

# Architectural Design in Hotel Industry – Contemporary Challenges, Approaches to Sustainability and Emotional Aspects for Competitiveness of the Tourism Offer

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## Abstract

Architecture and design have always played a significant role in the tourism system, where they become key factors in hotel positioning and influence its business performance. Modern tourism demand is looking for more than the location and basic services that the hotel provides; the emphasis is on style, personalized and innovative approach. Innovations affect the specifics of design, and the overall atmosphere of the space, which architecture and design have a direct impact on. The purpose of the paper is to investigate the process of architecture and design in the context of contemporary challenges, approaches to sustainability and emotional aspects for the competitiveness of hotels on the Croatian coast. The research methodology includes qualitative processing of data collected through in-depth interviews with architects and designers of the hotel space and environment, as well as comparative analysis. The results of the research confirmed the key role of architecture and design in creating special experiences for guests and the importance of creating a pleasant atmosphere and providing superior service for success in the hotel industry. The results present a platform to the formation of a new model of competitiveness that contributes to the scientific and professional development of the hotel industry.

**Keywords:** architecture, design, hotel industry, contemporary aspects, emotional aspects, competitiveness, smart hotels, sustainability

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## Introduction

The fundamental core of architecture and design is an artistic expression through which it is possible to reflect the attractiveness and competitiveness of hotels as accommodation buildings. The structure and spaces represent the appearance, creative and psychological presentation of the brand's identity. Art, as the purest expression of creativity, can influence a special experience just as much as the elements of the hotel's interior decorative elements. People travel in their free time because they are looking for interesting and unforgettable experiences. Contemporary hotels embody this aspiration, fulfil the desire for something new, and, by implementing artistic and cultural values, differentiate themselves from the uniform, typified offer of accommodation (Becerra et al., 2013)

Contemporary hotels are more than buildings with rooms and beds; they develop into spaces filled with works of art; paintings, sculptures, digital art as part of the interior decor. Hotels think outside the box, place art in the most unexpected ways and challenge guests to think more deeply about their experience (Floričić, 2022).

The aim of this study is to present the process of architecture and design in the hotel industry through the exploration of the views and considerations of a group of experts, architects, and interior designers who, following contemporary trends, create competitive accommodation structures of specific attractiveness.

In continuance, the research questions related with key aspects of the influence of architecture and design on hotel competitiveness are posed:

Q1 - What factors and motivation encourage architectural creativity in hotel design?

Q2 - What are the key sustainability characteristics that architects integrate into hotel design?

Q3 - Do the architects of contemporary hotels recognize emotional aspects when designing a hotel and which emotional key aspects?

The research presented in the paper is conducted through structured interview and explored the attitudes of the architects specialised on the hospitality industry. The new knowledge could contribute both to the scientific considerations and practical applications of architectural design in hospitality industry. It could bridge gap emerged by profound need of consumers, hotel guests of new experiences, sensations and immersive lifestyle and hotels that go beyond uniform characteristics accommodation structures that provide lodging and food services .

### *Theory and literature review - architectural design in hotel industry*

Architecture is generally conceived, designed, realized and built in response to an existing set of conditions. Conditions may often be functional but may also be reflected in varying degrees of social, political and economic climate. The initial stage of any design process is the recognition of a problematic situation and the decision to find a solution for it, while design is primarily a voluntary act, a purposeful effort. The designer must first document the existing conditions of the problem, define its context, and collect relevant data for assimilation and analysis (Čerović & Čomić, 2011).

Perceived as artistic discipline, architecture is more than meeting the purely functional requirements of a building program. Basically, the physical manifestations of architecture adapt to human activity. However, the arrangement and ordering of forms and spaces also determine how architecture might promote endeavours, evoke responses and communicate meaning.

The architectural project is assigned the role of explorer of the unknown and affirmation of the new, a catalyst in the turning points of changing worldviews, social, political and technical requirements, and thus the change of architectural means and procedures contained in the definition of style.

In the construction of hotels and catering facilities, architecture is very important because it determines the reputation and credibility of tourist facilities in the perception of guests. Many tourists will rather choose a hotel built in the domain of aesthetically acceptable and desirable architecture, than another one that fits into the typical, unified appearance of the hotel facility.

The aesthetics of the space influenced the appearance of new forms of tourism on the market, and with further development, new experiences and experiences that are imbued with a specific story and recognition gain importance. In the promotion of a tourist destination and in the creation of recognizable symbols, a key element is design in architecture. Nowadays, hotels, as accommodation buildings, are increasingly becoming attractions that people remain enchanted by and thus become a means of achieving diversity, because each hotel has its own story of why it was designed and designed in that way. Also, architecture and design in architecture play a very important role in determining the success or failure of a hotel project. When creating a new hotel, aspects of lifestyles and trends that influence changes in the tourist market should be considered, and it is necessary to pay attention to the harmony of architecture and design. In developed tourist markets, the public's awareness of ecology is growing, which directly affects the architecture and design of hotels and is one of the main incentives for numerous trends in the modern hotel industry. By choosing the location where the tourist facility is planned to be built, care is taken to create a unique story as part of the natural and cultural environment with pronounced authenticity and the use of local materials.

