“The Coexistence of Artificial Intelligence and Emotional Intelligence in Hospitality: Redefining Hotellerie Through Human-Technology Synergy”

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Yes, things are more efficient. But in many cases, the fear is that guests would notice a lack of warmth and that the iInteractions could feel a bit flat, like something essential has been left out. Several studies have picked up on this: while AI often improves the flow of operations, it can also leave guests with an experience that feels kind of cold (Kim.H., et Al., 2024.) There's a difference between a fast check-in and a meaningful welcome. And more and more, that difference matters.

That's why emotional intelligence is coming back into focus. In luxury hospitality especially, it's not enough to provide services that are technically perfect. Guests want to feel understood. They want staff who notice their mood, who respond to tone and body language, and who can adjust their approach without being told. That kind of emotional responsiveness (the ability to read people and genuinely connect) has become one of the few things that technology still struggles to replicate. And it's one of the things that makes high-end hospitality feel human.

It's not just about service delivery; it's about presence, empathy, and the subtle, often invisible work of emotional attunement (Sahin F., Derya I.; 2019;). In an environment where emotional nuance increasingly defines value, the human factor is not a nice-to-have, it's essential.

This thesis takes up a key question: How can the hospitality industry evolve technologically without sacrificing the emotional intelligence that underpins real human connection? Rather than positioning AI as a threat to empathy, this research explores how the two, when carefully balanced, can actually complement one another.

By weaving together insights from emotional labor theory, service design, and innovation studies, this work aims to pinpoint practical pathways for integrating smart technologies with emotionally intelligent practice. The goal isn't to replace human warmth with digital efficiency, but to rethink how the two can coexist and increment one another.

CHAPTER 1 Literature Review and Context

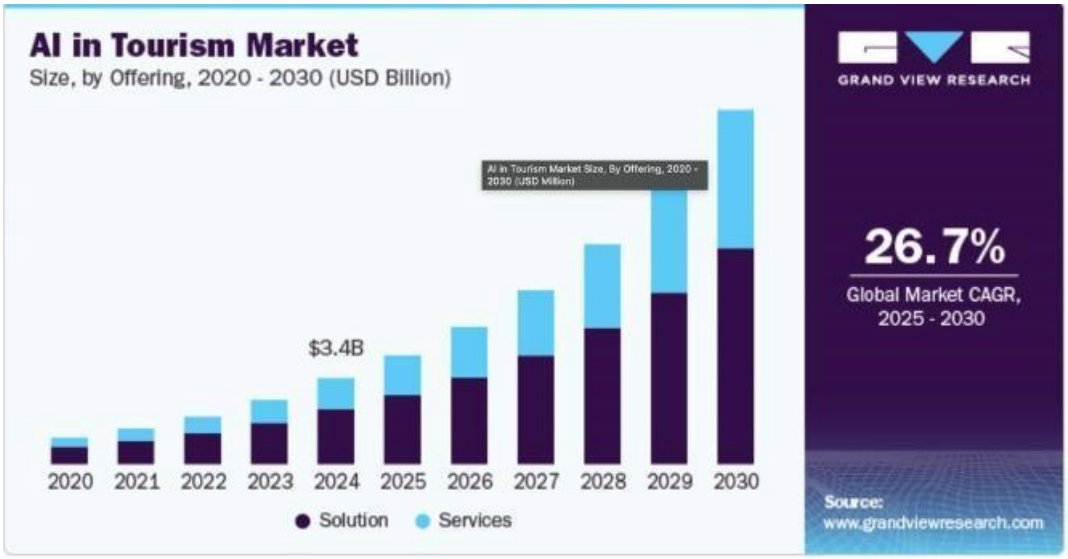
1.1: Artificial Intelligence in Hospitality

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become increasingly pivotal in the hospitality sector, transforming traditional operational practices through innovations such as automated check-ins, chatbots, and robotic concierge services (Kuo, Chen, and Tseng 2024).

AI stands at the forefront of investment priorities for hoteliers, reflecting its transformative potential across all operational and strategic dimensions, a research from **Canary Technologies** (Fox L., 2025), involving 327 hotel professionals, reveal us that 73% of hoteliers believe AI will have a significant or transformative impact on hospitality, it's just a question of when and how. The report also revealed how much of their IT budgets

the responding hoteliers plan to devote to artificial intelligence: of total respondents, 36% said they plan to invest between 10% and 25% on AI while 16% said they would invest 25% to 50% of their budget.

Concretely the value of investment in Ai had a steady upward trend from 2020, with optimistically forecasts still in 2030 (Grand View Research, 12-2024)



Since 2021 the value of the global Ai market has almost doubled, with an estimated value of nearly 3.4 billion dollars in 2024, and is expected to grow at a compound annual rate of 26.7% from 2025 to 2030.

Returning to the AI itself, Recent scholarly broadly defines it as the capability of machines or systems to perform tasks that typically require human cognitive functions, such as learning, problem-solving, and decision making, providing services previously delivered exclusively through human interaction (Russel et al., 2021; Kaplan et al., 2019)

In fact we can conceptualize AI as an artificial social intelligence as it allows machines to apply intelligence techniques to social phenomena (Cain et al., 2019). Since the Hospitality sector is a people-dependent, labor-intensive industry and is highly competitive, AI must

be seen not only as a resource but as an integral part of the future of hospitality (Acharya and Datta, 2023a).

To clarify further, we can define AI as a 'family of technologies', since these vary from 'Low AI' like chatbots on the website to 'Fully Functional Human-like Robots' that can even detect emotions from the data sets available (Chi et al., 2020).

Specifically, many operational tasks can be now powered by AI, as chat-based large language models to receive suggestions for accommodations, dining options or personalized travel plans, thanks to a mix of Data storage, analysis and personalization, such as in the Marriott case we will present later in this thesis.

1.1.2: Application on the field

Predictive analysis run by AI in Hotellerie is based on statistical models and machine learning that analyze data collected from different sources:

- Booking history (room type, length of stay, time of year)
- Behaviour during the stay (services used, dining preferences, activities performed)
- Feedback and reviews left by guests
- Demographic data and travel profiles

This data is processed to identify recurring patterns and correlations, allowing the system to make accurate predictions about future guest preferences. To understand the value of this tool, Accenture (2024) reports to us also underline that hotels that adopted predictive systems greatly improved customer retention whilst operating efficiently through 68%.

AI can also assess the attitude of web feedback thus permitting hotels to dynamically modify services to increase patron contentment. This signifies that, further than attributes

tackling singular demands, attributes are able to advance their services when they are reacting to nascent patterns and giving perpetual input, improving visitor satisfaction on a grander level (Francesco Di Cuonzo, 2024).

AI is transforming the front-end of hospitality — namely guest interaction — and also the back-end processes, these in particular by enhancing hotel operational management through predictive tools, automation, and advanced data analytics (Francesco di Cuonzo, 2025). Dr. Di Cuonzo, chief executive of LVG hotel consulting, in his article for Agenda Online, shares the different usage of AI in enhancing both the back-end processes and the front-end hospitality.

- To detect real-time micro-critical issues and suggest measurable, targeted actions, an Ai platform analyzes large volumes of data using different systems like the Performance Framework for hotel operations management. AI allows one to observe staff performance plus propose immediate improvements, and this sustains quality standards also improves customer experience by way of effective focused actions.
- Since AI is used in facial and biometric recognition, check-in and check-out could be fully automated without any stopping at the front desk, which speeds up the process and it improves security and overall convenience.
- As some hotels integrate this technology, smart voice assistants allow guests to control new aspects of their stay by simply speaking in their room.
- AI provides even more advanced solutions that personalize the guest experience within certain hospitality settings. AI goes beyond just the now-familiar chatbots. For example, artificial intelligence systems can analyze guest behavior in real time, automatically adjusting the room environment according to individual preferences such as temperature and lighting.
- Some hotels are in fact experimenting with even more advanced virtual assistants which respond to all guest requests plus proactively suggest various services based

upon the guest's own profile. These online helpers predict wants before the wants become plainly stated.

- Several properties are integrating this technology with smart voice control systems, so guests can manage aspects of their stay via a virtual assistant.

AI enhances operational efficiency, streamline employees tasks and automates product delivery processes to customers. But if there are few or little concerns regarding AI tacking the back-end processes, new concerns arise when it is used to assume the role of front end

While some employees perceive AI as a boon that eliminates redundant and repetitive tasks, creating space for more cognitive tasks, others have negative feelings towards AI, which will be reflected in job burnout (from the pressure of the competition), turnover intention, and job insecurity. However, current industry trends show that the road ahead is only uphill from here, as AI and big data analysis are taking over the industry (Choudhary and Datta, 2023, Choudhary and Datta, 2024b).

The solution for the authors is beside the hotel's walls: managers should adopt an inclusive and proactive strategy in AI implementation. It's necessary to be transparent as well as communicate openly with employees in order to address any resistance then adapt to new technology. Training's importance becomes apparent through its enabling of employees to adeptly utilize AI via requisite skills. This procedure may guide operative efficiency with personnel contentment plus competitive merits. This also can tangle with adverse occurrences, for example burnout, turnover and job insecurity.

