In such a case, the focus is often placed on routine activities. To counteract this behaviour, these third-places offer an ideal opportunity to lead a more prosperous social life again (Rosenbaum et al., 2007, p. 55). Needs can be satisfied by having older people sit together in these cafes or hotels and, for example, eat together or do other activities (Rosenbaum, 2006, p. 65).

2.2.7   Excursion dementia

Dementia is a syndrome. That means that a person with dementia has several symptoms simultaneously. These symptoms include decreased judgement, orientation, language and thinking skills. These symptoms vary significantly from patient to patient and are unpredictable. Dementia is caused by the degeneration of neurons in the brain. This process leads to a disturbance of brain functions. Therefore, the prevalence increases with age. In addition, the risk is increased in people with high blood pressure, depression, diabetes, as well as obesity and a generally unhealthy lifestyle. There are different forms of dementia, such as Alzheimer's disease, Lewy body dementia, Parkinson's dementia or vascular dementia. What the different forms have in common are the phases. In the first phase of the disease, there is a reduced ability to remember new information. Later, long-term memory is also affected, and the thought processes and flow of ideas are slowed down. In the progressive stage, personality changes and loss of social skills can also occur. This phase is noticeable through pathological crying, laughter, social withdrawal, irritability, hallucinations, or loss of independence. Dementia is, therefore, a heavy burden not only for the patient but also for the relatives. In the late course of the disease, motor disorders such as faecal and bladder incontinence also occur (Dr. med. Schnurbus-Duhs, 2022), (Deutsche Alzheimer-Gesellschaft, 2021).

Dementia must be distinguished from other diseases in which a cognitive disorder occurs. The symptoms can be very similar in old-age depression, forgetfulness, delirium, or confusion. Unlike dementia, these causes of cognitive impairment are treatable with medication. The therapy of dementia consists of maintaining independence for as long as possible. The patient is supported in incorporating memory aids into everyday life, such as keeping an agenda or writing notes. In addition, activating and brain-stimulating activities are critical. These include playing an instrument or doing crossword puzzles (Dr. med. Schnurbus-Duhs, 2022), (Deutsche Alzheimer-Gesellschaft, 2021).

2.2.8   The need of adaptation

To find suitable solutions for elderly travellers, companies in the tourism industry need to understand their potential customers' psychological state of mind. Thus, it becomes possible to design tailored service options in a targeted manner (Bai et al., 2009, p. 66). Although today's pensioners are fitter than ever before, their limitations and motivations should be taken into account. Service offerings such as workshops or leisure activities can thus be adapted to the specific needs (Glover & Prideaux, 2009, p. 35). Another point are the marketing measures. These should be designed so that they appeal to older people but do not address the fact that people are chronologically at a higher age. As it turns out, older people do not like it when advertising focuses on being older (Guido et al., 2020, p. 22). On the other hand, worth-to-mouth advertising is very popular with this target group as an advertising strategy. In order to optimise the holidays for the elderly, care should also be taken to reduce uncertainties (Kazeminia et al., 2013, p. 91). Marketers should strive to arouse positive emotions and create a familiar environment so that older people can be attracted and effectively addressed compared to younger people (Guido et al., 2020, p. 22). Price deals are also more suitable for younger generations and have less effect on seniors (Moschis & Ünal, 2008, p. 266). What is very important, however, are good price-performance ratios. Retired people want high-quality service for fair prices. If this is the case, they also become loyal customers (Lindqvist & Björk, 2000, p. 151). In order to gain customer loyalty, good insurance policies should also be paid attention to. Travel insurance should be well-regulated and especially cover cancellations due to medical issues (Kazeminia et al., 2013, p. 91). Personality in the service sector was seen as another essential point. Older people appreciate personal contact with the employees very much. Automations are accepted but not preferred (Wu et al., 2021, p. 37).

2.3   The role of servicescapes the in the hospitality industry

2.3.1   Lodging at liminal spaces

Whereas third places refer to entire buildings, the liminal spaces only concern a smaller area. Facilities thus have several liminal spaces. Another characteristic of this term is that it refers only to parts of a building or property, which can be used as a transit to get from one place to another. These are temporary places such as elevators or stairs. Parking lots or hotel lobbies can also be described as liminal places (Roberts et al., 2019, p. 1136). Employees who work in such places are very central. They should try as much as possible to convey a feeling of home. Guests feel more at home when such a feeling is awakened (Bolton et al., 2014, p. 267). This fact is important because a change in consumer behaviour is often observed in liminal spaces. Guests tend to be less careful with the facilities because they are only temporarily in that specific place. Thus, standard rules or norms which apply at home are disregarded, which may lead to damage. Walking on the carpet with dirty shoes is avoided at home by all means, whereas in a hotel, the consumers do not care as much (Roberts et al., 2019, p. 1137).

2.3.2   Development of servicescapes in hotels

A servicescape is an environment created by humans. Such physical settings that do not correspond to the natural environment are referred to as servicescape or, in the plural, servicescapes. These built surroundings impact the customer and the employee (Bitner, 1992, p. 58). The hotel environment awakens various stimuli to which the customer reacts. How hotel guests react to a particular environment in the hotel determines their response to individual stimuli (Lockwood & Pyun, 2019, p. 232). Generally, reactions are always emotional, cognitive and physiological (Bitner, 1992, p. 64). A hotel room can be seen as a servicescape where, for example, the quality of the furniture has an impact on the well-being of the customers. These influences, in turn, have an impact on how customers make decisions (Sundar & Noseworthy, 2016, p. 59). Only the size of certain objects can tell something about how important this object is and certainly when compared with others (Bitner, 1992, p. 62). With a hotel room, only limited customer value creation can be generated. It is much easier to gain value through services within the hotel. These services enable a much higher engagement of the customer. Nevertheless, by designing elements such as the menu and the room layout, a positive appreciation can be awakened among the customers (Chathoth et al., 2013, p. 17). For instance, places that make people feel good are places where people are likely to spend money and time

(Bitner, 1992, p. 63). Therefore, the hotel's setting should arouse high excitement and positive feelings among the customers, firstly to have more satisfied customers and secondly to generate more revenue (Lockwood & Pyun, 2019, p. 233).

Servicescapes can be divided into several dimensions. Initially, the three categories: ambient conditions, spatial layout and functionality, as well as signs, symbols, and artefacts, were defined. Ambient conditions refer to factors that influence the perception of the environment. These include ambient conditions such as sounds, smells, lighting, temperature and other background characteristics that influence the five senses. Spatial layout and functionality are all about the furnishings, for example objects, fulfil a need and are placed and designed according to their usefulness. Signs, symbols, and artefacts form the basis for nonverbal communication between objects and people. Labels provide content information, and signs define the benefit of objects or indicate behaviours (Bitner, 1992, p. 66-67). In recent years, further dimensions have been created. Aesthetic quality has very much to do with the design elements, such as which pictures or plants are hung, or which materials are used for the construction. Functionality continues to consist of heights, distances between furniture and the practicality of the objects. Where the atmosphere includes everything related to light, music and noise levels, spaciousness is all about the perceived space consumption and the empty air spaces. Physiological conditions form the final dimension, where temperature and humidity are of central importance (Lockwood & Pyun, 2019, p. 235-236).

2.3.3 Reshape the design of the environment

In order to optimise servicescapes and design them more modern, company-specific customers and employee behaviour must be identified as a first step. How customers react then serves as the basis for the strategic orientation. The environment can be designed to induce desired behaviour (Bitner, 1992. P. 62). Since older people sometimes have different needs, the environment can never be adapted to suit everyone. Therefore, designing servicescapes age-neutral or based on cognitive age may make sense rather than for defined stereotypes (Bateson, 2021, p. 7). Values and beliefs of individual seniors also influence their customer experience. Therefore, a focus should also be placed on small, individualised details, which positively shape the experience as a whole (Bolton et al., 2014, p. 260). In addition, it is essential to how employees behave towards seniors. Therefore, employees should be offered appropriate training opportunities to enable targeted communication, which impacts the brand image (Khan et al., 2020, p. 6).

Engagement and training can also be stimulated by granting voting rights. This means that employees can actively communicate their suggestions and ideas. Even customers could be involved in design processes to generate a more personal bond (Bolton et al., 2014, p. 267).

Physical evidence, which include all elements that clients interact with, has the power to affect customers mentally. For example, it may be the case that older people do not feel comfortable with too much noise. If it is too cold, they tend to freeze, poor ventilation systems can cause breathing problems, and too much or too little light can cause harmful effects on the eyes. Such influences have a significant impact on whether the customer feels comfortable in a servicescape or not (Bitner, 1992, p. 64). If only considering the height of the ceiling, this unconsciously has an enormous influence on any customer. If the atmosphere is designed with high ceilings and plenty of space, it evokes clearer thoughts and improves people's thinking ability. Customers associate space with freedom. In addition, it gives guests more energy and promotes health (Meyers-Levy & Zhu, 2007, p. 174). Another must-do is the care of the building and surroundings. Cleanliness and the absence of bacteria are what the guest requires in every case (Roberts et al., 2019, p. 1143). The feeling of being valued is further promoted by creating trust and offering the opportunity to find friends to form a community (Rosenbaum, 2006, p. 64). Design plays an essential role when it comes to the well-being of the guests. Therefore, special attention should be paid to the environment's design (Lockwood & Pyun, 2019, p. 233).

2.4 Multisensory marketing strategies in the hospitality industry

2.4.1 Sensory marketing

In science, multisensory marketing is used when customers are approached with more than one of the five senses. Sensory marketing targets only one of the senses. The five senses of human beings include sight, hearing, odour, taste, and touch (M. Lee et al., 2019, p. 4313). Sensory rich experiences ensure that customers behave favourably (Hultén, 2011, p. 258). Marketers even argue that sensory marketing contributes to the customer experience. Brand recognition is triggered much more strongly by certain smells or sounds. That means customers are likelier to remember companies that emphasise intense sensory experiences (Dzhandzhugazova et al., 2016, p. 10392). Multisensory information is therefore also used to generate added value for the company (Krishna et al., 2017, p. 43). It helps the customers visualise the company's mission (Kim & Perdue, 2013, p. 253). The advantage of multisensory marketing compared to single-sensory

marketing is that advertising is much more effective (M. Lee et al., 2019, p. 4322). Sensors, sensations, and sensory expressions are a good way to differentiate long-term (Hultén, 2011, p. 265). Events leave their mark on a person's mind. Each sensory note that is both original and masterfully performed produces the power of the impression (Dzhandzhugazova et al., 2016, p. 10398).

This area of multisensory marketing is fascinating for older people. In old age, people have difficulties reading the fine print. Besides that, other problems arise in the differentiation of colours and the resistance to bright light. The adaptation time to certain light levels also takes longer. It may become more difficult to hold objects and perform actions that require force, such as opening a can. Physiological changes like these can strongly influence how customers behave, especially how they react to services and products. Accordingly, appropriate products must be offered and available (Moschis & Ünal, 2008, p. 260). It is clear that needs change as people age. To name a few, people need glasses and more light to read just as background noise becomes more distracting to follow conversations. However, some measures are important for older people but can also offer advantages for younger people. Reduced noise levels, more giant signs, or menu cards are suitable for everyone, regardless of age (Bateson, 2021, p. 8).

