



Assessment of cultural sensitivity on hotel design and its impact to comfort and privacy: A case study of Lagos State

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Abstract

Cultural sensitivity in hotel design plays an important role in ensuring guest comfort and privacy, particularly in culturally diverse destinations like Lagos State, Nigeria. This study investigates the cultural sensitivity embedded within hotel design and its impact on guest comfort and privacy, focusing on key factors such as architectural aesthetics, spatial configuration, material selection, and smart building systems. Through a mixed-method approach utilizing observation and questionnaires, data were collected from the Oriental Hotel Lagos, and the Relative Importance Index (RII) was employed to assess the significance of identified elements. The findings reveal that architectural aesthetics, including modern elegance and water features, significantly influence comfort and privacy, with RII values of 0.921 and 0.904 respectively. Similarly, spatial configuration factors such as space zoning and multi-functional spaces exhibit high impact, with RII values of 0.945 and 0.931 respectively. Material selection, emphasizing natural and metallic materials, and smart building systems, particularly HVAC control and smart lighting, also demonstrate substantial influence on guest experiences. The study concludes that incorporating culturally sensitive design elements enhances guest satisfaction and recommends further research to explore long-term effects on guest loyalty and hotel performance, thus contributing to sustainable and culturally sensitive hotel development practices in Lagos State and beyond.

Keywords: cultural sensitivity, hotel design, comfort and privacy

1. Introduction

Cultural sensitivity in tourism involves respect, trust, ethics, cultural identity, mutual understanding, self-determination, governance, and unique healing, wellness, and spiritual needs (Hurst *et al.*, 2021) ^[11]. Cultural sensitivity involves the awareness, understanding, and respect for the values, beliefs, customs, practices, and norms of different cultures. In architectural and hospitality design, cultural sensitivity involves considering and incorporating elements that are mindful of the cultural aspect in which a structure or space is situated. Cultural sensitivity enhances recognition, respect, and reciprocity towards otherness in tourism (Viken *et al.*, 2021) ^[22]. Cultural sensitivity in design means acknowledging and respecting the diverse backgrounds and preferences of guests. It involves creating spaces that are inclusive, accommodating, and culturally appropriate, catering to the needs and expectations of a diverse clientele. This can include considerations such as: Incorporating design elements that resonate with the local culture or blend harmoniously with the destination's architectural heritage, Adapting the layout of spaces to align with cultural expectations regarding privacy, communal areas, and the flow of movement, integrating artwork, decoration, and symbols that reflect and celebrate the local culture, promoting a sense of place and authenticity, considering the cultural practices of guests and ensuring that the design accommodates or respects specific rituals or behaviors, choosing materials and color schemes that are culturally relevant and resonate with the local content, ensuring that the design is accessible to individuals of different cultural backgrounds, including those with specific needs or preferences.

Cultural sensitivity is essential for creating inclusive and welcoming environments, especially in the hospitality industry, where guests from diverse cultural backgrounds come together. Cultural sensitivity in designing is about building cultural bridges through design,

developing through exposure to cultural differences and working in multi-cultural landscape (van Boeijen *et al.*, 2019)^[21]. Cultural sensitivity in hotel design is a key factor in enhancing customer satisfaction and creating unique value. Incorporating local arts and culture into sustainable service design can generate unique value and experiences for customers (Chen & Chen, 2021)^[3]. The challenges in culturally sensitive design can arise from historical, ideological, or ethical factor (Häkkinen *et al.*, 2020)^[18]. The reduction of cultural heritage expressions in modern hospitality designs has resulted in designs of placelessness (Poon, 2019)^[17]. Cultural sensitivity in hotel design significantly impacts the comfort and privacy of tourists (D'Acunto *et al.*, 2021)^[5]. This is particularly important in the hospitality and tourism industry, where understanding and respecting cultural differences is crucial (Colocassides, 2022)^[4]. Cognitive cultural motivation and interest have significant effects on the emotional bonds that can form between consumers' existential authenticity, hotel image, and perceived value (Zhang *et al.*, 2020)^[24].

