

Service Design Dimensions in Destination Planning and Management

Walter Jamieson

Toronto Metropolitan University and The Centre for Hospitality Studies, Canada

Amir Hassan

The Centre for Hospitality Studies, Canada

Abstract: Within the larger visitor economy environment, select hotels achieve high levels of service and provide experiences that meet and often exceed the expectations and needs of their guests. Admittedly, these are usually five-star properties, but many others can more than meet their customers' expectations. The challenge for tourism destinations is to learn from this hotel experience, evaluate and, where appropriate, apply hotel-related service models, and incorporate these approaches into the overall planning and management of their destinations. It is recognized that the complexity of the destination management process is challenging. This article examines service design issues and the service dimensions of hotels and destinations and makes a series of recommendations for service design in destination planning and management.

Keywords: service, service design, destination management organizations, hotels, research, experience

1. INTRODUCTION

Hotel operations and tourism destinations face a series of challenges, some brought about by Covid 19 and others that existed before the pandemic and, in many cases, are built into the DNA of hotels and destinations. One key element of understanding how hotels and destinations can become more competitive, sustainable, and prosperous is through increased service delivery quality and, therefore, the experiences they provide.

The visitor industry, including hotels and destinations, faces a number of challenges and trends that must be addressed to ensure sustainability, competitiveness, and the ability to meet guest, visitor, and employee expectations (Goodman 2009; Louveau 2023). There is increasing demand for sustainability and a more equitable distribution of the benefits of tourism requiring the adoption of community economic development and regenerative strategies. Visitors seek unique, authentic, and personalized experiences requiring hotels and destinations to innovate. Supply chain issues are changing the way hotels deliver services and experiences. Labor and skill shortages affect a wide range of aspects of hotel and destination management, given the difficulty in attracting and retaining qualified staff. Among the challenges facing hotel and destination service design are understanding and restructuring processes to remain sustainable and competitive.

While hotels have well understood management and reporting systems, destinations lack strategic plans and management structures designed to provide

a consistent set of services and visitor experiences. Some destinations have destination management organizations (DMOs), which were historically marketing bodies but have now moved towards an overall concern for managing destinations. However, DMOs have limited authority and resources and there is a significant gap in their influence over the management of destinations.

This article analyses the hotel service model to provide insight into improving the service dimensions of destinations. The authors recognize the significant differences between hotels and tourism destinations. Hotels provide specific services to guests, focusing on lodging amenities and hospitality services. On the other hand, tourism destinations encompass a broader range of services, including accommodation, attractions, transportation, dining, and events. Hotels are individual entities that are part of larger tourism ecosystems, while tourism destinations are broad geographic areas or regions that attract visitors.

Hotels are typically privately owned or operated, while tourism destinations are managed by various stakeholders, including government bodies, local authorities, tourism boards, and community organizations. Hotels typically provide short-term services, while destinations cater to both short-term visitors and those who spend extended periods at them. Hotels usually serve their registered guests and provide services within the premises contrasting with tourism destinations that must accommodate a broad range of visitors, including day-trippers, independent travelers, and organized tour groups.

Based on these realities this article seeks to:

- Examine key ideas in service design and experiences.
- Analyze the service design dimensions of hotel and destination operations and management.
- Identify key service design dimensions and issues that can lead destinations to improve services and, therefore, the overall visitor experience.

2. VISITOR ECONOMY-RELATED SERVICE DESIGN DIMENSIONS

There are many studies and books about service design. The intent here is only to provide relevant ideas relating to service design within the hospitality landscape rather than a thorough discussion of the extensive field of service design. The literature search identifies several key issues and concepts that help us understand how the service dimensions of hotels can be applied to improving the visitor experience in tourism destinations.

Service Design

There are many definitions and perspectives on service design. Moritz (2005) suggests that design helps to innovate (create new) or improve (existing) services to make them more useful, desirable for clients, as well as efficient and practical for organizations. Saco and Gonzales (2008) identify the interrelationship

between service engineering and service design to examine the relationship between business, design change management, and service economy. They suggest that service design includes tools and concepts from several disciplines, including customer satisfaction, problem resolution, sustainability, and "practical beauty" (beauty that works). They and many other thinkers in the field recognize that service design is a human-centered and holistic process that involves a continuous and collaborative approach prioritizing user needs and incorporating various interdisciplinary methods. Service design must also address profitability in private sector activities (Heskett et al. 2008).

Gaynor Aaltonen states that a critical element of the service design process is understanding experience. Experience matters, and "what separates an industry's players is often the service that comes with the product offering – the customer experience." Service design seeks to identify new approaches and understandings of the service design process by asking basic questions such as: What will the customer experience involve? What will the employee experience be like? It is important to note that while much attention is paid to the customer or traveler, very often the nature of the employee experience is not dealt with. Despite this, there is clear evidence that employee satisfaction and commitment are crucial to quality service delivery (Media Guardian 2010).

Service design is based on a series of five principles best articulated by Stickdorn and Schneider (2012). The five principles are user-centred, co-creative (ensuring all stakeholders are involved in the process), sequencing (dividing service systems into processes), evidencing (looking at service experiences with clearly identified impacts and results), and holistic. These principles drive the service design process, which can involve a series of steps including understanding the vision and goals of the client, brainstorming, assessing the market, understanding the challenges, understanding the user through a range of techniques including personas, and developing and testing prototypes (Belyh 2019).

To understand service design, it is useful to identify the skills and knowledge necessary to create high-quality services and experiences. Moritz (2005) identifies a range of skills required by those involved in the service design process, which includes:

- Basic service design skills (e.g., negotiation and facilitation skills, team skills),
- Thinking skills (e.g., strategic thinking, understanding complex systems, understanding business strategic and tactical goals),
- Understanding skills (e.g., ability to develop hypotheses, ability to manage qualitative as well as quantitative research, expertise, user behavior, and human factors),
- Generating skills (ability to develop ideas, visual thinking, problem-solving skills, ability to design and craft touchpoints),
- Realizing skills (e.g., expertise in developing complex processes, experience in testing service prototypes).

All too often, a service and the resulting experience are created, then there is an attempt to sell them. A service design approach defines what is required in the service landscape, then creates the appropriate service (Tarling 2023). A quality service design process defines what the visitors or customers should experience, which involves understanding the customer and delivering value and a quality experience (Louveau n.d.).

One key element of the strategy design process is the development of a strategic blueprint, including an analysis of the challenges and the process objective. This design strategy must include guiding principles, what kind of activities can resolve issues and achieve objectives, and the definition of what metrics are to be used to determine the success of the blueprint (Kalbach 2021; Gyimothy 2000).

