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Understanding the Millennials' customer experience in hospitality throughout the customer journey

Mafalda de Andrade Segurão Cardoso Neves

Master in Hospitality and Tourism Management

Supervisor:
Professor Doctor Ana Margarida Mendes Camelo Oliveira Brochado, Auxiliar Professor (with aggregation), Marketing, Operations and General Management Department

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BUSINESS SCHOOL

Department of Marketing, Strategy and Operations

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Resumo

A importância das experiências como forma de obter vantagem competitiva destacou a necessidade de as estudar especialmente na hotelaria e turismo, enquanto área com características específicas que tornam estas experiências difíceis de prever. Em particular, são cruciais as experiências dos *millennials*, devido ao peso nas viagens globais, significativo contributo económico e particularidades que moldam a indústria. Assim, esta dissertação visa estudar as experiências dos *millennials* ao longo da jornada nos hotéis, através do *customer journey mapping* de forma a ter uma visão clara das interações entre esta geração e estes estabelecimentos.

Os resultados revelaram heterogeneidade na jornada dos *millennials* em hotéis de acordo com o tipo de viajante, resultando em mapas distintos. No geral, as interações identificadas foram, antes da experiência, a pesquisa, comparação de hotéis e a reserva, durante a experiência, o check-in, o quarto, as refeições incluídas, o restaurante, bar, piscina, ginásio, entretenimento, e o check-out, e, após a experiência, a avaliação e as promoções. Em cada mapa concluiu-se que as ações, canais, sentimentos, expectativas, *points of delight* e *pain points* variam ao longo da jornada e identificaram-se recomendações para melhorar o serviço em cada uma das etapas.

O estudo da experiência do consumidor em hotéis constitui um contributo para a teoria através da utilização do *customer journey mapping*, que, neste contexto, tem recebido pouca atenção da literatura. Ao mapear a jornada dos *millennials*, os hotéis conseguem identificar as oportunidades e fraquezas associados aos seus serviços e entender como podem adaptá-los para cativar esta geração.

Palavras-chave: Experiência do cliente, Jornada do cliente, Mapa da jornada do cliente, Turismo, Hotelaria, Millennials

JEL: L83, Z31

Abstract

The importance of experiences as a way of gaining competitive advantage highlighted the need to study them especially in the hospitality and tourism sector, as an area with specific characteristics that make these experiences difficult to predict. In particular, the experiences of millennials are of great importance, due to their weight of global travel, significant economic contribution and particularities that shape the industry. Thus, this dissertation aims to study the experiences of millennials along the journey in hotels, through the customer journey mapping in order to have a clear view of the interactions between this generation and these establishments.

The results revealed heterogeneity in the journey of millennials in hotels according to the traveler type, resulting in distinct maps. Overall, the interactions identified were, before the experience, the research, comparison and booking, during the experience, the check-in, room, meals included, restaurant, bar, pool, gym, entertainment, and check-out, and after the experience, the evaluation and promotions. In each map, it was concluded that the actions, channels, feelings, expectations, points of delight and pain points vary throughout the journey and recommendations were identified to improve the service at each stage.

The study of the customer experience in hotels constitutes a contribution to the theory through the use of customer journey mapping, which, in this context, has received limited attention in the literature. By mapping the millennials' journey, hotels are able to identify the opportunities and weaknesses associated with their services and understand how they can adapt them to captivate this generation.

Keywords: Customer Experience, Customer Journey, Customer Journey Map, Tourism, Hospitality, Millennials

JEL: L83, Z31

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

Through the years, the concept of customer experience has gained increasing attention by scholars with the realization that customers no longer desired only goods and services but also experiences (Abbott, 1955; Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Therefore, by staging experiences, businesses gain competitive advantage as the traditional characteristics such as the price, features, quality and service are not enough to differentiate companies (Schmitt, 1999; Shaw & Ivens, 2002). Nowadays customers have contact with companies through multiple interactions and channels that result in different and personal responses, not only during the act of consumption but also before and after it, resulting in multidimensional and complex customer experiences. As a result, firms should attempt to understand and manage all of these interactions that form the customer journey in order to deliver competitive customer experiences (De Keyser et al., 2015; Dhebar, 2013; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Norton & Pine, 2013; Rojas et al., 2021; Rudkowski et al., 2020; Stickdorn & Schneider, 2010; Zomerdijk & Voss, 2010). However, research on the customer journey is still limited (Rudkowski et al., 2020).

As tourism is an industry that focuses on providing experiences (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009; Cetin & Dincer, 2014; Gretzel et al., 2006; Hwang & Seo, 2016; Sternberg, 1997), its research is of great importance in order to differentiate from competition (Gilmore & Pine, 2002; Rojas et al., 2020), which is why these have been studied since the 1960s (Clawson, 1963). However, experiences are particularly complex in the context of tourism and difficult to predict as, in contrast to other goods and services, these experiences include extensive pre and post-experience phases (Gretzel et al., 2006), are characterized by their subjectivity, resulting in a diverse group of consumers (Jevtić et al., 2020; Ooi, 2005; Otto & Ritchie, 1996; Rojas et al., 2020; Tung & Ritchie, 2011), multidimensionality (Walls et al., 2011a), the heterogeneity of its services and products, the inseparability of production and consumption, the perishability and the intangibility of its services (Cetin & Dincer, 2014; Gunn, 1988; Kim & So, 2022; Zeithaml, 1981). Since the accommodation is an essential part of these types of journeys, the hospitality experience should also be given importance in order to understand the entirety of the phenomenon (Cetin & Dincer, 2014; Nasution & Mavondo, 2008). According to Cetin and Dincer (2014), due to the particular characteristics of the services in this area, in these establishments the physical environment and the social interactions are more important to the consumer than the product. Therefore, in order to deliver quality experiences and stand out from the competition, hospitality companies and researchers have to take into consideration a holistic view of the experience and invest on their physical environment and social interactions while bearing in mind the subjectivity of their interpretation of the experience (Cetin & Dincer, 2014; Hwang & Seo, 2016; Walls et al., 2011b).

Adding to the difficulty in managing the experiences in this area, tourism is an industry with multigenerational visitors which results in different motivations, attitudes and behaviors (Benckendorff et al., 2010; Li et al., 2013). Particularly, the millennials or generation Y (Kotler & Keller, 2012), which refer to members born between 1982-2002 (Benckendorff et al., 2010; Howe & Strauss, 2000), are of great importance to the tourism industry as they make significant economic contributions to the destinations and, owing to their unique motivations and behaviors, shape the travel industry (United Nations World Tourism Organisation, 2008). This importance is highlighted in a study by the Expedia Group (2020), in which they reveal that in 2020 this generation had taken more leisure trips than any other generation and were expected to be the ones to travel the most in leisure and business in the future. Due to this relevance in the tourism industry, companies and researchers should attempt to understand the profile and needs of this generation in the form of generational analysis in order to adapt their offers and deliver the desired experiences (Li et al., 2013; Veiga et al., 2017). However, according to Veiga et al. (2017), the millennials are not a homogeneous segment, and, in the specific context of tourism, there are different types of customers with different needs resulting from several factors such as their origin, culture, travel companion, purpose, etc, which reflects on the importance to study the different types of consumers and their needs (Rojas et al., 2020).

Taking this into consideration, the present dissertation aims to study the millennials' customer experience in hotels through a holistic and multidimensional view of their journey in these establishments. This research also seeks to test whether their journey varies according to the traveler type (alone leisure, friends leisure, couple leisure, family leisure, and business travelers) as it was already used in previous research and identified as a relevant market segmentation variable (Brochado & Brochado, 2019; Brochado et al., 2022).

For this purpose, the customer journey mapping tool will be employed as it provides a clear visualization of every interaction between the consumer and the company from the customers' perspective (Bosio et al., 2017; Richardson, 2010; Stickdorn & Schneider, 2010). Therefore, this method allows companies to identify the many stages that clients go through in their journeys with firms, the emotions that result from these interactions, the channels that they use in each touchpoint, the customers' expectations, the positive and negative aspects of the service and the factors that influence the customers' experiences (Bosio et al., 2017; Canfield & Basso, 2017; Crosier & Handford, 2012; Halvorsrud et al., 2016; Stickdorn & Schneider, 2010). Through this information, businesses are able to pinpoint opportunities for innovation and improvement, ensure efficiency in their processes and compare their services with their competition in order to meet customers' expectations and offer quality experiences (Akdag & Ergen, 2021; Crosier & Handford, 2012; Haugstveit et al., 2016; Nenonen

et al., 2008; Opresnik, 2021; Stickdorn & Schneider, 2010). Despite the relevance of this method in the research, design and improvement of the customer experience (Rudkowski et al., 2020; Zomerdijk & Voss, 2010), there is a paucity of research applying this method and studying the customer journey in this context (Dey, 2019; Taheri et al., 2021).

With this in mind, the current research addressed the following questions: (RQ1) What are the main touchpoints of the millennials' customer journey in hotels? (RQ2) Do the actions, channels, feelings, expectations, points of delight and pain points vary across the different touchpoints of the customer journey? (RQ3) What are the main recommendations to improve the service in each touchpoint? (RQ4) Is there heterogeneity in the millennials' customer journey in hotels across different market segments defined by traveler type?