Lagos State, Nigeria's with its economic and cultural epicenter, presents a dynamic blend of tradition and modernity, attracting a diverse array of visitors seeking to explore its rich heritage and vibrant urban landscape. The state is a home to several cultural integrated hotels which include Oriental Hotel. The state also exhibits inadequate tourism facilities that lack creativity and natural environments (Izobo-Martins, 2020)^[12]. Tourists' perception and experience of ecotourism in Lekki Conservation Centre, Lagos, Nigeria, are poor, highlighting the need for improved destination management, building design to enhance inbound tourism (Nwokorie & Adeniyi, 2020)^[15]. As tourism continues to thrive in Lagos, there arises a critical need to assess the cultural sensitivity embedded within hotel design and its implications for guest comfort and privacy. This study aims to comprehensively evaluate the cultural sensitivity embedded within hotel design in Lagos State, focusing on key factors such as architectural aesthetics, spatial arrangement and material type and smart building system. By assessing how these factors align with local culture and cater to guest comfort and privacy, the study seeks to provide valuable insights into enhancing the overall guest experience within hotels across Lagos State.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Concept of cultural sensitivity in tourism

Cultural sensitivity involves designing buildings with cultural bridges through design, integrating cultural dimensions into the practice while remaining in tune with one's own cultural beliefs and values (van Boeijen *et al.*, 2019)^[21]. Cultural sensitivity in tourist infrastructure is complex and multi-dimensional; it involves several factors such as reverence, confidence, morality, cultural distinctiveness, shared comprehension, individual autonomy, and specific requirements for healing and spirituality (Hurst *et al.*, 2021)^[11]. It is further enhanced by tourists' cultural competence, which includes cultural openness, understanding, consciousness, and participation (Lin *et al.*, 2021)^[13]. Understanding and respecting cultural differences have significant effects in achieving the goals of an organization that is operating in the hospitality and tourism industry (Colocassides, 2022)^[4]. The creation of attractions in tourism must be equational to the primacy of ethical principles with culture and technology (Neto, 2019)^[14]. A greater emotional

perception and cultural interest lead to a higher level of satisfaction with the tourist experience (Pérez Gálvez *et al.*, 2020)^[16]. Six key factors affecting cultural tourism experiences include prior perceived significance, authenticity, engagement, cultural exchange, culinary attraction, and quality of service (Seyfi *et al.*, 2020)^[19].

2.2. Impact of Cultural sensitivity on hotel design

Cultural sensitivity in hotel design significantly impacts the comfort and privacy of tourists (D'Acunto, 2021; Colocassides, 2022)^[5, 4]. This is particularly evident in the influence of cultural proximity on privacy concerns, with US guests showing lower levels of concern when staying at American hotel chains (D'Acunto, 2021)^[5]. Green building design, a key aspect of hotel design, also plays a role in tourists' intention to stay in green hotels, with their environmental concern and perceived importance of green building design influencing this intention (Hou & Wu, 2020)^[10]. The perception and attitude towards cultural differences in the hospitality and tourism industry are crucial, as they can affect staff dealing with the challenges of tourism (Colocassides, 2022)^[4]. In the digitalization era, the influence of cultural dimensions on complaint behavior in the hotel industry further underscores the importance of cultural sensitivity in hotel design (Wahyuni *et al.*, 2020)^[23].

2.3. Influences of cultural sensitivity on comfort and privacy in hotel tourism

Cultural intelligence has significant positive impacts on tourist satisfaction, revisit intention, and electronic word-of-mouth communication (Zhang *et al.*, 2020)^[24]. Cultural sensitivity has a greater influence on the design of hotel spaces, directly impacting the comfort and privacy of guests. However, the issue of privacy in tourism and hospitality, including hotel spaces, is relatively underexplored (Hall & Ram, 2020)^[9]. Cultural values often dictate preferences regarding personal space, social interaction, and sensory experiences. These factors are crucial in shaping the layout and ambiance of hotel interiors to ensure that guests feel comfortable and respected. For example, in cultures where privacy is highly valued, such as many Asian societies, hotel room layouts may prioritize discreet entrances, soundproofing, and secluded areas for relaxation. Conversely, in cultures that emphasize communal living and social engagement, such as Mediterranean or Latin American cultures, hotel designs may feature open-plan layouts, shared gathering spaces, and vibrant communal areas to foster interaction among guests. Space presence, social presence, and knowledge sharing positively contribute to tourists' authentic tourism experience (Shi *et al.*, 2019)^[20].