A critical dimension of delivering quality services is adopting a customer-centric approach to doing business which focuses on the customer by putting them at the center of everything offered, and designing products, services, and experiences around their needs and preferences. Customer-centric hotels and destinations prioritize customer satisfaction and loyalty above all else and aim to create long-term relationships with their customers by providing exceptional experiences at every touchpoint (Sheth et al. 2010).

There are many definitions of quality service which largely depend on the nature of the service and the reception of the customer. Sylvester and Ahmed (2008) argue for the development of the living service culture, which includes earning customers' trust, seeing both visitors and employees at the center of the service design process, taking care of supply chains, and having a long-term view. They stress the need to focus on "invisible excellence and elegant simplicity". Frei and Morris (2012) suggest that good service costs money, and must be paid for, which introduces a series of challenges at both the hotel and destination levels.

Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons (2011) note that service quality is a complex topic with five dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. The service quality gap is the difference between customer expectations and perceptions of the delivered service. Understanding and analyzing this gap is an important challenge within the larger service design process (Quattlebaum 2013). Reliability is the ability to deliver the promised services and experiences dependably. Responsiveness is the ability to respond to customer requests efficiently. Assurance requires employees to possess the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver a service experience. Empathy requires a culture of caring. Finally, the tangible elements of service quality include the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, employees, PR and branding collateral (Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons 2011).

While creating a service design culture and the resulting quality standards within a hotel presents challenges, adopting them at a destination scale can also be very difficult. One way of replicating the general management structure of a

hotel could involve, as Eliason (2012) suggests, creating the role of a destination chief customer officer with overall responsibility for the service experience.

Holistic Approaches to Service Design

The literature includes numerous references to the reality that hotels, and especially destinations, are complex ecosystems that require dynamic and holistic approaches to deal with the challenges (Gopalan 2010; Louveau 2023; Jamieson and Jamieson 2019; Hillebrand 2022). This complexity is partly a function of the fact that consumer needs are complex, requiring a holistic approach to the execution of service delivery.

This holistic approach requires service design to incorporate principles from several fields, such as design thinking, user experience, business strategy, and human-centered design. A holistic approach involves the entire leadership of a hotel or destination, with critical players becoming parts of a cohesive team. Tarling (2023) advocates the importance of recognizing the role of integrated planning in dealing with the complexity of service delivery, especially at the destination level.

Understanding stakeholders, especially at the destination level, is complex, given that many public, private, and non-profit sectors are involved. The reality is that, even within a holistic structure, the offering of these services can be both cooperative and competitive. The challenge is for stakeholders to work cooperatively to create value for themselves and the larger destination (Rihova 2018; Gaoa et al. 2022; Jamieson and Jamieson 2017). The nature of the stakeholder process is discussed in this article.

Research - Understanding the Guest and Visitor

An essential element of the service design process is a better understanding of the hotel guest and the destination visitor. Service design advocates using a wide range of research and analytic tools to gain this understanding. All too often, at the destination level, key stakeholders are unable or unwilling to understand their destination from the visitor's perspective. An important part of understanding the visitor is for the designer to step into their shoes. Ideally, they would adopt a persona to help them better understand a particular market segment and their services and experience expectations. Personas are fictional users created using research data of possible visitor segments. They are composite characters, often including a picture, a description of needs, preferences, behavioral patterns, and essential demographic data. Creating and using personas in service design requires careful planning and teamwork, which are important tools for understanding the nature and expectations of potential visitors (Stickdorn et al. 2018; Kalbach 2021).

Disney employees use the term 'guestology', which includes various techniques, including face-to-face surveys, comment cards, mystery shoppers, utilization studies, and focus groups to provide important demographic and psychographic information (Disney 2001). Schneider (2010) identifies the need

for desk research to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort, ethnographic approaches, and participant approaches, including observation, in-depth interviews, and co-creative workshops. Strickdorn and Zehrer (2009) identify shadowing, mapping, interviews, user journals, and observation as ways to understand the customer. Kalbach (2021) discusses that an experience develops in the customer's mind and that mapping experiences is necessary. He advocates creating an inventory of all the touchpoints in an incident. Ritz-Carlton finds that listening to and observing customers is vital to winning service awards (Michelli 2008). A good source of information is employees. Managers should work diligently at obtaining good ideas through brainstorming and nominal group processes with their staff (Timm 2011).

Large hotel companies such as Marriott have innovation labs where they physically simulate a service process with various touchpoints employed, to see how a service design performs in an actual service situation. Not all prototyping simulates actual physical environments. Stickdorn et al. (2018) offer a range of possible prototyping methods, including investigative rehearsals, a business model canvas, desktop system mapping, theatrical techniques, cardboard prototyping, paper prototyping, sketching, and mood boards. Two of the most used approaches, the visitor journey and the service blueprint, are discussed in detail below.

Visitor Journey

Destinations must offer a wide range of public, private, and non-profit sector services to support visitor attractions, provide critical visitor support and provide visitors with a safe and satisfying experience. Journey maps are commonly used to define and assess services and experiences (Kalbach 2021; Temkin 2010, Rowett 2022). In brief, journey maps record and analyze a traveler's journey through five or more stages: dreaming, planning, booking, experiencing the destination, and remembering and assessing the total experience. A destination-related service blueprint is discussed later in this article.

Service Blueprints

Service blueprints are essential research tools in the hotel industry (Gyimothy 2000). The Service Design Network (n.d.) comprehensively describes a service blueprint: "A service blueprint shows systems and processes that must be in place to deliver a desired service experience. In the same manner, as a customer journey, it follows a user's progression through a service (or phase of a service) and shows the underlying elements that come into play. These can be activities and roles played by people or systems, some of which are visible to the user (typically, "front stage") and others that are invisible ("backstage"). A service blueprint is crucial to orchestrating touchpoints to provide a holistic experience. It can also serve as one of the final deliverables of a service design engagement because it can be used as a briefing document (specification) for detailed,

touchpoint design activities, such as user experience (UX) design". Service blueprints are further explored later in this article.

Services and Experiences

A visitor experience in either a hotel or a destination consists of encountering multiple services, which can affect the visitor experience from the perspective of service quality (Strickdorn and Zehrer 2009). The customer's experiences are affected by several factors, including whether they enjoy a hotel or destination experience, the hotel or destination's intended experience, and the accumulation of memories that they have before the experience. Service experiences can be direct or indirect (Prebensen 2104). It is important to remember that many destination experiences can result from intangible elements and dimensions (Bettencourt 2010).