2.4.2   Sight

The eyes are responsible for the sense of seeing, with which everyone can perceive the environment visually. When the customer goes on holiday, this is the first sense activated. The guest first perceives the shape and design of the building and the nearby surroundings. The architecture is examined, as well as the interior design with the decorative objects (Dzhandzhugazova et al., 2016, p. 10392). Lighting influences the extent to which stimuli arise, and cognitive associations are instantly formed (Spence et al., 2014, p. 473). In the hotel room, curtains play an important role. Curtains allow the guest to make the light brighter or darker, as well as ceiling and bed lighting (Roberts et al., 2019, p. 1144). Elements of design are also incorporated here. Light pastel colours on the wall make the room seem much larger and intense colours make it look richer (Meyers-Levy & Zhu, 2007, p. 184). In the restaurant area, the light can change the eating behaviour of the guests. It has been found that customers tend to eat unhealthier food when the light is dim instead of bright. Weak light ensures that mental alertness is less strongly represented, and this inattentiveness is why people eat more unhealthily with less light. Whether the light is warm or cold makes another difference. Customers feel more

comfortable in warm light and accordingly, they stay longer on average and order, for example, another coffee or a dessert, which they might not have done with colder light tones (Biswas et al., 2017, p. 112). It has to do with the wavelengths of light. Cold colours like blue have shorter wavelengths than warm colours such as red. As a rule, longer warm wavelengths cause excitement, and shorter cold wavelengths tend to bring more calmness and relaxation (Bagchi & Cheema, 2013, p. 947).

2.4.3 Hearing

The ability to perceive sounds and melodies is related to the sense of hearing. This second sense allows people to differentiate sounds from each other (Dzhandzhugazova et al., 2016, p. 10393). There are countless studies on music in servicescapes (Bateson, 2021, p. 7). Studies repeatedly show that music has a positive influence on people. Music also plays a significant role for seniors. Mental health improvements are enhanced by music (Zhao et al., 2022, p. 2). The use of music in effective marketing demonstrates how it can elicit a favourable response from consumers and increase their benevolence toward the goods and services being given (Dzhandzhugazova et al., 2016, p. 10393). However, age-related hearing loss affects people's ability to distinguish certain vowels and hear sounds at different frequency levels (Moschis & Ünal, 2008, p. 260). Nevertheless, music, especially ethnic music, positively influences the long-term satisfaction of elderly guests. Music also contributes to an increased quality of life (Zhao et al., 2022, p. 9). Guests like it when there is background music in the lobby or other common areas of the hotel. Consumers are also willing to spend up to 5% more on snacks and beverages while music is playing in the background. It also increases customer loyalty and improves the company's profitability (Dzhandzhugazova et al., 2016, p. 10394).

2.4.4 Odour

The hotel aroma is a broad aspect that appeals to the sense of smell. Just as sounds awaken emotional connections with a servicescape, smells may also be able to do so. Smells can be stored in memory for a long time (Dzhandzhugazova et al., 2016, p. 10394). The use of almost any beautiful ambient aroma should serve the goal of a marketer to get customers to pay more attention and remember better the items and brands they encounter in a particular situation. Therefore, a company that sells cosmetics and toiletries is not required to select floral fragrances, and a bakery is not required to stick with vanilla, cinnamon or other flavours that are typically found in baked goods (Morrin & Ratneshwar, 2003, p. 23). However, it needs to be clarified how strongly these odours

affect older people because the ability to perceive odours decreases with age. The use of medication may also be a reason for a worsened odour perception (Moschis & Ünal, 2008, p. 260). Consumers pay attention to stimuli that occur in pleasantly scented environments. Ambient fragrances can and should therefore be used in a variety of servicescapes. This usage increases attention, and this is again connected to the customer experience that is experienced during the holidays (Morrin & Ratneshwar, 2003, p. 23).

2.4.5 Taste

Another of the five senses is taste. This sensual note comes into the kitchen and gastronomy (Dzhandzhugazova et al., 2016, p. 10396). A small biscuit as a welcome gift or a mint before returning home these gestures appeal to the sense of taste, and the customer is happy about it in most cases, which in turn creates positive memories in connection with the company (M. Lee et al., 2019, p. 4331). Both the sense of smell and taste have been shown to influence how acutely people see and hear, how sensitive the skin is and how emotionally stable guests feel overall. The aromas that are sweet, spicy, sour, astringent, bitter or other combinations create a distinct attitude and fill out the sensory picture of the world (Dzhandzhugazova et al., 2016, p. 10396). Seniors are gradually losing their sense of taste and appetite. Noticeably, chemical substances are no longer or less tasted (Moschis & Ünal, 2008, p. 260). As was the case with other senses, prescribed drugs may also have an influence on the weakening of the sensation of taste (S. S. Schiffman & Zervakis, 2002, p. 84). In the best cases from the history of the hospitality industry, well-known dishes or famous desserts were specifically associated with a hotel chain (Dzhandzhugazova et al., 2016, p. 10397).

2.4.6 Touch

The ability to feel surfaces and objects relates to the fifth sense, touch. With this sense, people can determine shapes, textures, sizes, consistencies, temperature, and humidity (Dzhandzhugazova et al., 2016, p. 10397). Elements such as the material of the floor influence the feelings of the people walking on it. A sense of well-being arises when a person walks on a soft floor with carpet. A hard tile floor has more of a fatiguing effect (Meyers-Levy et al., 2010, p. 183). A familiar texture gives warmth and shine, and smoothness can evoke specific memories. Feelings can be very nostalgic. Sometimes, it is very positive when old memories are provoked. That is also why, for example, many people prefer paper books to e-books, or digital images cannot replace traditional photographs on an equal footing (Dzhandzhugazova et al., 2016, p. 10397). Due to age-

related changes, special attention must be paid to the needs of seniors in this area. Older people need more warmth as they are often colder than their younger counterparts (Cheema & Patrick, 2012, p. 985). Operating a TV in a hotel room is always trial and error at first. The TV control panel differs from the one at home, making it more complicated to find the desired programme quickly. Getting used to such aspects always takes elderly people longer (Roberts et al., 2019, p. 1144). To optimise the experience, it can also be considered, for example, that customers arriving by plane always have limited liquid funds to take with them, which is why supplies such as shampoo or shower gel are often already offered in the guest area of the hotel room (Roberts et al., 2019, p. 1144).

3 EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

3.1 Preliminary remarks

3.1.1 Summary characteristics silver society

Table one summarises which aspects emerged from my theoretical investigation of elderly people. I have found that retired people have certain typical traits that largely apply to the senior as a stereotype. The three most important characteristics of this age group are the increased life experience, which helps to make decisions more easily. Furthermore, retirees generally have more free time. However, many older people claim that they also lack time. The third feature is the availability of financial resources, which is of great economic importance for hotel companies. I looked at the customer needs during the holidays and, in particular, why seniors do not necessarily want to go on holiday so that the customer experience can be improved and optimised. Various motivators encourage seniors to take a break from everyday life and go on vacation. The reasons vary depending on the preferences of the individual. The idea of travelling can be intimidating for some because of its physical and mental demands and health status.

Characteristics elderly people	Customer needs and desires	Constraints senior travellers
• Life experience • Emotional intelligence • Less difficulties with decision making • Increased brand loyalty • Rational thinking habits • No interest in complaining, with high complexity • Enough free time • Availability of money • Longer adaption time • Difficulties holding objects	• Well-being • Security • Social support • Save money • Attractive destination • Political stability • Technological standards • Adventures • Learn new things • Visit museums • Holiday related activities • Novelty-seeking • Distraction from negative feelings • Visit friends or family • Enjoy local food • Hiking • Relaxation	• Exhausting, stress, anxiety • Difficulties in processing information • Hearing problems • Diminished vision • Do not like unexpected situations • Do not like to make mistakes in front of others • Lack of time • Physical difficulties • Afraid of emotional disappointments • Health status • Worries about healthcare systems, lack of security • Language difficulties • No family support • Nobody to share experience with

Table 1 Behavioural patterns of the elderly customers

3.1.2 Summary of the design aspects for hotel structures

How customers behave and what they like or do not like is the foundation for the design of the servicescapes in the hotels. In table two I have summarised which features are essential from the hotel's point of view. In order to make the experience for the guests at the hotel during the holidays as pleasant and memorable as possible, I identified some do's and don'ts which are based on theories of high importance. It is important for older

people not to have too much complexity and stress. To fulfil the customers desires, bundled all-inclusive offers provide an excellent opportunity to reduce the effort for guests. According to my research, activities are popular. The design of all liminal spaces of the hotel should be adapted to consider the reduced abilities of the elderly. Care should be taken to ensure that older sensory perceptions can decrease on the one hand and be perceived differently on the other. It is vital to address the silver society in a targeted way, as it has been shown that there is great potential. With the right strategies, managers can win more customers who are happier and come back, which brings added value and an advantage over the competition for the hotel.

Important aspects to consider	Specific elderly design features	Purpose of adaptation
• Design hotel like a home • Offer packaged bundles • Offer workshops and leisure activities • Do not advertise with age-specific information • Use worth-to-mouth advertising • Reduce uncertainties • Create familiar environment • Price deals are not effective • Good ratio price and offering • Offer insurance policies • Think of cognitive as well as chronological age • Small, individualised details • Appropriate training for employees • Involve customers and employees in decision making	• Higher temperatures • Less background noise • High-quality ventilation systems • Higher ceilings promote freedom • Cleanliness is a must • No fine print • More light to read • Bright light helps to eat healthier • Customers feel more comfortable in warm light, they order more • Cold colours for calmness • Music has a positive influence • Ambient fragrances • Welcome gifts • Create special dishes for the hotel • Soft floor with carpet • Nostalgic design items • User-friendly devices • Light pastel colours make the room seemingly bigger • Provide toiletries for convenience	• Competitive advantage • Stronger bond customers • Immense market potential • Influence power on how customers make decisions • More loyalty • More well-being • Improved customer experience • Awareness of guest's behaviour in liminal spaces • Servicescape awakens various stimuli • Added value creation • Differentiation long-term • The power of impression • Better image of the company

Table 2 Measures for hotel chains

3.1.3   Target market specification

I narrowed down the field of investigation further to obtain more informative results. The study is geographically limited to Europe. This continent is best suited because my interviews are conducted there. Other continents must be excluded because major cultural differences exist in holiday behaviour, values and morals. Demographically, age segmentation is needed. For this purpose, people from the age of 64 are defined as senior or elderly customers. This age delineation is based on the average retirement age in Europe, which is 63.5 for women and 64.3 for men (Yanatma, 2023). Senior citizens with middle-class to upper-class incomes are regarded as a reasonable social-psychological distinction. Narrowing down the behaviour does not make sense in this paper due to the small study group. However, when selecting the interview partners, care is taken to ensure

the seniors are comfortable with travel. Only older people who enjoyed travelling before retirement will be interviewed. The health condition and character traits will be evaluated only after the survey. Both the new-age elderly and the more traditional seniors are targeted.