Moreover, cultural sensitivity influences the provision of amenities and services that cater to diverse guest needs while preserving individual preferences for comfort and privacy. This could involve offering a range of room configurations to accommodate different cultural norms regarding sleeping arrangements or providing optional features such as prayer rooms, halal food options, or gender-specific facilities to accommodate religious or cultural practices. Religion, particularly Islamic religiosity, has a significant impact on tourist comfort and privacy. Studies have found that Islamic religiosity moderates the relationship between perceived value and satisfaction among Muslim tourists (Preko *et al.*, 2020)^[18]. Additionally, hotel staff trained in cultural awareness can provide personalized services that respect

guests' cultural backgrounds and preferences, enhancing their overall sense of comfort and satisfaction during their stay. By integrating cultural sensitivity into the design and operation of hotels, architects can create environments that not only meet the functional needs of tourists but also resonate with their cultural identities, fostering a deeper sense of comfort, belonging, and respect for privacy.

2.4. Strategies for promoting cultural sensitivity in architectural design of hotel

A range of strategies have been proposed for promoting cultural sensitivity in the architectural design of hotels. These include the use of local materials, adaptation to climate and site contour, and the incorporation of communal areas to reflect local spatial behavior (Fransisca & Zahrah, 2019) ^[6]. It is also important to consider the cultural properties of buildings within the broader context of cultural properties of places, and to understand the dynamics of architectural traditions within varying scales of cultural change processes. Local arts and culture can generate unique value and experiences for customers (Chen & Chen, 2021) ^[3]. The potential of hybrid heritage in hospitality interiors to sustain and showcase a country's heritage, national pride, and identities (Almurbati, 2020) ^[2].

3. Methodology

The study employed the uses of both qualitative and quantitative method, the research instrument employed both observation and questionnaires. The study population was obtained from the study area which is the case study (Oriental Hotel Lagos). The total studied population for the survey was established from the sample size which is 38. Observation was carried out using an observation guide and the questionnaires were constructed to fit the study aims and factors been assessed. The impact of these factor to comfort and privacy were asses using 5-Point Likert scale of measurement. Statistical method which involved Relative Importance index (RII) were used to access identified element impact to comfort and privacy. As noted by several authors RII is used to rank certain building element to a specific function (Ahmad, 2019; Genc, 2021) ^[1, 7]. The relative important index for the study is expressed using the 5-point Likert scale of measurement equation for RII ($RII = (5a + 4b + 3c + 2d + 1e) / JN$)

Where indicate the number of respondents saying (extremely important), b indicates the number of respondents (very important), c indicates the number of respondents (somewhat important), d for the number of respondents (not very important) and e also for the number of respondents (not important). While N indicate the total sample size = 38 and j indicate the number of response categories based on Likert scale which is 5.

4. Study Finding and Discussion

4.1. Oriental Hotel Lagos

Oriental Hotel is a luxurious five- stars functional waterfront

hotel with Asian furnishing, 12-floor stories building boost of over 170 rooms, which offer enchanting views of the Lagos Lagoon and occupies a 4,734 square meter land area. Located around Lekki Road, Victoria Island, Lagos, Nigeria. Its prime area in Lagos known for its upscale neighborhoods, business districts, and leisure attractions. Its location offers convenient access to major commercial and entertainment hubs in the city. The hotel boasts a range of world-class amenities and facilities tailored to cater to the needs of both business and leisure travelers. These include luxurious rooms and suites designed with modern comforts and elegant décor such as standard rooms, deluxe rooms, executive suites, and presidential suites. Lagos Oriental Hotel is a popular choice for hosting corporate meetings, conferences, weddings, and other social events. Leisure and recreational activities at the hotel include. Fitness center, swimming pool, spa, and wellness center.



