

**QUALITY OF PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AND IMAGE OF FINE-DINING  
HOTELS IN THIKA TOWN, KIAMBU COUNTY, KENYA**

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF  
HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELORS DEGREE IN  
HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT OF  
GRE TSA UNIVERSITY**

**DECEMBER 2019**

## **DECLARATION**

This research project is my original work and has not been presented for award of a degree or for any similar purpose in any other institution.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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### **Declaration by the Supervisor**

This research work has been submitted with my approval as a University supervisor:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **DEDICATION**

To my husband for his morally and financially support and for always believing in me.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

**DINESCAPE:** Dining Scape

**SPSS:** Statistical Package for Social Sciences



## OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

The following key terms are defined as follows:

- Ambience** : Ambience means intangible background characteristics that tend to affect the non-visual senses and may have a subconscious effect on customers.
- Facility aesthetic** : Facility aesthetics refer to architectural design, along with interior design and décor, all of which contribute to the attractiveness of the dining environment.
- Lighting** : Design of the lighting systems and bulbs as well as their brightness.
- Hotel image** : From the perspective of the study, it is defined as the symbolic meanings that customers recall when they encounter the specific features of the product or service.

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of the quality of the physical environment on the hotels' image in Thika town. In particular, the study sought to establish the influence of three components of DINESCAPE model (that is: facility aesthetics, lighting and ambience) on the hotels' image. A descriptive cross-sectional study of 60 customers through self-administered questionnaires was conducted. Convenience sampling technique was used to select the 60 customers. All variables were measured using adapted and modified constructs from previous researches. Content validity technique was used to assess the validity of the questionnaire. Descriptive statistics (means, mean rankings, percentages, and standard deviations) were used to summarize data. Inferential statistics using Pearson correlation was used to test the study hypotheses. Results demonstrated positive significant correlations between the DINESCAPE model dimensions and the hotel image. The study recommends that the managers of fine-dining hotels need to know the relative importance of each of these elements with regards to the hotels' image to better understand the distinct role of each individual component. The findings of this study further reveal that out of the three components, ambience is the strongest contributor of hotel image. The study suggests to the managers of fine-dining hotels in Thika that priority be given towards ensuring that the hotels maintain good ambience in order to distinguish them with their competitors

**Keywords:** Ambience, facility aesthetics, lighting, quick-casual restaurant, hotel image

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

People are eating out more often than in gone days. However, they increasingly put a premium on saving time and eating healthy and in better conducive eating environments. As a result, there has been tremendous growth in the foodservice industry. Even though service is minimal, hotels provide menus and décor more reflective of dining restaurants where customers gets in and order foods and beverages while at the same time observing time. Hotels tend to make their highest sales during lunch hours and during the evening hours when most customers want to have their supper and proceed to their residences.

According to Tillotson (2003), the clientele for hotels are generally adult customer and earning individuals with middle to upper incomes. In the hospitality industry, the attractiveness of the physical environment can affect customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction has become probably one of the best ingredients of success in roughly all organizations because it is generally assumed to be an important determinant of repeat purchases, encourages positive word-of-mouth advertising, and customer loyalty (Ryu & Han, 2010). They have argued that the total foodservice in the hospitality industry encompasses both tangible (food and physical facilities) and intangible (employee-customer interaction) components.

### **1.2 Statement of Research Problem**

Service quality and customer satisfaction have become the most core marketing priorities since they are the prerequisites of customer loyalty (Han & Ryu, 2009). In today's intensely competitive market, and in particular in the hotel industry, customers generally use physical environment as a key component of restaurant experience in evaluating the choice of the restaurants (Chow *et al.*, 2007). Numerous researches on the effect of physical environment have been conducted in developed

nations and especially on the outcome variable such as customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. While this is the case, little research has been conducted to investigate the influence of these components on outcome variable such as hotel image specifically so in Kenya at large and Thika town in particular.