Regarding the structure of the present dissertation, after the first chapter in which the topic and focus of the study is explained and the research questions are outlined, in the second chapter a review of the literature on the concepts related to the theme is presented and divided into six sections. In the first section, the notion of customer experience is explained and its importance is highlighted, in the second section the specific customer experience in the tourism industry is explored and all of its particularities, then the focus is directed to the customer experience in hospitality, on the fourth section the customer journey is conceptualized as an essential part of the study of the customer experience, followed by the explanation and importance of employing the customer journey mapping tool, and the chapter ends with an introduction to the theory of generations, the millennials and their specific characteristics in the context of tourism. Bearing in mind the presented literature, on the third chapter a conceptual model was developed in which the information to include in the customer journey maps is chosen and explained. The fourth chapter has the purpose of contextualizing the present research and in the fifth chapter the methodology used is addressed in terms of its design, sampling, treatment and finally the analysis of the data through content analysis. Lastly, the sixth chapter refers to the conclusions of the research in which the findings are discussed and compared to the literature, the theoretical and managerial contributions are presented and the limitations and recommendations for future studies are enumerated.

2. Literature Review

In this section, the concepts that support the present study are presented and explained through the review of the existent literature. First, an overview of the studies in customer experience is provided as well as in the context of tourism and hospitality, then the term customer journey is defined and analyzed along with the customer journey map, which is the method used to study it from the

perspective of the customer, and, lastly, the theory of generations is reviewed and the generation under study, the millennials, is presented.

2.1 Customer Experience

The study of the customer experience has been essential in the creation and implementation of memorable experiences in order to achieve a competitive advantage (Jain et al., 2017). The realization that customers desire not only goods and services but also satisfying experiences that can be obtained through these purchases, started the debate regarding their importance (Abbott, 1955).

Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) were the authors of one of the first studies about the concept of customer experience in which they highlighted the necessity of broadening the theory of the buyer behavior by also addressing the "experiential aspects of consumption" characteristic of the interaction between the customer and the environment, such as the consumer fantasies, feelings and fun, that, until then, had been neglected by the research therefore restricting the study of the customer behavior.

In line with this, Pine and Gilmore (1999) emphasize the importance of the customer experience by distinguishing experiences from commodities, goods and services and conceptualizing them as the "fourth offering" that result in memorable and personal events. The authors also defend that, to add value and attract the masses, businesses need to stage experiences since goods and services are no longer enough.

The experiences staged by companies can engage customers on four dimensions, defined by the authors as the realms of an experience, depending on the customer's participation and connection to the experience (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). The entertainment realm occurs when customers participate passively in the experience through their senses as when watching a performance. Similarly, in the educational realm there is also an absorption of the event but, in these learning experiences, the participation is active. In contrast to the former, the escapist dimension characterizes experiences in which there is a complete immersion and active participation such as going to theme parks and casinos. Lastly, the esthetic realm describes immersive experiences with passive participation as visiting an art gallery (Pine & Gilmore, 1999).

With the commoditization of products, the customer experience becomes the new source of competitive advantage, as customers are more interested in companies that deliver great customer experiences instead of the traditional elements such as price, features, quality and service (Schmitt, 1999; Shaw & Ivens, 2002).

This transition to the experience economy is also supported by Schmitt's work (1999) in which it is stated that, in order to succeed in the marketplace, companies need to deliver a competitive

customer experience. According to the author, experiences result in a series of values that differ from the functional ones and that can be used by managers to create different customer experiences. These values are defined by the author as "strategic experiential modules" and refer to sensory, affective, cognitive, behavioral, and relational experiences, therefore taking a multidimensional view of the concept.

In 2001, Addis and Holbrook pointed out the need to study not only the utilitarian type of consumption experiences, marked by the correlation between the objectivity of products and their functionality, but also the hedonic type, which is related to the role of emotions on the customer experience which leads to subjective responses such as beliefs and feelings that can result from these experiences. In conformity with this, customer experience is defined as "(…) a blend of a company's physical performance and the emotions evoked, intuitively measured against customer expectations across all moments of contact" (Shaw & Ivens, 2002, p.6).

In 2003, Carù and Cova explored the notion and incorporated in it not only the extraordinary experiences characterized by unusual events and strong emotions (Arnould & Price, 1993), but also ordinary everyday experiences lived by consumers, which also have to be taken into account when approaching the concept under study.

Based on relevant scientific contributions, Gentile et al. (2007, p.397) define customer experience as "[t]he Customer Experience originates from a set of interactions between a customer and a product, a company, or part of its organization, which provoke a reaction (…). This experience is strictly personal and implies the customer's involvement at different levels (rational, emotional, sensorial, physical and spiritual) (…)". Moreover, the authors add that "[i]ts evaluation depends on the comparison between a customer's expectations and the stimuli coming from the interaction with the company and its offering in correspondence of the different moments of contact or touch-points (…)".

Furthermore, they conceptualize the customer experience as a multidimensional structure composed by: a sensorial component which relates to the senses; an emotional component that involves the feelings and emotions; a cognitive component connected to the mental processes; a pragmatic component related to the usability; a lifestyle component that describes the adoption of lifestyles and behaviors; and a relational component which is connected to the person, social context, relationships and his/her ideal self (Gentile et al., 2007).

In accordance with the previous definition, Meyer and Schwager (2007, p.2) define the term as "(…) the internal and subjective response customers have to any direct or indirect contact with a company.", in which the direct contact refers to the actual purchase, use or service and the indirect contact is related to the spontaneous encounters with representations of the company such as advertising or reviews.

Adding to these, Verhoef et al. (2009) describes the customer experience as a holistic construct composed by the consumers' cognitive, affective, emotional, social and physical responses, by elements that are controlled by the retailer, such as the price, and by those that are not, as it is the case of the influence of others in the consumer. In their work, the authors defend a dynamic view of the concept in which the customers' prior experiences impact the futures ones.

Since the customer experience is a holistic notion, it implies the whole experience phases and not only the moment of consumption, which means that every moment between the search and the post-consumption phase is encompassed by the concept and these phases can imply direct and indirect encounters with the retailer (Homburg et al., 2017; Klaus & Maklan, 2013; Du Plessis & De Vries, 2016; Lemke et al., 2011; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Verhoef et al., 2009). Additionally, Homburg et al. (2017) state that the experience journey is continuously judged against the responses of co-occurring experiences in the customer's related environment.

Since the customer experience is always originated from an interaction, is unique in nature and has multiple dimensions, De Keyser et al. (2015, p.14) defines the concept as being "(…) comprised of the cognitive, emotional, physical, sensorial, and social elements that mark the customer's direct or indirect interaction with a (set of) market actor(s)". Furthermore, the authors add to this definition that these experiences are inherently personal, dependent on the context in which they are lived, involve multiple interrelated market actors that influence it and that the event-specific experiences help shape an overall dynamic customer experience.

In order to overcome the conceptualization gaps, one of the most accepted definitions is that "(…) customer experience is a multidimensional construct focusing on a customer's cognitive, emotional, behavioral, sensorial, and social responses to a firm's offerings during the customer's entire purchase journey." (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016, p.71) which brings together the multidimensionality of the concept, the variety of offerings that a company can have, the interaction which is essential for the experience to take place and the holistic nature of it.

Recently, Godovykh and Tasci (2020, p.5) analyzed the existent literature on the concept and, based on previous conceptualizations, defined experience as the "(…) totality of cognitive, affective, sensory, and conative responses, on a spectrum of negative to positive, evoked by all stimuli encountered in pre, during, and post phases of consumption affected by situational and brand-related factors filtered through personal differences of consumers, eventually resulting in differential outcomes related to consumers and brands.". This is a very complete definition of the concept as it includes the experience's dimensions, the positive or negative responses that result from it, its phases, the determinants and the outcomes.

Due to the diversity of definitions of customer experience, there is no consensus regarding what the concept entails. In order to unify the customer experience theory, a recent study by Becker and Jaakkola (2020, p.637) suggests that the construct refers to "(…) non-deliberate, spontaneous responses and reactions to particular stimuli.". Along with this definition, the authors propose premises to delineate the concept which are: the concept includes the spontaneous responses to stimuli that are related to the offering across the customer journey; the responses range in intensity; the stimuli can be within or outside of the control of the company; the stimuli influence the experience in a dynamic manner; the customer experience is subjective and context-specific; and that although firms cannot create the experience, they can manage the stimuli that affect these experiences.

2.2 Customer Experience in Tourism

As tourism is an industry that focuses on providing experiences (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009; Cetin & Dincer, 2014; Gretzel et al., 2006; Hwang & Seo, 2016; Sternberg, 1997), the study of the customer experience is extremely relevant in order to offer the best experience possible and differentiate from competition (Gilmore & Pine, 2002; Rojas et al., 2020).

For that reason, the experiences in tourism have been studied since the 1960s starting with Clawson's (1963) study of the outdoor recreation experience in which the author defends that these experiences include an anticipation or planning phase, a travel to and back from the recreation site phases and a recollection phase. Shortly after, in 1971, Boorstin characterizes the tourist experience as a staged event characterized by "pseudo-events", therefore reflecting on its authenticity. Contrary to this view, MacCannell (1973, 1999) claims that, even though these are staged experiences, tourists are driven by the desire for authentic experiences as opposed to superficial ones as Boorstin affirms. Also in the 1970s, Cohen (1979, p.181) adds that "(…) tourism is essentially a temporary reversal of everyday activities – it is a no-work, no-care, no-thrift situation; (…)". In his work, a phenomenological perspective of the tourist experience was adopted in which he claims that the experience represents a "quest for the centre" and that the typology of tourist experiences ranges from a pursuit of pleasure to a quest for authenticity.

