

## **Research Paper 04**

### **From Guest Journey to Hospitality Design**

#### **Abstract**

Hospitality projects are traditionally designed by beginning with physical assets.

A site is selected.

A hotel is planned.

Restaurants are added.

Guest services are developed.

Marketing defines the target audience.

This paper proposes the opposite sequence.

Hospitality should begin by designing the guest's journey.

Only afterwards should physical and operational systems be created to support that journey.

#### **Key Question**

What should be designed first?

A hotel?

Or the experience that the hotel is intended to create?

#### **Observation**

Imagine a traveller planning a journey to Northern Scandinavia.

Several months before departure, the experience has already begun.

The traveller imagines:

fresh northern air,

vast landscapes,

indigenous cultures,

local cuisine,

winter silence,

stories to tell after returning home.

These expectations exist long before a hotel room is booked.

They shape the meaning of the entire journey.

Yet hospitality projects are rarely designed from this perspective.

Instead, accommodation, restaurants, leisure facilities and excursions are often developed independently and connected only after construction is complete.

#### **Discussion**

Suppose the destination is intended for guests staying five or six days.

Their purpose is not passive relaxation.

They want discovery.

Exploration.

Learning.

Movement.

Every day should feel different.

Every experience should reveal another dimension of the destination.

If this guest journey is defined before design begins, many decisions become clearer.

The hotel develops its own distinctive identity.

The restaurant reflects regional traditions rather than offering generic international cuisine.

Excursions become narrative chapters rather than optional activities.

Evening programmes become part of the destination rather than entertainment added after dinner.

Architecture, operations and services all begin serving the same story.

## Framework Insight

The Narrative Hospitality Framework proposes a different design sequence.

Target Audience

↓

Guest Scenario

↓

Destination Identity

↓

Narrative Layer

↓

Journey Design

↓

Hospitality Ecosystem

↓

Architecture

↓

Operations

↓

Service

↓

Memory

The guest scenario becomes the design brief for the entire destination.

Hotels are no longer designed as independent assets.

They become one component within a larger experience system.

## Multiple Guest Scenarios

Destinations rarely serve only one type of guest.

Business travellers.

Families.

Couples.

Wellness visitors.

Adventure travellers.

Each follows a different narrative.

Problems arise when destinations attempt to accommodate multiple guest types without recognizing these different journeys.

A hotel originally designed for business travel cannot simply "add" family leisure activities without affecting its original identity.

Likewise, a resort developed around family holidays may struggle to satisfy guests seeking tranquility and privacy.

The objective is therefore not to eliminate diversity.

It is to intentionally design multiple guest scenarios from the beginning.

When this is done, architecture, zoning, restaurants, leisure programmers and operational systems can support different journeys without forcing them into competition.

## Implications

Narrative Hospitality shifts the primary design question.

Instead of asking:

**"What facilities should this hotel include?"**

it asks:

**"What journey should this destination create for each type of guest?"**

Once this question has been answered, decisions about architecture, food, leisure, wellness, entertainment and service become significantly more coherent.

## Conclusion

The first object of hospitality design is not the building.

It is not the room.

It is not the restaurant.

It is the guest journey.

Only after that journey has been intentionally designed should physical, operational and service systems be developed.

The Narrative Hospitality Framework therefore proposes a fundamental reversal of conventional hospitality planning:

**Guest journeys design destinations—not the other way around.**

The following paper demonstrates how this principle emerged through practical observations across multiple hospitality projects and how those projects gradually shaped the development of the Framework.

## Design Paradigm Shift

The Narrative Hospitality Framework does not propose new hotel facilities.

It does not propose new operational standards.

It proposes a different **sequence of design decisions**.

This distinction is fundamental.

Most hospitality projects are still developed according to the following logic.

## Conventional Hospitality Design

Market Analysis



Site Selection



Architecture



Rooms



Restaurants



Facilities



Operations



Service Standards



Marketing



Guest Experience

## Primary Question

*What should we build for guests?*

The Narrative Hospitality Framework reverses this sequence.

# Narrative Hospitality Design

**Target Audience**



**Experience Architecture**



**Guest Scenarios**



**Destination Identity**



**Narrative Layer**



**Journey Design**



**Hospitality Ecosystem**



**Architecture**



**Operations**



**Service Design**



**Memory**

## Primary Question

*What journey should guests experience?*

## Framework Principle

In conventional hospitality, **the building becomes the starting point.**

Within the Narrative Hospitality Framework, **the guest journey becomes the starting point.**

Architecture, restaurants, leisure, wellness, entertainment and operations are no longer designed independently.

They are developed as coordinated responses to an already defined guest narrative.

The physical destination becomes the expression of an experience that has first been designed in time.

## Final Conclusion

The Narrative Hospitality Framework therefore proposes a fundamental shift in hospitality design.

The first object to be designed is neither the hotel nor the restaurant.

It is the experience the destination intends to create.

Everything else follows.