The effects of an organization's image on consumer behavior has been researched (Andreassen & Lindestad, 1998). Some earlier studies have found that the perceived quality of the physical environment (Baker et al., 1994) or service quality (Lai *et al.*, 2009) can significantly influence corporate image. However, few studies have examined the influence quality of physical environment has on hotel image.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to establish the influence of the quality of the physical environment on fine-dining hotels' image in Thika town, Kenya.

### **1.4 Objective of the Study**

#### **1.4.1 General Objective**

To investigate the influence of the quality of the physical environment on hotels' image.

#### **1.4.2 Specific Objectives**

- i) To determine the influence of facility aesthetics on image of fine-dining hotels in Thika town.
- ii) To establish the influence of lighting on the image of fine-dining hotels in Thika town.
- iii) To examine the relationship between ambience and the image of fine-dining hotels in Thika town.

### **1.5 Study Hypotheses**

- i)  $H_{01}$ : There is no statistically significant relationship between facility aesthetics and image of fine-dining hotels in Thika town.

ii) **H<sub>02</sub>**: There is no statistically significant relationship between lighting and image of fine-dining hotels in Thika town.

iii) **H<sub>03</sub>**: There is no statistically significant relationship between ambience and image of fine-dining hotels in Thika town.

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The study findings may help the management of fine-dining hotels in Thika town especially in setting standards specifically addressing areas concerned with the hotels' image. By establishing the influence of facility aesthetics, lighting and ambience on hotels' image, the findings of the study may be useful to hotels' managers by helping them to form concise strategies directed towards enhancement of hotels' image and thus, customer satisfaction.

### **1.7 Scope of the Study**

To measure customer perceptions about the physical environment of hotels in Thika town, Kenya, this study uses DINESCAPE scale (Ryu & Jang, 2008). The scale has six constructs (facility aesthetics, lighting, ambience, layout, dining equipment and employees). However, the study covers the influence of the first three constructs (facility aesthetics, lighting and ambience) as they are the ones customers encounters first when they visit the hotel. Additionally, the study was conducted in Thika town fine dining hotels.