But not only in the employees: despite these substantial operational advantages and employee specialization, the integration of AI could also present challenges into customers' perception, where AI integration could be perceived negatively by guests seeking genuine emotional connections (Kim.H., et Al.; 2024).

Moreover, discussions surrounding customers' attitudes and perceptions toward service failures caused by AI and AI-powered devices, as well as subsequent service recovery, have gained considerable traction in recent years. Researchers have been exploring how customers respond differently to service failures in AI interactions than those involving humans. Studies indicate that, overall, customers tend to exhibit a higher tolerance for service failures caused by humans than those caused by AI or AI-powered devices (Kim and So, 2023)

Key Points:

- AI significantly enhances operational efficiency.

- Risks include impersonal interactions.

- Future trends favor highly personalized technology use.

1.2: Emotional Intelligence as a core element in Hospitality

Emotional intelligence (EI) concept became popular after Daniel Goleman, American psychologist, writer and professor at Harvard university, introduced to the academic world by his Book 'Emotional intelligence', in which he describes EI as the ability to recognize, understand and manage one's own emotions as well as those of others. Goleman identified five keys of EI: Self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. These competencies are especially relevant in such high-interaction environments as hospitality, where the ability to understand and regulate emotions can significantly influence the quality of service delivered (Antonietta Veronesi 2014).

Recent studies emphasize the role of EI in creating authentic and memorable guest experiences, increasingly perceived as essential elements of luxury hospitality (Gupta and

Sharma 2023) (Giannotti.F 2021). The connection between emotional intelligence and higher perceived service quality has been substantiated, suggesting that emotionally intelligent interactions significantly enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty (Nguyen, Tran, and Pham 2024).

Forbes in 2021 talked about EI as crucial to reach success and also indicated that occupations that require these soft skills will account for two-thirds of jobs by 2030. They indicated also that hiring those with EQ may potentially increase their revenue by more than $90,000.

Since guests today require so much more than just a meal or a room to stay in, it is imperative that their experience is enhanced to provide positive emotions, which has been shown to significantly influence retention rates, consumption patterns, and the overall guest experience (Giannotti.f, 2021).

Since EI is so important to the hospitality and service industry, the high skills gap continues to be an issue as soft skills are in-demand. According to **"Future of Jobs Report 2020"** (from the World Economic Forum), as we approach 2025 the top skills someone can acquire include soft skills such as stress tolerance, flexibility, resilience and critical thinking. It is estimated that almost 40% of employees will require reskilling for at least six months to attain them.

Moreover, the essence of contemporary luxury lies in meaningful, experiential interactions fostered by genuine emotional engagement, elevating EI as a critical differentiator in competitive hospitality markets (Jain v. et al.,2023). However, developing and maintaining high EI among hospitality staff remains challenging, necessitating targeted training and continuous management support to overcome practical limitations related to emotional labor (Fernandez and Lee 2024).

1.2.1: what is EI then?

Antonietta Albanese, together with Carlo Cristini, following Goleman's model, have appropriately assessed the benefits that hospitality can gain from the application of emotional intelligence.

First of all, self-awareness is outlined as the foundation of the construction of a stable emotional system.

Self-awareness is the presence to oneself of one's own emotional state and of the related implications of thoughts and consequently of actions. Specifically, it concerns the awareness that one's own emotions trigger corresponding reactions in others. Being self-aware is complex, especially in relation to negative, disturbing or overwhelming emotions—anger, frustration, envy—since, in a defensive manner, they can be 'rejected' and not recognized as one's own. However, this way of managing negative effects is not effective, since there is not full awareness of the subjective reasons underlying the discomfort.

It is clearly as complex as it is evident that the basis of self-awareness lies in being able to recognize the origin of an emotion, succeeding in clarifying one's own means and increasing self-confidence.

This ability therefore constitutes the basis for empathy, which is the recognition and understanding of the emotional states (including desires, expectations, and beliefs), needs, and fears of others. Self-awareness and empathy are knowing how to listen, understanding and anticipating needs or expectations. Sometimes it can make a difference even to help someone get in touch with their own less explicit and declared needs and expectations, as for example in the case of undecided clients.

Before interfacing with clients, employees first build an internal relationship, which greatly influences their ability to interact with tasks.

It is in the role of the 'director' to possess EI and help to build, thanks to the help of self-motivation, a shared synergistic vision of the staff, through the promotion of mutual feedback, or the construction of a workgroup based on individual strengths.

Being motivated is reflected in the ability to choose and pursue goals, acting driven by hope and success more than by fear of failure, developing gratification and accepting changes in order to reach goals (Rahim and Psenicka, 2022).

1.2.2: Application of EI in the relationship with the client

It is clear that the guest needs to experience good emotions also in the interaction with the hotel staff, who must make them feel unique and special.

It is essential to effectively manage both one's own emotions and those of the client. Poor management can compromise the relationship with the client, with a consequent decrease in the level of satisfaction and the creation of negative publicity.

First of all, self-awareness is reflected, in the relationship with clients, in knowing how to remain calm in conflict situations (Rahim and Psenicka, 2022), for example in front of an angry or particularly demanding client.

In economic terms, in fact, an inadequate management of this type of situation can lead to a future loss of the client with negative consequences on business and on the image of the hotel.

As reiterated, empathy is the core of the relationship between employee and client. The measure of a good empathic ability is knowing how to perceive even from non-verbal behavior the client's emotions, noticing possible dissonances between communicative levels, which could be signs of disappointment or of differences compared to their expectations, or unexpressed complaints out of fear or anxiety. On the other hand, it is important to understand the extent of the client's desire to be emotionally involved, respecting privacy, space, and timing.

Finally, empathy is precisely the ability to help others and give emotional support—making the guest feel understood, respected, reassured, and protected in their needs, fostering a unique experience that gratifies the desire to feel unique.

In the management of complaints and discomforts, in addition to the mere tangible tools that can obviously satisfy the guest, there are corresponding levels of deeper psychological needs to be met.

In this direction should move the personalization of the offered service: on one hand, adapting it based on the requests and desires of the guest (e.g. in the menu, diet requests, etc.); on the other, it precisely means making the client feel 'unique' in relation to their expectations, especially if they come from a country with a different culture.

Antonietta Albanese finally considers the use of a multicultural staff one of the keys in identifying the ideal emotional tools in the employee-client relationship.

Key Points:

- EI enhances guest experience quality and satisfaction.

- EI is a competitive differentiator in luxury hospitality.

- Challenges exist in EI training and practical application.

1.3: Anthropomorphic Design elements and Communicative Agency structuring in AI

With the rapid and ongoing sophistication of artificial intelligence, and its growing ability to replicate a convincingly human-like interface (particularly through language) we are now facing a set of questions about the future of the hospitality industry.

Could it be that, beyond simply improving efficiency (ex. back-end processes as seen), AI may become a key ally in enhancing the emotional intelligence framework that, as we have seen, is so vital for hospitality?

In previous sections, we examined how AI strengthens internal operations and how EI serves as a cornerstone of the human side of service. Can these two aspects (AI and EI) work together in a genuine way? Not just coexist in parallel, but actually support and strengthen each other in ways that matter, especially in a setting where service is so deeply relational.

To do this, we will start analyzing the ability developed in recent years that could allow artificial intelligence, as we have seen in part at the end of paragraph 1.1.2, to approach front-end works. In this case, we refer to the so-called Conversational Agencies, which have undergone rapid evolution in the last decade.

Already in 2017, Larivière in his article, put forward as more relevant and central challenges the ability to improve interactions between AI and customers, as it considered the interface between companies and customers evolving towards a domination of technology, where intelligent assistants play the role of interface instead of human operation.

Firstly, AI communication between company and customers was configured as Disembodied conversational agents, namely with the production boom in 2017, where over 100000 chatbots were created (Araujo, 2018). Chatbots communicate and interact

in written form. Later, a new form of IA conversation agent was implemented, the disembodied voice assistants compared to text-based interaction. Voice assistants offer speech as a new interaction modality. Specifically, speech is natural and intuitive, which is why companies use VAs in customer service (Przepka C., Berger B., Hess T., 2022).

In the hospitality sector, the success of Customer service depends on the capability to offer interactions that are at once efficient, engaging and emotionally satisfying.

Following the task-technology fit theory, empirical evidence (Przepka C., Berger B., Hess T., 2022) demonstrates that the correspondence between the modality of interaction (voice or text) and modality of task (directed or experiential) affects customer satisfaction and perception.

in line with other recent experimental findings (Diederich et al., 2022) it has been observed that voice interaction with virtual assistants, as opposed to text-based interaction, generates greater perceived efficiency, lower cognitive effort, and higher enjoyment, especially when guests engage in complex but not strictly structured experiences, or cultural events during their stay.
Conversely, for high goal directed tasks, such as checking a reservation, requesting the Wi-Fi password, or inquiring about breakfast hours, text-based interactions may prove more functional. This is due to the guest's ability to re-read information at their own pace and keep a visible trace of the conversation. Moreover, simple yet repetitive tasks, when handled via voice, risk being less practical in noisy or shared environments, a frequent condition in hotel receptions or lobbies.