Contemporary hotel common areas act as social hubs of activity and gathering places for social interactions. Therefore, it is necessary for hotels as hospitality companies in tourism to adapt to the needs of users and to the development of innovations and products to improve the quality of service. The successful architecture and innovative design of the lobby, rooms, restaurant, as well as the rest of the hotel, are the result of a creative idea, a meticulously designed plan and the final implementation of the project. In addition, it is necessary to attract and stimulate the positive perception and experience of guests towards the interior, regardless of whether it is a short visit or a realized tourist stay with an overnight stay. The importance of combining the concept of architecture and design in architecture with service marketing strategies is emphasized.

The task of contemporary architecture and interior design of the hotel is to combine the story, the message of both the interior and the exterior, that is, the external environment, including horticultural design, in harmony with the wishes and needs of the guests. Modern hotel guests of the 21st century are looking for fun, excitement, style, fashion and technology, but at the same time they value tranquillity, mindfulness, calmness and surrender to their own mind and body through the concept of complete well-being. Despite the fact that today's guests are increasingly demanding and look for quick reactions, it is important not to overload them with too much information, content, elements of architecture and design, and sensory experiences. Independent hotels and those in the branding system need to understand that clients are looking for a clear concept and identity profile of the service in order to better understand and appreciate the experience they have had through their hotel stay. The effects of elements such as stimulating and outstanding innovation, products, creative idea, well thought out plan, courage and execution need to be evaluated and combined with marketing strategies to achieve the satisfaction of hotel guests and users (Braun, 2011).

Contemporary hotel industry is subject to the needs of monitoring world trends and requirements for the transformation of facilities through renovations and investments.

The renovation results in an increase in the standard, quality and category of the hotel, as well as an increase in guest satisfaction. The goal of the investment is to improve the quality and image of the hotel. Improving the hotel's image is achieved through product modifications, interior design changes or additions and reconstruction of entire buildings. In recent years, there has been a trend of an increasing number of hotels that stand out in terms of aesthetics, primarily from changes and development of the surrounding land, such as green areas, recreational areas, to unique architecture and interior design.

The functions of such hotels become diverse because with the renovation, the hotels become differently themed, i.e. supplemented with, for example: business concepts, conference rooms, spa facilities, wellness, entertainment and recreational facilities, which is the result of investment in their renovation, in accordance with improved trends on the demand side. The change and variety of hotel architecture affects their transformation into desirable accommodation facilities of superior design and high quality.

### *Interior design within the concept of hotel architecture*

Design in architecture in an extremely competitive environment becomes one of the most powerful tools for hotels to achieve diversity and at the same time becomes a factor of innovation. It refers to the creative arrangement and integration of structure and landscape, the achievement of specific, functional and aesthetic goals, i.e. hotel design is essentially the result of socioeconomic changes, technological progress, the economic and political situation and environmental factors. The offer of uniform hotel chains began to lose its importance, and the new offer includes design & boutique hotels with special and unique decoration and personalized service.

Design represents applied art, i.e. the artistic shaping of objects for use. Architectural design plays a significant role in tourism and hotel industry and becomes one of the key factors for hotel positioning. Contemporary, modern tourists look for more than the location and special services provided by the hotel and pay more attention to the style of construction, personalized approach, specific design and overall atmosphere of the space.

The long-term contribution to increasing the competitiveness of an individual hotel is reflected in the organization and competitiveness of the tourist destination itself. The synergistic development activities of all the key stakeholders of the destination result in a new quality in which the hotel industry grows from a key infrastructural accommodation facility into a factor of the destination's attractiveness. Awareness of the advantages of synergistic effects influences all activities of forming a modern hotel product, from the development of the hotel program to architectural and design solutions. Transformations of offer are influenced by various internal and external factors where the recent COVID-19 pandemic could be pointed out. It influenced the changes in space use (ie. lobbies, rooms and kitchens) and architectural design (spatial organisation) aiming the safety of both, guests and hotel staff (Puraprom & Dangkhawkeaw, 2022).

While considering differentiation, hotels explore initiatives that could achieve the strategic goals of competitiveness. The solutions are related with personalized approach to the guest, a unique gastronomic offer, diverse additional hotel services, sensory attributes and visual identity of the hotel (Mustapić & Vlahov, 2015).