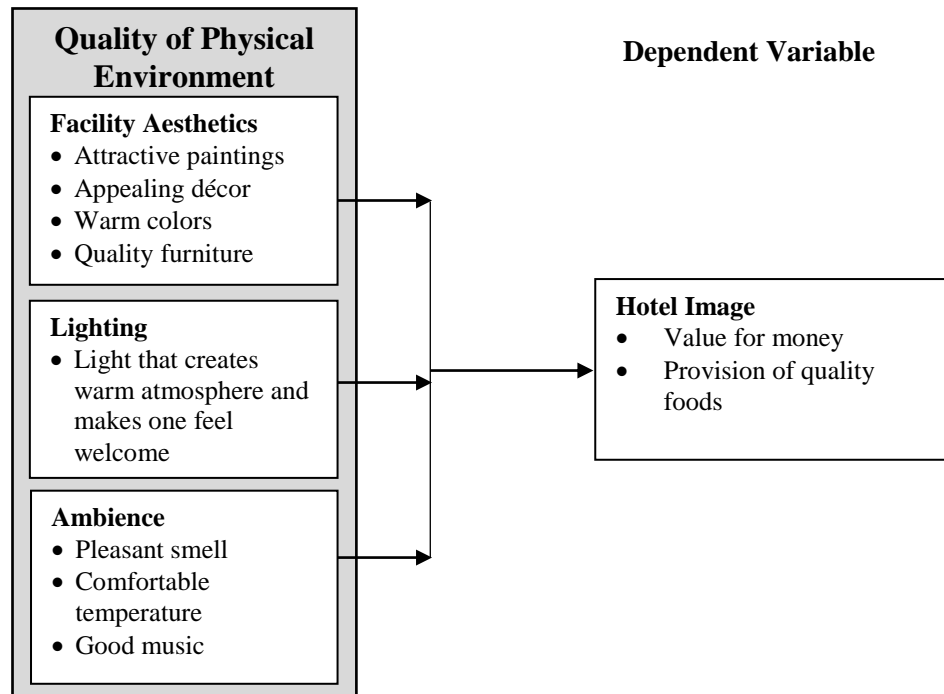
### **1.8 Limitations of the Study**

There are certain limitations in the study. First, in this study, data were collected using a convenience sampling technique which may result to bias in responses. Second, data were collected from only fine-dining hotels operating in Thika and thus, results can only be generalized to these hotels. Last but not the least, the use cross-sectional sample does not allow for an assessment of change within a single person over time.

## 1.9 Study Conceptual Framework

Figure 1.1 illustrates the study conceptual framework. The study hypothesizes direct relationships among the study variables.

### Independent Variables



**Figure 1. 1: Conceptual Framework for Measuring the Influence of Physical Environment Quality on the Hotel's Image.**

Source: Researcher (2019)

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.0 Introduction**

The chapter discusses review of literature based on the following sub headings: The concept of customer loyalty, perceived price and brand image and their relationship with customer loyalty. The chapter concludes with a summary of the knowledge gaps emanating from the literature review.

### **2.1 Hotel Image**

There are many exceptional methods of defining a brand and its measurement items because of the complicated nature of the image (Ryu et al., 2008). Brand image refers to perceptions created in the mind of customers either through knowledge or experience with an organization's products and services (Keller, 1993). In this study, the restaurant image refers to the sum of the emotional perceptions, ideas, or symbolic attitudes that customers associate with restaurants.

### **2.2 The Influence of Physical Environment on Hotel Image**

The physical environment does much to shape an establishments' brand image.

#### **2.2.1 Facility Aesthetics**

Facility aesthetics refer to architectural design, along with interior design and décor, all of which contribute to the attractiveness of the dining environment (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994). Once customers enter the dining area of a quick-casual restaurant, they often spend hours observing (consciously or subconsciously) the interior of the dining area, which is likely to affect their attitudes towards the restaurant (Baker, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1988). In addition to the appeal of the architectural design, customers may be influenced by the color schemes of the dining area.

### **2.2.2 Lighting**

Lighting can be one of the most noticeable physical stimuli in quick-casual restaurants. Research has revealed the impact of lighting level preferences on individuals' emotional responses (Kumari & Venkatramaiah, 1974).

### **2.2.3 Ambience**

Ambience means intangible background characteristics that tend to affect the non-visual senses and may have a subconscious effect on customers. Previous research has shown that background music can (1) affect customer perceptions of stores (Mattila & Wirtz, 2001); (2) increase sales (Mattila & Wirtz, 2001); (3) influence purchase intentions (Baker et al., 1992); (4) generate significantly enhanced affective response such as satisfaction and relaxation (Oakes, 2003); (5) increase shopping time and waiting time (Yalch & Spangenberg, 2000); (6) decrease perceived shopping time and waiting time (Yalch & Spangenberg, 2000); and (7) influence dining speed (Milliman, 1986).



## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter focuses on research design, study area, target population, sampling techniques, sample size, instruments, validity and reliability, pre-testing, data collection procedures, analysis techniques, and data presentation. Additionally, logistical and ethical considerations are discussed in the end.

### **3.1 Research Design**

A descriptive cross-sectional research design was used in the study. This design, not only, permits one to analyze inter-relationships among the independent and dependent variables at the time of research, but also provides information pertaining the degree of relationship between the variables being studied (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

### **3.2 Study Area**

The study was carried out in fine-dining hotels situated in Thika town, Kenya. The town is home to six (6) fine-dining hotels (Paleo, Eton, Birmingham, Lilian Corner, Luke hotel-Cravers, and the Coconut Grill).