This evidence suggests that, in implementing AI in a customer service ecosystem in the hotel industry, it's essential to implement hybrid interaction modalities that leverage the specific advantages of each technology. In other words, the interaction design should be based not only on technological efficiency, but also on the fit between the modality and the type of tasks. For instance a voice assistant could be activated through an in room smart speaker to suggest romantic restaurants or scenic routes (experiential tasks) while

a text-based chatbot could be integrated into hotel's mobiles app to promptly answer practical and standardized requests (goal directed tasks). Lastly, the vocal assistant is still perceived as 'new' and stimulating, and in fact it can offer a temporary hedonic advantage, the so-called novelty effect. However when this effect fades, people really start evaluating the real utility and pleasantness of the vocal assistant, so in the long term, the sustainable adoption of voice assistants in hospitality requires a design that focuses on both functional value of user experience, balancing utilitarian benefits with emotional engagement. So it has to find the right balance between useful and enjoyable.

1.3.1: Anthropomorphism and his role in AI

This is where the concept of anthropomorphism becomes relevant — the tendency to ascribe human qualities to non-human agents. According to Epley et al. (2007), when machines behave in ways that feel human — through tone of voice, word choice, or the way they respond in conversation — people are more likely to trust them, to interact with them more naturally.

This perspective is further reinforced by a pivotal author of this psychological branch, Araujo, which in 2018 found that anthropomorphic design cues and communicative agency framing significantly influence users perceptions of both the conversational agent and the company it represents.

In the context of voice assistants, this dynamic plays a major role in improving not only how users perceive functionality but also how much they enjoy the interaction and also consequently how satisfied they are and how emotionally connected consumers feel with the company after interacting with the chatbot. A human-like voice assistant can change an user's experience from useful to pleasant and emotionally engaging.

Thus, anthropomorphic design tactically tools, for it delicately balances utility with enjoyment. Especially in the hospitality sector, in which emotional connection and service personalization differentiate, a well-designed anthropomorphic voice assistant is able to

satisfy customers more through interacting in a way that is less mechanical and more personalized. Care is needed however. As WIRED points out ("The Uncanny Valley Nobody's Talking About"), voices evoke discomfort when they are almost human but not quite, and they fall into the so-called uncanny valley. User expectations, context, as well as cultural norms determine the effectiveness of anthropomorphism, therefore. Anthropomorphism if it is overused or if poorly executed could weaken trust plus make the interaction feel eerie, not all that engaging.

Creating a voice assistant that is functionally effective and emotionally pleasant requires finding the right degree of anthropomorphism. This is important to customer engagement, with idealization of the company too.

And we're already seeing this play out in real hospitality environments. A good example is Marriott International, which stands out for its focus on innovation and customer service and, as we're gonna hear from one of the core of decision-making of Marriott strategies, Miss. Nicolette Harper, found in AI the best way to blend those two factors.

They began testing smart voice assistants like Alexa and Siri in guest rooms.
Within a few years, these tools got upgraded, and now they installed IoT Guestroom Lab, sensors that allow guests to adjust the lights, temperature, curtains or TV just by speaking, offering a more fluid, hands-free experience that feels intuitive and, in some ways, even personable (Marketing Dive, 2017).

1.4: Our research

These and other tools enhanced in the Marriott agenda are not just technical conveniences; they mark the beginning of emotionally responsive technology in hospitality. This capacity raises an important hypothesis: Can AI evolve into a relational technology that complements or even enhances emotional intelligence in guest interactions?

To explore this question, our research incorporates, alongside the Marriott case, a second empirical component: a structured questionnaire targeting hospitality professionals. The goal is to gain insight into how industry practitioners perceive the coexistence (or conflict) between artificial and emotional intelligence in their work.

The survey consists of 45 Likert-scale items (0–5) and is divided into three thematic sections:

- The use of AI for operational optimization
- The perceived value of emotional intelligence in daily hotel work
- Willingness to adopt AI in guest-facing roles

This exploratory study has three core objectives:

(1) to measure the degree of openness to AI among hotel professionals,

(2) to assess how central emotional intelligence remains in their strategic thinking, and

(3) to examine whether a high regard for EI corresponds to skepticism toward AI—or, conversely, whether professionals see these two elements as compatible or even complementary.

Put simply: Are hotel managers who deeply value emotional intelligence more resistant to AI, or is there common ground where technology and human connection can thrive side by side?

To find out, we have collected responses from a selected group of hospitality professionals, whose input will be analyzed in the following chapters. This mixed-method approach allows us to go beyond theory—grounding our inquiry in the actual sentiment and experience of those working in the field today, and laying the foundation for a more nuanced understanding of hospitality's technological and emotional future.

CHAPTER 2 Methodology

2.1 research approach

This thesis embraces a hybrid methodological approach, and it unifies qualitative and quantitative strategies to furnish a more exhaustive perspective of the subject. These dual strategies exist to reconcile specificity alongside generality because they include both the subtle accounts of specialists and wide-ranging trends derived from quantifiable evidence.

- **Qualitative Method: (explore the CASE STUDY)**

This research has an explorative qualitative nature. A main component involves Marriott International research. Marriott International was selected because it occupies a pivotal role within the hospitality sector innovating it, through experiments, with artificial intelligence. Marriott possesses the reach plus means as a worldwide brand to use high technology showing an important example yet working in a sector where caring service

stays important. Therefore, studying Marriott offers perception into how those innovating can introduce innovations without losing sight of the human dimension of service. In order to do this we interviewed Nicolette Harper, Global Marketing Executive of the company and I've integrated it with articles about Marriott.

- **Quantitative Method: (descriptive)**

Alongside the qualitative strand, the **quantitative component** of this research is **descriptive in nature**, designed to chart broader tendencies and allow for structured comparison. With careful grouping of them into three thematic areas, the instrument was built up from around 45 Likert-scale items like 1. AI use for operational optimization,
2. the importance attached for emotional intelligence and 3. being open to AI in guest-facing roles. The survey, through the use of this structure, was created to capture both respondents' positive or negative feelings toward AI. In other words, it helped identify if managers draw boundaries around specific uses for using this instrument. Also, this helped determine how these boundaries relate with their views on emotional intelligence.

- **In Conclusion**

Combining these approaches lacks sufficiency using either approach on its own as a rationale. However, a single case study, even if rich, risks being too specific, while survey results can alone lack texture if we have only lived experience.

2.2 Data collection

Investigators accrued data along this dual track. This trajectory steered the information gathering.

Data for the qualitative portion was amassed via both original and derivative origins. In order to reconstitute how Marriott structured its AI adoption strategies along with how

these subsist alongside endeavors for developing emotional intelligence, corporate reports, industry analyses, also academic articles underwent review.

Concerning the quantitative element, the information originated from a digital survey disseminated to specialists employed within hospitality administration positions. Respondents could articulate subtle sentiments, explicit advocacy, or dissent via the survey's employment of a five-point Likert scale. In all, 28 legitimate responses were acquired. Even though this number may not permit statistical generalization for the whole business, it resides inside limits that scholars in utilized social sciences deem adequate regarding initial investigation.

In this way, the thesis has its empirical foundation because it builds on two complementary types of evidence: a case study's contextual depth as well as expert testimony, furthermore patterns emerge that are measurable from a targeted survey. This stratified architecture guarantees that the scrutiny stays embedded in application and related to wider inclinations, and it proposes a viewpoint that practical and responsive to the view on hospitality.

CHAPTER 3 Case study: Marriott

3.1: introduction

Marriott International is one of the largest and most renowned hotel chains in the world.

Founded in 1927 by J. Willard Marriott as a simple root beer stand in Washington D.C., the company has evolved into a hospitality giant with over 9,500 properties in more than 130 countries.

The group manages a portfolio of 36 different brands, ranging from ultra-luxury with Ritz-Carlton and St. Regis, to accessible elegance with Marriott Hotels and Sheraton, and even more affordable solutions like Courtyard and Fairfield Inn.

Marriott stands out for its focus on innovation and customer service, emphasizing the quality of the guest experience and loyalty programs such as Marriott Bonvoy, which allows members to earn points for free nights and exclusive benefits.

Marriott's business model is primarily based on franchising and hotel management, thus reducing risks associated with direct property ownership. This strategy has allowed it to grow rapidly while maintaining high standards and consistency across all its locations.

The company has also heavily invested in digital solutions, facilitating bookings and check-ins through mobile apps and online platforms, and that is where our interest is focused.