Having these studies as pioneers, many researchers have studied and attempted to conceptualize the phenomenon of the tourist experience. According to Uriely (2005), until then, the major developments in the conceptualization of the tourist experience were the distinctiveness of these from the daily ones, the emerging of typologies which emphasize the diverse nature of the experiences, the subjectivity of their interpretation and the change in the literature related to this concept from contradictory points of view to relative and complementary ones.

Bearing in mind the different approaches taken in the conceptualization of the experiences in tourism, Tung and Ritchie (2011, p. 1369) define the notion as "[a]n individual's subjective evaluation and undergoing (i.e., affective, cognitive, and behavioural) of events related to his/her tourist activities which begins before (i.e., planning and preparation), during (i.e., at the destination), and after the trip (i.e., recollection).".

Through this definition, the authors were able to put together some characteristics of tourism that are also important to mention. In tourism, the experiences are highly subjective as people have different experiences and interpret them in a personal way, which makes tourists a diverse group of consumers that have distinct needs and whose behavior is difficult to predict (Jevtić et al., 2020; Ooi, 2005; Otto & Ritchie, 1996; Rojas et al., 2020; Tung & Ritchie, 2011; Walls et al. 2011a). These experiences are also characterized by their holistic nature since they include not only the experience that represents the main motivation of the tourist but also the supporting experiences which allow the main experience to happen such as hotels, restaurants and transportation (Quan & Wang, 2004). Therefore, these experiences comprise multiple stages such as the pre-experience or planning phase, the actual undertaking of the trip and the post-experience or recollection phase (Clawson, 1963; Gopalan & Narayan, 2010; Gretzel et al., 2006; Hwang & Seo, 2016; Larsen, 2007; Tung & Ritchie, 2011).

In addition to this, the experience in tourism is defined as a multidimensional construct (Walls et al., 2011a). Since this is a complex concept to study, several dimensions have been proposed in the literature such as cognitive, emotional or affective, behavioral, hedonics, safety, comfort, involvement, recognition, among others (Cutler & Carmichael, 2010; Oh et al., 2007; Rageh et al., 2013; Rather, 2020; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Sangpikul, 2018; Tung & Ritchie, 2011; Walls et al., 2011a).

In 2010, Cutler and Carmichael (p.8) put forward a model which demonstrated "(…) the multi-phased, multi-influential and multi-outcome nature of the tourist experience.", which includes the phases of the experience such as the anticipation, travel to site, on-site, return and recollection, the influences on the tourist experience which are outside of the individual as it is the case of the physical aspects, social aspects and products and services, the elements within the individual as it is the case of knowledge, memory, perception, emotion and self-identity that translate into motivations and expectations, and the outcomes of the tourist experience which are the tourist's satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Walls et al. (2011a) also proposed a framework for the composition of the consumer experience in the hospitality and tourism industry in which the core experience consists of two axis, the ordinary and extraordinary, which refers to the intensity of the experience, and the cognitive and emotive, which relates to the consumer behavior, and is impacted by factors such as the perceived

8

physical experience elements, perceived human interaction elements, individual characteristics and situational factors.

Taking these characteristics into account, in contrast to the consumer experience in other goods and services, the experience in tourism is very complex and difficult to predict. Moreover, since tourism is characterized by the heterogeneity of its services and products, the inseparability of production and consumption, the perishability and the intangibility of its services, it adds to the difficulty in creating and predicting the customers' experiences (Cetin & Dincer, 2014; Gunn, 1988; Kim & So, 2022; Zeithaml, 1981). However, tourism companies should continue to improve and adapt these experiences in order to serve the different types of tourists and their needs and, as a result, offer quality experiences (Ooi, 2005; Rojas et al., 2020) to achieve customer satisfaction and future behavior (Kim and Brown, 2012; Kim, 2014).

2.3. Customer Experience in Hospitality

As accommodation is an important component of the overall tourism experience, it is important to analyze the experiences in the hospitality industry specifically (Cetin & Dincer, 2014; Torres et al., 2014). Nevertheless, the literature on the subject is limited (Kandampully et al., 2018).

Adding to the previously mentioned characteristics of the experiences in tourism businesses, hospitality companies gather tangible aspects as for example beds, rooms, food and beverage, and intangible factors as it is the case of the quality of the service and the atmosphere (Pizam, 2010). However, due to the commoditization of products and services in this area, what distinguishes a company from its competition in hospitality is the quality of the experience offered as it drives customer satisfaction and behavioral outcomes, such as willingness to pay higher prices (Cetin & Dincer, 2014; Gilmore & Pine, 2002; Pizam, 2010; Walls et al., 2011a, 2011b). Therefore, creating high quality, memorable experiences is essential for the competitiveness of these establishments (Pizam, 2010; Yuan & Wu, 2008).

Cetin and Dincer (2014, p. 183) define the guest experiences in hospitality as "(…) memorable events and impressions that engage customers in an emotional and personal way during their hotel stay, which influence future purchase decision (loyalty) and sharing with others (word-of-mouth). Hence, guest experiences are multidimensional outcomes that occur in response to some interaction with servicescape and/or service providers.".

According to Reuland et al. (1985), hospitality is an experience which is formed by the combination of the material product, the behavior and attitude of the employees, and the environment. Similarly, Cetin and Dincer (2014, p. 183) affirm that "[a]s services are intangible, inseparable, and heterogeneous, physical environment and social interactions in hospitality are more

important than products.". Thus, the customer experience in hospitality implies the interaction between the physical and human interaction dimensions in order to deliver quality experiences and positively impact the consumer behavior (Cetin & Dincer, 2014; Walls et al., 2011b).

In the context of a luxury hotel, Walls et al. (2011b) states that the physical environment dimensions have an impact on the guests' five senses and identifies four physical dimensions that have an impact on the luxury hotel experience, which are the ambience, the multisensory dimensions, space and functions, and signs, symbols and artifacts. Regarding the social interactions, in the hospitality industry these can occur with employees and with other guests. Employees are the responsible for providing the service in hospitality companies, which makes them essential in the creation and delivery of superior experiences. For that reason, encouraging favorable interactions between the staff and guests is a priority in this highly interactive industry (Kandampully et al., 2018; Nixon & Rieple, 2010; Walls et al., 2011b). The customer experience in hospitality is also impacted by other guests who are sharing the experience (Nicholls, 2011). By sharing a collective experience with other guests, the personal experiences are also affected, therefore making these interactions a key aspect in the customer experience in hospitality (Kandampully et al., 2018).

The findings of the study performed by Cetin and Dincer (2014) confirmed that the combination of these two dimensions of the customer experience in hospitality is related to customer loyalty and recommendation. However, the interpretation of these dimensions is unique to each guest, which makes it dependable on the customers' personal characteristics and trip-related factors (Cetin & Dincer, 2014; Haywood, 1983; Nasution & Mavondo, 2008; Pizam & Ellis, 1999; Rojas et al., 2020; Walls et al., 2011b). Since the customer experiences in hospitality are highly subjective, they evoke different emotional responses which have an impact on the guests' future behaviors, such as purchase intention and recommendation (Barsky & Nash, 2002; Titz, 2008; Torres & Kline, 2013). Consequently, it is important for the companies in this area to study and manage these personal characteristics and emotions to understand and improve the guests' experiences in hospitality (Barsky & Nash, 2002; Miao et al., 2014; Titz, 2008; Torres & Kline, 2013).

In a similar way to tourism in general, the experiences in hospitality are characterized by their holistic nature. In Knutson and Beck's work (2004), a model of the experience in hospitality is proposed with three stages: the pre-experience, the actual experience and the post-experience. Additionally, the authors put emphasis on a secondary aspect of the experience model called the feedback loop, which assumes that the satisfaction felt on the post-experience has an impact on the expectations perceived on the pre-experience stage. Their study highlights the need for a holistic approach to the study of the customer experience in hospitality as it encompasses several important stages that affect the overall evaluation and the customers' behavioral responses.

To conclude, in the highly competitive hospitality industry, companies have been affected by the commoditization of their businesses since their physical and operational aspects have become increasingly similar. Since these features are no longer enough to distinguish businesses and satisfy customers, companies achieve a competitive advantage through their quality customer experiences (Cetin & Dincer, 2014; Gilmore & Pine, 2002; Kandampully et al., 2018; Torres et al., 2014; Walls et al., 2011a, 2011b).

Taking the previously mentioned definition of guest experiences in hospitality into account (Cetin & Dincer, 2014, p. 183) and according to what has been discussed, in order to deliver quality experiences to their customers, hospitality companies have to take into consideration a holistic view of the customer experience and invest on their physical environment and social interactions while bearing in mind trip-related factors and guests' personal characteristics and emotions which affect the customers' interpretation of each experience and future behavior.

2.4 Customer Journey

As it was mentioned previously, in order to stand out in todays' marketplace, companies need to deliver a competitive customer experience. Nowadays, customers have contact with companies through multiple interactions and channels resulting in complex customer experiences. Therefore, it is necessary to manage these experiences throughout all the interactions between customers and firms, which constitute the customer journey (Dhebar, 2013; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Norton & Pine, 2013; Rojas et al., 2021; Rudkowski et al., 2020; Stickdorn & Schneider, 2010; Zomerdijk & Voss, 2010).

According to Norton and Pine (2013, p.12), the customer journey is defined as "(…) the sequence of events – whether designed or not – that customers go through to learn about, purchase and interact with company offerings – including commodities, goods, services or experiences.". This process extends over a period of time and encompasses numerous touchpoints between the customer and the organization, which are seen from the customer's perspective in terms of expectations, responses, motivations and barriers (Halvorsrud et al., 2016; Patrício et al., 2011; Stickdorn & Schneider, 2010; Varnali, 2019; Voss & Zomerdijk, 2007).