### **3.3 Target Population**

The study targeted all the six fine-dining hotels located in Thika town. The customers dining in the hotels were targeted as the study respondents.

### **3.4 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size**

The sample size for the study was 60 customers. According to Creswell (2011), 30 cases are enough for data analysis and reporting. The convenience sampling technique was used to select 60 customers dining in the hotels. This technique is very easy to carry out. Also, the relative cost and time required to carry out a convenience sample are small in comparison to other techniques which will enable the researcher to achieve the sample size in a relatively fast and inexpensive way. Even though the sample selected using convenience sampling technique may have inherent bias, this technique helps in collecting useful information that may not have been possible using

probability sampling techniques, which require more formal access to lists of populations.

### **3.5 Research Instruments**

A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. The questionnaire comprised of closed-ended questions for easier data collecting, coding and analysis (Kothari, 2012). Secrecy and privacy are the basic features of this technique of data collection (Bush & Hair, 1985).

### **3.6 Pretesting**

A pretest of the questionnaire was conducted to assess whether the questionnaire was adequate for data collection. The aim of this process was to assess the participants' understanding of the meaning and clarity of the questions (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2012). Pretesting was used to improve the validity and reliability of the responses.

### **3.7 Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaire**

The content validity technique was used to assess the validity of the questionnaires. This was ensured through supervisor's review. Reliability of the constructs used in the questionnaire was examined using Chronbach's alpha technique for internal consistency where 0.70 will be considered as the threshold point. The alpha levels for facility aesthetics, lighting, ambience, and hotel's image were 0.766, 0.878, 0.912, and 0.911 respectively. All the alpha levels were above the threshold point demonstrating that the constructs were reliable for data analysis.

### **3.8 Data Collection Procedures**

The process of data collection comprised of the following stages. First, permissions to collect data were sought and obtained from Grets University School of Hospitality and Tourism and managers of the selected hotels. Second, customers' consent to participate in the study was sought and obtained. Third, a self-administered questionnaire was issued to customers who will agree to participate in the study. Last

but not the least, the hotel supervisors were requested to assist in data collection by encouraging the customers to participate in the study in a way of filling the questionnaires.

### **3.9 Data Analysis**

The study collected data were analyzed quantitatively using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) statistics v.20. Several steps were followed to analyze the collected data. First, the questionnaires were manually sorted to ensure completeness of data. Second, the collected responses were keyed into SPSS and variables were coded accordingly. Third, descriptive statistics using frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations were used to summarize data. Last but not the least, Pearson correlation technique was used to test the study hypotheses.

### **3.10 Logistical and Ethical Considerations**

Logistics in this study comprised of obtaining necessary permission approvals before data collection, pretesting the questionnaires and budget planning, projecting time based on the activities, administering questionnaires, data collection, and gathering the filled questionnaires from the field, editing, coding and entering responses into SPSS. On ethical considerations, informed consent to participate in the study was sought from customers. Moreover, respondents were informed of the purpose of the study and assured of confidentiality of data collected. Also, respondents were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage of the data collection exercise without any risk or penalty levelled against them.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses results of the study in line with the specific objectives and their matching research questions.

#### 4.2 Response Rate

A total of 60 questionnaires were distributed, and all were returned (100% response rate). This response could be attributed to the fact that the questionnaires were self-administered and customers were encouraged to fill them at the time of research. However, out of the 60 questionnaires that were returned, 15 had incomplete data and were discarded. Only 45 questionnaires were used for further analysis of data.

#### 4.3 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 4.1 reports the descriptive statistics of the respondents in this study. 23(50.5%) of the total respondents were male and 22(49.5%) female; 19(42%) were between 25 and 30 years and 14(30%) between 31 and 35 years. Only 9(20%) of customers sampled were above 35 years and 4(8%) were below 25 years.