3.2: a constant rising: the 2016 acquisition of Starwood

The 2016 purchase of Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide represented an important juncture in Marriott's evolution, an union that subsequently forged the world's preeminent lodging enterprise including over 5,500 sites and exceeding 30 marques. Marriott's global footprint expanded via this planned move that constituted a statement of ambition coupled with a financial operation, strengthening its presence throughout the luxury and lifestyle segments into new markets. By virtue of Marriott assimilating Starwood's strong collection, including marques like Sheraton, Westin, W Hotels, and St. Regis, Marriott augmented its demographics and refined its infrastructure. Marriott Bonvoy, a consolidated platform totaling presently over 180 million members globally, fundamentally was created from Marriott Rewards plus Starwood Preferred Guest's (SPG) integration. Marriott's aspiration for self-positioning as a novelty worldwide, although that unification presented complexities regarding synchronizing trademark recognitions and adjusting functional schemes (Marriott International 2016; The New York Times 2016).

3.3: Brand positioning

With 36 brand and over 10.000 destinations worldwide, Marriott international represents an unique case in hospitality sector: this extensive network offer a significant competitive advantage, attracting a highly heterogeneous clients (Nicolette Harper, 2024)

In fact, the brand positioning revolves around two fundamentals: accessibility and benefits. Marriott aims to deliver exceptional value for money without sacrificing quality and comfort, differentiating itself with a portfolio of more than 30 brands that allow it to reach different targets and meet specific needs. Personalization of the experience, digital innovation and loyalty programs like Marriott Bonvoy further strengthen the customer relationship by stimulating engagement and retention(mother design, 2024)

Marriott also stands out for its commitment to sustainability, social responsibility and inclusiveness, all of which help build a strong and modern reputation in an increasingly sensitive marketplace. In short, Marriott's brand positioning is based on a combination of accessibility, quality, diversity and responsibility, with the ambition to be synonymous with global and innovative hospitality (lattery.org, 2025)

3.4: How Marriott manages marketing and communication - an interview with Nicolette Harper, Global Marketing Executive

The recent integration of artificial intelligence within Marriott's structure stems from the vision of **Nicolette Harper**, now Global Marketing Executive of the company.

As outlined in the methodology, I considered important to interview Miss.Harper in order to gain a deeper understanding of what it has meant to advance this process, as well as the theoretical and practical foundations on which it has been carried out.

For Harper, the varsity of Marriott Portfolio represents the core of Marriott advantage in the global hospitality sector, but such a broad diversification also entails considerable complexity, especially in the management of marketing and communication.

Mostly after Starwood acquisition, many brands present similar value propositions and address a shared audience, increasing the risk of overlap and this requires sophisticated approaches to balance the promotion of different

So this required the adoption of different Strategies:

- **Time diversification** - Those brands who share a similar target are promoted in different times, according to certain characteristics, an example that misses. Harper believes it's functional is Courtyard and Moxy, two brand that are associated to as a Selected 'perception', where the former is associated with sporting events such as the NFL and so can be advertised during the sports season, while the latter, with its modern and youthful style, is reserved for periods when the focus shifts to lifestyle experiences.
- **Differentiation of communication channels -** Another solution is to diversify the advertising channels used for each brand. For example, one brand may focus on traditional platforms like TV, while another focuses on targeted social media campaigns. This strategy not only reduces internal competition, but also allows you to optimize results by exploiting the peculiarities of each platform.
- **Targeting based on interests and experiences -** Marriott also explores the aggregation of multiple brands around specific interests or experiences, creating product clusters to attract specific segments. For example, families planning beach holidays can be targeted through a campaign that combines brands focused on seaside destinations, presenting a combined offer that directly responds to their needs.

3.5: How AI affected Marketing and the use of CDP

As a miss. Harper explained to us Marriott's vision is clear: to exploit technology to enhance the human experience.

In an increasingly personalized world, Marriott International stands out for its ability to deliver experiences tailored to our guests, balancing this focus with compliance with privacy and data regulations.

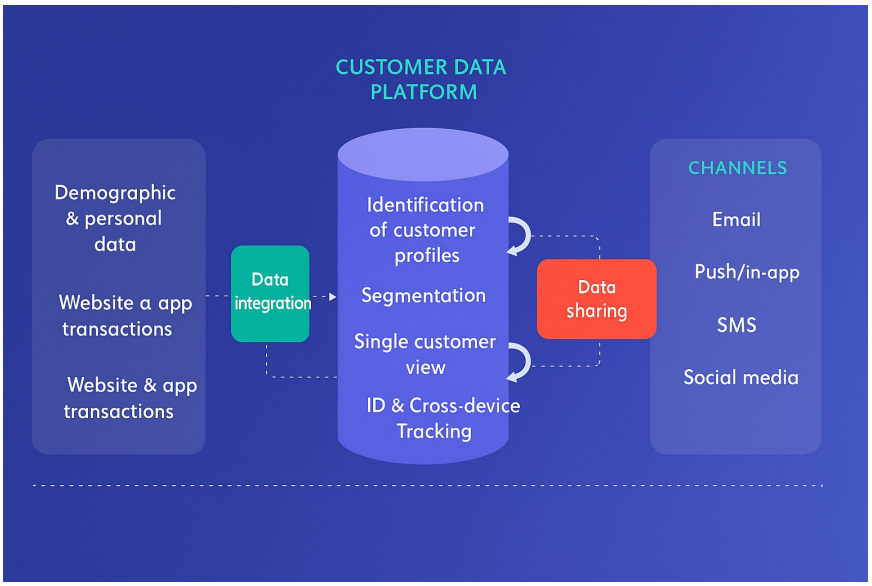
The differences between Marriott and other hospitality brands is reflected through their class in their marketing approach: Marriott found a balance between being useful and not appearing intrusive in their communication. Clients love receiving one advertising but specific on their interest, and nowadays this is possible with AI.

Marriott leverages both Automatized data platform and the data gathered through The Bonvoy fidelity program- Specifically they use a Customer data platform (CDP). It’s a software package that creates a unified and persistent customer database, accessible to other systems.' In other words, it’s a system that centralizes customer data from all online and offline business sources (including websites, email, social media, mobile apps), making it available to other internal systems.

A CDP allows you to track and manage all current and past customer interactions, based on up-to-date and complete data (boraso.com, 2024)

It allows the company to subdivide and group the audience according to common characteristics such as behaviour, interests, past purchases and personal and psychographic data.

What data are purchased?



Specifically:

-Behavioral or event data: your actions on the website, app and mobile browser. -Demographic data or attributes: name, contact details, date of birth and email address

-Transactional data: purchases, returns and other information from eCommerce or POS systems as well as customers' purchase history.

-Customer service data: live chat information, number and duration of interactions, frequency and other data from CRM systems.

-Email and SMS marketing campaign metrics: engagement, reach, impressions and other campaign metrics.

3.5.1: Instruments to leverage the CDP

After the data storage, the CDP also offers advanced analytics tools, including machine learning, that identify patterns and trends in customer data to develop more effective marketing strategies.

In fact the purpose of the CDP within Marriott is to transform raw customer data into actionable intelligence. Once information is stored and unified, the CDP employs

advanced analytics and machine learning models to identify patterns and predict customer behaviors: as Nicolette says in her interview, the company needed to change their perspective about the client, surely the name Marriot, would have led customers to put up with whatever they had to in order to book, but just because we're doing well, doesn't mean we're doing our best; that's why we moved from relying on what we think we know about our customers and what they want, to actually measuring what they really think and want.

So the predictive capability enables the Company to anticipate guest needs, such as the likelihood of booking an upgrade, using spa services or returning within a specific timeframe and so to deliver highly personalized communications across digital channels. For instance, models of propensity to upgrade can trigger targeted pre-arrival offers(for example: discounted premium rooms with late check out), while next-best-offer engines recommend ancillary services during the stay, and churn predictions models activate tailored post stay campaigns to increase repeat bookings.

Evidence across the hospitality industry confirms the economic value of such personalization: data-driven personalization strategies can raise revenues by 10-15% on average, with peaks up to 25% in best in class executions(McKinsey2021). Moreover, 61% of travelers declare themselves willing to pay more for personalized experiences (Medallia 2024), while sector analyses demonstrate that the integration of loyalty data into CDPs strengthens direct booking and lifetime value(h2c 2024; HospitalityNet2023).

Marriot's adoptions of predictive analytics through the Bonvoy ecosystem thus not only improves guest satisfactions but also creates tangible financial benefits, reinforcing the strategic link between customer experience and profitability

3.6: utilization of ai for operational processes

Beyond marketing and customer personalization, Marriott International has increasingly used artificial intelligence so as to make its own internal operations much more efficient.

Introduced around 2025, the Automatic Complimentary Upgrade (ACU) system is a prominent initiative using AI to allocate complimentary room upgrades to elite Bonvoy members automatically. Staff at the front desk once had to check room availability, elite status, and upgrade eligibility by hand. That task was time-consuming in addition to error-prone. The AI tool enables the system to be able to process thousands of assignments within seconds. Also, it balances priorities of loyalty with availability, and staff workload decreases. This innovation streamlined front desk operations as well as made upgrade allocation more transparent and consistent (Ben Schlappig, 2025)

Operational AI is used for smart guestrooms. Marriott has been experimenting via the IoT Guestroom Lab through occupancy sensors and connected devices plus smart mirrors along with mobile-controlled HVAC and lighting systems. Hotels use these technologies to change temperature, ventilation, and illumination dynamically due to guest presence plus their individual preferences. Marriott did report on some meaningful potential savings when it came to energy consumption while still preserving guest comfort though pilot phases remained active. This positions the brand as technologically advanced along with environmentally responsible (Maryna Synytsia, 2022).