Source: Wikipedia

Fig 1: Exterior view



Source: Oriental Lagos

Fig 2: Interior review

Table 1: The cultural sensitivity element identified within the building (oriental Hotel Lagos) is presented in table below

Cultural sensitivity Factor	Observed element within the case study
1. Architectural Aesthetics	Modern Elegance such as clean lines, minimalist design elements, and sleek finishes.
	Water Features such as pools
	Colours palette inspired by the local landscape, flora, fauna, and cultural symbols
	cultural heritage style and fusion
	Iconic Architecture such as Traditional craft
	Artistic Installations such as artifact, art and decoration
2. Spatial configuration	Multi-functional space such as Communal spaces including cultural gathering space, event spaces
	Space zoning
	Outdoor spaces such as terraces, rooftop lounges or landscape garden
	Cultural landscape integration
	Circulation flow and accessibility
	Inclusive amenities such as prayer room and mediation room
3. Material Selection	Local and indigenous material such as bamboo, thrash and terracotta, Stone
	Natural material such as Marble, Granite, ceramic tiles and glass
	Metallic Materials such as brass, bronze and stainless steel
	High-performance materials such as Structural Insulated Panels (SIPs), Fiber-Reinforced Polymers (FRPs), Insulated Concrete Forms (ICFs) and Cross-Laminated Timber (CLT)
4. Smart Building System	Automated lighting, HVAC controls, occupancy sensors, and building management systems (BMS).

4.2 impact of Cultural sensitivity to comfort and privacy

4.2.1 Impact of Architectural aesthetic element

Table 2: Impact of Architecture aesthetic element to comfort and privacy in the hotel

	Aesthetical Aesthetics	RII	Ranking
1	Modern elegance	0.921	1
2	Water feature	0.904	2
3	Cultural heritage fusion	0.823	3
4	Artistic Installation	0.781	4
5	Iconic Architecture	0.774	5
6	Colour palette	0.714	6

The Relative Importance Index (RII) was utilized to assess the impact of different aesthetic elements on comfort and privacy in hotels, based on a 5-point Likert scale. Among the factors evaluated, modern elegance emerged as the most influential element, with a high RII of 0.921, securing the top rank. Following closely is the water feature with an RII of 0.904, ranking second. Cultural heritage fusion, artistic installation, and iconic architecture also contributed significantly to comfort and privacy, albeit to a slightly lesser extent, with RII values of 0.823, 0.781, and 0.774 respectively, ranking third, fourth, and fifth. The colour palette, while still impactful, held a lower RII of 0.714, placing it sixth in the ranking.

4.2.2 Impact of Spatial configuration

Table 3: Impact of spatial configuration element to comfort and privacy in the hotel

	Spatial Configuration	RII	Ranking
1	Space zoning	0.945	1
2	Multi-functional space	0.931	2
3	Outdoor Space	0.727	3
4	Circular flow and accessibility	0.723	4
5	Cultural integration	0.674	5
6	Inclusive amenities	0.639	6

Utilizing the Relative Importance Index (RII) to evaluate the impact of spatial configuration elements as cultural sensitivity factors on comfort and privacy in hotels, the results indicate that space zoning emerged as the most

influential factor, boasting a high RII of 0.945 and securing the top rank. Following closely is multi-functional space, with an RII of 0.931, placing it second. Outdoor space and circular flow/accessibility also contributed significantly to comfort and privacy, with RII values of 0.727 and 0.723 respectively, ranking third and fourth. Cultural integration and inclusive amenities held lower RII values of 0.674 and 0.639 respectively, placing them fifth and sixth in the ranking.

4.2.3 Impact of Material selection element

Table 4: Impact of material selection element to comfort and privacy in the hotel

	Material selection	RII	Ranking
1	Natural material	0.981	1
2	Metallic material	0.884	2
3	High performance material	0.663	3

Analyzing the impact of material selection elements on comfort and privacy in hotels using the Relative Importance Index (RII), it is evident that natural materials have the most substantial influence, boasting an exceptionally high RII of 0.981 and securing the top rank. Following behind is metallic material, with RII of 0.884, placing it second? High-performance materials also contribute significantly, albeit to a lesser extent, with an RII of 0.663, earning them the third rank. These findings emphasize the importance of incorporating natural materials into hotel design to enhance comfort and privacy.