Sensory attributes are most strongly associated with memories, which is especially important for the reason that every guest tends to be emotionally attached to the hotel where they stay. Olfactory marketing, i.e. the use of special scents, marks a new trend in hotel marketing positioning. The reason for the intense increase in the use of

olfactory marketing appears in the fact that smells are most strongly associated with memories, which is especially important because every hotel tries to bond emotionally with the guest (Floričić, 2022).

In the hotel industry, interiors play an important role in attracting customers. Interior decoration or design is defined as the act of arranging a space so that it is attractive, easy to use and works well with the existing architecture (Tieng, 2019). By planning, designing and building the hotel, one strives to achieve complete expediency and aesthetics in order to satisfy the needs of guests, staff and owners.

The planning process starts from the engineering level of the entire sensory experience it invites, and creates a feeling of warmth and belonging. The importance is reflected in the design of hotel lobbies, since they influence the first and last impression of the facility, which can be evaluated as a specific experience with the affirmation of the wow effect. A collaborative environment created by smart design can remove barriers between hotel team members and guests and encourage more physical interaction and engagement.

Considered through the historical context, for decades the hotel industry primarily focused on business and functionality, and only recently have accommodation structures begun to be considered as a factor of tourist attractiveness (Floričić & Pavia, 2017). Many different aspects of the interior and exterior affect the impression of the hotel, and the architectural profession says that the guest room is the core of the building unit that is placed in the structure of the building. Since architects have been dealing with hospitality projects for decades, the fact is that there is no "one size fits all" in the hotel industry. Since ancient times, hotels have been associated with travellers, which has led to different types of hotels in accordance with different types of cultures. This has led to an urge for hotel designers to develop new innovations in hotel strategies for the success of hoteliers operating at competitive market. Currently, in the hospitality industry, numerous hotels are continuously being built every year, which affects the formation of specific, creative structures of architecture, design and theming (Oliveira, 2020).

Hotel investments, new buildings and renovation inspired by local culture and art and enhanced by creative design stimulates the local economy. They expand the tourist offer, enables the development of tourism in the pre- and post-season and generate new jobs through the collaboration of local stakeholders and hoteliers (Serreat et al. 2015). In addition, with the creation of such hotels, there is an increased need for specialized employees who have knowledge in both tourism and art. It can be said that one of the most significant features of the art & culture hotel is the involvement of the local community. Considering the importance of implementing socially responsible business, support for implementation initiatives is essential. In this context, the potential of local artists who can achieve commercialization and recognition with their exhibitions in hotels is visible. The implementation of authentic cultural assets in art, design or heritage hotels increases and enriches the competitive advantage of both the tourist destination and the hotel offer, claim Wang et al. (2017). Interior design and special architecture influence the perception of space and ambience with their activities and evoke a special experience claim Williams et al. (2006). The importance of cooperation is emphasized, so that, for example, the entry of fashion designers into the world of the hotel industry, architecture and design, presents a new branding potential. Namely, fashion designers or luxury goods producers become the authors of the interior design and often enter the ownership structure of the hotel. Their style is recognizable and unique, and with their fame and popularity they contribute to the hotel's competitiveness. The mentioned lifestyle

marketing concept is also reflected on other well-known personalities of the world of showbiz and entertainment, actors, singers and influencers (Mustapic & Vlahov, 2015).

### *Reflection on the architectural design and its development in Croatia*

The development of modern hotel industry in the Mediterranean destinations followed the technological progress of architecture at the turn of the 20th century. The Croatian Adriatic coast, as a part of the Mediterranean geo - climatically environment at the time of the emergence of organized hotel industry on a global level, followed international trends and developed modern accommodation facilities for the emissive market of the Central European aristocratic and industrial elite.

Considering the development of the modern hotel industry and architectural design of accommodation structures in Croatia, a strong influence of design in architecture has been recorded in certain phases of development, among which the projects of well – known architects with characteristics of trends in architecture stand out (Floričić, 2022). The initial phase of development was signified by the construction of the first Austro – Hungarian villas and palaces on the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as holiday facilities for upper social classes that included first hotels with clearly defined organizational functions operated for leisure purposes. In the development phase of the hotel industry in Croatia between the two world wars, decorative elements in exterior and interior of the buildings changed and new, simpler solutions were sought, so straight lines and clean geometric shapes were often used. The interiors were designed to be spacious and the functionality of the space was the key feature in its architectural design. The intensive construction of hotels along the Adriatic coast and the formation of the basis of the hotel infrastructure characterised the third development phase, more precisely from 1970 to 1980. In that period, 69% of all built and 72% of all complementary accommodation capacities that Croatia disposed until 1990, were built. The last, fourth development is marked by restructuring and the launch of a new investment cycle, which to a greater extent involves the renovation and adaptation of old hotels, but also the construction of modern hotel facilities. There is also a trend towards the development of small and family hotels, diffuse hotels (Villani & Dall' Ara, 2015, Stehan & Presenza, 2013) and small, luxury heritage hotels (Thirumaran et al. 2023, Xie & Shi, 2019) which is evaluated extremely positively from both, an architectural and sustainability point of view, with the reason that such facilities are not intrusive and do not require large areas. (Vukonić, 2005) (Skorup, 2020) states that the appearance of the hotel, the form of historicist or classical palaces, is in accordance with the style of the time and corresponds to the content and meaning of the place of the main social life. Hotel Kvarner in Opatija (built on 1884/1913) or Hotel Esplanade (built on 1925) are examples that still vividly represent the image of this meaning.