Marriott also established an AI Incubator for testing operational use cases across properties worldwide. These include predictive maintenance tools analyzing data from HVAC systems along with other equipment so that they forecast failures, which enables interventions for prevention, with digital assistants powered by AI that are designed so they alleviate routine front desk interactions. Specific numerical results are not always disclosed, but Marriott indicates automation reduces repetitive manual tasks. This automation allows for employees to dedicate more time to guest-facing activities, so it

reinforces service quality and improves on operational efficiency (AIExpert. Network 2024).

These initiatives that are taken together show Marriott leveraging AI as a driver for transformation operationally plus in marketing and also in engagement. Marriott automates repetitive tasks, optimizes energy consumption, and anticipates maintenance needs because it increases productivity, reduces operational costs, and sustains high levels of service delivery across its global portfolio.

3.7: sustainability and AI

Marriott International covers a pivotal role in the hospitality sector into reducing environmental impacts, and AI play a very functional role in this 'game'
We can observe how Marriot, in all the external and internal communication, feels compelled to operate responsibly while expanding his global presence (Marriott communication, 2024)

Apart from integrating sustainability across our value chain and mitigating climate related risk, Marriott is working, also thanks to third collaborations, to reduce the environmental impact, with the goal to reach net-zero value chain greenhouse gas emissions by no later than 2050.

3.7.1: automatization of the Scope 3 emissions calculation process

Very interesting is the automatization of the Scope 3 emissions calculation process Before

stepping into the process, we have to define this type of emissions:

Scope 3 emissions are a category of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions generated by business operations from sources that are not directly owned or controlled by an organization, such as the supply chain, transportation, product use, or disposal. Also

known as **value chain emissions**, they are the most difficult to measure and reduce(ibm.com)

How the process was managed by Marriot

First step: engaged a Carbonium consultee to draw up an Inventory management plan (IMP), a strategic and organizational document, enveloped as basis for managing and monitoring the emission of scope 3

Precisely is a 'map' to manage data and define the calculation rules **second step:**

integrating the process of mapping emission factors to expenditure data

integrating IA required collaboration with the IA developer and the development of an internal climate Action program database, this integration process took approximately one year to complete (SED international, 11-2024)
An emission factor is a coefficient that allows the company to convert a specific activity into an estimated amount of greenhouse gas emissions.

companies collect data on their expenditure (for example, purchases of goods and services) and assign an appropriate emission factor to each category of expenditure.

This process allows the estimation of indirect emissions associated with the economic activities of the organization (ibm.com, 2025) even if we don't have specific data

Specifically, Marriott takes inventory from its General Ledger spend and assigns emission factors based on the nature of the spend. (SED international, 11-2024)

The wall to climb for Marriot, consisted in the diversity of descriptions associated with costs and, it's here, **that IA played a fundamental role…**

In a global company like Marriott, the expenses recorded in the General Ledger can have very different descriptions, making it extremely complicated to efficiently organize all expenses with respect to emission factors.

AI was essential precisely at this stage: thanks to its ability to quickly process large amounts of unstructured data, it was able to analyze the expense descriptions, associate the appropriate emission factors, and automate a process that would otherwise have been manual and error-prone.

To achieve this, it was necessary to restructure the CAP database, allowing expenses to be reported at the level of individual hotels or business entities, with every available detail, and then send it to the AI tool for fast processing.

Between the speed of automation brought by AI and the restructuring of the CAP database (which eliminated methodological assumptions and increased data granularity), Marriott was able to provide the AI platform with enhanced CAP data, thus enabling it to calculate emissions with greater accuracy.

So, this calculation method is particularly useful when specific activity data are enormously varied.

Using this process, specifically the expenditure data, Marriott could estimate their 'indirect' emissions, identifying areas where action could be taken to reduce the environmental impact

3.7.2: Results of Ia integration (SED, 11.2024), (Marriott annual report, 2024)

-Marriot, since the adoptions of this instrument, have easily reduced the Scope 3 Emission of 5-10%

-Marriot is also able to estimate time saved by comparing workloads for measuring emissions from prior years. Current estimates mark 250 hours saved

3.7.3: Food Waste Management in China through AI

Marriott has partnered with Wastely to implement a food waste reduction program at more than 70 operated hotels in the Greater China region. Using big data and artificial intelligence, Wastely's technology measures, tracks and analyzes food waste, supporting the company's waste reduction goals.

In 2023, these properties collectively reduced food waste by more than 255,000 kilograms, with an average 65% reduction per hotel after at least four months of participation in the program.

CHAPTER 4 The questionnaire

4.1 Rationale and Framing

In order to strengthen and complement the qualitative analysis of the Marriott International case, a structured Likert-scale questionnaire addressed to hotel professionals is included in this study as a second empirical component. The purpose is to gather grounded understanding into how those managing luxury hospitality perceive Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Emotional Intelligence's (EI) integration in operations.

This addition's central idea stems from research's question: can EI as well as AI truly coexist in a hotel environment without the one weakening the other? AI use is known to streamline workflows and tailor offers from user data (Chi et al., 2024;). Yet, in luxury hospitality, success hinges on something that is less quantifiable which involves connecting emotionally as well as empathizing plus being able to “read the room” (Goleman, 1995).

To explore this, the questionnaire was designed around three well-established theoretical perspectives:

- Goleman’s Emotional Intelligence theory, which highlights the importance of empathy and relational competence in service;
- Davis’s Technology Acceptance Model, which addresses how people adopt new technologies depending on their perceived usefulness and ease of use;
- and Anthropomorphism theory (Epley et al., 2007), which looks at how humans respond emotionally to non-human agents designed to imitate them.

The questionnaire includes 45 statements, grouped into three thematic areas:

1. AI for operational improvement: gauging whether hoteliers find AI practical and desirable for optimising staff management, logistics, and data handling;
2. Importance of Emotional Intelligence: understanding how much weight they place on emotional sensitivity in their service culture;
3. AI in guest-facing roles: examine if they are comfortable with introducing AI into the front desk or conciergerie, areas that traditionally rely on human warmth.

Taken together, the responses aim to help answer a key exploratory question:
Are hotel professionals who prioritise emotional intelligence more likely to be sceptical about AI—especially when it comes to guest interaction? Or is there room for the two forces to work in harmony?

4.2 Sampling and Data Validity

This study integrates within it a quantitative descriptive component using a structured questionnaire designed for hospitality professionals, particularly hotel managers and owners. Participants get chosen since their engaged management role within hotels makes certain responses show informed opinions about choices for planning and operations.

The sample statistically shows no industry representation attempt. Instead, it's built for capturing meaningful input from people. Those people happen to be in positions in order to influence or to implement technological change. Hospitality research widely uses this targeted approach since the intent is generating analytical perceptions instead of universal claims (Yin, 2018).

The questionnaire is designed so it can highlight broad patterns in addition to correlations. Because this is more of an exploratory study, specific hypotheses are not tested. To collect between 25 and 40 responses, generally considered to be solid for exploratory applied

social sciences work (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Bryman, 2016), is what we aim to do. Attitudes directed toward AI within guest-facing roles and emotional intelligence value plus openness for AI throughout operational trends can be understood by this range in a reasonable way.

In order to give even more context for all of the responses, participants also will be asked to share some basic information about their background. This information will include years of experience in the type and category of hotel and the size of their operation. This allows for some segmentation within the analysis in the event that prominent patterns are emerging based upon those characteristics.

We will do an analysis of all of the data with some basic statistical methods. We will use mean scores with frequency distributions and cross-comparisons between the sections of the questionnaire. The aim here isn't to conclude so firmly or predict any behaviours but instead to picture even more clearly how those people perceive both AI and also emotional intelligence and then see them as conflicting or complementary forces.

4.3: The Questionnaire

4.3.1: Operalization

We needed a tool that could do much more than just collect opinions in order to explore the subtle relationship between artificial and emotional intelligence in hospitality. To capture those subtle tensions and harmonies within industry leaders' thinking, we needed to measure sentiment, creating a questionnaire intended to create a structured conversational tool for capturing how industry leaders think of today's challenges and opportunities. To define the three main pillars that came out of the literature review was

our start. Our questionnaire showed a direct and focused intent. These were on account of the core themes or latent constructs.

1. AI for Operational Optimization: AI for Operational Optimization was designed in order to gauge the logical and practical acceptance for AI. We intended to learn if managers would integrate these tools into the hotel's engine room. Staff scheduling, financial reporting, and revenue management may use these tools. Usefulness and also perceived efficiency are the underlying question.

2. The focus within Emotional Intelligence (EI) shifts from the operational to the human. The aim was for measurement of how important they considered emotionally resonant service to be. We sought comprehension of the value professionals assign to relational skills with empathy. Real human interaction has long defined luxury hospitality so we tried understanding it as well..