The touchpoints that characterize the customer journey are defined as "(…) the individual interactions people have with brands before, during and after purchase." (Opresnik, 2021, p.468) and they "(…) occur whenever a customer "touches" an organization, across multiple channels and at various points in time." (Zomerdijk & Voss, 2010, p.74). These channels convey the touchpoints across the customer journey and can be digital, human-served or a combination of both (Halvorsrud et al., 2016). Since some touchpoints refer to the moments of truth between companies and their customers, a holistic approach to their management is fundamental to understand the

interdependencies between them, which form the customer's journey and affect the overall experience (Dhebar, 2013; Stein & Ramaseshan, 2016).

The customer journey refers to a dynamic process that involves a prepurchase, purchase and postpurchase phase (Grewal & Roggeveen, 2020; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Shaw & Williams, 2009; Voss & Zomerdijk, 2007). The prepurchase phase includes the exchanges before the transaction as well as the search for information, the purchase phase refers to the interactions during the transaction and the postpurchase phase includes the interactions after the purchase, the evaluation of the service and satisfaction (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Shaw & Williams, 2009). The customer journey process is also cyclical, which means that its end leads to the beginning of another customer journey (Voss & Zomerdijk, 2007).

According to Lemon and Verhoef (2016), each one of these stages can include different types of touchpoints and their importance varies depending on the stage of the customer journey. The authors identified four categories of touchpoints: the brand-owned touchpoints, which are under the firm's control; the partner-owned touchpoints, that refer to interactions managed by the company and its partners; the customer-owned touchpoints, that represent actions only controlled by the customer; and the social/external touch points, which can influence the customer's journey as it is the case of other customers, acquaintances and the environment.

In Stein and Ramaseshan's work (2016), the authors state that touchpoints combine a variety of elements: the atmospheric elements, that represent the physical characteristics present in the interaction; the technological, which refer to exchanges with technology that can be retailer facilitated or unaffiliated; the communicative elements, that involve the communication between the firm and the customer; the process that the customer has to go through to achieve a specific outcome; the interactions between the employee and the customer; the interactions between customers; and the direct and indirect interactions that customers have with the company's offers.

Since customer experiences are very personal and subjective, customers go through different journeys when interacting with the same company. As a result, there can be different responses to each stage and touchpoint of the journey such as cognitive responses, as wondering how they evaluate that stage, behavioral, as for example doing more research, and emotional, which refer to the customer's emotions (Grewal & Roggeveen, 2020).

Bearing this in mind, Towers and Towers (2021, Discussion section, para.1) define the customer journey as "(…) the customer engagement with all touch points (brand owned, partner owned/managed and outside the control of brand owner or partner) used throughout the decision-making process stages (pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase).".

In spite of being a dynamic and personal process, research has tended to focus on a static view of the customer journey and from the perspective of the company instead of the consumer (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2015). Organizations should take into consideration the customer's point of view when it comes to the identification and assessment of the interactions that form the customer journey. By doing so, companies are able to pinpoint pain moments and highlights which can be used to understand the variety of journeys and improve the customer experience (Halvorsrud et al., 2016; Kranzbühler et al., 2017; Stein & Ramaseshan, 2016; Towers & Towers, 2021).

2.5 Customer Journey Mapping

As it was discussed in the former section, in order to offer quality customer experiences, businesses need to understand the interactions between the company and its customers, which form the customer journey, from the customers' perspective (Ludwiczak, 2021; Opresnik, 2021).

For this reason, according to Kalbach (2020), creating models is essential for companies since, by illustrating the customer experience, they facilitate its understanding, evaluation and improvement. One example of these models is the customer journey map which is defined as "(…) a form of ethnographic observation that consists of tracking a person in a real context within a timeframe to understand his/her behaviors and experiences." (Cateriano-Arévalo et al., 2021). This tool provides a visualization of the whole customer journey by identifying chronologically the steps, stages and touchpoints that the consumer goes through when engaging with a company, as well as the emotional responses to these interactions (Bridge, 2012; Crosier & Handford, 2012; Halvorsrud et al., 2016; Marquez et al., 2015; Opresnik, 2021; Richardson, 2010; Stickdorn & Schneider, 2010).

The sequence of interactions that customers experience in their journeys with a specific company are organized horizontally in the customer journey map and usually divided in three stages: pre-service, service and post-service (Ludwiczak, 2021; Marquez et al., 2015; Rosenbaum et al., 2017). The first stage is described as the period of time before the actual experience, when the customer becomes aware of the company's offer, the service stage refers to the actual experience and decision point and the last stage reflects the customer's evaluation, satisfaction and loyalty (Kalbach, 2020; Nenonen et al, 2008; Richardson, 2010).

After defining each touchpoint and stage, the company needs to identify what is happening in each one of these interactions. Therefore, on the vertical axis of the map, there are usually aspects that are chosen for their convenience to the company to be studied, such as the customer's actions, goals, emotions, pain points, moments of truth, satisfaction, questions, among others (Kalbach, 2020; Richardson, 2010; Rosenbaum et al., 2017). The emotions of customers have particular importance

in this method as they allow companies to identify the areas of the customer journey that need to be improved (Crosier & Handford, 2012).

In order to collect these insights from customers, firms should resort to qualitative research methods such as interviews and observations so as to be able to collect detailed information about the customers' journeys (Richardson, 2010; Stickdorn & Schneider, 2010).

However, the customer journey is not a linear process and differs depending on, for example, the customer's characteristics, the company's offerings or even the market. Consequently, different companies and customers will have different customer journey maps that vary in terms of the number and importance of the stages and touchpoints as well as their interpretation and responses (Canfield & Basso, 2017; Dhebar, 2013; Opresnik, 2021; Richardson, 2010).

For this reason, personas are often used when elaborating customer journey maps as they can condense the information regarding a company's customers by representing different target groups that have common behaviors, motivations and points of view regarding the service (Bradley et al., 2021; Kalbach, 2020; Opresnik, 2021; Stickdorn & Schneider, 2010).

By employing tools such as the customer journey map, companies are able to have a holistic view of the actual journey that customers undertake, in which they can identify positive and negative aspects of the service as well as the factors that influence the customers' experiences (Bosio et al., 2017; Crosier & Handford, 2012). This information allows companies to focus on opportunities for innovation, detect weaknesses in the service that need to be improved, ensure efficiency in their processes and compare their service with their competition in order to meet customers' expectations and offer quality experiences (Akdag & Ergen, 2021; Crosier & Handford, 2012; Haugstveit et al., 2016; Nenonen et al., 2008; Opresnik, 2021; Stickdorn & Schneider, 2010).

Since tourism is an experience-centric industry characterized by its complexity, subjectivity and holistic nature, it is essential for companies to gain customer insights regarding their expectations, needs and perceptions in order to improve the experiences offered (Dey, 2019; Stickdorn & Zehrer, 2009). For that reason, tourism companies should identify and study the multiple touchpoints that constitute the interactions between them and their customers throughout the whole customer journey from the tourist's perspective (Dey, 2019). For this purpose, the customer journey map represents a useful tool, as it illustrates the customer journey and its touchpoints from the customer's point of view so that companies can use it to design and implement quality experiences focused on their customers (Dey, 2019; Veréb & Azevedo, 2019).

However, as it can be verified in the review of the existing literature referring to the use of the customer journey mapping tool in tourism (Appendix A), the application of this method and the study of the customer journey in this context are still very limited (Dey, 2019; Taheri et al., 2021). Specifically

in hospitality, there are two studies that use this tool to map the interactions between hotels and their customers throughout the customer journey. Rojas et al. (2021) identified the multiple touchpoints, channels and emotions that take place in the stages of the experience in hotels and Wang & Wu (2020) studied the experiences of individual female travelers in hotels to address matters of security. The lack of studies and the fact that only recently this method has been implemented in the hospitality context brings to attention the need to further employ this tool in this area in order to better understand the customers' journeys and experiences in the hotel setting (Rojas et al., 2021, Taheri et al., 2021).

2.6 Theory of Generations and the Millennials

The term generation was first defined in Mannheim's theory of generations (1952, p.292) as "(…) a particular kind of identity of location, embracing related 'age groups' embedded in a historical-social process." in which the people in each location share the same year of birth within a time interval and have similar experiences in the social and historical contexts, which reflects on its members character, ideas and values (Mannheim, 1952; Ryder, 1965).

Another important contribution to the generation research is the Strauss-Howe generational theory in which the concept is described as a "(…) cohort-group whose length approximates the span of a phase of life and whose boundaries are fixed by peer personality." (Strauss & Howe, 1991, p. 60). The authors characterize these cohort-groups as having an involuntary, permanent membership and a finite number of members. These individuals are inserted in an age location and each of these groups is affected differently by historical and social shifts and events which shape their identity. When these decisive events happen, the differences between groups are reinforced and a new and distinct group is created with children born since that last event (Strauss & Howe, 1991).

In the present study a generational analysis approach was adopted since it is often used to understand the different motivations, attitudes and behaviors of tourists from different generations (Li et al., 2013) as tourism is an industry with multigenerational visitors (Benckendorff et al., 2010).

Specifically, the generation under study is the millennials, also known as generation Y (Kotler & Keller, 2012). There is no consensus regarding the age interval of this generation (Benckendorff et al., 2010) since researchers mention distinct intervals in their studies such as 1979-1994 (Kotler & Keller, 2012), 1979-2000 (Garikapati et al., 2016), 1982-2002 (Benckendorff et al., 2010; Howe & Strauss, 2000), among others. Since in Strauss and Howe's work (1991) the authors refer that the millennial generation begins in 1982 and ending "(…) probably just beyond the year 2000, the end of the second millennium.", for the purpose of this study the interval of age 1982-2002 will be considered.