### *New approach in architectural design in hotel industry*

The strength of a good project lies in the architects themselves and their ability to perceive the world with a sense of space, ambience and functionality (Kim et al, 2020). Many architects and design-oriented firms in architecture strive to find sustainable solutions, applying a holistic approach that takes into account all aspects of the design process as well as its impact on the environment (Jauhari, 2014, Mensah, 2019). The task of contemporary architecture and hotel interior design is to combine it with the story, message, external environment, i.e. horticultural design, comfort, acoustic features, atmosphere and service of the hotel (Rogerson, 2010; Jablonska & Trocka-Leszczynska, 2019; Šker, 2023). It is essential to create a better environment in

the premises with ambient lighting and plants, a kind of microclimate, aiming at savings on heating and cooling. Inadequately designed spaces consume a lot of energy reaching an optimal room temperature and are not sustainable for the environment nor profitable for the investor. Many authors research aspects of sustainability and eco efficiency of resources: energy, water, waste and discuss initiatives of optimisation (Juvan et al. 2021, Tirado et al., 2019, Pengpeng, 2015). In continuance, global institutions UNEP and UNWTO (2015) create a platform for sustainable and responsible decision making including spatial organisation planning, tourist zones and building strategies. Features of space, indigenous, local materials and intangible storytelling of destinations, buildings and people represent inspiration for successful architectural and design projects in the hotel industry. As the contemporary hotel industry has abandoned the perception of the hotel as a uniformed generic building of basic hospitality services, creativity and innovation are being sought (Alidadi & Zadeh, 2016). These qualities are the platform for the competitiveness of architectural projects that are evaluated by the investor and finalised in time dynamics according to the feasibility studies and strategic plans (Adams, 2011)

When considering an investment project at famous locations, there are often already built structures that should either be preserved or demolished (Bondarenko, 2021). Therefore, cooperation with urban expert public bodies as well as with department of cultural heritage conservators is extremely important. Initiatives of merging and transforming a historical building into a hotel structure often represent a successful interpolation of heritage and contemporary context (UNEP, 2015, Dastbaz, 2015.).

In the aforementioned situations of the planning and construction of new structures in populated, urban destinations, communication with the local community contributes to understanding and affirmation of added value. The goal of architectural and urban creativity is the realization of spatial organisms that simultaneously satisfy quantitative and qualitative needs, psychological spheres of man and social symbolism, stresses out Penevska (2018) while elaborating competitiveness of innovative hotel architecture for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A hotel with adequate structural strength, with a purposeful arrangement of rooms and a subtle position in the environment and a aesthetic shape in a harmonious balance of parts with the whole can take on architectural epithets points out Neidhardt (1997). He points out that it is important that architects have ecological and social empathy, and that they creative, whereby they must meet three conditions: an idea that is new, i.e. statically rare, secondly, that the idea is to a certain extent adaptable, and thirdly, that it is capable of preserving the original ideas that it brings to full expression through evaluation and elaboration.

## Methodology and research design

After determining the purpose of the research, which refers to the examination of the process of hotel architecture and design in the context of contemporary challenges, approaches to sustainability and emotional aspects on the competitiveness of the tourist offer and the design of research questions, the target group of examinees was defined - architects of hotel facilities, and the implementation of qualitative research. Qualitative research had the character of reconnaissance research, and it was carried out using the method of examination, that is, the technique of data collection by interviewing, which gained a deeper insight and collected a wider range of data. Due to the specific nature of the mentioned profession in terms of the uniqueness and

diversity of the projects, and the possibility of partial comparability of answers, the in-depth interview technique with structured questions was chosen.

According to the study by Mack et. al. (2011) conducting an in-depth interview takes place in several stages; from problematizing the topic, designing questions, conducting interviews, transcribing conversations to analysis and reporting. Therefore, based on the researched literature, questions were developed and defined for conducting an in-depth interview (Table 1).