3.2   Methodology

3.2.1   Qualitative research design

For this thesis I have chosen the qualitative research process as an approach. This means that no classical hypothetico-deductive approach is used, which is often the case in quantitative research. The method of organising and using prior theoretical knowledge differs between qualitative and quantitative research. In the qualitative research process, no hypotheses are made that are tested (Kelle & Kluge, 2010, p. 50). The current basic strategy for qualitative content analysis is to build on the foundation of quantitative content analysis by using its advantages and developing qualitatively oriented text analysis methods (Mayring, 2022, p. 49). In the procedure of qualitative research, which is present in this study, different dimensions of prior knowledge, such as everyday knowledge and theoretical knowledge, can be used in different ways to derive theoretical knowledge. If it is possible to form empirically valid sociological categories and statements about the area of activity under investigation through a combination of the theory, general knowledge and the research, the purpose of the qualitative research method has been achieved (Kelle & Kluge, 2010, p. 39). To achieve this goal, expert interviews will be conducted. I will use a deductive approach to derive from the theory where the focus of the survey and investigation should lie. The qualitative interviews with representative hotel mangers and employees should supplement the previous theory. I will use expert information from customers to develop optimisation proposals for the redesign of hotels.

3.2.2   Sample interview partners

There are different methods of sampling, ranging from random sampling to deliberately selected individuals (Mayring, 2022. p. 54). When selecting the interviewees, I first made a distinction between clients and companies. I wanted to interview senior citizens to find out more about their travel behaviour, their wishes, and concerns. On the other hand, I was also aware that I would have to get in touch with the hotels themselves in order to know what hotels implement and what experiences have already been made in the area of older travellers. When selecting the senior citizens, care was taken to ensure that people

from different age segments were interviewed, but all over 64, as this corresponds to the defined target group. Nationality was not an important factor, but I still interviewed people from different countries. However, the sample is too small to draw conclusions on cultural backgrounds. The names of the persons were not mentioned in this work for reasons of data protection. I have defined codes for each person. The code consists of a number that refers to the order in which the interviews were carried out. The capital "I" stands for interviewee and the letter at the end refers to the first letter of the person's name. The "xx" is a place marker which will refer to a line number from the appendix. In the appendix the symbol […] is used to replace a name.

Interview no.	Person	Code	Age	Nationality	Date
1	I-J	(1-I-J-xx)	72	Dutch citizenship	12.03.2023
2	I-M	(2-I-M-xx)	67	Dutch citizenship	20.03.2023
4	I-S	(4-I-S-xx)	77	Swiss citizenship	31.03.2023
8	I-D	(8-I-D-xx)	76	American-Swiss citizenship	11.04.2023

Table 3 Elderly interview partners

The same concept applies to the interviewed employees or managers of a hotel. Here, however, there is no "I" but an "H" for hotel. For this paper, I interviewed employees of the Hotel Dolder in Zurich and the Hotel Am Schloss in Thun. Both hotels are located in Switzerland, but they are very different from each other, which is what I wanted, because this way a better comparison can be made.

Interview no.	Person	Code	Function	Company	Date
3	H-N	(3-H-N-xx)	Manager	Hotel Am Schloss	24.03.2023
5	H-P	(5-H-P-xx)	Teamleader Front Desk	Dolder Grand	03.04.2023
6	H-S	(6-H-S-xx)	Front-of-House-Manager	Dolder Grand	04.04.2023
7	H-T	(7-H-T-xx)	Teamleader Front Desk	Dolder Grand	04.04.2023

Table 4 Hotel interview partners

The Hotel Am Schloss is located in the city centre in Thun, in Switzerland. The city hotel has been run as a family business since 2014. The hotel itself is set up for a short stay, guests usually only stay for one or two nights. Different types of rooms are offered, from small business rooms to larger family rooms. The facilities and prices vary depending on the room. In general, however, the price per night and per person is between 90 and 150 Swiss francs. The hotel has a total of 40 rooms (Hotel Am Schloss, 2023).

I decided to ask this hotel for my interview because it is a family business and the couple who runs the hotel is therefore responsible for a large part of the activities themselves. I

was told on the phone during the preliminary research that the hotel's target group is mainly businesspeople, but that it also regularly caters for senior tourists. This is especially the case because the hotel is located close to the city. Older people who travel to Thun to see a musical or other cultural events are therefore very happy to come to stay in that hotel.

Hotel Dolder Grand is a luxury 5-star hotel located in Zurich, Switzerland. The location is very central, but since the hotel is located on a hill, it is quiet and has a beautiful view of the surrounding area, including Lake Zurich. The hotel is equipped with many amenities. For example, a spa area, fitness room and various pools, as well as tennis courts and golf courses are part of the facility. Bars, dining facilities such as award-winning fine dining restaurants offer guests the opportunity to indulge themselves. The hotel serves not only for overnight stays, various events and seminars are also held. The Dolder Grand was opened for the first time in 1899. Meanwhile, the property has 173 fully equipped rooms. The hotel has elegant historic rooms to highly modern rooms. The hotel offers a variety of activities, including guided tours of the city, walks in the surrounding area, and cultural events and concerts (Dolder Grand, 2023).

3.2.3   Data collection via interviews

Before I could start conducting the interviews, I created a guideline, which was slightly adapted from person to person. The questions served as a basis, but since the interviews are expert interviews with a qualitative approach, the interviews are only partially structured. This means that on the one hand the guide provides a structure for the topic area and on the other hand it serves as a tool that facilitates the collection of data. Partially standardised guidelines can already contain specific questions (Bogner et al., 2014, p. 28). The following questions are intended only as a guideline. They may be deviated from during the interviews:

a) **Change in travel behaviour after retirement?**

The first step in the interviews with the older people was to find out how travel behaviour has changed after retirement. The aim of this question was also to find out whether the interviewee had also been a traveller in the past.

b) What does a typical holiday day look like?

This question should give me a rough idea of where older people like to go and what the daily programme looks like. I wanted to use this question to get an overview of which activities are popular with the target group.

c) Which constraints make travelling more difficult?

In the theoretical part of the paper it was already stated that there are many reasons for seniors not to go on holiday anymore. With this question, I wanted to find out other possible reasons and to find out to what extent these reasons really have an impact on behaviour.

d) Are medical facilities, social contacts, and courses particularly relevant?

Due to the decline in health, medical facilities play an essential role. However, the extent to which this is a reason to organise the holidays differently was still unclear. It is also known that many older people suffer from loneliness, so it was interesting to ask about the need for social contacts. The previously defined new-age-elderly are adventurous and willing to learn, hence the question of whether such offers in this direction would be exciting for those surveyed.

e) What are the most important design aspects of a hotel?

To better design servicescapes, more information is needed about which aspects of the design have a positive or negative impact on seniors. Hence the question about the aesthetics of the images, colours and furniture. Other questions in this area focused on functional features such as emergency exit signs, smoke detectors and so on. Not to forget, especially for seniors, the accessibility and lifts.

f) To what extent do multisensory experiences make the experience better?

Another part of the work is devoted to multisensory marketing strategies. Therefore, it is relevant to learn more about how customers perceive smells, sounds, surfaces, dishes, light and temperatures.

g) Important factors that should be right when booking?

According to theory, important decisions are already made in the pre-service phase. For me, this was therefore also relevant to talk about with the interview partners. Contents that can be discussed in this area deal with security of the region, political stability, surroundings, booking website, cancellation conditions, attractions, diets, and allergies.

h) What are special or unpleasant customer experiences?

The personal stories may be able to explain other interesting aspects of the customer journey.

I created a guideline for the interviews with the hotels as well. The structure reflects the outline from the theoretical part. On the one hand, it is about finding out how employees perceive and influence the customer experience, in a further step what the typical characteristics of the seniors as guests are and then, last but not least, how the design is created and adapted within the servicescapes of the hotel. Within each section I have come up with possible questions that serve as a foundation, but there may be some deviations depending on the conversation.

a) What is important when it comes to customer satisfaction?

How can be ensured that guests are satisfied during their stay? How to deal with requests from guests regarding special requirements or wishes and how to deal with complaints from guests regarding the design and service in the hotel rooms? In what way differs the experience of older guests from younger guests?

b) Focusing on the target group seniors, what stands out?

Have employees ever been allowed to take part in training on how to deal with elderly guests? How important is it to have older people as guests in the hotel? Is there added value in having guests from different age groups? How does the hotel adapt its offers and services to the needs of older guests? How does the hotel encourage older guests to participate in activities and offers at the hotel? How can an employer offer additional comfort to older guests? Should there be special cancellation conditions for older guests so that they can cancel a stay or a booked service without additional costs? Are there special amenities for older guests on offer, such as comfortable chairs, non-slip bathroom mats or grab bars in the shower? What is the best way to ensure that older guests have access to all liminal areas of your hotel, including stairs, lifts, and corridors? Are all rooms accessible, or are guests with specific needs assigned to specific rooms? What specific challenges occur in caring for older guests? What are special experiences in general in connection with older guests?

c) Layout and design

What kind of feedback do employees usually receive from guests regarding the design in the rooms? What special features does the hotel room have that guests particularly appreciate? How important is it that hotel rooms are modern and contemporary in design? What special features should be in the room which guests might appreciate? Are there any special sensory impressions that make guests feel particularly comfortable in the hotel? How should the design of hotel rooms be updated? Are renovations planned on an ongoing basis?

3.2.4 Execution interviews

In conducting the interviews effectively, special care should be taken not to ask only the questions from the guideline. There is often a danger that the questions will then be too neutral. The interviews should have a reference to the addressee but should not be evaluated by the person asking the questions (Bogner et al., 2014, p. 51). In this case, I conducted the interviews myself and used my prior knowledge from the theory and my research on the companies to ask questions in a targeted and personal way and add further questions if something is unclear or particularly interesting. Some of the interviews took place in person and on site, others I conducted online due to the geographical location of the interviewees. The length of the interview varied depending on the person, but it can be said that all interviews took between 40 and 80 minutes.

3.2.5 Transcription sound recording

According to Mayring (Mayring, 2022, p. 55), it is important to determine how the transcription of the interviews was done. I decided to transcribe the sound recordings I made with my mobile phone using the OpenAI tool Whisper. Whisper is a system for automatic speech recognition that can comprehend several languages (EdXD, 2023). This was very important because the interviews were conducted in English, German and Dutch. The transcription was then carried out on the website named colaboratory, with Whisper as the programme installed in the background (Colaboratory, 2023). Subsequently, the generated texts were checked. Most of the filler words were deleted. The preliminary clarifications and information about my work were not recorded in most cases, only the actual interview. The transcripts can be found in the appendix (supplement file).

3.2.6   Data encoding

Before conducting the interviews, a deductive structuring of the categories is made (Mayring, 2022, p. 96). In this case, this means that the categories were already determined before the interviews were conducted.