In their seminal work, Pine and Gilmore (2011) identify five key service design principles for developing experiences that evoke memories and customer loyalty. The principles include having a distinctive theme, layering the theme with easily understood signs, and engaging all five senses. In the realm of hotel atmosphere management, the mood of the overall experience is a key factor that can be affected by lighting, music, interior design, maintenance, and the design of social spaces. The Ritz-Carlton has different playlists and scents designed to create different moods at different times of the day. While this level of detail may be relevant in the hotel context, it is understanding which touchpoints best provoke the necessary memories that leads to guest satisfaction and repeat visits.

Pine and Gilmore (1999) discuss experience in a different way from many other writers. The very title of their book, *The Experience Economy: Work Is Theatre and Every Business a Stage*, signals how they view the experience economy and its relationship to providing services and experience. They say that "companies stage an experience whenever they engage customers, connecting with them in a personal, memorable way". By way of illustration, they describe how flight attendants and hotel staff perform acts of theatre when they direct customers to the nearest exit or function room. They see a hotel's physical setting as the stage designed to allow a theatre performance. Exploring this further in this article is not possible, given space limitations, but there is value in considering aspects of the destination as a stage to provide services and experiences.

Service innovation is an ongoing theme in much of the service design literature. Gustafsson et al. (2020) define service innovation as "a new process or offering that is put into practice and is adopted by and creates value for one or more stakeholders". Service innovation brings together a number of disciplines in order to better understand the dimensions of studying the design and development of services.

Disney also identifies the need to appeal to all five senses (Disney 2001). Disney is concerned that the guest experience meets their basic human needs and offers "fun, fantasy and desire" (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). Disney uses

fireworks, fountains, music, etc., to build opportunities for guests to interact with one another as part of the experience (Disney 2001).

For those responsible for a destination, including the DMO, becoming familiar and comfortable with the design of services and experience is an important development area. Destination managers must imagine the essential experience, then fit that experience into design and technology solutions (Kalbach 2021). It is equally important to understand and map the employee experience (Kalbach 2021).

Summary of the Service Design Literature Review

Service design is a multidisciplinary field that deals with complexity at several levels. For the service design process to be successful, it must be holistic, involving a wide range of stakeholders and various ways of thinking and practicing. It is concerned with establishing service levels and innovation to provide visitors with exceptional experiences (Binkhorst et al. 2009). Successful service design requires various research techniques, including the visitor journey and service blueprints. It is important that innovation, out-of-the-box thinking, and willingness to break the rules are employed as part of the standard practice of developing services at the destination and hotel levels. (Guidara 2110)

3. SERVICE DESIGN IN HOTELS

The hotel industry is known for 360-degree service delivery, and this is largely attributable to its modeling of guest service, a particular element connecting luxury to limited service, each one defining its level of service with one common element of measuring in-advance guest expectations (such as brand promises) or exceeding the expectations of a particular market segment (e.g., limited service focusing on efficiency rather than variety). The most known service models in the hotel industry are the luxury, full-service, select-service, and limited-service models, which all share a common element of guest centricity.

The hotel service model comprises three components: people, processes, and technology.

- *People*: The people component of a hotel service model refers to the individuals who provide the service, namely hotel staff, restaurant staff, and other service providers.
- *Processes*: The hotel process component refers to the procedures and systems used to deliver the service, including check-in and check-out procedures, housekeeping, and food and beverage services.
- *Technology*: The technology component includes hotel management software, point-of-sale systems, and guest feedback systems/loyalty programs.

Within the hotel sector, service design addresses front-of-house (FOH) and back-of-house (BOH) processes, which take place in designated spaces and

physically designed areas such as kitchens, offices, housekeeping facilities, maintenance workshops, reservations, and storage areas (Penner et al. 2012). Typically, BOH areas are not exposed to the guest's eye and play an essential role in the delivery of services through service design. The planning and design of the administration offices and other BOH or service areas of the hotel, most of which the guest rarely sees, are equally critical to the eventual success of the hotel. The organization of the offices and service areas greatly influences the staff's ability to meet overall administrative needs and provide essential services to support the overall service design of the hotel (Penner et al. 2012). BOH service design in full-service and luxury hotels refers to the process of creating efficient and effective systems and processes to support the delivery of exceptional service to guests, while the FOH focuses on guest interactions and experiences.

Gomez (2022) provides a finer grain understanding of BOH and FOH. She refers to the "front stage" where the interactions happen, "the backstage" where the support functions occur, and lastly the "behind the scenes" which includes regulations, policies, and budgets. This finer-grained approach separates operational issues from higher-level policy and regulatory concerns, and highlights which are consequential at the destination level.

FOH areas are typically considered the center of service design in hotels where guests interact with staff and access services. Typical locations in the FOH of a hotel include the reception desk, concierge desk, business center, gift shop, restaurant(s), lounges, meeting rooms, conference facilities, and recreation spaces. The BOH areas which are not accessible or visible to guests are crucial for the smooth functioning of the hotel and include various departments and spaces such as administrative offices, employee break rooms, uniform rooms, laundry rooms, the maintenance department, and kitchens.

In successful hotel operations, FOH and BOH activities have a symbiotic relationship based on a well-structured organization that clearly defines roles and responsibilities. This includes determining the hierarchy, reporting lines, and coordination mechanisms to ensure smooth communication and accountability. There are streamlined workflows and processes to optimize efficiency and productivity, especially in the various BOH operations. Creating such a system involves mapping out the sequence of activities, identifying bottlenecks at crucial touchpoints, and implementing strategies to enhance operational effectiveness. In hotels, human resource and departmental trainers provide comprehensive training programs to equip FOH and BOH staff with the necessary skills and knowledge to perform their roles effectively. This includes technical training and soft skills development (e.g., communication, teamwork, problem-solving) to ensure a high standard of service. Regular meetings, digital collaboration tools, and standardized reporting mechanisms optimize communication and coordination.

Technology plays a pivotal role in connecting BOH and FOH for the purpose of the continuation of service flows, using automation to streamline BOH

operations. This may include implementing property management systems, inventory management software, maintenance tracking systems, and other technological solutions to improve efficiency, accuracy, and data management. Hotels effectively use technology to facilitate their guest interactions and maximize satisfaction (Baker & Magnini 2016).

Hotels commonly use a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) to assess performance and determine improvements where necessary. There are many KPIs, but the most used are revenue growth, revenue per client, profit margin, client retention rate, and customer satisfaction.