This generation has received considerable attention from research regarding their priorities, preferences, activities, values, among other factors, as they have an important presence in the marketplace, not only because of the cohort-group's size but also because of the buying power of its members (Mandagi & Aseng, 2021; Garikapati et al., 2016).

Millennials are described as being very different from the previous generations. They are characterized as being more numerous and affluent, ethnically diverse, team-oriented and the most educated generation (Benckendorff et al., 2010; Howe & Strauss, 2000, 2007). According to Benckendorff et al. (2010), important events that happened at the young age of these individuals such as terrorism, the financial crisis and the digital revolution, impacted the identity of millennials in terms of risk propensity, feeling of security and communication. Therefore, millennials are worried about safety and security, uncertain spenders who are often financially dependent on their parents and the first generation of digital natives. According to McMahon and Pospisil (2005), this digital lifestyle is characterized by the need the need to be connected, multitasking and for immediacy, which makes them intolerant to delays. They are also described as socially and environmentally conscious, focused on brands and friends with which they are constantly connected to and whose opinions they give a lot of importance (Benckendorff et al., 2010; Kotler and Keller, 2012).

In relation to tourism, Millennials are often time rich, which allows them to travel for longer periods of time and to spend more at the destinations than the older generations (World Tourism Organization, 2016). The travelers from this cohort are interested in unique and immersive experiences that can connect them to the local culture, which is often seen by their choice of destination and accommodation (World Tourism Organization, 2016). Accordingly, the findings of the study by Rita et al. (2019) revealed that the Millennials' main motivations for considering a vacation were "(…) the need 'to relax', the desire 'to escape from the ordinary' and the hunger 'to experience different lifestyle'".

Since they are concerned with social and environmental issues, studies show a shift from leisure travel towards purposeful travel in the form of volunteer tourism and studying abroad (Benckendorff et al., 2010; World Tourism Organization, 2016). This generation also highlights the importance of social interaction and, as they are digital natives, they value technology and the permanent connectivity in their travels (Benckendorff et al., 2010; Veiga et al., 2017).

Bearing this in mind and taking into account that this group of individuals has the potential to attract other visitors and increase the attractiveness of the destination (World Tourism Organization, 2016), this is an important segment for the tourism industry which should be understood in order to improve their experiences and meet their specific expectations (Veiga et al., 2017).

Regarding the study of Millennials through the customer journey map method, the research on this generation's customer journey is very limited (Mele et al., 2021), therefore, the present work intends to fill this gap by broadening the knowledge concerning this generation in the hospitality industry through the customer journey map method.

3. Conceptual Model

A review of the literature on customer journey mapping showed that there is a lack of frameworks or models regarding the use of the method in general and in tourism and hospitality specifically (Dey, 2019; Heuchert, 2019).

However, there have been attempts to develop models and frameworks for this method. In 2016, Moon et al. presented a customer-driven design process based on ethnographic research, without the participation of the customer in the design process. In their study, a user diary method was employed to collect user activities and difficulties, a survey was used to collect verbs related to the users' actions and a design workshop was conducted, in which a 10-step process for the design of the customer journey map was established. Since the former design process was data-driven, Heuchert (2019) developed a new framework for participatory CJ Mapping, through several iterative workshops, which was then applied in a pilot study.

In the context of tourism, Dey (2019) presented a framework for customer journey maps, in which it is stated that, based on the customers' insights, personas that include common characteristics, preferences and motivations, are created. These insights are also useful to shed light on the journey touchpoints and the tourists' expectations and perceptions. The combination of these elements would help creating well-designed customer journey maps in order to offer better experiences and increase the tourists' satisfaction.

Regarding the customer journey map itself, the sequence of stages that characterize the interaction between companies and their customers is represented on the horizontal axis, in a timeline manner, and normally refer to the periods before, during and after the service (Ludwiczak, 2021; Rosenbaum et al., 2017).

In 2021, Rojas et al. developed a customer journey map with the aim of representing the customer experience in the hotel industry. Based on a survey, the authors were able to identify eight touchpoints that characterize these interactions: the search for information, which involves the research, findings and comparison of hotels; book a room, which refers to choosing and booking the hotel; check-in, which encompasses the guests' arrival and interaction with the front desk; room stay, which relates to the interaction between the customers and the room during their stay; visit common areas, which represents the guests' interactions with the common areas of the hotel; order and

receive food, that describes the interactions with the restaurant and room service; check-out, which involves the interaction with the front desk to end the stay at the hotel; and report experience, which represents the customer's evaluation of the experience. However, the authors concluded that order and receive food and visit common areas were not successful touchpoints since the former does not occur in any type of hotel and the latter is very general.

After identifying the touchpoints to be included in the horizontal axis, businesses should decide the points to be incorporated in the vertical axis of the map according to their strategies, as this part determines the effectiveness of the method (Rosenbaum et al., 2017). According to Kalbach (2020) the elements that are typically included in customer journey maps are actions, goals, emotions, pain points, moments of truth, touchpoints, brand perception, satisfaction and opportunities. Similarly, Rojas et al. (2021) refer that customer journey maps are composed of personas, touchpoints, channels and emotions and other elements such as expectations, pain points and recommendations can also be added.

Bearing this in mind, the present study will include the three stages referring to the periods before, during and after the service in the horizontal axis. In regard to the vertical axis, the map (Appendix B) will incorporate actions to know what the customers actually do in each touchpoint, emotions since they are essential to understand how the customer feels about each stage of the process, channels to identify how the touchpoints are conveyed to the customers, expectations to know what the client would like to happen at each stage of process, pain points as they allow companies to see what needs to be improved, points of delight to understand what was highlighted in the experience and recommendations in order to know the customers' suggestions for the service's improvement (Kalbach, 2020; Rojas et al., 2021). This way, the essential aspects enumerated by Rojas et al. (2021) are included as well as some additional ones stated by Kalbach (2020), so as to better understand the experiences that customers have in a hotel.

Additionally, personas will be developed in this research as they are an essential element of customer journey maps (Dey, 2019; Rojas et al., 2021) and allow the sample to be reduced and condensed in target groups with similar needs, behaviors and feelings (Bradley et al., 2021; Dey, 2019; Kalbach, 2020). In order to build the personas, the participants of the study will be segmented according to the traveler type (alone leisure, friends leisure, couple leisure, family leisure, and business travelers) as it was already tested in previous studies and identified as a relevant market segmentation variable (Brochado & Brochado, 2019; Brochado et al., 2022).

Taking everything into account, the development of the Customer Journey Maps of the millennials' experiences in hotels according to this segmentation is expected to test the following propositions:

P1. The customer journey map varies according to the travel purpose (leisure or business);

P2. The customer journey map varies according to the traveler type (alone leisure, friends leisure, couple leisure, family leisure, and business travelers);

P3. The actions, channels, emotions, expectations, pain points, points of delight and recommendations vary according to the different stages of the experience in hotels.

4. Research context

The present research aims at studying the Portuguese millennials' customer experience in hotels through the mapping of their customer journey before, during and after the service. Therefore, a generational analysis approach was adopted in this study by focusing on the millennials, also known as generation Y, which refer to individuals born between 1982 and 2002 (Benckendorff et al., 2010; Howe & Strauss, 2000).

This generation was chosen as the object of the present study due to its importance for the global travel industry. The 2021 Travel Trends Report by the Expedia Group (2021) about the American travel industry predicted that the millennials would be the ones to spend the most in their travels. The significance of this age group can also be verified in a survey conducted by the same company (Expedia Group, 2020) of 11000 individuals across 11 countries, in which it was stated that, in 2020, the Millennials had taken more leisure trips than any other generation and were expected to be the ones to travel the most in leisure and business in the future.

According to Pordata (2021), in Portugal, the age group that traveled the most out of the total of resident population, who traveled for tourism in 2019, was the one between 25-44 years old (which does not match precisely with the ages under study). In 2020, this age group came in second place following the 45-64 age interval. These statistics reflect the need for this generation to be further studied in the tourism industry, not only internationally but also at a national scale, in order to understand its demands and, therefore, appeal to them by adapting and improving the tourism services accordingly.

5. Methodology

5.1 Research design

In order to study the millennials' customer experience in hotels through the mapping of their customer journey, primary data was collected with the aim of building the customer journey maps. This type of data is originated by the researcher to address the topic under study (Malhotra et al., 2017).

Since the aim of this research is to study the customer experience, a qualitative research design was adopted due to its exploratory nature. The exploratory research is used when the topic under

study cannot be measured or quantified (Malhotra et al., 2017) as it is the case of experiences. Qualitative research is often used in exploratory studies (Garcia et al., 2015; Malhotra et al., 2017) as it seeks to understand how and why the phenomenon under study happens, by including the participants' perspective in the research, which is why it is useful to study experiences, feelings and behaviors from the customers' point of view (Garcia et al., 2015; Malhotra et al., 2017; Palmer, 2010; Rahman, 2017; Tetnowski & Damico, 2001; Trischler & Zehrer, 2012).

The qualitative method employed in the present study was semi-structured interviews as they provide deep and detailed insights regarding someone's perceptions, behaviors, motivations, feelings and experiences (Garcia et al., 2015; Gill et al., 2008; Johnstone, 2017; Suzianti et al., 2020). This method involves interviews based on a guide, which is followed with flexibility to allow for more detailed and elaborate descriptions (Brinkmann, 2014; Johnstone, 2017; Qu & Dumay, 2011).