Code	Category	Definition
Customer Experience:		
(EX)	*Experience*	*Experiences are customer experiences that have either a positive or negative impact on the holiday. So, to speak, the special stories that the travellers remember.*
(BE)	*Behaviour*	*The travel behaviour category is about how the behaviour of seniors is changing. This also includes typical character traits.*
(MO)	*Motivation*	*The aim here is to show why elderly people like to go on holiday, the underlying motivation for travelling, and the reasons for going on a chosen trip.*
(CO)	*Constraints*	*Statements that give an indication of why older people do not go on holiday are coded as constraints. It is therefore about reasons that make travelling more difficult in old age.*
(HE)	*Health*	*Anything to do with health problems belongs to the coding of health.*
Administration:		
(IN)	*Insurance*	*From car insurance to health and travel insurance, everything related to insurance is coded as insurance.*
(BO)	*Booking*	*Statements regarding booking platforms or booking criteria are presented under the term booking.*
(RE)	*Review*	*To what extent reviews are important and whether they are more important for seniors. Statements about whether reviews are done or not by the respondents are also part of the coding of reviews as well as feedback that is given.*
(LA)	*Language*	*Problems that arise in connection with different languages, or exciting experiences with other languages, are assigned to the term language.*
Lifestyle:		
(SE)	*Services*	*What are important services that add value and must be offered, and which are less important. Demands and expectations of the services are also brought together under this category.*
(FL)	*Flexibility*	*Basically, everything that has to do with the adaptability of the guests falls into this category. The procedure of planning journeys is also included here. Character traits can be partly classified here if they have to do with the flexibility of the person.*
(AC)	*Activities*	*The organisation of the daily programme, including the activities that are or are not enjoyed, fall under this category.*
(SC)	*Social contacts*	*Travelling alone or together, connecting with a group, or talking to locals are all part of social contacts.*
Housing:		
(FU)	*Furnishings*	*The focus here is also on the furnishings of the hotel rooms, for example which pieces of furniture are where, what they look like and how practical they are.*
(PL)	*Place*	*Location coding is used when referring to a geographical position or area, but also when referring to the location or accessibility of the accommodation.*
(AD)	*Accommo-dation*	*On the one hand, the accommodation is about what type of accommodation, for example a studio, hotel, or B&B, further includes information that says something about the accommodation. There will also be renovations and parking spaces included.*
(RO)	*Room size*	*The term speaks for itself, everything that has to do with the size of the rooms and especially the hotel rooms.*
Multisensory:		
(SI)	*Sight*	*Statements about how customers perceive the design or how the hotel designs something belong in this category.*
(SO)	*Sound*	*What role does noise play and how is it controlled.*
(SM)	*Smell*	*Which smells are perceived or used specifically for well-being.*
(TA)	*Taste*	*This includes everything that has to do with food, such as breakfast, dinner, and drinks.*
(TO)	*Touch*	*Carpets, curtains, ventilation, colours, and temperatures fall under the term touch.*

Table 5 Category definitions for the analysis of the interviews level-1 and level-2

22 categories were derived from the literature review. The definition of the categories was done in a first step on two levels. The 22 subcategories were created from five main categories from level one. Both levels were thus created deductively. Table five explains the categories. After the interviews were conducted, relevant statements were transferred as sentences into an Excel document where they were assigned to one of the 22 categories. These statements serve as anchor examples according to Mayring (Mayring, 2022, p. 96). Afterwards, a filter could be set and the most important statements per category could be analysed.

3.2.7   Systematic comparison and inductive subcategorization

In the evaluation of these individual text passages, the statements were compared with each other, or the data material was compared by means of a systematic comparison according to the method of Kelle and Kluge (Kelle & Kluge, 2010, p. 56). This comparison served to allow further new subcategories to be formed. These new subcategories were derived inductively (Kelle & Kluge, 2010, p. 59). These additional codes, which are on level-3, were not created for all categories. To define the codes on the further level, it was examined whether the statements have enough content per category to define further categories (Kelle & Kluge, 2010, p. 64). If this was the case, it was seen which categories could be created according to the meaning. With this subcategorization in the most important categories, it was possible to create the basis for the context's formation. In the categories at level-3, the correlations were subsequently analysed (Kelle & Kluge, 2010, p. 40).

3.2.8   Evaluation methodology

In order to create the evaluation, the most important statements with a high relation to the core topic were summarized per category on level-2. Subsequently, these categories were evaluated for their relevance (Kelle & Kluge, 2010, p. 57). In other words, I looked at the extent to which the category is related to the behaviour and satisfaction of seniors. From this, it could be deduced which factors are particularly relevant for seniors and which factors must be implemented without being served from the perspective of the hospitality industry.

3.3 Evaluation from coded categories level-1 and level-2

3.3.1 Customer experience

Customer experience comprises the categories of experience, behaviour, motivation, constraints and health. In the following sections, the statements made in each category are addressed. The statements of the hotel in the reference with the "H" and the interviewed seniors designated in the reference as "I" were both mentioned in the sections. The importance, interpretation and correlations will be discussed later.

In experience, both positive and negative experiences were reported. (1-I-J-351) believes that the customer experience has a lot to do with personal attitude. You can enjoy many more things if you are flexible as a traveller. (2-I-M-767-768) also believes that employees and locals usually try everything to please and help if necessary. What makes it an extraordinary experience, according to (2-I-M-785-787), is hearing or witnessing unique stories of the local people in the area of the trip. According to (3-H-N-1245-1247), this is also what hotel hosts try to offer guests, a unique experience and try to make their stay as good as possible. Just like (2-I-M-785-787), (4-I-S-1579-1581) also thinks that people often do their best, and therefore, as (1-I-J-351-353) also thinks, one should be satisfied and appreciate the effort of others, thus minimising the number of negative experiences. (1-I-J-308-313), in turn, also told me that there can always be inconveniences, of course, and often because the communication is unclear. For example, (1-I-J-294-295) experienced that a hotel was closed on arrival, and the manager could only be reached when a small post-it with a phone number was found on the back door. It was off-season, so there was no staff on-site during the day. However, the traveller booked the accommodation a week in advance, so the person would naturally have expected to be informed about this situation. Other examples of negative experiences were, according to (1-I-J-321-335), that the furniture was so illogically placed in the hotel room that one could not easily get past it, and this was not disclosed at the time of booking, as well as the fact that it was supposedly only 400 metres walking distance to the city centre. However, there was a huge difference in altitude, which should have been mentioned. Such withholding of information was very tiring for the guest. The person (5-H-P-1669-1670) has learned many things about how to keep guests happy. The hotel ensures customer satisfaction with personal conversations and telephone calls with guests. So-called courtesy calls are made, which consist of calling the room to ask if everything is okay. Sincerity and personality are the two most important keywords for (6-

H-S-1847). Moreover, (5-H-P-1670) and (7-H-T-2291-2294), also named courtesy calls a successful means of picking up guest requests and ensuring satisfaction. However (6-H-S-1848-1851) mentioned it should be remembered that guests always have different wishes and needs, which is why older guests should be addressed individually by means of empathy. What (6-H-S-1861-1863) noticed during the working hours at the Dolder is the family relationship with the customers. Employees are often referred to as family by visitors. Furthermore, that leads to the highest level of satisfaction that can be achieved. In addition, (7-H-T-2291-2292) mentioned that the guests are always given a business card so that the contact person is easier to recognise and can always be addressed with questions. There are always challenges when it comes to seniors in the hotel. However, they always try to act preventively, for example, by allocating rooms near the lift or activating the WiFi right at the beginning with the elderly guest, if necessary (7-H-T-2307-2309). Then there were stories about exceptional experiences that cannot be forgotten. To make an example, the person (1-I-J-465-468) was in Paris with a grandchild and wanted to eat at Montparnasse but was too early and had no reservation. However, the employee was able to arrange something. Finally, the two were allowed to come back later and, to their surprise, they were placed at the most beautiful table in the restaurant with an incredible view of the Eiffel Tower. Alternatively, when (8-I-D-2263-2266) was in Las Vegas at a famous hotel and the staff needed to understand customer service, the person explained the problem. As a result, the person was given the suite on the top floor. (4-I-S-1581-1581) enjoyed a surprise singing at the daughter's birthday. Hotels also try to create such experiences, as (6-H-S-1917-1919) mentioned that sometimes even personalised presents like dog collars or miniature pictures of the Matterhorn are created for guests.

(1-I-J-12-14) stated that travel behaviour has mostly stayed the same after retirement. The only big difference is time. This person has always loved to travel and still loves to travel a lot. The typical character traits explained by (1-I-J-370-371) consist of being positive, not complaining often and enjoying the moments. That means all opportunities are used, even if it costs little. The biggest difference for (8-I-P-2442-2444) is also the time available. Travelling was always great before and after retirement, but now seniors have more time to travel longer distances. (8-I-P-2447-2448) likes to try new things, and now that the person is not in a hurry, time makes it possible to stay in one place longer. In addition, more financial resources are available, making it possible to stay in a nice hotel

from time to time or another luxurious treat. Due to experiences and worldwide friendships, this interviewee also has less trouble travelling alone because there are people you can meet everywhere. However, it should also be remembered that although variations are desired, people still always have their habits and like to do certain things the same, as (8-I-P-2458-2461) thinks. The travel behaviour of (4-I-S-1343-1345) has changed quite a bit in recent years. The interviewee used to travel a lot. (4-I-S-1659-1661) loved travelling so much that the person thought later, when getting old, that he or she would be on the road all year. Unfortunately, the person had to realise that travelling takes much energy and is not always easy with the dog. According to this person, cruises would be a good option for older people, but (4-I-S-1456-1458) is very environmentally conscious these days and no longer does this as a matter of principle. According to (3-H-N-1027-1028), the travel behaviour of older people has some typical characteristics which often occur. However, the fact that older people always have their tricks to achieve what they want is fundamental. Service was defined as a very central part of behaviour from the host's perspective. (5-H-P-1683-1686) noticed that elderly guests compared to younger guests attach great importance to comprehensive service, guests are happy when they are recognised, which leads to satisfaction and positively influences behaviour. The behaviour of the elderly is not always the same. (6-H-S-1998-2003) reports that some older guests want silence, and others want to be listened to. It has also been shown that many older guests are still very young in spirit. Sometimes some 90-year-olds even want to WhatsApp with the staff. The behaviour varies greatly, from depending on support to asking where the next jogging route is. The person (7-H-T-2388-2391) is often surprised. Older guests are now often technically gifted and have no great trouble with paperless check-in and bills by e-mail.

There are things seniors do that are simply more motivating while being older, according to (1-I-J-390-404). As a retired traveller, you have an attitude that you should enjoy the trip and are more aware that this might be the last time you visit this place. That is why it is a good idea to say that you will do something unusual like a helicopter ride with a champagne breakfast in the Grand Canyon and not look at the cost. Also, (8-I-D-2469-2480) likes to travel to see as many more things as possible and check them off the bucket list. These dreams are incredibly motivating to travel the world as long as it is still reasonable regarding health. It is also a way to beat the clock.

Where you go on vacation changes as you age. Other factors are considered, such as (1-I-J-119-120) not being allowed to spend too much time in the sun or (8-I-D-2528-2529) not liking cold places anymore. Other changed characteristics are that seniors needs more comfort (4-I-S-1548) does not want extremely early flights anymore, and (2-I-M-615-616) has heart problems, so you have to pay attention to how the medical care is in the particular country. (5-H-P-1769-1772) has found that older guests sometimes have difficulty with technology, so more time must be taken for explanations. One thing that also needs to be considered, according to (2-I-M-621-624), is that after retirement, you often have parents in nursing homes, so you do not want to travel that far and long yourself.