Hotels continue to innovate and adapt to the post-Covid expectations of the guest and comply with redesigned service flows by diversifying offerings, developing collaborations and partnerships, and supporting a culture of continuous improvement. The organizational structures used in hotels, as well as how FOH and BOH are integrated, provide useful directions, which may be difficult to implement, for the management of destinations.

4. SERVICE DESIGN IN DESTINATIONS

There is a wide range of types, sizes, and capacities of destinations. These factors significantly influence the type of services that can be delivered to provide a quality visitor experience. Destinations can range from large-scale urban areas to main streets in small rural communities; some are small, others metropolitan in scale; some are doing well, others are declining; some have a healthy visitor industry, others have limited visitor activity; some have well identified and maintained tangible and intangible heritage, others do not; some have DMOs, others do not. This range of differences presents a challenge for service design in destinations.

The competitiveness and success of a tourism destination is influenced by various factors such as the quality of infrastructure, accessibility, natural and cultural attractions, safety and security, services, and pricing. Additionally, factors such as marketing strategies, government policies, and environmental sustainability practices can also impact a tourism destination's competitiveness. Gartner and Ruzzier (2011) suggest that service quality is essential to visitors' evaluations of a destination experience. Ghobadian, Speller, & Jones (1994) say that tourist destinations can achieve an advantage over their rivals by enhancing the level of quality of the services they provide.

From a service design perspective, it can be argued that successful destinations can be structured around six attributes: attractions, accessibility, amenities, available packages, activities, and ancillary services. It is important to note that, at the destination level, the delivery of quality visitor services and experiences is complex, given that different stakeholders deliver these six attributes. Given the complexity and range of stakeholders, Stickdorn and Zehrer (2009) suggest that "holistic destination management is crucial for sustainable tourism success". DMOs need to be involved in strategic planning, product

development, provision of information systems, and organization of visitor experiences and activities.

As noted, many destinations adopt destination management approaches, and a DMO is a “leading organizational entity which may encompass the various authorities, stakeholders, and professionals and facilitates partnerships towards a collective destination vision” (UNWTO 2019).

Destination Stakeholders

Given the nature and complexity of destinations, no DMO has the capacity or authority to deal with all the individual parts that contribute to the service and experience structures. As noted, a wide range of stakeholders are involved in the delivery of services in any destination. While destinations are far more complex organizations than hotels, the concepts of FOH and BOH are useful in assessing the full dimensions of service design. Some stakeholders are directly involved in the face-to-face delivery of services, such as accommodation providers. In contrast, others are BOH, such as branding and marketing authorities, wayfinding, and the maintenance and design of supplier websites. Figure 1 illustrates the range and nature of the destination stakeholders involved in the service delivery process. Each stakeholder has FOH and BOH functions, some of which involve touchpoints that the visitor interacts with while many others are essential and supportive of the overall FOH activities.

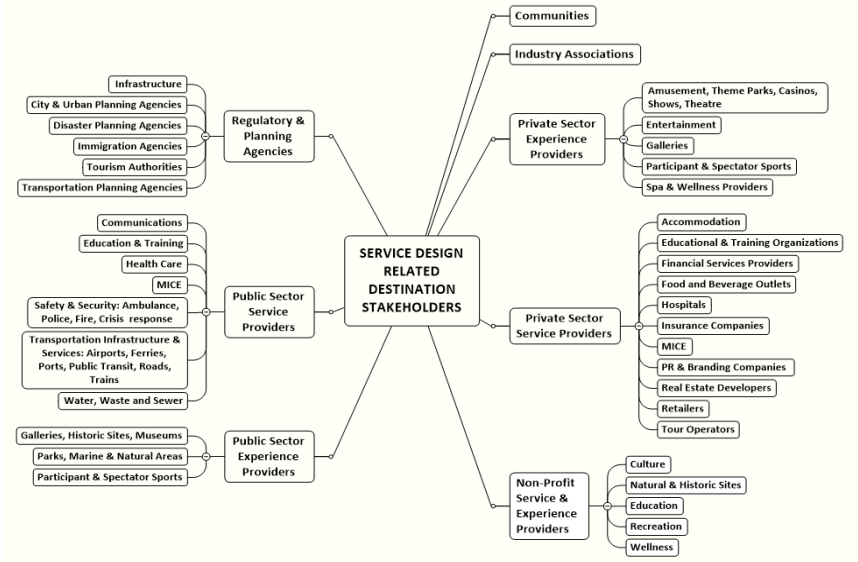


Figure 1: The Range and Nature of the Destination Stakeholders Involved in the Service Delivery Process

(Source: The authors)

Figure 2 provides a simplified destination blueprint identifying some key dimensions of both FOH and BOH functions. The blueprint is organized around the key dimensions of a visitor experience: inspiration, shopping, booking, pre-trip activities, activities within the destination itself, and what the visitors do after they return home.

Visitor Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Searches for places to go • Looks for travel ideas on social media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Searches for flights and hotels • Compares offers • Reads reviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looks for the best price • Books flights • Books hotels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans in-trip activities • Books in-trip activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrival experience • Book tours and experiences • Visits attractions • Eats in restaurants • Shops • Departure experience • Moves around destination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeward flight • Arrival experience • Review and feedback
	Inspiration	Shopping	Booking	Pre-trip	In-trip	Post-trip
Back of House	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search engines • Meta-searches • OTAs • Traveller review websites • Social media • Attraction websites • Destination branding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OTAs • Supplier websites • Meta-searches • Attraction websites • Destination branding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OTAs • Supplier websites • Destination booking system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OTAs • Review websites • Tour and excursion sites • Supplier websites • DMO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attraction operators • Accommodation supplier • Wayfinding authority • Safety and security authorities • Food and beverage suppliers • DMO • Transportation suppliers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation suppliers • Social media • Tourism review websites

Figure 2: Simplified Destination Visitor Blueprint

(Adapted from <https://www.travelport.com/our-views/re-drawing-the-map>)

Destination Touchpoints

Within each stage of the visitor destination journey, a significant number of touchpoints must be dealt with. Kimbell (2014) Figure 3 provides an illustration of some of the major touchpoints in the destination visitor journey that have service design implications. It is based on a visitor arriving by air. Similar journeys could be designed for those arriving by road or water.