3. AI in Guest-Facing Roles: This final section exists upon the frontier. The questions explored the comfort and trust around AI handling guest interactions. Customarily, human warmth along with intuition were reserved for this domain.

With these three pillars established, the process of question development began. Our approach was a hybrid one, blending the rigor of academic theory with a creative, brainstorming process. Each of the 45 statements in the final questionnaire is the result of a multi-stage refinement.

We anchored each section at first. Prior theoretical frameworks got discussion earlier. Questions covering operational AI drew upon the Technology Acceptance Model's logic (TAM), while the EI section built upon Goleman's foundational work. The final section, because it concerned AI that is in guest services, was informed via research upon

anthropomorphism and also the psychology that is human-robot interaction. Theory supplies a sound research instrument, not just random gathered questions.

4.3.2: Using AI for Hotel Optimization

Goal: To explore how willing hoteliers are to adopt AI across core operational areas (e.g., planning, logistics, HR, accounting, sustainability, marketing).

Theoretical base:

Davis (1989) – *Technology Acceptance Model*: perceived usefulness → acceptance

Chi et al. (2024) – AI improves satisfaction via operational enhancement

Kuo, Chen, Tseng (2024) – *AI in automation and back-end systems*

Deng et al. (2023) – *Efficiency vs. human connection risk*

Marriott case – shows practical uses (e.g., CDP, staff scheduling, sustainability tracking) Chi O., et al (2020) -'artificially intelligent device use in service delivery: a systematic review, synthesis, and research agenda

Response Scale

0 – I totally disagree

1 – Slightly agree

2 – Somewhat agree

3 – Moderately agree

4 – Mostly agree

5 – Totally agree

Statements

I would consider using AI tools to help forecast demand and occupancy throughout the year.

2. If it could improve efficiency and staff satisfaction, I would be open to using AI to schedule housekeeping shifts.
3. I believe AI systems could handle accounting and financial reporting tasks more effectively than manual methods.
4. I would adopt AI software that predicts guest cancellations or no-shows based on historical patterns.
5. I think AI could support better allocation of resources during peak and off-peak periods.
6. I'm in favour of automating basic back-office operations—like inventory tracking or invoicing—using AI tools.
7. I would see value in using a Customer Data Platform (CDP) powered by AI to help personalise guest experiences.
8. I would be open to letting AI suggest dynamic room pricing based on market trends.
9. I believe an AI system could outperform staff in some areas of revenue management.
10. I would use an AI-powered internal assistant to support staff communication, like managing shift changes or daily updates.
11. I would rely on AI to scan guest reviews and identify common feedback themes.
12. I believe AI could be a helpful tool for managing environmental data, such as tracking energy or water usage.
13. I would feel comfortable connecting AI systems to our PMS to automate logistics tied to guest preferences.
14. I would allow AI to generate reports on hotel performance and suggest areas for improvement.
15. I believe introducing AI could help lower overall operational costs in my hotel.

4.3.3 Section 2: Emotional Intelligence in Hospitality

Goal: Explore two dimensions: how Hotel Managers value the EI and role of emotional intelligence (EI) in quality service, managing staff, and maintaining guest satisfaction.

Theoretical base:

- Goleman (1995) – Core EI framework: self-awareness, empathy, social skills
- Gupta & Sharma (2023) – EI as a competitive differentiator in luxury
- Nguyen et al. (2024) – EI linked to customer loyalty
- Kim H. et Al., (2024) (2024) – EI as key in service personalization
- Kim, Park, & Lee (2023) – EI drives experiential luxury

15 Likert-Scale Questions

Section: Emotional Intelligence in Hospitality

Response Scale

0 – I totally disagree

1 – Slightly agree

2 – Somewhat agree

3 – Moderately agree

4 – Mostly agree

5 – Totally agree

Statements

1. I see emotional intelligence as one of the most important factors in how well my hotel team performs.
2. Staff who show strong emotional awareness, in my experience, tend to form longer-lasting connections with guests.

If I knew for sure that emotional intelligence training could genuinely improve how guests feel about their stay, I'd be more than willing to invest in it for my team.

4. According to my experience, whenever something's gone wrong for a guest, it's usually empathy (more than policy) that turns the situation around.
5. Regarding roles that involve guest-facing, skipping over emotional awareness when hiring people feels like ignoring one of the most important parts of delivering real hospitality.
6. In luxury settings, emotionally intelligent staff often seem to shape how the brand is perceived, even without trying.
7. I believe guests can easily pick up on whether or not service is delivered with real emotional care.
8. Leadership that is grounded in emotional understanding tends to create a more stable, supportive team culture.
9. In guest-facing roles like reception, emotional intelligence often matters more to me than technical ability.
10. I make a point of encouraging my team to think about how emotions — their own and the guest's — affect daily interactions.
11. Emotional intelligence training isn't prioritised nearly enough in hospitality development programs, in my opinion.
12. From what I've seen, emotionally tuned staff can anticipate guest needs even when nothing is said.
13. Being able to adjust emotionally helps staff handle different guest personalities with more grace and flexibility.
14. In sensitive guest situations, I tend to rely more on intuition than on standard protocols or data dashboards.
15. The emotional awareness of the team, I believe, plays a big role in shaping both reviews and the overall guest experience.

4.3.4: Section 3: AI in Customer Interaction / Guest Services

Objective

This section aims to explore how hotel professionals feel about the use of Artificial Intelligence in direct contact with guests—especially in areas traditionally defined by human warmth, empathy, and service intuition. It looks at perceived comfort, trust, and the potential for AI to either support or dilute the guest experience.

Theoretical base:

The questions reflect key insights from the literature on human-AI interaction, anthropomorphism, and emotional authenticity. Researchers such as Epley et al. (2007) have shown that humans respond more positively to AI systems with human-like traits. Other studies highlight both the promise (Chi et al., 2024; Ivanov & Webster, 2019) and the risks (Kim H. et Al., (2024) of introducing AI into emotionally sensitive service contexts.

Response Scale

0 – I totally disagree

1 – Slightly agree

2 – Somewhat agree

3 – Moderately agree

4 – Mostly agree

5 – Totally agree

1. To better handle routine questions from the guests (like check-in times or available services) I would be open to using a chatbot, if it freed up staff to focus on more complex needs.
2. I would feel inclined letting an AI system guide guests through check-in or check-out, as long as it was reliable and easy to use.
3. For simpler requests, I think AI could deliver a level of service that guests would find perfectly acceptable.

4. I'd be more inclined to use AI in guest-facing roles if the system was designed to sound or behave more like a real person.

   In general, I think most guests would be okay getting help from a digital assistant, especially for basic things.
6. I would consider using AI to personalise messages or services for guests based on their preferences and stay history.
7. I get the sense that many guests today expect at least some digital automation as part of a modern luxury experience.
8. I'd be fine using AI to handle the first line of communication—emails or messages before arrival—if it made the process smoother.
9. I believe an AI system can be programmed to express empathy or care, at least in how it communicates.
10. If it meant quicker replies and fewer mistakes, I'd be willing to let AI take over things like concierge requests or room service orders.
11. I can see how letting AI handle guest communication could take some pressure off my front desk staff.
12. Personally, I prefer a blended approach: let AI deal with routine tasks, but keep real people for more emotional or delicate situations.
13. I think younger guests, especially, are more comfortable interacting with AI and even expect it.
14. I sometimes worry that relying too much on AI might make the hotel feel less personal or warm.
15. I can imagine a future where AI gets good enough to match human staff in delivering emotionally sensitive service—but I don't think we're there yet.

The questionnaire is structured in three thematic sections (AI for optimization, Emotional Intelligence, AI in guest services), each with 15 statements rated on a 0–5 Likert scale. we can interpret the response in different ways:

A. Section Scores (Thematic Indices)

- **Calculate the mean score per respondent (0–5 scale)**
- **Calculate the average across all respondents**

This gives:

Section	What a High Score Suggests
AI for Optimization	**The respondent is highly open to using AI in operations (trusts its efficiency, sees value in automation, is future-oriented).**
Emotional Intelligence	**The respondent places strong importance on human emotion, empathy, and relational skills in hospitality.**
AI in Guest Interaction	**The respondent is open to AI handling guest communication and interaction (especially if human-like), and is comfortable with tech replacing some emotional tasks.**

What we are looking for:

- Tensions: e.g., someone high on EI but low on AI in guest services → more cautious, emotionally focused profile
- Harmony: high on both → believes in human–AI synergy
- Resistance: low on all → skeptical of both emotional training and technological tools
- Efficiency-driven: high on AI optimization, low on EI → focused on cost-saving, less on guest relationship quality

4.4: Framework for Analysis

This analysis bases itself upon 30 professionals who now manage positions within the hotel industry. The participants come from a wide array of hotels, ranging over small, historic properties to large multinational chains (e.g., NH, Accor, etc.). These hotels can provide for you a broad snapshot of what the sector is.