(1-I-J-234) has a very positive attitude, and no active attention is paid to medical care. According to (1-I-J-238-239), in most cases, one can assume that a doctor or at least someone who works in nursing is on board. (2-I-M-910-913) agrees that, for example, on a cruise ship, a doctor is always present, which leads to the problem that the seniors make such journeys until they can drop dead on the spot. Therefore, (2-I-M-890-892) questions whether people know when to stop travelling and when it is no longer responsible. That can also lead to the disability of other travellers, for example, on a group trip, where someone has to sit down all the time during a hike to rest (2-I-M-895-897). As a traveller with heart problems, (2-I-M-613-615) is still one of those travellers who consciously pay attention to certain things but does not abstain from travelling because of health difficulties. It can happen that the host (6-H-S-2070-2072), is forced to mention that the hotel staff is no nursing staff, and thus the guest must be pointed out that possibly a hospital or nursing home must be visited. (6-H-S-2224-2227) has experienced once that such a thing had to be communicated to the guest. (6-H-S-2077-2079) believes there are always situations where, in retrospect, one thinks it would have been better to solve things differently. That is why (6-H-S-2086-2088) thinks it is so great that all negative situations are always logged. These are then also included in training sessions for the entire staff. In addition, (6-H-S-2092-2095) thinks that in the event of a negative or unpleasant incident, one should also make sure to behave discreetly. It is especially in the customer's interest that not the entire staff needs to find out about it and certainly not other customers. (4-I-S-1423-1424) is severely limiting himself or herself due to heart problems. Travelling overseas is no longer possible, partially still in Europe here and there a little. (8-I-D-2518-2520) loves group travel but looks very closely at whether the trip he or she chooses is

doable. That means, many hikes are deliberately not aimed. According to (8-I-D-2455-2457), as a senior citizen, you should still do as much as possible because you never know how long you can travel. The interviews also revealed aspects that must be mandatory for older travellers. (3-H-N-959-961) tells me that one must always be prepared for allergies and have suitable household goods. The person (3-H-N-976-979) also says that for wheelchair users, other criteria must be met, such as wider door frames and showers. Another aspect that (5-H-P-1722-1724) mentions are the handholds in the bathrooms. It is optimal if such can be attached at the request of the guests. Alternatively, as (6-H-S-2211-2214) says, even chairs can be placed in the shower (6-H-S-2236-2239).

3.3.2 Administration

In the following paragraphs, the most important statements on the subcategories of administration are elaborated. These consist of insurance, booking, review and language.

It is pretty straightforward, according to (2-I-M-748-749). If you have more health problems, you also have appropriate insurance. However, what is much more exciting is what insurance companies are doing. For example, (2-I-M-900-902) has seen several times that the premium costs for seniors are increasing when renting cars abroad. Cancellation policy is also a more relevant topic as it may be that older guests cancel more, plus (3-H-N-1020-1023) offers voucher solutions so trips can easily be made at another time.

There are no major differences between young and old when it comes to bookings (2-I-M-836). Moreover, (4-I-S-1518-1519) finds out about activities and prices beforehand, but he or she has always done that. The only difference is that if you have limitations yourself, such as being in a wheelchair, you can find out more information before booking according to (3-H-N-984-986).

According to (5-H-P-1691-1692), feedback is always appreciated. When you receive negative feedback, you always try to do something immediately, which can be challenging. What offers added value is the recording of complaints in the customer file so that authorised employees in the hotel can view the file and react in a targeted manner when the guests come back. (1-I-J-339-341) believes that good communication between guests and hosts is the most important thing to get good platform reviews.

Language skills can be a problem, according to (2-I-M-612-613), (1-I-J-254-256) and (8-I-D-2526-2527). Nevertheless, it is never the case that you do not go on a trip because of

the language. Either you take your son or daughter with you, who already speaks Spanish, or you book a tour guide. However, what does not only apply to the language but much more to the culture can become more difficult if you travel to culturally very different countries according to (8-I-D-2523-2525).

3.3.3 Lifestyle

The section on lifestyle is divided into services, flexibility, activities, and social contacts. Statements from the respondents, as well as the hotels, are shown.

There is no denying that customer service is key. (1-I-J-384-386) and (8-I-D-2673-2674) are always particularly happy when employees manage to organise something important to you as a guest. The internet service is also significant for older people, says (3-H-N-1206-1208) and for the guests, of course, assuming that it is offered free of charge according to (8-I-D-2610-2611). Another service (8-I-D-2598-2600) appreciates is transportation from the airport to the hotel. (5-H-P-1773-1776) says that the service in the background, for example the preparation, can prevent many complications, for example by older guests indicating that they are going on a wellness holiday, are given a room near the spa area, or even putting down welcome cards, is a popular service (5-H-P-1781-1783). During the stay, the most important thing from (7-H-D-2381-2382)'s point of view is that you have time for the guests. Staff training also helps educate the team on good customer service (6-H-S-2033-2035).

Some research is done in advance, but (1-I-J-121-262) is spontaneous on the road. Especially when travelling solo, the plan is easy to adjust constantly. Also, (2-I-M-595-770) never really does the same thing. Variety is great and especially when you can plan it yourself. If you are not so critical, the experience is also much better. The attitude is then also that if something is not good, you realise it is only for a short time, and thus the whole experience becomes much more positive and easier with less stress. (8-I-D-2568-2570) likes luxury and adventures as long as they are not too stressful. Furthermore, only a few seniors are so flexible and make it simple. There are also those, like (4-I-S-1413-1415), who no longer have the energy for such adventures and then plan everything exactly and react less flexibly if something needs to be fixed.

When you go on holiday, you naturally want to see and do something. (1-I-J-77-79) is always on the go and always wants to see something new. Lectures and courses, for example, on cruises, are great for (1-I-J-116-118) because you learn something new

immediately. Also, the readings are great and (2-I-M-648-649) can well imagine it is a good additional service. The reason (1-I-J-271-272) plans everything is to see everything, but on the other hand, to avoid getting comments about missing something, which would have been close to visit. (7-H-T-353-356) thinks it is great that so many activities for older people can be offered in the Dolder, such as the aqua gym, a property map with walks, the rental of e-bikes, or the issuing of tickets for the art house in Zurich. Older guests are always happy to take advantage of such offers.

(8-I-D-2445-2447) likes to make new friends during the holidays, others such as (2-I-M-640) do not like it at all. However, it tends to be easy to socialise when travelling alone without a partner (1-I-J-85-86). It also depends on the destination, how many and what kind of contacts you make. If you do not go to the mainstream places, you often meet with the locals, which can also be lovely, as (2-I-M-806-808) said.

3.3.4   Housing

Under housing, topics such as the facility and location are explained. Specifically, the subcategories at level-2 are addressed: furnishings, place, accommodation and room size.

The person (1-I-J-57-58) mentions some very desirable points when it comes to furnishing the room. A refrigerator, something to make tea or coffee and preferably a microwave. (8-I-D-2249-2450) likes it when you can prepare breakfast yourself, which is always a big advantage in vacation apartments. This independence is very popular with both of them. Other things that are a must are something to sit on (1-I-J-60-61), (8-I-D-2615-2616), a shower big enough to stand in (1-I-J-191-192), and of course, their own bathroom (8-I-D-2592-2593). You could share it well as a teenager, but as a senior, you would rather have your own bathroom (1-I-J-658-659). (4-I-S-1498-1499) especially likes the king-size beds. Furthermore, it must have a wooden floor in the rooms if you travel with a wheelchair or walker to move around easier, according to (7-H-P-1752-1754).

It turns out that one has a lot more time available after retirement, so one can go on vacation much longer, as (1-I-J-14-15) and (8-I-D-2467-2468) think. Apart from that, nothing changes much in the places you visit, except that you might pay more attention to other circumstances, such as the centrality of the location, as (8-I-D-32601-2602) says.

The seniors surveyed (1-I-J-38-43), (2-I-M-596-597), (4-I-S-1382-1384), and (8-I-D-2512) all agreed that there is no change in accommodation preferences. That means that

if you used to love hotels, then that is still the case. If you go camping regularly, it is still something you enjoy doing even while you get older.

It is sometimes a disadvantage if the rooms are tiny (1-I-J-49), but it is much more critical that there is space for a chair or something because it is just tedious when you can sit comfortably in the room (8- I-D-2615-2616). The interviewee (6-H-S-2188-2190) thinks the rooms in the hotel Dolder are always big enough, but it depends on which furniture the guests want in the room.

3.3.5 Multisensory

In the following, statements from the interviews are reproduced on sensory impressions. These consist of sight, sound, taste, and touch. The smell was not mentioned as a section because the interviewees made no informative statements on this topic.

The decorative aspects are well appreciated by guests, such as (4-I-S-500), who likes paintings in hotel rooms, or (2-I-M-696-697), who usually prefers a simple decor but still finds it a great caricature when it has small items everywhere. (6-H-S-2133-2135) pointed out to me that there is much art in the hotel, which is constantly changing, and the guests appreciate having a museum within the hotel. Especially older guests often have preferences for cultural things. With age, the eyesight of the guests can decrease, which does not affect the decoration, but makes it more difficult to read the information texts. Therefore, the staff (6-H-S-1974-1976) also has training courses showing how to easily make all texts larger on the iPad, which is used at check-in. Light sources are kept rather warm in the hotel (6-H-S-1812-1814) and can also be dimmed, or, if desired, more light sources can be installed.

When asked about the music in hotel buildings, (2-I-M-709) and (4-I-S-1511) said this is unpleasant. Also, (8-I-D-2627-2629) is not enthusiastic and likes it only when it is quiet and instrumental without lyrics. Music can, of course, be changed, but the city noise cannot be changed much. That is why (3-H-N-1071-1074) also tries to isolate the windows as well as possible because it is quite noticeable that seniors do not like noise. (6-H-S-1978-1980) thinks that it is important that the staff knows how to deal with hearing problems. For example, the iPads can be set to read the texts out louder. However, this is not always the best solution. Sometimes employees have to get closer to the customer because the whole hotel should not hear the content of a conversation.

The senior (8-I-D-2639-2642) always likes a buffet because you have choices. (2-I-M-676-678), on the other hand, likes to eat rather non-mainstream and attaches much more importance to healthy food. Further, the offered food cannot be brought in connection with the age group. The differences exist rather in the culture or the character of the person. For example, the Swiss eat brioche on Sunday, not Saturday like (3-H-N-1092-1095) stated. It is generally better to offer something local. Elderly guests like that very much, which is also a reason for travelling. French fries can be found everywhere, which is, according to (4-I-S-1534-1536), not very nice because one must not travel to eat the same as in the hometown.

Questions such as carpet or laminate always arise. Initially, the Hotel am Schloss had carpet (3-H-N-1143-1145) because it is low maintenance and soundproof. As also (4-I-S-1528) thinks, it is unhygienic for guests. Regarding the mattresses, one can only please some people (6-H-S-2152-2154). However, there are simple ways to change the firmness level with toppers or extra bedding. For older guests, in most cases is that the bed is just a little low. Using pillow choices allows (6-H-S-2177-2178) the guests to meet their different needs as much as possible.