Before proceeding with the interviews, an interview guide was developed based on the information that was needed to build the customer journey maps (Appendix C). It was divided into five sets of questions: the first one corresponded to demographic questions such as age, gender, civil status, educational level, and occupation, the second referred to questions related to the specific trip that the respondent was going to describe and the last three sets were equivalent to the three phases of the experience (pre, during and post-experience). For the purpose of building the customer journey map, in each of the phases, it was sought to know which interactions took place in the experience and, within each interaction, which actions were performed, with which channels the guests interacted, what were their expectations, if any aspect stood out for the positive or the negative, if they had recommendations to improve the service and how they felt about each interaction.

Before the start of each interview, the respondents were informed about the aim of the research and were asked for consent to be able to audio-record the interviews, bearing in mind that their identities would remain anonymous. As the interviewees were all Portuguese, for a better understanding of the questions and to facilitate the development of the conversation, the interview guide was written in Portuguese and the interviews were conducted in the same language.

After conducting the semi-structured interviews, personas were created based on the traveler type, which can be traveling alone for leisure, with friends for leisure, as a couple for leisure, with family for leisure, and business travelers, as they are often used in combination with customer journey maps to represent different types of consumers (Kalbach, 2020).

Based on the results of these methods, customer journey maps were built in English for each persona in the software Smaply, in order to have a more visual representation of the millennials' customer journeys in hotels and to allow their analysis and interpretation.

5.2 Sample Design

The target population of the present study is Portuguese millennials that have stayed at a hotel in the last 12 months, which refers to individuals born between 1982 and 2002, as mentioned in the literature review.

Therefore, the participants were selected through a non-probabilistic, judgemental sampling method, as the members of the sample are chosen based on the judgement of the researcher regarding the representativity of the population under study (Malhotra et al., 2017). This sample was collected in a cross-sectional approach, since the collection of data took place at a single point in time (Levin, 2006).

In qualitative research, the sample size is usually much smaller than in quantitative studies (Mason, 2010; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). According to the extant literature, it is recommended that qualitative samples should have between 20 and 30 individuals (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2013; Marshall et al., 2013). In accordance with this, the most common sample sizes found in Mason's study (2010) about the sample size and saturation in PhD studies using qualitative interviews were 20 and 30.

Bearing this in mind, in the present study, 30 Portuguese individuals between 20 and 40 years old, which corresponds to people born between the years 2002 and 1982 respectively, who had stayed in a hotel at least once in the last 12 months, were interviewed over the period of two months.

The interviews were conducted mostly by Zoom call but some of them were carried out in person. After the first couple of interviews, the interview guide was adapted to improve clarity and so that the interviews could run more smoothly. As these were semi-structured interviews, prompts were used whenever necessary to obtain deeper insights about the participants' experiences. On average, the interviews lasted 33 minutes.

The sample included 53% males and 47% females (16 males and 14 females), and the average age of the respondents was 29 (15 respondents under 30 years old and 15 respondents over or 30 years old at the time of the interviews). Most of the participants were single (83%), had a bachelor's degree (40%) and are currently working (77%), with only a few of them studying (13%), and working and studying at the same time (10%). The demographic information and details of the specific hotel experience described by each participant can be found in the Appendix D.

5.3 Data Treatment

The aim of the present study is to understand the Portuguese millennials' experiences in hotels throughout their customer journey. For this purpose, it is important to collect longitudinal data about

the customers' experiences to have a holistic understanding of their journeys (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2015), which can be done through customer journey maps (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2010).

In order to use this tool, a content analysis method is required as it allows the analysis of narratives by reducing, summarizing and structuring the data according to theoretical rules, which facilitates its interpretation (Malhotra et al., 2017).

After conducting the interviews to gather data about each phase of the customers' experiences, customer journey maps were elaborated for each of the interviewees, in order to reconstruct each customer journey and have a clearer view of the information to be included in each element of the vertical axis of the maps.

Subsequently, the individuals were grouped in personas according to the traveler type (alone leisure, friends leisure, couple leisure, family leisure, and business travelers). Then, maps were built for each persona in the software Smaply (from Appendix E to Appendix J), according to the two axis presented in the conceptual model of the present research: the horizontal axis comprises the three stages of the customer journey, which are before the service, during the service, and after the service; and the vertical axis includes seven elements, which are actions, channels, emotions, expectations, pain points, points of delight and recommendations.

The emotional state of each persona is represented in the maps by a smiley face which is labelled by a 5-point Likert scale from -2 till 2 as defined by the software Smaply, in which -2 represents a terrible experience, -1 a not so good one, 0 a neither good or bad (indifferent), 1 a good one and 2 a very good experience. The box referring to the pain points was colored in red, the one concerning the points of delight in green and the one related to the recommendations in blue so as to highlight these aspects in the map.

By mapping the customer journey of each persona, it is possible to synthetize the information about their experiences in a more visual way, to allow its analysis and the identification of not only the similarities and differences between them but also the issues and opportunities that can be used to improve the service.

5.3 Data analysis

After conducting the interviews to 30 Portuguese millennials, personas were elaborated based on the traveler type, which can be traveling alone, with friends, as a couple and with family for leisure purposes, and business travelers. However, considering the resulting journeys of the participants of the present study, a further distinction was made between traveling with family with and without small children, as the journeys of these two types of respondents differ.

Based on the data collected from the semi-structured interviews, six personas were created:

- The first persona was called José "the worker" (Appendix E) as he represents the participants that travelled in business, which corresponded to 13% of the sample. This persona is 34 years old, male, single, has a bachelor's degree and is currently an Account Manager. He has visited nine hotels in the last 12 months and the average duration of these stays in a hotel is two nights.

- The second persona created was named Joana "the friend" (Appendix F) as she characterizes the Millennials of the sample that travelled for leisure with their friends, which also refers to 13% of the sample. She is 22 years old, female, single and is currently a student in university with only a high school degree. Over the past 12 months, she has visited three hotels and her stays in hotels last three nights.

- The third persona corresponds to 10% of the sample and represents the respondents that traveled alone for leisure purposes, which is why it was called Afonso "the individual traveler" (Appendix G). He is 27 years old, male, single, has a master's degree and is an Engineer. He has visited three hotels in the last 12 months and usually only stays one night in the hotel experience described.

- The fourth persona refers to the individuals that traveled for leisure with their family with small children, which in the current sample was of five and six years old. This persona was called Sofia "the mother" (Appendix H) and represents 7% of the sample. She is 38 years old, female, married, has a bachelor's degree and works as a Public Relations Officer. She has traveled to five hotels in the last 12 months, and she usually stays six nights in these types of trips.

- The fifth persona was named Pedro "the son" (Appendix I) as he represents the millennials that traveled with their parents and siblings, which correspond to 10% of the sample. He is 25 years old, male, single, has a bachelor's degree and is currently a student-worker. He visited four hotels in the past year and the average duration of these stays is five nights.

- The last persona created was Cláudia "the girlfriend" (Appendix J) and she characterizes the participants that traveled for leisure as a couple, which constitutes 47% of the sample. She is 30 years old, female, single, has a master's degree and is a Dentist. Cláudia has been to five hotels in the last 12 months, and the average duration of the stay of this traveler type in hotels is four nights.

Once the personas were identified, a customer journey map was elaborated for each one of their journeys based on the data analysis of the hotel experiences of the participants. As mentioned previously, every map included the horizontal axis with the stages of the experience (before, during

and after the service) and the vertical axis with the elements that characterize each step of the experience (actions, channels, emotions, expectations, pain points, points of delight and recommendations). However, the map of each persona has specific touchpoints that characterize each one of the experience stages and specific considerations for each element of the vertical axis, which make it possible to analyze and compare the different journeys.

José "the worker"

José (Appendix E) travels in business with his coworkers, and the average length of this stays in a hotel is two nights. Due to the purpose of his trip, he does not choose the destination or the hotel where he is going to stay as this is decided by his company. Since he is traveling for work, the hotel serves as a place to stay in another destination where he can also spend some time working, which implies some requirements that will be discussed shortly in the analysis of the map. Nevertheless, José also makes use of the hotel facilities to relax and enjoy his stay after a busy day at work.

Bearing the context of this persona in mind, before the service at the hotel, the only phase identified was the booking as he was not in control of the search and selection of the accommodation. During the service, the touchpoints identified were the check-in, the room, the meals included in his stay, the services used in his spare time such as the bar, gym, and the pool, and lastly the check-out of the hotel. There were no touchpoints identified after the service at the hotel potentially owing to the fact that the hotel did not get in touch with the guest after his stay or due to the booking channels used through the company.

The booking phase is classified as a good experience in which this persona receives information about the trip through email or SMS, books it directly with the hotel through a phone call or has someone from the company taking care of the reservation followed by receiving the booking confirmation through email. This persona expects to try new hotels on his business trips and values the direct contact with the establishment which, when he knows the manager, expects to grant him some benefits such as free parking. The biggest frustrations on this stage are the lack of information about the stay when he is informed by his company and the waiting time to be able to book his stay through telephone. Therefore, as recommendations, this persona highlights the need to be provided with more detailed information about the stay, for the hotel to have someone always available for phone calls and suggests that the hotel should have a direct number that frequent customers can call to book their stay.