Table 1

Design of questionnaire and interview question (resume) – created and adapted according scientific research

<b>Motivation for project acceptance</b>	Kim et al. (2022), Adams (2021), Penevska (2018)
<b>Vision of architectural project</b>	Mustapić & Vlahov (2015), Čerović & Čomić (2015), Jablonska & Trocka-Leszczynska (2020)
<b>Sustainability characteristics of the project</b>	Čomić (2015), Uskoković (2014), Alidadi & Zadeh (2016)
<b>Investors perception, preferences and required changes in the project</b>	Mustapić & Vlahov (2015), Bondarenko & He (2021)
<b>New trends, innovations and experiences in hotel architecture</b>	Sterkenberg (2017), Šker (2023), Asmara & Mohi (2016), Puraprom & Danghkawkeaw (2022)

Source: Authors' research

The research was conducted on a sample of five architects who designed six well-known hotels on the Croatian coast. When selecting projects, consideration was given to the geographical distribution on the Croatian coast (Poreč, Krk, Zadar, Šibenik, Split, Hvar), tourist centers, different tourist brands, hotel complexes and categorization (4/5 stars).

Respondents were primarily contacted by phone and asked to participate in the survey, the purpose of the research was explained, as well as questions about data confidentiality and participant anonymity, followed by an agreement on the availability of an appointment for an in-depth interview. The research was conducted from October 2023 to March 2024, and an interview questionnaire was used to collect qualitative data, which contained demographic questions and five open-ended questions, which were focused on the motivation for hotel design, project vision, sustainability characteristics, modifications of projects and emotional aspects of tourists' stay.

The primary data obtained from the interview were recorded, and during the interview, the questions were read to the interviewees and the sequence of the interview was presented.

In-depth interviews lasted from 31 to 52 minutes (Table 2) in accordance with the recommendations on the duration of in-depth interviews, which are based on the general practice and methodology of qualitative research in the social sciences.



Table 2  
Duration of in-depth interviews

Architect	Duration
Architect 1	56'20"
Architect 2	38'24"
Architect 3	45'20"
Architect 4	40'17"
Architect 5	52'43"

Source: Authors' research

Considering that Architect 1 was interviewed for two hotels, we can conclude that his interview lasted the longest. However, if we leave it out, the longest interview lasted 52 minutes and 43 seconds with architect 5, and the shortest 31 minutes and 50 seconds with architect 1. The average duration of the interview was 38 minutes and 71 seconds.

In qualitative research, it is challenging to ensure the validity and reliability of the results, however, there are several methods that solve this problem. Denzin (1978) states that validity or credibility can be ensured by the method of triangulation, distinguishing four types of triangulation: the use of multiple methods, data sources, researchers, or theories. Furthermore, Merriam (2009) states that reliability or consistency can be achieved using triangulation methods, peer-examination or peer-review, researcher's position or reflexivity, whereby the researcher looks back to his assumptions and biases in the research, and audit trail, when the researcher describes in detail how the data was collected and categorized, and how the conclusions were reached. When analyzing the data in this work, the methods of review by colleagues and revision by the researcher were used.

The obtained data were processed using the method of content analysis with the help of the program WordArt (<https://wordart.com>), while the NVivo 14 software package and the inductive and comparative method were used for data coding and analysis.

## Results

At the beginning of the in-depth interview with each architect, demographic characteristics were recorded, which are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3  
Demographic characteristics of the interviewed architects

Architect	Gender	Age years	Work experience in architecture
Architect 1	F	(31-35) 34	10
Architect 2	M	(51 and more) 57	30
Architect 3	M	(51 and more) 78	41
Architect 4	M	(31-35) 35	12
Architect 5	F	(41-45) 45	20

Source: Authors' research

Based on the data from the table, it can be concluded that the respondents are three male and two female architects with an average age of 49.8 years and an

average work experience in architecture of 22.6 years. The oldest architect is Architect 3 who is currently retired and is 78 years old with 41 years of work experience in architecture, while the youngest is Architect 1 who is 34 years old and has 10 years of work experience in architecture. From the data it can be concluded that the sample is reliable and valid.

The basic demographic questions were followed by questions about the impetus for hotel design, project vision, sustainability characteristics, project modifications, and the emotional aspects of a tourist's stay.

In the following, the processing of the collected qualitative data was started. First of all, the answers of the architects related to the incentive and choice of designing the hotel were analyzed in order to identify possible key aspects of architecture and design that contribute to the competitiveness of the hotel from the perspective of the architects. By processing the responses from Table 4, certain common themes such as challenge, history, brand, public content can be extracted.