4 EMPIRICAL RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results

4.1.1 Significance footprint for seniors

Level	Category	Level-2 and Level-3 categories	Footprint					
			6	5	4	3	2	1
1	Customer Experience		6	5	4	3	2	1
2	Experience	EX		●				
3		- Positive EX		◆				
3		- Negative EX		◆				
3		- Negative with a positive outcome	◆					
2	Behaviour	BE	●					
3		- New-age elderly silver surfers	◆					
3		- Traditional elderly not technology affine		◆				
2	Motivation	MO		●				
2	Constraints	CO			●			
2	Health	HE		●				
3		- Optimistic boundless	◆					
3		- Unpleasant difficulties	◆					
3		- Must-Have offerings			◆			
1	Administration		6	5	4	3	2	1
2	Insurance	IN				●		
2	Booking	BO					●	
2	Review	RE						●
2	Language	LA						●
1	Lifestyle		6	5	4	3	2	1
2	Services	SE		●				
2	Flexibility	FL		●				
3		- Adaptable and spontaneous	◆					
3		- Mere presence			◆			
2	Activities	AC				●		
2	Social contacts	SC					●	
1	Housing		6	5	4	3	2	1
2	Furnishings	FU			●			
3		- Self-catering			◆			
3		- Special requirements		◆				
2	Place	PL					●	
2	Accommodation	AD						●
2	Room size	RO					●	
1	Multisensory		6	5	4	3	2	1
2	Sight	SI		●				
2	Sound	SO		●				
3		- Hearing problems	◆					
3		- Silence			◆			
2	Smell	SM						●
2	Taste	TA					●	
2	Touch	TO				●		

Legend Footprint
6: Very high relevance for senior guests
5: High relevance for senior guests
4: Relevant for senior guests
3: Some differences present, not very relevant for senior guests
2: Minimal differences between senior and young guests
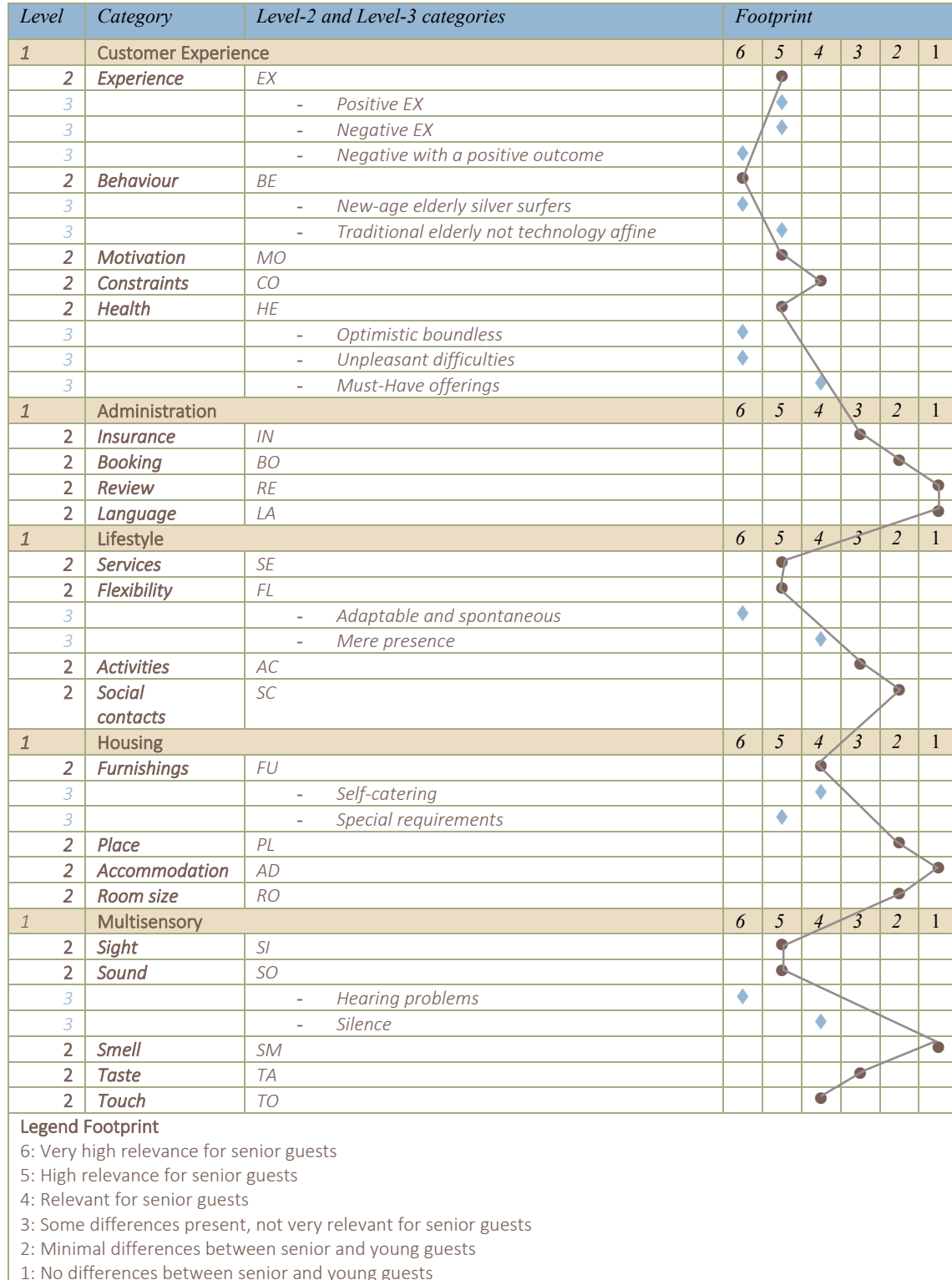1: No differences between senior and young guests

Table 6 Data encoding categories level-2 and level-3 including footprint

To see how high the relevance of each coded category is concerning older travellers, I created table six, which shows all coding on the three different levels. The relevance of level-1 was not determined because this dimension contains too much information. The brown dots show the relevance on level-2, with a score from six to one in the footprint, where six shows a very high relevance, and 1 shows no relation to age. The detailed legend is explained below the table.

EX, BE, MO, HE, SE, FL, SI, and SO are most relevant for seniors. For example, it could be determined that the motivation for seniors takes an interesting perspective. Travel has always been motivating for many, yet the motivation is fundamentally changed for seniors, and that is because of the variable of time (1-I-J-12-14). On the one hand, there is more time available for travel after retirement, but because one is older, one cannot estimate how much time one has left to enjoy life, so the motivation is higher to do what one can while it lasts (8-I-D-2469-2480).

> *"We call it a bucket list. It is a list of things that I dream about, some of which I can do and would like to do, and some I probably will never get to do. It is still just a dream."*
>
> *– Quote (8-I-D-2469-2470)*

The following chapter analyses the other categories with high relevance in more detail below. Administration categories and the activities offered proved to be less relevant for seniors. PL and RO are not more or less relevant for seniors than younger people. In sensory impressions, it turned out that SM, TA and TO are less important than SI and SO.

4.1.2 Experience more: elevating your everyday moments

The experiences that the customer has within the customer decision journey (Kandampully et al., 2018, p. 27) directly influence the senior's well-being. From the theory (Wu et al., 2021, p. 37) and the interviews (6-H-S-1863), it has been shown that the guests' behaviour can be strongly influenced by the manner of the employees and that time given is one of the essential aspects for seniors.

> *"Time is the highest thing that can be offered as a gift."*
>
> *- Quote (6-H-S-1863)*

In order to offer the experience, it is, of course, an advantage to offer many things, so you have a better chance of finding something suitable for everyone.

> *"I think what many guests say is that we just have the bridge between tradition and history to modernity. Many guests come to us expecting an old castle, really old, classic service school. They are then surprised how actually modern and how fresh it can be in here. So practically this mix between, we live the tradition and the history, but we also interpret it in a new way. And that, I think, is what many guests also appreciate, that we simply have it all."*
>
> *- Quote (6-H-S-1869-1874)*

This quote indicates positive emotions. However, further sub-categories could be recognised at level-3. Three emotions can be determined from the experiences: disappointment in the case of negative experiences, joy in the case of positive experiences and loyalty in the case of negative experiences with a positive outcome, or in other words, a surprisingly positive outcome of a situation that seemed normal or negative before. Negative experiences often arise from unclear communication (1-I-J-308-313). However, negative experiences with a positive outcome have the highest impact. Situations where a senior is not satisfied, but this problem is solved so well by the staff that the customer has a memorable experience and has a solid connection with the loyalty of the customer is great, as has been shown in the interviews (1-I-J-465-468), (8-I-D-2263-2266), (6-H-S-1917-1919), (4-I-S-1581-1581). Like multi-sensory experiences (Dzhandzhugazova et al., 2016, p. 10392), seniors' loyalty is also triggered by positive or negative experiences, including service.

4.1.3   Behaviour matters: How habits shape your life

It is not easy to assess the character of the guests, but this can be very helpful for the hotel staff to better respond to the guests' needs. As established in theory, seniors like an empathetic community environment when travelling in third places (J.-E. Lee & Severt, 2017, p. 219). Seniors can be divided into two behavioural categories. The new-age elderly silver surfers who are incredibly flexible and have a positive mindset are on time and do not have any significant difficulties with the modern technical world (1-I-J-370-371). Then some behave more traditionally and always plan everything carefully, and have trouble adapting quickly but still like to travel (5-H-P-1769-1772). New-age elderly travellers like to spend more money to experience something great (8-I-P-2447-2448), (1-I-J-390-404). Some people are over 90 and still want to WhatsApp or ask about Netflix or jogging routes (6-H-S-1998-2003). Such people can already be recognised at check-in

if they are fine with the paperless check or are willing to receive the bills by e-mail (7-H-T-2388-2391). With the traditional guests and the silver surfers, it is essential always to clear how the guests are doing. However, this service has a special meaning for the cognitive (Barak & Schiffman, 1981, p. 189) older people (7-H-T-2291-2294). That is best done by issuing business cards (7-H-T-2291-2292) so that the guest always has the opportunity to reach a contact person or by making courtesy calls to the hotel room to ask if everything is fine (5-H-P-1669-1670). For guests who need to be more technically savvy, it makes sense as an employee to take more time to explain the room, including the technology, and install certain things such as internet access together (7-H-T-2307-2309).