4.2.4 Impact of smart building system element

Table 5: Impact of smart building system element to comfort and privacy in the hotel

	Smart building system	RII	Ranking
1	HVAC control	0.937	1
2	Smart lightning and door	0.854	2
3	Occupancy sensor	0.645	3
4	Building Management system	0.618	3

Assessing the impact of smart building system elements on comfort and privacy in hotels through the Relative

Importance Index (RII), HVAC control emerges as the most influential factor, obtaining a high RII of 0.937 and securing the top rank. Following closely is smart lighting and door systems, with a notable RII of 0.854, placing it second. Occupancy sensors and building management systems also contribute significantly, with RII values of 0.645 and 0.618 respectively, sharing the third rank.

4.3. Discussion of finding

In the assessment of cultural sensitivity on hotel design and its impact on comfort and privacy, various cultural sensitivity factors were identified within the case study of the Oriental Hotel Lagos. These factors encompass architectural aesthetics, spatial configuration, material selection, and smart building systems. Architectural aesthetics include elements such as modern elegance, water features, cultural heritage fusion, iconic architecture, and artistic installations, all of which are observed within the hotel's design, incorporating clean lines, minimalist designs, pools, traditional craft, and decorative artworks. Spatial configuration elements encompass multi-functional spaces, space zoning, outdoor spaces, cultural landscape integration, circulation flow, and inclusive amenities, providing communal areas, terraces, and prayer rooms for guests. Material selection emphasizes local and indigenous materials like bamboo and stone, along with natural materials such as marble and metallic materials like brass, bronze, while also integrating high-performance materials like Structural Insulated Panels (SIPs). Additionally, smart building systems such as HVAC controls, automated lighting, and occupancy sensors enhance guest comfort and privacy. The Relative Importance Index (RII) was employed to evaluate the impact of these cultural sensitivity elements on comfort and privacy within the hotel. Within the architectural aesthetics category, several influential factors based on their RII index were identified such as modern elegance and water features, with RII values of 0.921 and 0.904 respectively. These elements, characterized by clean lines, minimalist design, and the inclusion of pools, significantly impact guest comfort and privacy by creating visually appealing and serene environments. In the spatial configuration category, space zoning and multi-functional spaces stand out as influential factors with RII values of 0.945 and 0.931 respectively. These elements enable efficient utilization of space, providing guests with diverse areas for relaxation, gatherings, and events, thus enhancing comfort and privacy. Moving to material selection, natural materials and metallic materials emerge as influential factors, boasting RII values of 0.981 and 0.884 respectively. Incorporating materials such as marble and brass not only adds aesthetic value but also contributes to a sense of authenticity and luxury, enhancing guest experiences. Finally, within the smart building systems category, HVAC control and smart lighting and door systems demonstrate significant influence with RII values of 0.937 and 0.854 respectively. These systems offer guests control over their environment, ensuring optimal comfort while also enhancing privacy through automated features such as lighting and door control. Overall, these factors show the importance of considering cultural sensitivity elements and their associated design features in hotel development to optimize guest satisfaction and overall hospitality experiences.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the assessment of cultural sensitivity on hotel design and its impact on comfort and privacy highlights the critical role of various factors such as architectural aesthetics, spatial configuration, material selection, and smart building systems. Through the Relative Importance Index (RII) analysis, it is evident that elements like modern elegance, space zoning, natural materials, and HVAC control significantly influence guest experiences. Recommendations for hotel developers include prioritizing the incorporation of these influential factors into design plans to enhance guest satisfaction and overall hospitality experiences. Additionally, further studies could explore the long-term effects of these design elements on guest loyalty, brand perception, and overall hotel performance, providing valuable insights for sustainable and culturally sensitive hotel development practices.

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