In our analysis, we will look through the responses to each question, and we will calculate an average score to observe the general tendency toward agreement or disagreement on the scale we developed.

We aim to see if we can recognize trends regarding tension, harmony, or resistance across the three sections of our study. We want to determine whether the embrace of technology conflicts with the amount that we value human-centric service.

We will examine whether or not they do disagree or agree with earlier literature, once we have these results. Specifically, what we want is to understand if hotels hold emotional intelligence in high regard. Does this great regard inspire or deter hotels from using AI in guest service jobs unrelated to the support center?

Finally, we will integrate the findings and the Marriott case study. This will allow us to discuss just whether the trend that advances AI adoption is a path that is viable for smaller or more customary hotels-in short, whether this trend applies globally or only to large-scale players.

4.5: Statistical Tools

To ground this analysis, a few key statistical methods will be used to interpret the questionnaire data.

1. **A Snapshot of the Data (Descriptive Statistics)** First, we'll get a clear picture of the responses.

- **Mean (M)**:
- **Standard Deviation (σ)**:

2. Finding the Connections (Correlation Analysis) This is where we'll hunt for the "harmony" and "tension" patterns. We'll compare the scores between sections to see how they relate to one another.

- **Pearson's Correlation (r)**: This measures the relationship between two sets of scores (for example, the average score for EI vs. the average score for AI in guest services). The result r is a value between -1 and +1.

A score near **+1** shows a positive link (Harmony).

A score near **-1** shows a negative link (Tension).

A score near **0** means there's no real connection.

Formula: $r = [\, n(\Sigma xy) - (\Sigma x)(\Sigma y) \,] / \sqrt{[\, [n\Sigma x^2 - (\Sigma x)^2] \, [n\Sigma y^2 - (\Sigma y)^2] \,]}$

Where n is the number of participants, and x and y are the mean scores for the two sections being compared for each participant.

4.6: RESULTS

4.6.1: result in the first part of questionnaire

The first part of the questionnaire asked hotel managers to reflect on artificial intelligence (AI) operationally inside hospitality.

These are backstage processes that most guests never see directly in fact: occupancy is forecasted (question 1), shifts are scheduled (question 2), accounts are managed (question 3), sustainability is tracked (question 12), or reports are generated (question 14). These

functions remain hidden from visitors yet sustain a property's smooth running throughout. The level of reliability for all of these functions is important for this intended effect.

The purpose was not only to establish whether managers are aware of AI, but also to know if they trust it enough for delegation of tasks that shape the “engine room” of a hotel. Davis’s (1989) Technology Acceptance Model provides the theoretical backdrop: adoption depends less on abstract awareness also on usefulness people perceive. Usefulness practically translates into lighter workloads, reduced costs, and more space for higher-value service staff (Chi et al., 2024; Kuo et al., 2024). Yet as Deng et al. (2023) stress, people are usually enthusiastic about efficiency but doubt reliability or fear that human oversight erodes.

Key Findings by Theme

The clearest openness appeared around forecasting demand and resource allocation (questions 1 and 5, M ≈ 3.7). Managers are comfortable letting AI work through datasets to predict occupancy or balance resources, yet they still prefer combining algorithmic forecasts with managerial instinct. A similar picture emerged with housekeeping scheduling (question 2, M ≈ 3.6). Efficiency finds a welcome here if staff feel satisfied.

Therefore both productivity gains as well as workplace impacts do condition adoption. About technology, Acharya and Datta (2023) reached a similar conclusion. Staff acceptance often determines whether it succeeds in practice.

Enthusiasm dipped to a degree for finance and for reporting. Question 3 was like this case, since M ≈ 3.4. Faster, more exact processing is attractive, but financial reporting mistakes risk heavier than forecasting errors. Efficiency as well as risk dislike do have a tension that is recurring. This tension is what appears right here.

The highest scores were found in sustainability tracking (question 12, M ≈ 3.8). Managers strongly supported AI systems that monitor energy, water, or waste. AI is a helpful partner because that excitement shows technology aligns with set goals since sustainability is a fiscal plus image issue. Support was also found with routine back-office tasks like invoicing,

inventory, plus reporting. Moderate yet firm was the support given (questions 6 and 14, M ≈ 3.5, 3.6). These routine functions invite automation since professional identity is not threatened.

Dynamic pricing and revenue management generated greater scepticism (questions 8 and 9, M ≈ 3.3 and 3.2). Managers do hesitate in order to fully delegate pricing to algorithms, fearing authority loss in addition to potential guest trust erosion, which is often regarded as a hallmark of expertise (Deng et al., 2023). AI in review analysis (question 11, M ≈ 3.7) was met with relative enthusiasm. In contrast, it was so. Because managers considered this complementary instead of competitive, they valued the capability of machines to find patterns and process online comments.

Interpretation

The pattern across these findings is consistent. Managers show the greatest openness to AI when it:

- takes on repetitive or heavily data-driven work (questions 1, 2, 5, 11);
- supports long-term goals without displacing human authority (questions 12, 14);
- improves efficiency while respecting staff morale (question 2).

By contrast hesitation is most clear when error stakes are too high in question 3 or when the task touches professional identity in questions 8 and 9. AI remains a supporting actor not the lead. This picture thus emerges. Algorithms can be granted a voice by the managers, but not as the final word. This is aligned to the idea for “augmented intelligence,” under which humans still judge as machines assist and structure.

4.6.2: result in the second part of questionnaire:

Emotional Intelligence in Hospitality

Introduction

Managers were asked in the questionnaire's second part to reflect upon EI's importance for their daily work. Questions 16 and 30 explore qualities like empathy, self-awareness, and deep connection with guests regarding their value. The intention is to determine whether people still view EI as being central in hotellerie.

General Trends

The responses left almost no room for doubt. With an average score of 4.2 out of 5, the Ei section showed the strongest consensus in the whole survey. In practice, managers were almost entirely aligned: emotional intelligence is not a “soft” extra, but a core requirement. Unlike AI in operations, where opinions leaned toward cautious optimism, here the tone was unequivocal and consistent.

Key Findings by Theme

The early questions define the tone. Regarding question 16, it is widely agreed by managers that EI is one of the most important factors in team performance. This observation was reinforced by 17, showing that staff able to read emotions and respond appropriately create stronger, longer-lasting guest relationships. These responses make clear that managers do not see EI as an abstract virtue but as a concrete driver of measurable results.

Practical investment followed naturally. Question 18 was whether managers would be willing to fund EI training if guest satisfaction improved. Yes it was the answer for most people. Question 19 underlined empathy's role within problem-solving: empathy, rather than rigid rules, usually determines whether a guest leaves satisfied when something goes wrong. As many managers stressed, guests remember their treatment more than they remember the technical resolution of the initial issue.

For hiring decisions there was similar emphasis. Question 20 confirmed that overlooking EI during recruitment is a serious error. Employees with emotional intelligence influence brand perception almost without consciousness, Question 21 suggested further. EI here is viewed as being linked for sure to a property's broader identity, not merely as just a skill.

Guests did themselves perceive such a central role. In Question 22, broad agreement was revealed that guests do immediately sense authentic emotional care in service. Question 23 added that emotionally aware leaders build team cultures of calmer and more supportive types. This very stability ripples outward into that guest experience.

Everyday practice also came through clearly. Question 25 showed that managers actively encourage staff to reflect on the emotional side of service. Question 26 showed discontent about formal EI training's absence within programs. This reveals a gap in the high value managers place on EI and the tools the industry provides.

adaptability and intuition emerged as key themes in questions 27–29. Managers agreed that emotionally tuned staff can anticipate unspoken guest needs and adjust naturally to different personalities. Several also acknowledged that they often rely on intuition rather than rigid protocols in sensitive situations. This blend of awareness and instinct was described not as a weakness but as part of the professional craft of hospitality.

The section concluded with a compelling result; Question 30 highlighted the direct influence of team emotional awareness on reviews and overall satisfaction. On this point, agreement was nearly universal: EI is not only a cultural value but also a factor that shows up in concrete metrics.

The single note of criticism—question 26 on the lack of structured training—does not challenge EI's importance. Instead, it highlights the gap between what managers consider essential and what formal programs currently deliver.

In short, emotional intelligence emerged as the strongest shared priority among respondents. With an average score of 4.2, it clearly outweighed AI in the degree of consensus. Managers consistently identified empathy, awareness, and adaptability as the foundations of service, confirming what much of the literature already suggests: in luxury hospitality, emotional intelligence is a decisive differentiator (Gupta & Sharma, 2023; Kim, Park & Lee, 2023).

4.6.3: result in the third part of questionnaire

AI in Guest Interaction

The third part of the questionnaire shifted the spotlight to moments where technology does not only support operations but meets the guest directly. These encounters such as check ins, or service requests, or first impressions at the front desk, can carry emotional weight, unlike during staff training or backstage tasks. Questions 31 to 45 explore managers' preparedness for letting AI step into situations that require an emotional touch, and their view of it as something that may improve the service or risking hospitality's authenticity.