**Table 4. 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

	Frequency (n)	%
Sex		
Male	23	50.5%
Female	22	49.5%
Age		
Below 25 years old	4	8%
25-30 years old	19	42%
31-35 years old	14	30%
Above 35 years old	09	20%

#### 4.4 Descriptive Results

This section presents the descriptive results of constructs used in the study.

##### 4.4.1 Descriptive Results of Facility Aesthetics

Results of the descriptive analysis of facility aesthetics are demonstrated in Table 4.2.

**Table 4. 2: Facility Aesthetics**

	<b>Means</b>	<b>SD.</b>	<b>Mean Ranking</b>
Has paintings/pictures that are attractive	4.12	0.76	2
Has wall décor that is visually appealing	4.25	0.68	1
Has plants and flowers that makes me feel happy	3.85	1.10	5
Has colors that create a warm atmosphere	3.87	1.14	4
Has furniture (e.g. dining tables and chairs) of high quality	4.11	0.78	3
<b>Total Mean Score</b>	<b>4.04</b>	<b>0.89</b>	

The findings presented in Table 4.2 show that respondents were in agreement with all the items of facility aesthetics as all the means were above 3.00. The overall mean was 4.04 with a standard deviation of 0.89.

##### 4.4.2 Descriptive Results of Lighting

Table 4.3 presents the descriptive results of lighting construct.

**Table 4. 3: Lighting**

	<b>Means</b>	<b>Sd.</b>	<b>Mean Ranking</b>
Has lighting that creates a warm atmosphere	4.32	0.81	2
Has lighting that makes me feel welcome	4.75	0.68	1
Has lighting that creates a comfortable atmosphere	4.15	0.94	3
<b>Total Mean Score</b>	<b>4.41</b>	<b>0.81</b>	

The findings presented in Table 4.3 demonstrate that the respondents were in agreement with all the items measuring lighting. The overall mean was 4.41 with a standard deviation of 0.81 showing respondents' level of agreement.

#### 4.4.3 Descriptive Results of Ambience Construct

Results of the analysis of the respondents' with regard to ambience are exhibited in Table 4.4 below.

**Table 4. 4: Results of Ambience Construct**

	<b>Means</b>	<b>Sd.</b>	<b>Mean Ranking</b>
Has background music that is pleasing	4.25	0.68	2
Has temperature that is comfortable	4.85	0.34	1
Has aroma that is enticing	4.07	0.91	3
<b>Total Mean Score</b>	<b>4.39</b>	<b>0.64</b>	

The Results presented in Table 4.4 show that the respondents in this study agreed with all the items measuring the ambience construct. The overall mean was 4.39 with a standard deviation of 0.64 demonstrating respondents' level of agreement.

#### 4.5 Testing the Study Hypotheses

Table 4.5 exhibits the bivariate correlation results. Three hypotheses were tested using Pearson correlation analysis.

**Table 4. 5. Correlation Results**

	<b>Correlation</b>	<b>P-Value</b>	<b>Decision Rule</b>
Facility Aesthetics and Hotel Image	<b>0.66*</b>	.000	Reject H <sub>01</sub>
Lighting and Hotel Image	<b>0.34*</b>	.000	Reject H <sub>02</sub>
Ambience and Hotel Image	<b>0.73*</b>	.000	Reject H <sub>03</sub>

**Note:** \* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As indicated in Table 4.5, all the correlation were positive and significant. Thus, all the hypotheses were rejected.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter deals with the summary of major findings, conclusions, managerial implications and recommendations for further research.

#### **5.2 Summary of Findings**

Analysis of the study data has revealed several major findings. First, facility aesthetics is an important factor in creating a good and positive hotel's image.

Second, the lighting aspect of the hotel is has a positive correlation with the image portrayed.

Ambience aspects of the restaurant has positive correlation with the image of the hotel.

#### **5.3 Conclusions**

Based on the aforementioned research findings, the following conclusions are made: First, all the three components studied (facility aesthetics, lighting and ambience) are significant contributors of fine-dining hotels' image. Secondly, ambience is the most crucial contributor to fine-dining hotels' image.