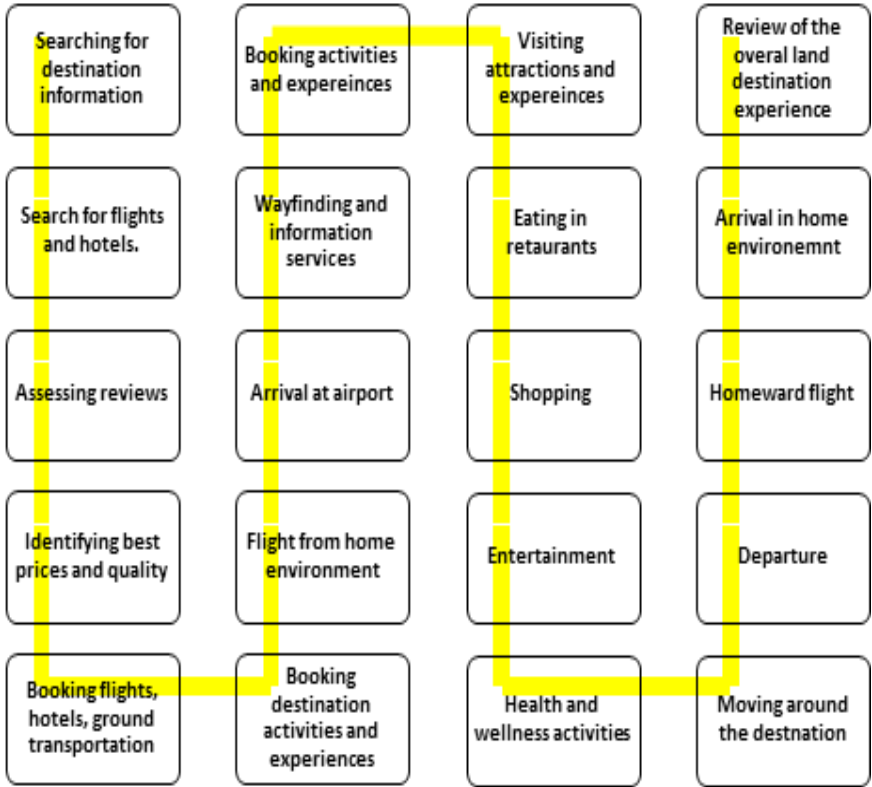


Figure 3: Sample Visitor Journey with Key Touchpoints

(Source: The authors)

Any touchpoint within the visitor journey can produce a negative assessment of the overall visitor destination experience. Unlike a hotel, where the management has the authority and responsibility for each touchpoint, many of the touchpoints in Figure 3 are outside the purview of the destination. Still, they are the responsibility of the large number of stakeholders identified in Figure 1. To add to the complexity, each touchpoint has multiple touchpoints with multiple stakeholders.

To illustrate this complexity, Figure 4 presents the nature of the touchpoints at various contact points for a visitor arriving by plane. Each is the responsibility of a different stakeholder, with their own perspectives on the importance of the services and the experiences they provide.

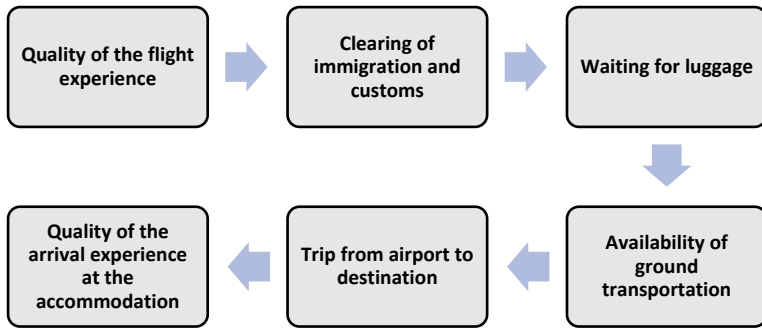


Figure 4: Arrival Experience Touchpoints

(Source: The authors)

Various dimensions of the arrival touchpoints can influence the visitor experience.

- The quality of the flight experience, while outside the responsibility and influence of the destination, impacts the visitor's overall impression of the destination. Factors include whether the flight is on time and the quality of the in-flight service. A plane that is late or provides poor service can very much affect the visitor's state of mind as they arrive in the destination.
- The length of time necessary to clear immigration and customs is a key touchpoint since it is the visitor's first contact with the destination and its service levels. In many cases, the customs and immigration people help set the tone for the visitor experience. Very often, immigration and customs officials do not see themselves as part of the visitor experience but rather see the provision of security procedures as devoid of any notion of service. Using the hotel analogy, until this part of the visitor voyage is seen as part of the overall experience it can seriously lessen the quality of that experience. Developing a service mind within these types of agencies can be very challenging.
- A long wait for baggage or lost baggage immediately colors the nature of the destination experience. Lack of efficiency or sympathy in handling lost luggage can impact the visitor experience, especially if the visitor is missing essential clothing or support materials. This is often a joint responsibility between the airport authority and the airline.
- Usually, transportation in airports is the responsibility of the airport authority. A lack of transportation options or high costs can contribute to a poor arrival experience.

- The safety and courtesy of the ground transportation personnel and the condition of vehicles are essential to the visitor experience since this is the first contact with somebody working directly within the destination.
- Finally, the quality of the welcome at the place of accommodation is key to creating a positive initial impression.

An essential part of the visitor experience is therefore out of the control and authority of the DMO and the larger destination management stakeholder group. However, a holistic approach would allow the DMO to work with various stakeholders to encourage them to increase service levels in order to provide an overall positive experience. However, this can be very difficult.

Destination-wide Services

A destination provides a wide range of services which are essential to support a high level of visitor experience and are interdependent. The services that support the visitor experience and who provides them can be found in Table 1. As in the case of hotels, some services are provided FOH and others BOH. For each group of services, the stakeholder with the highest level of responsibility is indicated in bold.

Key:

Private sector: PS

Public sector: PSS

Non-profit sector: NPS.