4.1.4   Health is wealth: Prioritising your well-being

The population is ageing, and a change in health is evident (Bateson, 2021, p. 7), especially in the category of optimistic boundless seniors. An interesting issue has arisen among the new-age elderly. For optimistic seniors, estimating when it is still responsible for travelling (1-I-J-238-239) might be challenging. That means they assume that there is always a doctor or nursing staff (2-I-M-910-913), (1-I-J-238-239) somewhere, and accordingly, they go on vacation because they have the time and money, not necessarily the strength. That can be highly stressful for staff and other travellers (2-I-M-895-897). For staff, this can mean that, in some cases, guests need to be made aware that a hotel or cruise ship is not a nursing home (6-H-S-2070-2072). There are also visitors with poor health, memory loss, and declining physical and mental capacity (Wu et al., 2021, p. 31). Unpleasant problems can arise. In such cases, it is of high relevance to keep incidents discreet towards the customer (6-H-S-2092-2095). This means that the staff ensures that other staff only primarily get involved if this is necessary, and it should also be avoided that other guests find out about it. Then, in a second step, health incidents should be logged and then processed by experts in such a way that it can be explained or discussed in training courses or team events how similar scenarios should be dealt with in the future (6-H-S-2086-2088), so everyone can benefit and learn from it at the end (5-H-P-1691-1692). In order to satisfy the health demands of some seniors, several factors have emerged which have to be present if desired. That includes good cancellation conditions, preferably so you can rebook the dates for a small fee; if the guest has a health problem, the trip can be rebooked later (3-H-N-1020-1023). One activity that is very popular with seniors is classes or readings, as they do not require much physical effort but can still be

very exciting. Seniors also like to learn new things (1-I-J-116-118) (4-I-S-470) (2-I-M-648-649). Furthermore, programs such as aqua jogging, e-bikes, reduced museum tickets, or even hiking maps of the surrounding area, including difficulty level, offer an excellent additional service for seniors (7-H-T-353-356).

4.1.5 Flexibility for success: Adapting to changing environments

According to Bai (Bai et al., 2009, p. 67), novelty-seeking is a solid motivator for vacation. Adaptable and spontaneous travellers can also be classified again as new-age elderly. No matter how you look at it, all travellers always plan certain things, and so do spontaneous seniors (1-I-J-121-262). Despite rough planning, many activities are planned spontaneously. With a flexible attitude, the experience will always be more positive because travellers will be comfortable with everything (1-I-J-351). The slightly less enthusiastic seniors on vacation are categorised as merely present. This implies that these retired seniors try simplifying everything and minimising the effort. If something is not as desired, they often do not complain (Chaouali et al., 2021, p. 72) because this is associated with effort. Accordingly, to increase satisfaction, staff must avoid problems rather than solve them. In concrete terms, this means trying not to put this customer group in an unpleasant situation in the first place (5-H-P-1774-1776).

4.1.6 Designing for comfort: Furnishings the perfect hotel room

It has been found that many seniors like to have a little freedom when it comes to food, so kettles, coffee makers and also microwaves offer an optimal complement in hotel rooms (8-I-D-2249-2450). This desired freedom is also reflected in the hotels; guests like it when they can walk freely and go on a discovery tour. If the hotel is set up as a museum, this is extremely exciting to look at the constantly changing art pieces and decorations (6-H-S-2133-2135). As my initial research has already shown, older travellers place more emphasis on functionality (Khan et al., 2020, p. 6). Therefore, furnishing rooms and other liminal spaces (Roberts et al., 2019, p. 1136) play an increasingly important role for seniors. There should always be enough space to move around the furniture, and a seat is a crucial piece of furniture, which should be mandatory (1-I-J-61-63). Especially for seniors with wheelchairs or walkers, it is mandatory to have a wooden floor in the rooms so guests can move around quickly (7-H-P-1752-1754).

4.1.7   Sound of serenity: finding peace in a noisy world

Various studies have shown that music positively influences spending behaviour and satisfaction (Zhao et al., 2022, p. 2). The seniors interviewed told me that music is not pleasant. Especially if one already hears worse, such background noise is only disturbing (2-I-M-709), (4-I-S-1511). In the dining area, it is acceptable, and it is also understandable why hotels like to play music. However, it should firstly be quiet and secondly advantageously only instrumental, which would still be somewhat pleasant (8-I-D-2627-2629). As people age, they notice they are having more hearing difficulties. That can make conversations very tedious. However, the staff knows some tricks that help to communicate more effectively in such situations. It is neither in the interest of the staff nor the guest to talk very loudly so that everyone can hear (6-H-S-1978-1980). Especially because seniors require silence, it is not optimal to increase the noise level. Accordingly, employees try to get closer to the person. What also works is to increase the volume of the iPad or other devices or to connect directly via Bluetooth with any hearing aids. The same applies to the decrease in vision; the font size can be increased on the iPad or other electronic devices (6-H-S-1974-1976).

4.2   Discussion

4.2.1   The interrelationship between the defined categories
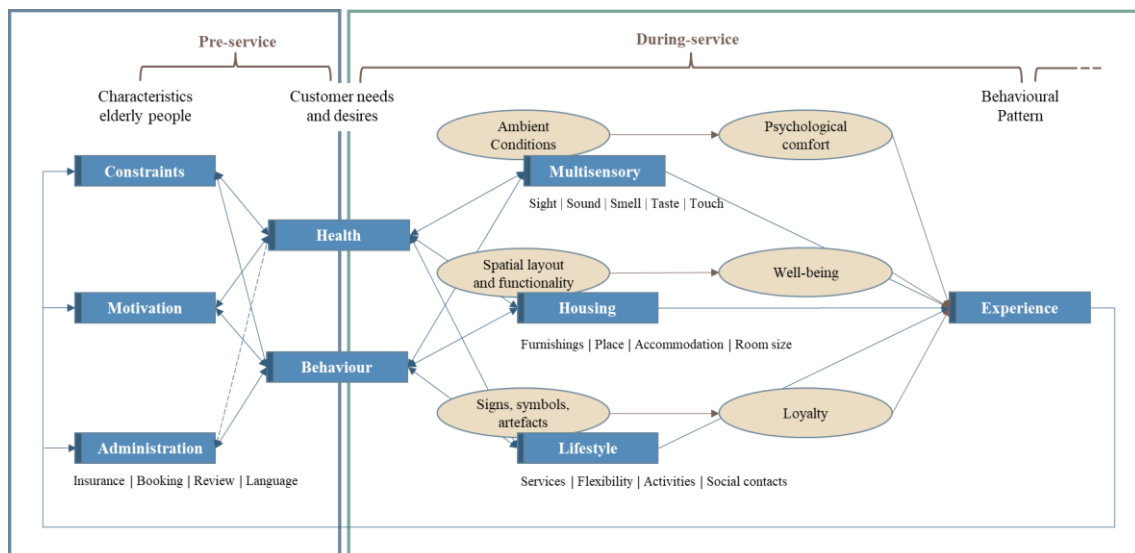

Figure 1 The interrelationship between the defined categories (own figure)

Interrelationships can be derived from the coding of the contents. The statements from the supply side, the hotel, and the demand side, the senior, were congruent in the interviews. It has been shown that concerns or constraints, motivational factors and

administrative aspects shape the pre-service phase. Deciding how, where and for how long seniors go on vacation depends on their motivation and how strongly constraints prevent retirees from travelling. The administrative aspects also have an impact; for example, poor cancellation policies can discourage seniors from travelling or language or cultural differences can influence destination choices. These characteristics of elderly travellers explain the behaviour of seniors. When hotels better understand this behaviour, decisions can be better comprehended. Although influences in this area can play a role, it has been shown that these categories' relevance is not extremely important. The time factor differs most in this category compared to younger travellers. On the one hand, older travellers have more of it at their disposal, which makes longer trips to more countries possible; on the other hand, the time factor is equally a constraint because seniors are much more likely to have no time to travel for sudden health reasons anymore. Depending on the person, these thoughts ensure that travelling is extremely popular at the beginning after retirement and, depending on the cognitive age, for quite a while. Therefore, it is a promising target group, as already stated in the theory (Barak & Schiffman, 1981, p. 24).

H1: If seniors retire, then it is expected that the number of days of travel per year will significantly increase, as they may want to seize every chance to travel while they are still able.

The health condition of the seniors as well as the typical behaviours, form the bridge between the pre-service phase and the during-service phase. That means that effects play an essential role in both phases. The health and character of the person strongly influence needs and desires. The next chapter will explain seniors' characteristics and how they can be categorised. However, it was found that when guests are cognitively younger than their chronological age, this positively affects the whole during-service phase.

H2: If guests' cognitive age is younger than their chronological age, it is hypothesised that this will positively impact the overall customer experience during the service phase.

The three categories, multisensory, housing and lifestyle from level 1, could be assigned to the typical dimensions of a servicescape defined by Bitner (Bitner, 1992, p. 66-67). The multisensory impressions can be equated with the ambient conditions, housing category, spatial layout, and functionality. Lifestyle has many similarities with the signs, symbols, and artefacts. Multisensory marketing strategies can be used to improve ambient

conditions. It turned out that sight and sound, particularly, have very high relevance for seniors. By limiting background noise, for example, by removing music altogether or at least making it quieter, and by getting closer to the person when communicating with seniors with hearing problems, well-being can be significantly increased, positively affecting psychological comfort. The same applies to people who have poor eyesight; increasing the font size on electronic devices also increases the psychological comfort of these specific older guests.

H₃: If the visual and auditory senses primarily influence the sensory perception of seniors, then it is hypothesised that reducing environmental noise levels and increasing font sizes can enhance their psychological comfort remarkably.

In terms of functionality in the housing category, optimisation for seniors has shown that the most relevant finding is that seniors with restricted mobility need a wooden floor in the rooms to make it easier to move forward with a walker or wheelchair. In addition, there should be enough space to move around easily. The seniors surveyed also always wanted a seat in the room. Devices such as a coffee machine or microwave, which increase independence, are also often desired but are not necessary for well-being.

H₄: If the functionality of senior living spaces is primarily determined by mobility, including sufficient room to move around and suitable flooring to facilitate movement with walking aids, then it is hypothesised that this will increase the well-being of seniors staying in those spaces.

Lifestyle, and especially the service subcategory, have the most significant influence on the loyalty of older customers. Senior guests value personalised, time-consuming service much more than younger guests. Achieving this loyalty is extremely important because seniors strive for more habits as they age, so it is vital to start building relationships as soon as possible. When hotels gain the loyalty of young seniors, they will keep them for much longer as returning guests, which has exceptionally high added value for the hotel.

H₅: If senior guests' loyalty can be established quickly after retirement through a personalised service that requires significant time and attention, it will be the most effective method to increase the loyalty of elderly guests and encourage them to return for a longer duration.

The aim is to increase psychological comfort, well-being and loyalty in all these areas of the servicescapes so that the seniors' guest satisfaction increases. Customer satisfaction is the highest goal a hotel can achieve for its guests, and this goal is to be achieved by training hotel employees in customer service with senior citizens. From my research, I was able to derive some recommendations as to what employees can do in certain situations with older guests to react in a targeted manner. These findings are explained in the section below.

4.2.2   The interaction between the customer and the employee

One of the hotel employees' most noteworthy challenges is finding out what the guest needs. That can be especially difficult with seniors because employees have less experience dealing with seniors. Health problems are often not told directly to staff, so it is also often difficult for staff to assess how much support and supervision is effectively needed. The interviews also showed that people do not like to talk about health problems. Guests prefer to keep it discreet. For example, there are experiences with patients with dementia. However, the staff also does not like to talk about it because it is often a difficult situation. As an employee, you do not know how best to deal with it because it has so many different manifestations, as has already been shown in the theory of dementia (Dr. med. Schnurbus-Duhs, 2022). On the other hand, it will be much easier for the staff if guests and their problems are known to the staff. Consequently, the team can react better.