Table 4

Results of content analysis on hotel design motivation

Key word	Frequency of occurrence (number)	Frequency of occurrence (%)
Challenge	4	23,53 %
History / Historical Identity / Tradition	3	17,65 %
Brand	2	11,76 %
Public contents	2	11,76 %
Innovative approach	1	5,88 %
Anthology	1	5,88 %
Complexity	1	5,88 %
Location	1	5,88 %
Memory	1	5,88 %
Specifics	1	5,88 %

Source: Authors' research

Most of the respondents mention the challenge as a factor that attracted them to the hotel project, however, the continuation of the sentence follows as the complexity of the project and the need to meet a number of criteria in order to successfully realize the project. Accordingly, some of the respondents state:

"It was a special challenge and honour to work on this project due to the design of the entire urbanism, interior, environment and different types of buildings, not only hotels but also villas, annexes, castles, which are in an extremely important location for the city and form a unique functional spatial entity with a historical the core of the city" (Architect 5);

"It was very challenging to work on both hotel complexes because they operate under the international hotel brand and require the fulfilment of many more criteria that should be invested in, in comparison with for example, a boutique hotel or a smaller hotel owned by a private person" (Architect 1).

Several respondents emphasize the importance of the history and cultural identity of the location where the hotel is located, stressing the need for the hotel project to nurture history and contribute to the cultural life of the city. Some consider the influence of local architecture and specific architectural styles on hotel design, and try to integrate local elements and characteristics into the project. Furthermore, they

reflect on how historical events and the development of a place can influence hotel design and contribute to the creation of an authentic experience for guests.

Certain interviewees emphasize the hotel company's brand as a key incentive when designing a hotel. One respondent points out the importance of brand recognition and reputation in creating hotel design and guest experience, while another respondent states that brands represent guidelines and standards that affect every aspect of the hotel, from architecture and interior to services and experience. Therefore, when designing, respondents carefully adjust the design to match the company's brand and target audience, thus ensuring brand consistency and recognition throughout all segments of the hotel experience.

Two interviewees emphasize that public facilities within the hotel are key to creating a lively and inclusive hotel environment. One respondent states that areas such as restaurants, cafes and congress halls not only provide additional services to guests, but also actively contribute to the hotel's economic success, emphasizing:

"Public spaces, of course, allow the investor a higher income on the one hand, while on the other hand the type of hotel becomes part of the community" (Architect 2).

The respondent notes that these public spaces are open to the wider community, which enables the hotel to become an integral part of the local community and states:

"The public cannot get to the room, but they can enter the hotel lobbies, which had a great tradition as social gathering space from the beginning of the last century until the time of socialism, when top hotels had a strong reputation for good restaurants, cafes, and congress spaces" (Architect 3).

It can be concluded that through public facilities, the hotel becomes a place of meeting and interaction not only for hotel guests, but also for the local population. This encourages mutual connection and exchange of ideas, which contributes to the richness of the hotel experience and encourages the development of the community as a whole.

The second question related to the vision of the architectural project. All respondents emphasized the importance of realizing the vision of the hotel project and the satisfaction that they were able to convey the initial ideas to the end. In addition, they emphasize the need to design a functional and aesthetically attractive space that fits the investor's budget, stating:

"We architects imagine beautiful things, but equally these things should be functional and should fit into the investor's budget", (Architect 1), and they emphasize the importance of integrating local elements and characteristics into the design of the hotel stating: "...use of natural materials, palette of Mediterranean colors". Also, the respondents look back on the specifics of the location of the hotel and its surroundings, and how they adapted to these contextual factors in realizing the vision of the project. All respondents emphasize the importance of guest and investor satisfaction as the ultimate goal, and some emphasize that they succeeded in creating a product that was well received by the public.

The continuation of the interview was related to the question of the sustainability characteristics of the project. Respondents show a high level of awareness of the importance of sustainable design and practices in hotel design. Sustainability is a key aspect of their considerations and decisions. According to the answers, it can be concluded that the respondents referred exclusively to ecological sustainability. By processing the responses from Table 5, certain common words such as energy, materials, recycling, water, solar panels can be extracted.

Table 5  
Results of content analysis on project sustainability

Key word	Frequency of occurrence (number)	Frequency of occurrence (%)
Energy	5	15,63 %
Materials	5	15,63 %
Recycling	4	12,50 %
Water	4	12,50 %
Solar panels	2	6,25 %
Electric service vehicles	1	3,13 %
Food waste composting	1	3,13 %
Heat pumps	1	3,13 %
LED lighting	1	3,13 %
Near Zero Object	1	3,13 %
Photovoltaic elements	1	3,13 %
Savings	1	3,13 %
Smart room systems	1	3,13 %
Stone	1	3,13 %
Trees	1	3,13 %
Underfloor heating with hot water	1	3,13 %
Ventilated facades	1	3,13 %