Table 1: Destination Services and Service Providers

Nature of service	Who
Accommodation: Hotels, resorts, lodges, guesthouses, vacation rentals, and campgrounds	PS, PSS
Cultural experiences: Performing arts, visual arts, public and private art galleries, heritage sites, museums, and festivals	PSS, PS, NPS
Destination image and branding	PSS, PS
Destination information services: Social media as well as collaterals at the destination itself	PSS, PSC
Developing partnerships: Partnerships in marketing strategies, providing infrastructure and visitor experiences	PSS, PS, NPS
Education and training: Overall formal and vocational education	PSS, PS, NPS
Entertainment and nightlife: Theatres, cinemas, music venues, nightclubs, bars, and casinos	PS, PS, NPS
Festivals and public events	PSS, PS, NPS
Food and beverage: Restaurants, cafes, bars, food halls, and street vendors	PS
Infrastructure: Roads, ports, airports, parks and playgrounds, sewage treatment systems, water supply, internet services, etc.	PSS, PS
Ongoing monitoring and evaluation: Ensuring that overall destination social, economic, cultural, and environmental needs are met.	PSS, PS, NPS
Quality assurance: Developing quality service standards, certification, or accreditation approaches	PSS
Recreation options: Water sports, hiking, cycling, skiing, snorkeling, scuba diving, and wildlife safari	PSS, PS
Retail activity: Stores, markets, banks, money exchange services, malls,	PS, NPS

and boutiques	
Safety and security: Fire protection, police assistance, emergency medical services, disaster response, and lifeguards at beaches	PSS
Tour operators and guides: Providing tours of natural, historical, and cultural experiences	PS, PSS
Tourism planning and management: Developing tourism plans, area plans, regional strategies, urban design guidelines, etc.	PSS
Transportation: Airports, train stations, bus terminals, and car rental services. At the local level taxis, buses, streetcars, bicycles, etc.	PS, PSS
Wayfinding: Signage, development of routes and trails,	PSS, PS
Wellness and Spas: Relaxation treatments, massages, yoga classes, and wellness programs	PS, PSS, NPS

The nature of destination services and who provides them is an important part of the overall development of a destination service design strategy. The mix of responsibilities and authorities makes this a challenge, overcoming which is difficult given that change is almost always resisted (Michelli 2008). There is a need to introduce processes of change management at a destination scale in order for destinations to adapt and evolve to meet new challenges and take advantage of new opportunities (Silvester and Ahmed 2008; Jamieson and Jamieson 2017).

5. FINDINGS

There is a similarity between the various service design aspects of hotel management and destination management, notwithstanding issues of scale and complexity. However, the complexity of destinations provides significant challenges to developing a service design strategy. Table 2 illustrates the similarities and differences.

Table 2: Differences and Similarities between Hotels and Destinations

	HOTEL	DESTINATION
Decision making	A small group of stakeholders	A very significant group of stakeholders
Designing the experience (creating magic)	A long history of doing this	Much more recent experience in designing experiences in destination management
Elements of the experience	Within the property and possibly the destination	Situated destination-wide and, at times, within the larger region
Front and back of the house or front stage, backstage, and behind the scenes	Well-understood in the hotel sector	Very poorly understood in the destination management field
Geographic boundaries	Usually within the hotel or resort property	Significant and often open to debate as to where the boundaries exist
Guest/visitor cycle	Guest cycle well understood	Visitor cycle is not well understood

	HOTEL	DESTINATION
Improving yield (ROI etc.)	Well-established and can be centrally controlled	Very difficult to carry out at a destination scale
Knowledge of guest/visitor	Can be extensive since guests stay at least 24 hours and are often repeat visitors	For day trippers very little may be known
KPIs	Easily understood and accepted	Given the number of stakeholders can be very difficult
Making it happen	Straightforward in a hotel based on the number of stakeholders and the hierarchal nature of most hotels	Very difficult and complex given the wide number of public, private, and non-profits stakeholders
Management	A long history of various management models and experiences	DMOs are evolving into management organizations but there is a need for a mechanism with a destination-wide management perspective
Marketing and branding	Chain hotels must adhere to brand values and messages	A wide range of marketing and branding initiatives
Service anticipation gap	Easier to determine within a hotel environment	Much more difficult at the destination level, given the number of stakeholders and the range and number of visitors
Service standards	In the case of chain hotels, the standards are largely determined	This is completely unexplored at the destination level
Staff training	In most hotels, well understood skills and competency levels	No agreement on skills or competency levels
Tangible versus intangible	Easy to assess within the hotel context	Complex at the destination level given the variety of views
Tourism value change	While complex, well understood	Within destinations not well understood and very complex
Value proposition	Well-understood within the hotel sector	Not understood within destinations

(Source: The authors)

Hotels have well-established and, in most cases, successful service models within a hierarchical system of management. The system has well-understood areas of responsibility and activity with the necessary BOH support to ensure quality service and experiences. As demonstrated, the same cannot be said for destinations. While a great deal of focus is often put on the DMO, there are a great many other stakeholders with a strong interest in a successful destination.

Figure 5 attempts to summarize some of the key issues and dimensions of service design at the destination level.

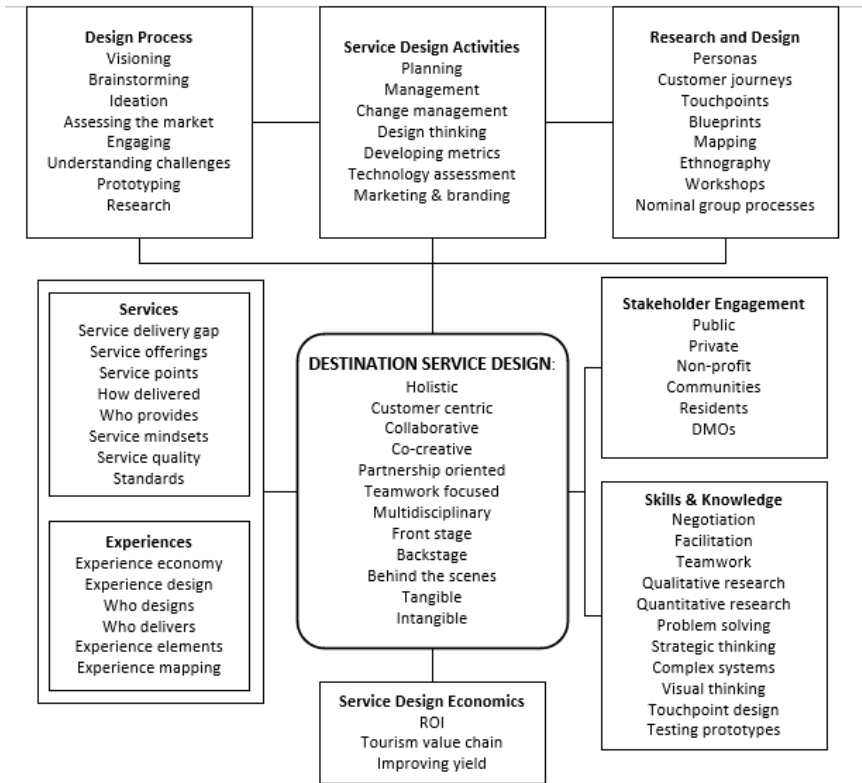


Figure 5: Key Destination Service Design Issues and Dimensions

(Source: The authors)

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In concluding the article, a series of recommendations are presented based on an analysis of the intersection between hotel and destination management service design issues and concerns.