> *"Every guest who comes through the door is, of course, always a new book for us, a new chapter, what we read, what we may work on or even collaborate. It is the most beautiful thing, but some books and guests have been loyal to us for years. That is when you know what the guests want."*
>
> *- Quote (6-H-S-1857-1860)*

It has been shown that it is not possible to classify retirees according to their chronological age and draw conclusions as to whether they are capable or incapable of performing certain activities. In order to improve the customer satisfaction of the seniors in the servicescape of the hotel, it is of very high importance that the guest is not only understood but also that the guest is correctly assessed.

H₆: If a hotel's staff member can categorize seniors as "New-age elderly" and "Traditional elderly" and take appropriate actions for each group, the CX for seniors will be improved, and seniors' satisfaction and loyalty to the hotel will increase.

An elderly super tech-savvy guest would not want to be asked if help is needed installing the Wi-Fi network; he or she would immediately feel attacked. On the other hand, a guest with specific health needs, such as a holder in the bathroom, may not necessarily want to ask for it him- or herself; the appreciation and the feeling of being understood are much higher when the staff asks if adjustments should be made to the room. These are things that the employee should assess or figure out. Of course, the more time the guest spends in the servicescape, the easier it becomes. It is identical with friends or family. It takes time to build a relationship. The same should be done with the seniors in the hotel; older guests appreciate it, in most cases excessively, if it is noticed that the employee spends time with the guest. Especially with returning seniors, the employees are also seen as family. For that very reason, it is of high importance to spend as much time as possible with the guest and to apply a targeted service strategy that suits the guest. According to the interviews, communication is one of the most essential measures to avoid negative customer experiences. The theory and the interviews showed that seniors could be classified based on chronological age. However, cognitive abilities play a much more important role. However, it also does not work to only assess older guests based on their cognitive age. My research has shown that the character, for example the behaviour of a retired person, is also of great importance. It is challenging to classify seniors according to their character. However, two rough categories can be analysed, which could significantly contribute to assessing seniors as hotel guests better to interpret needs precisely and thus increase customer satisfaction so that loyalty grows. The seniors return as visitors, which can greatly increase the number of hotel guests, which leads to more revenue.

Retired seniors often fall into two categories, the new-age elderly and the traditional elderly. These two categories have distinctly different characteristics. As has been seen, service is paramount and directly related to customer satisfaction. Suppose the seniors who are guests in the hotel are classified in the correct category. In that case, the employees can apply targeted strategies concerning the service to gain many advantages,

at least in the eyes of the customers. The main difference between the new-age elderly and the traditional elderly is the attitude.

New-age elderly are very young in spirit, so they have even more cognitive abilities. The character is also shown to be adventurous and optimistic. They can adapt quickly and are willing to make spontaneous decisions. Health-wise, they can face the same difficulties as the traditional ones, the difference being that they worry less and trust those around them more. This means they assume there is always someone nearby who can help, so they have fewer qualms about going on vacation. The staff can recognise such guests because they are okay with paperless check-in, are happy to receive receipts electronically, and are usually tell it if they do not like something. For these guests, this, in turn, has the advantage that good service can result in unforgettable moments and experiences, which the customer naturally likes very much. The difficulty with this type of senior are the health limitations. An optimistic attitude and a high desire to travel can lead to irresponsible decisions. That means this group might not know their health limits and, therefore, goes on vacation when it is no longer reasonable. That can be uncomfortable for the staff and other guests. Group activities can result in delays to other guests, and hotel staff are not typically nursing staff. That means some challenges can arise for the staff if things are suddenly not going well with the guest. Therefore, in such cases, the guest should also be made aware that this type of holiday may no longer be suitable. As long as the guest is still doing well, much interest should be shown, and suggestions should be made as to what the guest could do. If problems arise, they should be solved in a customer-oriented manner so that loyalty remains.
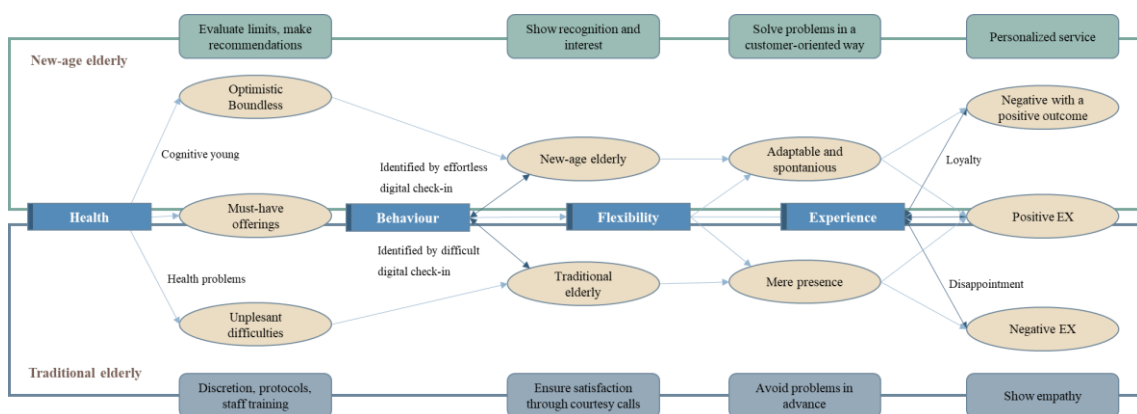

Figure 2 The interaction between the customer and the employee (own figure)

On the other hand, shown in figure two on the lower part, there are the traditional elderly. These are characterised by the fact that they are set rather negatively. In unpleasant health

situations, these seniors want discretion. To respond better to situations where health problems arise, the staff should keep a log. As a result, the entire workforce benefits from previous experiences through exchange or specialised training. The staff can recognise the traditional ones when there is discomfort in using technological devices or when they do not appreciate that many things in the hotel are digitised. With this group of older guests, it is imperative to make regular courtesy calls, which are calls to the room, as the guest often does not approach the staff with problems him- or herself. Such phone calls allow the staff to ensure that the elderly guests are okay. Problems should also be resolved in advance, for example, by allocating optimal rooms that suit the needs, frequent inquiries, and spending time with the customer; empathy is essential.

4.2.3   Managerial implications

In order to increase the customer satisfaction of the target group aged 64 and older, targeted service strategies, optimised design of servicescapes and the understanding of multisensory impressions play an important role. The management should allow the staff to participate in external training courses, which deal with the service for older guests. Internally, logs of negative guest experiences should be kept. The logs should be discussed with the workforce to obtain a learning effect because if health problems arise, quick actions are required. Through retrospective reflection, decisions made can be carefully re-evaluated, which contributes to the fact that in similar cases in the future, it is targeted to act more efficiently and faster. Dealing with the health problems of the elderly can be extremely stressful. That ought to be avoided by staff learning more about how to act in such cases. In order to choose a targeted service strategy for the guest, the staff must assess which category the older guest is best placed in. Consequently, tailoring a customer-oriented service to the guest might be more accessible. The time invested in a guest should be higher than with younger guests, as seniors value this. It should be asked often how the guests are feeling. The theory has proven that older guests like to feel at home; this was not reflected in my analysis. In particular, the new age guest is always looking for adventure, which means the staff is welcome to suggest unique activities.

For the purpose of making the servicescapes better for seniors, additional options such as extra cushions, chairs, and handles should be offered. The bathroom emergency button is another feature ideal for older guests, as it is an excellent way to call for help. To facilitate forward movement, there must be solid floors, and carpeting should be avoided due to the reason of restricted mobility. To specifically respond to the declining sensory perception

of the elderly, appropriate measures should be taken in the event of visual or hearing difficulties in order to enable the guest to receive the information and ensure psychological comfort. Furthermore, font sizes should be made large enough and legible. Background noise such as music should be minimised as far as possible so that a conversation between guest and employee is more pleasant for the guest.

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 Impact

The relevance of the CX was presented as a research field, the research niche as senior demeanour and the research gap as the behaviour of seniors in the hospitality industry. The insights gained from the theory and interviews impact these three fields. Literature displays limited research on the theory of how sensory marketing can positively influence customer experience and satisfaction in the hospitality sector. Specifically on elderly people research is rarely present (M. Lee et al., 2019, p. 4314). It has become apparent through my research that optimizing servicescape design significantly impacts well-being, psychological comfort, and loyalty. Various helpful approaches for seniors with health limitations have been identified, such as adapting hotel room furnishings and sensory marketing strategies. As a consequence, seniors feel more comfortably.

The implications of this study for science are versatile. First, it helps to expand the understanding of how older people travel and what factors influence their decision. It has long been thought that age plays a decisive role concerning the needs of elderly travellers (Wu et al., 2021, p. 37). Through this study, it became apparent that individual character traits play an even greater role than age. Moreover, the research results can help develop more differentiated strategies to understand older travellers better and target their needs. Understanding the fact that older people exhibit particular behavioural patterns due to their cognitive age has a major impact on the economy. Specifically, hotel and tourism sector companies can benefit by explicitly addressing the individual needs of their older guests and thus increasing their satisfaction and loyalty. Because seniors have more time available, there is also the chance that older people will increasingly plan longer stays and become a stable and lucrative customer group.

The research results on seniors as guests in the hotel industry significantly impact the field of customer experience. By recognizing that seniors can be divided into two categories, the new-age elderly and the traditional elderly, hotels can take more targeted measures to meet the different needs of these two groups. For example, CX can be improved by providing innovative technology or digital offerings for the new-age elderly guests while offering traditional services and a more personalized approach for the traditional elderly guests. A targeted approach and adapted services lead to an increase in the satisfaction of seniors as guests in hotels. Furthermore, higher satisfaction leads to a

higher emotional commitment to the brand, which in turn, has a positive impact on affective commitment and customer loyalty (Khan et al., 2020, p. 5). In addition, better CX accelerates positive word of mouth, improving the hotel's reputation, which benefits businesses.

5.2   Suggested future research

Further investigation in this field of research is needed to close the science gap regarding the needs of elderly guests. Through this qualitative work, I created six hypotheses that referred to the elaborated theory and conducted interviews in the discussion. These hypotheses can be used for further quantitative research to analyse whether the findings are reflected in a more extensive interviewee set. Although the health topic was discussed in the interviews, I did not further investigate disease patterns such as dementia. Further research in this area would be helpful. Hotels, which have experience with serious illnesses among their guests, do not like to talk about it. I noticed a certain discretion, making addressing these problems even more important.

Furthermore, I have defined service measures that could be applied to the different senior groups. Checking these measures' efficiency in further experiments would be crucial to obtain more specific data. In addition, it would be helpful to examine how the findings of my research can be applied in other sectors, such as healthcare or fashion.

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7 Appendix (Supplement file)

7.1 (1-I-J), 12.03.2023

7.2 (2-I-M), 20.03.2023

7.3 (3-H-N), 24.03.2023

7.4 (4-I-S), 31.03.2023

7.5 (5-H-P) 03.04.2023

7.6 (6-H-S), 04.04.2023

7.7 (7-H-T), 04.04.2023

7.8 (8-I-D), 11.04.2023