Source: Authors' research

All respondents mentioned energy as a key word in their answers about the sustainability of the project. Some mentioned energy in the form of production through solar panels, some through savings, some through smart room systems that affected the unnecessary consumption of air conditioning energy. At the same time, the respondents mentioned materials as a key word in the project's effectiveness, encouraging natural materials, EU-certified materials and materials that can be recycled, stating: "...the hotel brand insists that all the materials that are installed can be recycled, for example, they do not want to use blackout fabrics - blackout fabrics because they are more difficult to recycle than decorative fabrics for curtains..." (Architect 1). Recycling follows a sequence of keyword occurrences. In addition to materials, recycling is associated with environmental responsibility and care for the environment in the answers of two respondents. Water as a keyword has a total of four occurrences. Certain respondents emphasize the importance of using toilets with a lower water flow, which contributes to saving water and reducing consumption. Also, the use of seawater in pools as an alternative source of water is mentioned, which can contribute to the sustainability of the project.

The results shown in Table 4 are illustrated in Figure 1, using the WordArt application that visually shows the frequency of occurrence of certain words among respondents.

Figure 1  
Frequency of occurrence of words related to project sustainability characteristics



Source: <https://wordart.com>

From the above data, we can conclude that the answers show a strong engagement of architects in creating sustainable hotels that not only meet the needs of guests and investors, but also respect environmental standards and promote environmental responsibility.

Considering the relationship between investors and architects, the next question was whether the investors asked for modifications in the project and which ones, in order to understand how the demands of the investors can be reflected in the final design of the hotel on the market.

All respondents stated that they had changes in hotel design, emphasizing:

"Yes, according to the handover, the project was reduced by almost 30% (Architect 4)", "The design took two years and the project was developed and adapted to the needs, wishes and new knowledge of the investors" (Architect 5).

Certain respondents believe that changes in projects are the result of the current situation, regulations, budgets, external influences, changes in investor requirements, all with the aim of increasing investor satisfaction and the needs and wishes of guests, i.e. increasing the hotel's competitiveness. Three respondents stated that the 3D visualizations of the projects they create represent opportunities to reduce changes to a minimum level.

At the same time, it is crucial to establish clear and open communication between investors and architects from the very beginning of the project. Regular meetings and discussions help in understanding the needs and expectations of investors and facilitate the adaptation of the project. In addition to harmonizing needs and expectations, Architect 2 states: "We are architects - a service activity, but we are also creative, artistically and technically educated, and we have to satisfy all technical matters, and equally we have to satisfy our aspects, responsibility towards the city and the environment."

When planning and designing a hotel, architects often have to take into account a wide range of factors that influence the guest experience. Emotional aspects are one of the most important elements that can significantly influence the perception and experience of the stay. By asking the question "When planning and designing, do you think about the emotional aspects of the guests' stay in the hotel?" we wanted to

gain insight into how much architects take into account the emotional needs and experiences of guests when planning and designing a hotel, because consideration of these aspects can result in the creation of a space that encourages positive emotions and experiences in guests, thereby increasing the attractiveness and competitiveness of the hotel on the market.

All respondents emphasize the importance of emotional aspects in hotel design and indicate the importance of creating a space that will ensure a pleasant stay for the guest, stating:

"It is important to create interiors that are pleasant, that provide the atmospheres that the user needs; whether it was a relaxing atmosphere, a calm - working atmosphere, a pleasant, intimate atmosphere in the bar, so all these things are incredibly important. If the space has bright white light, or faces the sea but the seating is oriented incorrectly, we as architects have not thought through the space and people will not want to stay there", (Architect 1).

At the same time, three respondents state that other influences besides the visual space itself are important, and one respondent states: "...the theme can be not only visual, but also tactile, emotion, sound, smell...sometimes you surprise guests that it's not just a chair beautiful and pleasant, but feel that it is wood and nature and that it evokes emotion", (Architect 2).

By processing the answers (Table 6), certain common words can be extracted that can affect the emotional aspects of guests in the hotel, such as atmosphere, local identity, smell, sound, tactile elements, texture.

Table 6

Results of content analysis on emotional aspects of the project

Key word	Frequency of occurrence (number)	Frequency of occurrence (%)
<b>Atmosphere (quite, comfort, relaxing, business, intimate, Mediterranean)</b>	7	31,82 %
<b>Local (identity, typology)</b>	3	13,64 %
<b>Scent</b>	2	9,09 %
<b>Sound (music)</b>	2	9,09 %
<b>Tactile elements</b>	2	9,09 %
<b>Texture (materials, space)</b>	2	9,09 %
<b>Brand</b>	1	4,55 %
<b>Colours</b>	1	4,55 %
<b>Lighting</b>	1	4,55 %
<b>Functionality</b>	1	4,55 %

Source: Authors' research

The results shown in Table 5 are illustrated in Figure 2 by using the WordArt application that visually shows the frequency of occurrence of certain words among respondents.