A holistic management process must be developed for destinations involving all stakeholders. DMOs should play a leading role in this management process but, given the essential role the public sector plays in several areas, as shown in Table 2, there needs to be a clear delineation of responsibilities. Since DMOs have a specific mandate to be responsible for the visitor economy, the public sector may assign them a stronger coordinating role for all stakeholders. An

alternative is to place the overall management function within the public sector, with DMOs dealing with marketing and promotion along with acting as the voice of the private sector. Each destination is different, but there needs to be one voice advocating for quality services and experiences at the destination level. To accomplish this objective, there is a need for a continuous process of change management to move key stakeholders towards the holistic mindset approach to managing a destination. Innovation and prototyping of various destination management models, based on a service design model, must be developed and assessed.

Destinations can learn from the BOH and FOH functions of the hotel sector. Destinations must develop BOH functions that clearly recognize the importance of effective support for FOH activities. Destinations must adopt front stage, backstage, and behind the scenes, recognizing the invisible dimensions of service design. At the destination level, awareness of and ability to implement regulations and policies is especially important.

A customer-centric focus must be at the core of destination management. This requires sophisticated research, as discussed in this article. There is a need for a centralized research focus within DMOs or at the political/management structure level, to enable all stakeholders to deliver quality services and experiences more effectively. The results of the research must be distributed to all stakeholders. Most destinations face serious resource challenges, and there is a need to consider the most cost-effective research approaches to better understand visitors and their behavior.

Most destinations invest in many areas to attract and satisfy visitors, as evidenced. For example, the public sector often funds branding and marketing initiatives; incurs increased costs for security and safety measures to accommodate destination visitors; invests in transportation infrastructure; builds enhanced sewage and water treatment facilities to support increased visitor numbers; and supports information and communication services which may include a visitor center, etc. These investments are made on the basis that increased visitor activity and spending results in improved business conditions, job creation, new enterprises being developed, and the tax base increasing. The positive impacts of improved services and experiences must be researched and reported. All stakeholders must agree on appropriate KPIs to ensure ongoing support for improved performance measures at the destination level.

Destinations must learn from hotels how to achieve higher levels of guest and visitor satisfaction, through better understanding and adoption of quality standards that lead to effective ongoing assessment of the service environment. Destinations typically measure success through visitor numbers and revenues. A service design model must adopt performance measures that include qualitative dimensions such as whether the overall quality-of-life of residents has been improved, whether the local community supports the visitor industry, and the levels of visitor satisfaction with services and experiences.

Destinations must invest in training and upgrading all stakeholders to ensure that visitors receive excellent service and have positive experiences. This training might include concepts of customer service, cultural awareness, and sustainability practices. The training must be in all sectors of the destination ecosystem, including police, immigration officials, planning and design. Given the realities of the level of staffing for the destination management process, multitasking, and multi-skilling are important areas for improvement. Stakeholders must develop the skills and knowledge to work in multidisciplinary settings.

Employees are an essential part of the process of determining service levels and processes. Destinations must develop mechanisms by which various stakeholders' employees can voice their opinions and become involved in the strategy development process.

The technology component of destinations must be improved, learning in part from the hotel service design model. For example, ticketing systems should be easy to use and allow visitors to book tickets online or through mobile apps. Transport management software should be used to manage transport services efficiently, and attraction management software should be used to manage attractions effectively.

Following the experience of hotels, destinations should create a welcoming environment in order to help visitors feel at ease and enjoy their experience. This can include providing clear signage, trained customer-centric friendly staff, effective wayfinding, tourism ambassadors, and comfortable and easily accessed amenities (e.g., family-friendly toilets, drinking water, and nursing stations). Destinations must seek the means to provide personalized experiences for their guests through better coordination of research activities and the sharing of the research process results. Residents must also be helped to better understand the importance of the visitor economy and their central role in providing services and experience opportunities.

It must be recognized that improving service design in a holistic way at the destination level is challenging, but there is a need to develop a framework for the change process to occur.

7. FURTHER RESEARCH

With growing awareness of the need for holistic service design approaches that engage major stakeholders and include residents, destination management service design models must be analyzed. This requires research efforts to design and test a multidisciplinary approach from the perspective of all major stakeholders to provide a better understanding of service design and its effectiveness as a destination management tool.

There needs to be further exploration of the effectiveness of the various research tools discussed in this article, given the human and financial resource realities that most destinations face. Finally, there needs to be research into

training and development opportunities for the stakeholders who may not see themselves as essential components of the visitor economy.