Across the 30 responses, 3.3 as out of 5 was the mean score. This marks greater hesitation in comparison to emotional intelligence (4.2) as well as operations (3.5). Managers do appear to be cautiously curious for they recognise AI's potential in terms of speed and convenience. These managers also worry about what is lost whenever machines replace people in emotionally sensitive encounters.

Managers felt comfortable letting AI process requests routinely. Chatbots might handle simple requests (question 31) if this will free the staff time so it can serve for difficult needs. Question 33 echoed this confidence, also it noted that guests are likely to accept AI for straightforward interactions.

More caution was revealed in Question 32 about AI guiding check-in or check-out. This operational procedure, even if standardised, appears to be fundamental into costumers perception as the first contact with the hotel and so full reliance to artificial intelligence was not approved by managers since failure risk at such a key touchpoint was too damaging.

Guest expectations also had an impact on attitudes. Most managers believe digital assistants for routine matters would be accepted according to Question 35. Question 37 noted that many travellers now expect automation within luxury hotels. For the

generational dimension, question 41 added that AI is perceived as being more embraced by the younger guests during interactions.

People in particular personalized content in an open way. This stood out. Managers indicated that they would use AI so as to tailor communication or services based upon guest history in question 36. Question 38 showed they had support of AI when it manages pre-arrival messages. Both show readiness to use instruments predicting wants also saving time without relating to people less.

Question 39 asked if care could convincingly be expressed via AI tone or wording. Managers leaned toward positive but lacked confidence because they doubted whether simulated warmth could ever feel authentic. This doubt increased along with question 44: only a few managers foresaw later progress, even though most of them thought that we still lack human emotional sensitivity.

Question 43 worried managers because AI overreliance might make hotels seem less authentic: Impersonality fears became their concerns.

The central captured worry for the section was just this: technology may smooth out logistics. Yet, it risks stripping hospitality of that defining quality of warmth.

Even then, such a midpoint did appear. Question 42 revealed a strong preference for hybrid models, AI handles the repetitive tasks, and humans lead now in delicate or emotional situations. Adding that the use of AI to relieve some pressure could be quite positive, Question 40 cited how the human element is not being erased.

Interpretation

Across responses, a consistent pattern appears. AI is welcomed when it:

- manages routine, low-stakes requests (31, 33); ● enhances personalization and convenience (36, 38);

- reduces workload without eroding staff presence (40, 42).

But hesitation arises when AI is asked to:

- simulate empathy or authentic warmth (39, 44);
- take over roles tied to identity and guest trust (43);
- replace professional judgment in sensitive, high-stakes moments.

Managers frame AI not as a substitute for front-line staff but as an extra set of hands. They accept machines smoothing processes in the background, but draw the line where the "human touch" is central.

Conclusion to Section

With an average score of 3.3, hotel managers approach guest-facing AI more cautiously than other applications. The preferred model is hybrid: technology for speed and consistency, people for warmth and authenticity. This aligns with the literature. Epley et al. (2007) show that people respond better to systems that feel human-like, but Tung, Au, and Law (2023) warn that overreliance risks diluting service warmth. The survey results sit between these poles: managers are open to experimentation yet protective of the human role that sustains luxury hospitality's unique value.

CHAPTER 5 Conclusions

5.1 Comparison between collected data and literature

When results are compared with academic literature a clear pattern then emerges:

Hotel managers do not often view things in a way that is different from what scholars have already described. The two perspectives instead seem to reinforce each other even in different tones.

Managers gave a score of 3.5 on average for the first part of the questionnaire, a positive score, though with caution. This fits comfortably inside Davis's (1989) Technology Acceptance Model, which highlights technology is adopted when people see it as genuinely useful. Chi et al. (2024) and Kuo et al. (2024) noted what "useful" means in practice: lighter workloads, and also fewer costs, and even more time for staff so they can focus on higher-value service. That survey of responses does suggest that the very same logic is at work here. AI gets particularly strong approval for sustainability tracking that depicts this perfectly (3.8 on average). AI is seen by managers as a partner in achieving broader goals since sustainability has moved to the centre of strategy, not only as an operational helper.

That same enthusiasm mirrors a number of observations within much of the literature. However, environmental responsibility has become a competitive necessity beyond a branding accessory.

Revenue management plus pricing brought about a score around 3.2 or 3.3, on the other hand. The managers' hesitation here closely resembles an instinctive resistance to algorithms dictating decisions tied to brand identity as well as fairness, as Deng et al. (2023) describe. It is instead a defence of expertise since human assessment seems vital; this is not a full AI rejection. Managers draw such clear boundaries at that time when

technology begins for the purpose of touching guest trust which the literature warned about and which the survey shows.

That section of emotional intelligence did align even more as well. With averaging a score of 4.2, the managers doubted nearly nothing: EI is not optional, it is necessary. The Results section showed this unanimity plus Gupta and Sharma (2023) or Kim, Park, and Lee (2023) give broader consensus. These authors argue that EI differentiates the high-end hospitality sector. The survey data confirms that practitioners feel in the same way. One interesting criticism that appeared is EI training's frequent inadequacy which instead subtly adds to the literature. The gap between the value managers attach to EI as well as the limited attention it receives in formal programs is highlighted, a misalignment that theory and practice seem keen to address.

AI perhaps compares in a most delicate way in the guest-facing areas. The survey showed cautious curiosity (average 3.3): managers are open to using technology in routine requests or pre-arrival communications. They remain sceptical about entrusting empathy or emotional care to machines. The literature has two strands within. This sits squarely between both of them. Epley et al. (2007) argue that anthropomorphism can increase trust that is, making systems feel human. Tung, Au, and Law (2023) warn that AI overreliance risks instead creating emotionally flat experiences.

The managers' preference toward a hybrid model AI and people shows how these two perspectives can coexist. The data do depict "augmented intelligence" in such a way: rather than being a substitution, a partnership exists right between people and machines.

A partnership, clearly stated in the case study we followed.

5.2: Comparison between the survey and the case study

If we bring side by side the outcomes of the survey with what emerged from the Marriott case study, a certain contrast becomes visible, though it is more apparent than absolute.

From the questionnaire, managers across different contexts expressed a major degree of hesitation, particularly whenever artificial intelligence appeared to intrude upon those domains where empathy and emotional intelligence are at stake.

In their eyes, EI remains a quality essentially human, not something to be comfortably assigned to algorithms.

On the other hand, the Marriott case allows us to see how, in a large international chain already engaged in implementing AI across different services, resistance at the local managerial level has been gradually reinterpreted and, in many cases, overcome.

Through the leadership of figures such as Bloomberg, the company managed to change the very meaning of experimentation.

By means of Adobe Target, his team reframed the value of testing: not every trial had to show a direct revenue gain to count as a success. On the contrary, even a negative result could be considered a "win" if it produced reliable knowledge about guest preferences. As Bloomberg himself put it, "sometimes learning what our customers do not want from us is just as, if not more, impactful as learning where we did well" (Susan Bloomberg, 2021). By redefining failure as an opportunity to learn, the fear traditionally associated with innovation began to fade, making experimentation a safer and more acceptable practice.

In addition, framing "loss prevention" as a key performance metric further shifted the focus even further, encouraging teams to see that experimenting protects against potential mistakes just as much as it seeks opportunities for improvement.
Gradually, this cultural change multiplied the number of tests conducted annually, confirming that resistance is not immovable: when managers are invited to treat technology as a source of insight and not a rival to their professional judgment, adoption becomes significantly more achievable

5.3: Conclusions

The combined reading of the survey and the case study suggests a conclusion that is both simple and demanding. Artificial intelligence will not succeed in hospitality by trying to substitute the human element; it will succeed only where it is capable of complementing it.

The survey shows clearly how managers still defend EI as indispensable, especially in guest-facing interactions. The Marriott case confirms that these methods are well-founded, yet it also demonstrates that resistance can be softened. What matters is the way technology is framed: when it is presented as an ally that supports learning and reduces risks, managers are more willing to embrace it.

The points of tension are clear. Resistance tends to rise when technology appears to replace human empathy or when it threatens elements tied closely to brand identity and personal judgment. Where instead AI is placed at the service of operational refinement, sustainability, or guest personalisation, integration is not only possible but welcome. Marriott's experience shows that what makes the difference is not so much the technology itself, but the perspective with which it is introduced (Susan Bloomberg, 2021.).

Finally, the theme of anthropomorphism opens a further horizon. Studies have suggested that people respond more readily to systems that carry traces of human-like behaviour or tone. In an industry like hospitality, where human warmth and presence attend to be the core engines , this approach may ease the interaction between guest and machine. Still, both the data and the case study remind us of a fundamental truth: no degree of simulation can entirely replace genuine emotional intelligence. The craft of hospitality rests on human presence, and AI can at best act as a complement.

In conclusion, the path ahead is not about choosing between artificial and emotional intelligence, but a question about learning how to coordinate them. Efficiency, prediction,

and data-driven insight must be brought into harmony with empathy, adaptability, and care. Only by holding these two dimensions together will hospitality continue to evolve without losing its defining essence.

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