When the guest arrives at the hotel, the first interaction is the check-in with the staff of the front desk. He is asked to show his personal documents to confirm his identity, receives the room keys, makes necessary reservations such as the breakfast schedule and gym reservations, and is taken to his room. The expectations identified in this interaction were for the staff to show concern for the

guests' well-being, for them to be friendly, to be provided relevant information about the hotel, to have everything confirmed and was not expecting to have someone taking his bags to the room. In this phase, this persona values a simple and quick service carried out by a friendly staff who provides all the necessary information for his stay, a familiar ambiance and free parking in case he brings or rents a car. However, this is a less positive phase, with a classification of not being neither a good or bad experience. The pain points identified are the lack of concern for the guest's well-being and the queue which was aggravated by the lack of staff members at the front desk. In order to improve the service, it is recommended that the staff could ask how the trip was or offer at least a water bottle and for the hotel to have more people at the reception desk to reduce the waiting time and queuing.

As José is traveling for work, he uses his room not only to rest and shower but also to work. The channels identified in this touchpoint are the telephone to ask for information and a personalized welcome message on the TV screen. He expects and values a spacious room with good Wi-Fi, a place to work and good soundproofing. Moreover, he also highlights having a smart TV, a familiar ambiance and free items such as water bottles from the region, which show a special attention to the guest. This phase has a good classification, having only pointed out as pain points the twin bed instead of a singular one, the lack of variety of TV channels and the bad soundproofing, which can bother the guest while he is working or resting. The only recommendations identified are the increase in variety of tv channels and for the hotel to inform at the check-in time that the guest will have a shared door with another room and give him the option to change rooms.

Regarding the meals included in the stay, this persona can have only breakfast included or breakfast and one main meal. Normally they happen in a separate room, buffet style, the guest has to give the room number or company's name, and sometimes the hotel has shifts in which the guest has to choose a specific schedule to have his meal. This is overall a good experience for this persona and the only channel used is the hotel staff. This persona expects quality food and regional options and stands out from the experience the quality, the friendly staff, and the shifts, which avoid having many people in the room at the same time. The only two pain points identified in this touchpoint were the lack of food quality or variety. The recommendations to improve the service are to have an à la carte service so that the guest can stay in his place socializing with his colleagues, a bigger variety of table sizes so that they can be adapted to guests traveling alone and more variety of food options.

In his spare time, José uses the bar, the gym, and the pool of the hotel. The bar service can be paid separately at the moment of purchase or with room charge and the guest can order at the table or over the counter. This interaction with a member of the hotel's staff is classified as a good experience, having only two aspects that can represent pain points such as the lack of ambiance and the waiting time. To improve this, it is recommended that the bar should have background music and

a quicker and more automatized service to reduce the waiting time at least when the guest wants to order. In this service, this persona values the friendliness of the staff, their ability to make recommendations about the food and drinks and portion sizes, the free appetizers that come with the drinks and the quick service. In the gym service, the guest books the schedule in advance and interacts with a member of the staff that controls the entrances and gives gym towels. Similar to the check-in, the gym is a less positive phase for the guest as he expects modern machines. The lack of them and their maintenance can represent pain points that impact the experience, hence the hotel should invest in this service by changing and maintaining the equipment. In this touchpoint, it is only highlighted the view from the gym. The pool is regarded as a very good experience for José that did not expect the hotel to have this kind of facility. In this interaction with the hotel, there is no need to contact the staff as the guest can just choose a sun lounger and enjoy the pool, in which he values having salt water and being spacious.

The last touchpoint identified in José's hotel experience is the check-out with the staff from the front desk, which he considers a good experience. In this interaction, he delivers his room keys, pays for the stay with his company's credit card, and asks for an invoice with the correct company details, as it is something that worries him due to the occasional mistakes experienced in this process. This persona expects to have someone from the staff at the moment of the check-out, for the process to be quick, to be charged correctly, and for the hotel to collect the guests' evaluation. Having a quick and efficient service, with his data stored from previous stays and with an invoice passed correctly represents points of delight for this persona. As pain points, he brings out the lack of interaction with the staff, the queues, and when the hotel does not collect the guests' information to be able to contact him after his stay. The recommendations that can be used to improve this touchpoint are to have someone from the staff always present at the check-out time, to have more people at the front desk to reduce queues, to collect the guests' data for future contact, for example to evaluate the hotel, or, if that is not possible, to deliver a feedback form or to have feedback machines for a quick evaluation of the stay.

Joana "the friend"

Joana (Appendix F) is a 22-year-old student that travels for leisure with her friends and stays on average three nights in a hotel. This is a city break to get to know a new destination while on vacation from university. As the goal is to visit the city and not spend a lot of time at the hotel, only to rest and shower, she looks for a hotel with a great location, at an affordable price and with breakfast included as it is more practical. Therefore, after the search and comparison and the booking phase prior to the hotel service, the interactions that this persona has with the hotel are the check-in, the room, the breakfast included and the check-out, followed by the evaluation after the stay.

Before booking the hotel, Joana searches for a hotel according to a good location and accessibilities, the reviews, the price and with breakfast included. For this, she asks for her friends' recommendations and looks on the Booking website, Trivago, TripAdvisor and on the hotel's website. At this stage she expects low prices and considers pain points the fact that it is a long and stressful process, resorting to filters, the higher prices in the online travel agencies and booking aggregators, the fact that the most expensive options appear first and the many options available with many positive and negative reviews, which makes it difficult to draw conclusions. However, the search and comparison phase is viewed as an overall good experience marked by having every option condensed in these platforms, the genius discounts in the case of Booking, the user-friendliness and the option of free cancellation. In this stage, it is only recommended that the websites such as Booking, Trivago and TripAdvisor should show the best price-quality options instead of the most expensive first.

In the booking stage the guest either books the stay on the Booking website or contacts the hotel directly through email. In this process, the guest fills her personal data, and the credit card details as a security measure, receives the booking confirmation by email and receives a message from the hotel asking about the time of arrival. This is classified as a very good experience to Joana, as she has discounts associated with her booking account, the process is simple and quick, the staff is friendly, she books with free cancellation to be able to cancel the stay if she changes her mind and she has the option to choose when she wants to make the payment, before or upon check-in. The only frustration identified in this touchpoint is the lack of clarity regarding when the credit card is charged which could be solved by being more explicit about the payment procedures on their booking platforms and, if the guest decides to pay before the check-in and the credit card is to be charged some days prior to the trip, the hotel should send an email informing that the card is going to be charged.

When Joana arrives at the hotel, she does the check-in with the staff from the front desk. She is asked for the booking confirmation and personal documents, she pays for her stay, receives the room keys and is taken to her room. She expects her reservation to be identified, to be given relevant information about the hotel and for the process to be long and complex. This process constitutes a very positive experience for her marked by the friendliness of the staff and for the communication. However, she pinpoints as frustrations when the staff is unfriendly, and the hotel is confusing, hence she recommends that the staff should be friendly, and the hotel should have direction signs or provide a map or a tour of the facilities.

As mentioned previously, this persona only uses the hotel room to rest and shower and the only channel identified is a personalized welcome card upon arrival. For this touchpoint, the guest expects to have a treat from the hotel such as a free chocolate and for the room to correspond to the pictures. She values having a spacious room and a balcony with a nice view. Even though this represents a good

experience to Joana, she points out as negative aspects the bad soundproofing, the view, and the fact that the windows could not be opened. Besides suggesting that the windows should open, to improve the service the guest recommends having better soundproofing and having not only free amenities such as shampoo and shower gel, but also a treat as it is the case of a chocolate or a welcome message.

This persona only has breakfast included and considers it an overall positive experience. It is buffet style, in a separate room, the guests have to inform the staff about the room number and sometimes the hotel has breakfast shifts that the guest has to choose beforehand. For this service, Joana expects a lot of variety and many alternatives and for the breakfast to correspond to the hotel's classification and values the familiar environment with no confusion. As pain points she refers the waiting time for the guests from the previous shift to finish their meal and the lack of variety of warm foods and alternatives, such as having plant-based milk besides cow milk. Therefore, this persona suggests having more variety, specifically of consistent warm foods, alternatives for food intolerances and preferences, more toasters to reduce waiting times and for the hotel to have a 15-minute tolerance between shifts for the guests to give place to the other shift.

The last interaction with the hotel during the service is the check-out with the front desk staff, in which the guest delivers the room keys, makes the payment of his stay, if he has not done it already in the check-in, and leaves the luggage stored at the hotel. For this stage, it is expected that the hotel asks for concrete feedback about the stay and allows the guests to leave their luggage stored. This is a very good experience to Joana, marked positively by the friendliness of the staff and negatively by having no lockers in the luggage room. For this stage, this persona suggests implementing lockers so that each guest can leave their luggage safe in separate compartments and for the hotel to ask for more direct feedback about the stay.

After the service, the guest receives an email requesting an evaluation of the stay either from Booking or from the hotel. This persona expected to be asked directly for feedback at the hotel and to receive an email from Booking but not from the hotel. Even though she considers as points of delight the interest in the guests' opinions and the fact that it is a quick and simple process, this is an indifferent phase for Joana because she does not have the time or patience to answer the feedback form after her stay and the forms are very extensive and tiresome with a minimum number of characters to be able to submit her answers. Consequently, she suggests that the hotel should be the one to send an email to mark the end of the stay, to send less extensive feedback forms and, in the case of Booking, to reward their clients, for example with genius discounts, for their evaluations to encourage them to answer the forms.

Afonso "the individual traveler"

Afonso (Appendix G) travels alone for leisure purposes, and the average length of the stay is one night. He only books a hotel because he needs a place to spend the night and leave seamlessly the next day, which means that he does not care about the hotel experience and services. The price and location are important factors for him as well as finding quick and efficient services that do not hold him back.