#### **5.4 Managerial Implications**

All the three components (that is, facility aesthetics, lighting and ambience) of the hotel function as significant contributors of positive hotels' image. Since all the three do matter to customers' perceived image about fine-dining hotels, the managers need to know the relative importance of each of these elements with regards to the hotels' image to better understand the distinct role of each individual component. The findings of this study further reveal that out of the three components, ambience is the strongest contributor of hotel image. The study suggests to the managers of fine-

dining hotels in Thika that priority be given towards ensuring that the hotels maintain good ambience in order to distinguish them with their competitors.

### **5.5 Suggestions for Future Research**

Several recommendations for further research are made on the basis of the study findings. First, the fieldwork of the study was carried only in Thika town. A more extended geographical sample might show that, in other towns, there is a difference in the influence of the three components studied on the overall image the hotels. Last but not the least, the present study looked into only three aspects of DINESCAPE model. Another study can be conducted that looks into the influence of the holistic DINESCAPE model dimensions on the fine-dining hotel's image.



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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Letter of Introduction



*Quality Education for the Real World*

### **SCHOOL OF HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM MANAGEMENT**

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Dear Sir/Madam,

This letter is to introduce **Loise Wangui Muigai**, registration number HPM-4-2462-18 who is a student in the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management at Gretsa University pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Hospitality Management. She will produce her student card as proof of identity.

To complete her degree course, she is undertaking research leading to the production of a research report or other publications and his study is titled: *QUALITY OF PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AND IMAGE OF FINE DINING HOTELS IN THIKA TOWN, KIAMBU COUNTY, KENYA*.

She would like to invite you to assist in this project, by filling in the questionnaire which covers certain aspects of this topic.

Be assured that any information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence and none of the participants will be individually identifiable in the resulting research report or other publications. You are, of course, entirely free to discontinue your participation at any time or to decline to answer particular questions.

Any inquiries you may have concerning this research project should be directed to me by telephone on **0715 567 175** or by email ([\*\*johnkahuthugitau@gmail.com\*\*](mailto:johnkahuthugitau@gmail.com)).

Thank you for your attention and assistance.

Yours sincerely

**John K. Gitau**

**Research Coordinator & Lecturer**

**Department of Hospitality Management, Gretsa University**

## Appendix 2: Questionnaire for Hotel Customers

**GRETSA UNIVERSITY**  
School of Hospitality and Tourism

### **PART A: RESPONDENTS DEMOGRAPHICS**

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**1. Gender:**

Male

Female

**2. Your age in years**

Below 25

25-30

31-35

Above 35

**3. Highest level of education completed**

Primary

Secondary

Diploma

Degree

### **PART B: QUALITY OF PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

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Please rate the extent to which you agree/disagree with the following statements measuring the hotel's quality of physical environment on a scale of 1 to 5 (*1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Undecided, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree*).

<b>Facility Aesthetics</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Has paintings/pictures that are attractive					
Has wall décor that is visually appealing					
Has plants and flowers that makes me feel happy					
Has colors that create a warm atmosphere					
Has furniture (e.g. dining tables and chairs) of high quality					
<b>Ambience</b>					
Has background music that relaxes me					
Has background music that is pleasing					
Has temperature that is comfortable					
Has aroma that is enticing					
<b>Lighting</b>					
Has lighting that creates a warm atmosphere					
Has lighting that makes me feel welcome					
Has lighting that creates a comfortable atmosphere					

### **PART C: HOTEL IMAGE**

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Please rate the extent to which you agree/disagree with the following statements measuring the hotel's image on a scale of 1 to 5 (*1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Undecided, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree*).

<b>Statements</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
The hotel is complex					
It has a cheerful and enhancing atmosphere					
The hotel has good and authentic foods					
The hotel offers value for money					