REFERENCES

- Baker, M. & Magnini, V. (2016). The evolution of services marketing, hospitality marketing and building the constituency model for hospitality marketing. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 28(8).
- Belyh, A. (2019). *The Ultimate Guide to Service Design*. <https://www.cleverism.com/ultimate-guide-service-design/>
- Bettencourt, L. (2010). *Service innovation: How to go from customer needs to breakthrough services*. McGraw-Hill.
- Binkhorst, E. & Dekker, T. (2009). Agenda for co-creation tourism experience research. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 18(2).
- Downe, L. (2020). *Good services: how to design services that work*. BIS Publishers.
- Eliason, F. (2012). *@ Your service*. Wiley and Sons.
- Fitzsimmons, J. & Fitzsimmons, M. (2011). *Service management: Operations, strategy, information technology*. McGraw-Hill.
- Frei, F. & Morriss, A. (2012). *Uncommon service*. Harvard Business Review Press.
- Gaoa, Y., Zhang, Q., Xua, X., Jiab, F. and Lin, Z. (2022). Service design for the destination tourism service ecosystem: A review and extension. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 27(3), 225-245.
- Goodman, J. (2009). *Strategic customer service*. American Management Association.
- Gopalan, R. and Narayan, B. (2010). Improving customer experience in tourism: A framework for stakeholder collaboration. *Socio-Economic Planning Sciences*, 44(2), 100-112.
- Guardian (2110). *Service Design*. Media Guardian. <https://www.guardian.co.uk/service-design>
- Gustafsson, A., Snyder, H. and Witell, L. (2020). Service innovation: A new conceptualization and path forward. *Journal of Social Research*, 23(2).
- Guidara, W. (2022). *Unreasonable hospitality: the remarkable power of giving people more than they expect*. Optimism Press.
- Gyimóthy, S. (2000). Visitors' perceptions of holiday experiences and service providers: An Exploratory Study. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 8(2).
- Heskett, J., Jones, T., Loveman, G., Sasser, W. and Schlesinger, L. (2008). *Putting the service profit-chain to work*. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2008/07/putting-the-service-profit-chain-to-work>
- Hillebrand, B. (2022). An ecosystem perspective on tourism: The implications for tourism organizations. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 24(4), 517-524.
- Holbrook, M.B. & Hirschman, E.C. (1982). The experiential aspects of consumption: Consumer fantasies, feelings, and fun. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9(2), 132-140.
- Jamieson, W. and Jamieson, M. (2017). Developing the Capacity of Southeast Asian Urban Tourism Destination Planners and Managers. *Tourism Development Journal*, 15(1).
- Kalbach, J. (2021). *Mapping experiences*. O'Reilly Media Inc.
- Kimbell, L. (2014). *The service innovation handbook*. BIS Publishers.
- Lin, M., Hughes, B., Katica, M., Dining-Zuber, C. and Plsek, P. (2011). Service design and change of systems: Human centred approaches to implementing and spreading service design. *International Journal of Design*, 5(2).
- Louveau, F. (2023). *Seven customer experience trends to watch in 2023*. <https://hospitalityinsights.ehl.edu/customer-service-experience-trends>
- Louveau, F. (n.d.). *Service design definition how hospitality leaders see it*. <https://hospitalityinsights.ehl.edu/service-design-definition>
- Michelli, J. (2008). *The new gold standard*. McGraw-Hill.
- Moritz, S. (2005). *Service Design: Practical Access to an Evolving Field*. Koln International School of Design. <https://www.servicedesigninstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Practical-Access-to-Service-Design.pdf>

- Penner, R., Adams, L. & Robson, A. (2013). *Hotel Design Planning and Development* (2nd Edn.). W. Horton & Company.
- Pine, J. & Gilmore, J. (2011). *The experience economy*. Harvard Business Review Press.
- Pine, J., & Gilmore J. (1998). Welcome to the Experience Economy. *Harvard Business Review*, 76(4).
- Pine, J. & Gilmore, J. (1999) *The experience economy: Work is theatre and every business is a stage*. Harvard Business School Press.
- Prebensen, N., Chen, J. & Uysal, M (Eds.) (2104). *Creating experience value in tourism: Putting the service profit-chain to work*. CABI.
- Quattlebaum, P. (2013). *On service design*. <https://www.slideshare.net/ptquattlebaum/on-service-design>
- Rihova, I., Buhalis, D., Gouthro, M. & Moital, M. (2018). Customer-to-customer co-creation practices in tourism: Lessons from customer-dominant logic. *Tourism Management*, 67.
- Rowett, P. (2022). *Customer Journey Mapping for Tourism Brands*. The Tourism Collective.
- Saco, R. and Gonzales, A. (2008). Service Design: An appraisal. *Design Management Review*, 19(1).
- Sheth, J., Sethina, N. & Srinivas, S. (2010). Mindful consumption: a customer-centric approach to sustainability. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 39.
- Silvester, M. & Ahmed, M. (2008). *Living service*. Prentice-Hall.
- Stichdorn, M., Lawrence, A., Hormess, M. & Schneider, J. (2018). *This is service design methods*. O'Reilly Media Inc.
- Stickdorn, M. & Schneider, J. (2012). *This is service design thinking: Basics, tools, cases*. John Wiley and Sons.
- Strickdorn, M. & Zehrer, A. (2009). Service Design in Tourism: Customer experience driven destination management. In Clatworthy, S., Nisula, J.-V. and Holmlid, S. (Eds.) *conference proceedings DeThinking Service, ReThinking Design*. <http://www.aho.no/en/aho/news-and-events/service-design/>
- Tarling, K. (2023). *The service organization*. London Publishing Partnership.
- Temkin, B. (2010). *Mapping the customer journey: Best practices for using an important customer experience tool*. https://recrewed.nl/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Artikel-mapping_customer_journey.pdf
- Timm, T. (2011). *Customer service: career success through customer loyalty*. Prentice-Hall.
- World Tourism Organization (2019) UNWTO Guidelines for institutional strengthening of destination management organizations (DMOs): Preparing DMOs for new challenges. United Nations World Tourism Organization.
- Witell, L., Snyder, H., Gustafsson, A., Fombelle, P. & Kristensson, P. (2016). Defining service innovation: A review and synthesis. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(8).

About the Authors

Professor Dr. Walter Jamieson has worked to bridge and challenge the academic and consultancy worlds through creative, innovative and out-of-the-box thinking for more than 40 years. Jamieson has, through his work, made significant contributions to organisations at the international, national and local levels (ADB, UNWTO, ESCAP, UNESCO, JICA and ASEAN). His activities have included cultural heritage, planning and tourism work in Canada, research and consultancy work in China, extensive community-based tourism work in Southeast Asia, and exploration of the power of tourism as a tool for cultural, economic and social development worldwide. Jamieson has held senior positions in universities in Canada, the United States and Asia, including Thailand and Japan. His awards and recognitions include the Queen's Jubilee Medal for his contributions to heritage preservation in Canada, the Heritage Canada Lieutenant Governor's Award, and his election to the College of Fellows of the Canadian Institute of Planners. He has authored and contributed to 140+ academic

publications and over 150 consultancy and research projects. Recent consultancies include participation in the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan; the ASEAN Tourism Marketing Strategy; Myanmar Tourism Master Plan and the updated 'Greater Mekong Subregion Tourism Sector Strategy (2016-2025)'. Currently, Jamieson is Director of the Centre for Hospitality Studies and Research, an Adjunct Professor at Toronto Metropolitan University in Toronto, Canada; Distinguished Adjunct Professor at the Asian Institute of Technology, Bangkok, Thailand; and Chief Innovation Officer at Green Door Solutions Ltd. Email- walter.jamieson@torontomu.ca

Amir Hassan, with more than 25 years of professional experience in a wide spectrum of the hospitality industry is considered a subject matter expert in areas of leadership development and integrated services concepts. Amir holds a Master of Business Administration degree and has had a career for the past 10 years with two of the largest global hotel chains. He now advises on integrating tourism and hospitality in public-private partnership projects across Canada and Asia. He is CEO of the Centre for Hospitality Studies and Research. Email- Amir.hassan@centreforhospitality.ca