Figure 2

Frequency of occurrence of words related to the impact of the project on the emotional aspects of the guests



Source: <https://wordart.com>

All interviewees repeatedly mention the atmosphere in their answers about the impact of the project on the emotional aspects of the guests. The importance of creating different atmospheres in the hotel, such as a calm, pleasant, relaxing, business or intimate atmosphere, which can affect the emotional experience of the guests, is emphasized. At the same time, local identity is mentioned by two interviewees as crucial in designing a hotel, and one interviewee states: "When designing, we try to give the guest an experience of the destination, by choosing characteristic local typologies and shapes, materials, colors, textures", (Architect 5). Creating a space that will stimulate the activation of the guests' senses and thus affect their emotional aspects, four interviewees state, highlighting scent, sound, touch. The importance of tactile sensations and the texture of materials in creating a pleasant environment for guests is emphasized.

In addition, some answers mention other aspects such as brand, colors, lighting and functionality, but their presence is less pronounced compared to the emotional aspects described above.

The words of architects about their constructions and designs often do not correspond to what their constructions tell us. This is probably related to the fact that they talk a lot about the imaginary aspects of their works and reveal little about the creative passions that really fill their works with soul.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The paper investigates the process of architecture and design on the competitiveness of hotels in the context of tourism, with an emphasis on contemporary challenges, approaches to sustainability and emotional aspects. The results of in-depth interviews with five architects were analyzed to identify key aspects of architecture and design that contribute to hotel competitiveness, including design motivation, project vision, sustainability characteristics, project modifications, and emotional aspects impacting the hotel stay.

Based on the respondents' demographic characteristics, average age and work experience, it was identified that the architects involved in the research have many years of experience in the industry.

The analysis of the collected qualitative data provides a deeper insight into the key aspects of architecture and design that contribute to the hotel's competitiveness. By processing qualitative data on hotel spatial organisation incentives and choices, key themes that shape hotel architecture and design have been identified. Challenge, history, brand and public facilities stand out as important factors in creating a competitive and attractive hotel experience, which answered on first part of research question 1. Architects are called upon to balance design challenges, respecting historical and cultural contexts, adapting to the company's brand and creating an inclusive environment for guests and locals in order to achieve a hotel experience that reflects authenticity, innovation and recognition, which is key to market success and long-term sustainability. hotel.

The analysis of qualitative data on the project vision and sustainability characteristics in hotel design provided a deeper insight into the key aspects that shape the hotel's architecture and sustainability. The architects emphasized the importance of realizing the project's vision, emphasizing the need for a functional, aesthetically attractive space that fits the investor's budget, as well as the integration of local elements and adaptation to the specifics of the location in order to realize the project's vision, which answered on second part of research question 1.

Respondents showed a high awareness of the importance of ecological design and practices in hotel design, with an emphasis on energy, materials, recycling and water as key aspects of sustainability. The use of renewable energy sources, natural and recycled materials and water saving are actively promoted, which answered research question 2. The results testify to the involvement of architects in creating sustainable hotels that not only meet the needs of guests and investors, but also respect environmental standards and promote environmental responsibility. It is crucial to establish clear and open communication between investors and architects from the very beginning of the project to ensure alignment of needs, expectations and technical aspects of it. Regular meetings and 3D visualizations of projects can help minimize changes in projects and ensure the successful realization of the vision of the hotel project.

In the process of designing a hotel, architects point out the importance of emotional aspects that can significantly influence the guests' experience during their stay, which answered part of research question 3. Atmosphere is a key element that stands out in the architects' responses, emphasizing the need for different atmospheres in the hotel that can be calm, pleasant, relaxing, business or intimate. The importance of local identity is also emphasized, highlighting the need to provide guests with a destination experience through the selection of characteristic local typologies, shapes, materials, colors and textures.

Creating spaces that encourage the activation of guests' senses, such as smell, sound and tactile elements, is also highlighted as an important aspect in creating a pleasant environment. The importance of tactile sensations and the texture of the material in stimulating positive emotional reactions is emphasized. Taking into account the emotional needs and experiences of guests when designing a hotel can result in the creation of spaces that not only meet functional needs, but also stimulate positive emotional reactions, which can significantly increase the attractiveness and competitiveness of the hotel on the market. By analyzing the respondents' attitudes and perceptions, positive answers to all three research questions were detected.



Based on the analysis of in-depth interviews with architects, the research identified key aspects of architecture and design that significantly contribute to hotel competitiveness, including sustainability, respect for historical and cultural contexts, integration of local elements, and emphasis on the emotional aspects of the guest experience. They present platform for future research targeting new competitiveness in hospitality industry.

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