Before the service he searches and compares hotel options and books his stay, during the service at the hotel he checks-in, uses the room and checks-out, and after the stay he receives a request for an evaluation of the hotel.

On the first touchpoint, Afonso searches according to the location and price in the Booking website, Airbnb and Google. He expects the process to be easy and clear and highlights the discounts that he has from his company and the fact that these websites have many options. Despite representing a good experience to him, it also has pain points, specifically when the results do not match with the filters chosen and the difficulty in comparing the options due to the existence of too many platforms competing in terms of price. In this phase, he only recommends having clear information and to facilitate the comparison of the available options.

When he decides to book his stay, he either goes to the Booking website or contacts the hotel directly through the telephone. After filling his personal data and credit card details, he pays for the stay and receives the booking confirmation and other information through email. Afonso expects this process to be the same as previous bookings, the hotel to confirm its availability and for the reservation to be concluded. This is neither a good or bad phase for him and although he values the fact that it is an easy process, there are some frustrations regarding the lack of clarity as to when the card would be charged and of assurance as to whether the stay is booked or not when he makes the reservation through the phone. Consequently, it is suggested that they should be more explicit about when the card will be charged and to have a more automatized process on phone reservations so that guests can pay beforehand and have their booking confirmed.

When he arrives at the hotel he does the check-in with the front desk staff, in which he shows his personal documents, pays for his stay if he still had not done so at the booking stage, and receives the room keys. Despite being a good experience for the guest, there was one pain point identified which was the fact that the reception was in the kitchen area. In this interaction he recommends having better maintenance, since there was a malfunction in the system and automatic payment terminal (TPA), for the front desk to be in a more adequate space and for the hotel to have a food machine for late arrivals.

As mentioned previously, this persona only uses the room to rest and shower and the only channel identified was the telephone, which was used to ask for information. This is also classified as

a good experience distinguished by the free water and chips that he had at his disposal, the cleanliness, comfort, simplicity and by the fact that, if he gave up the room cleaning and the reward for doing so, the hotel would offer meals to people in need. As pain points, he points out the lack of natural light, the bright room lighting and the random way the towels had been laid out. To improve the experience, he recommends having less bright lighting, better comfort, and more care in the display of the towels.

The last touchpoint during the stay is the check-out, in which the guest interacts with the front desk staff to deliver the room keys and pay for the stay, if it was still to be paid. This is a very positive phase in which this persona highlights the quick and practical process and the free water or coffee that was offered to him because he had missed breakfast. However, the guest recommends delivering a feedback form to be able to evaluate his stay.

After the service, the guest receives a request for an evaluation of the hotel from Booking through email, which he usually does not do. The guest is indifferent about this stage but values the fact that it is useful for other people to see the feedback from previous experiences. This persona is concerned about what third parties can do with the email and suggests that the hotel should ask for this evaluation directly on the check-out.

Sofia "the mother"

This persona (Appendix H) travels for leisure with her husband and five-year-old son and stays, on average, six nights in a hotel. Since the purpose of this trip is to relax and escape the routine, she looks for a hotel with breakfast or everything included, where she can spend at least a part of the day and with plenty of activities to entertain her son. Before the service happens, she searches and compares hotel options and books her stay, during the service, besides the check-in, the room, the meals, and the check-out, she also uses the pool, and, after the service, she receives a request for an evaluation and starts receiving the hotel's promotions and newsletters.

Sofia searches for a hotel according to its quality, price and adequacy for adults and children. Therefore, she expects to find an all-inclusive, affordable option, with a good location and suitable for families. The channels identified in this interaction are the Booking website, Trivago, Logitravel and the hotel's website. This is a very positive stage for this persona, but, even though there are no frustrations or points of delight, she suggests that these channels should show the best price-quality options instead of the most expensive ones first.

To book her stay, she uses the Booking website, in which she chooses the desired hotel, her personal data is filled automatically because she has an account, she pays for her stay, receives booking confirmation by email, contacts the hotel about her child's bed and receives a message from

the hotel asking for the estimated time of arrival. This is also a very good experience for her, only marked positively by being a quick and direct process.

In the hotel, the first touchpoint identified is the check-in with the front desk staff. In this process, she shows the guests' personal documents, receives bracelets of all-inclusive and the room keys, and they are taken to their room. Similar to the last phases, this is a very positive interaction for her, in which she only highlights the quick process, the fact that the hotel corresponded to the pictures and the snack that the hotel had prepared for their late arrival.

This persona only uses her room to rest and shower and she values the correspondence to the pictures she had seen prior to the stay. This phase is classified as a good experience to the guest, in which she only points out, as a pain point, the cleaning and, as a recommendation, its improvement.

Regarding the meals included in her stay, she either has all-inclusive, which includes the three main meals and snacks, or only breakfast included. These interactions happen in a separate room, where the guests have to tell a member of the staff their room number and the meals are buffet style. In this touchpoint, she highlights the variety and quality that are consistent with the hotel's classification. Although this is an overall good experience to Sofia, she indicates the lack of variety and the fact that the hotel has the same options every day as frustrations. For this reason, she suggests having more variety and to change the daily buffet options.

This persona usually spends a part of the day in the pool with her family, where she can just choose a sun lounger without having to interact with the staff. This is a very positive phase for her, in which the fact that the pool was clean and tidy are identified as points of delight. In this touchpoint, it is suggested that, since it is a family-oriented hotel, they could have slides or other fun activities to entertain the children.

In the check-out, the only channel identified is the front desk staff and the guest only had to head to the reception and deliver the room keys. She also identifies this stage as very positive and highlights the quick and efficient service.

After the hotel service, she receives a request to evaluate her stay through email which then redirects to the Booking website. She already expects to receive this request and considers it a very positive experience that is useful for other people to see the feedback of the guests' experiences, which she considers as a point of delight. The last touchpoint identified is the promotions and newsletters, since Sofia started receiving them on her email, which she classifies as an overall good experience with no remarks.

Pedro "the son"

Pedro (Appendix I) travels with his parents and siblings for leisure purposes and his stay at the hotel lasts, on average, five nights. He usually has this type of trips once a year to spend time with his

family and to escape the routine and work obligations. As a result, he wants to enjoy the hotel and the many services available, which means that he values the experience in these establishments.

This persona's journey begins before the service with the search and comparison and the booking phases. Then, at the hotel, he does the check-in, uses the room, has meals included, uses the many services available such as the restaurant, bar, pool, gym and entertainment, and ends his stay with the check-out. After the service, the journey ends with the evaluation of the service.

Pedro searches for a hotel according to the location, the type of hotel and the price. The channels used in this phase are Google, the Booking website, Airbnb, and the email to contact the hotels directly. For this touchpoint, he expects the communication with the hotel to be hard due to the language barrier. This phase is classified as being positive by the persona, and it is positively marked by the variety of options. However, he also identifies as negative aspects the unnecessary information, the language barrier, and the fact that the results do not correspond to what was searched, which is why he suggests showing options accordingly.

Then, Pedro books his stay by going to a travel agency, contacting the hotel directly through email or going to the Booking website. The process is usually characterized by filling his personal data, making the payment, and receiving the booking confirmation by email. This is a very positive experience for him, and he considers the quick, simple and effective process as points of delight. The only frustration associated with this stage is the lack of assurance about whether the booking through email had been done or not. For this, he recommends improving the hotel's website to increase credibility and booking safety and suggests having lower rates in these channels.

When he gets to the hotel with his family, they do the check-in with the front desk staff, in which they show the booking confirmation and personal documents, make the payment, and receive the room keys. In this touchpoint, he expects the process to be fast and is not sure if the reservation had been made. He considers this a good experience, in which he brings out the friendliness and helpfulness of the staff and the flexibility in changing rooms. As negative aspects, he pinpoints the waiting time and the bureaucracy, which he recommends that should be reduced.

The next stage identified during the service at the hotel is the room, which is only used to rest and shower and in which the welcome card is the single channel identified. Pedro expects the room to correspond to the pictures and to the previous stays and considers it a very good experience highlighted by the effectiveness in solving maintenance problems. However, he identifies the size of the room and the fact that the internet was weak and paid separately as pain points, which can be solved by having a better internet for the price that it is paid. He also suggests having a welcome pack with water and food, to show pictures that correspond to the reality, so that the room does not look bigger than it is, and for the hotel to check for maintenance problems before the guests' stay.

Regarding the meals, this persona either has only breakfast included or breakfast and a main meal. This interaction happens in the meals' room, buffet style or à la carte, the guest has to tell the staff member the room number upon arrival and, in one case, he had to deliver a ticket given at the check-in to have breakfast. This is a very positive experience for him, marked positively by the variety of options. To improve this service, he recommends having more vegan options and food prepared at the moment, such as omelets.

Concerning the other services consumed at the hotel, the next touchpoint identified is the restaurant, which is à la carte and paid separately. This interaction implies a contact with a member of the staff and is considered a very positive experience for the guest, in which the good environment, the live music and the friendliness of the staff constitute points of delight. The only suggestion identified for this stage is to have better portion sizes. This persona also uses the bar, which has an at the counter service and is paid separately right away or with room charge. The only channel associated with this phase is the hotel staff and it is classified as a very good experience. However, the guest pinpoints the quality of the food as a pain point and recommends its improvement. The following step in the journey is the pool, where they just choose a sun lounger and enjoy without having to interact with the staff. However, this persona approached the available staff member in certain situations, regarding stollen towels or moving the sun loungers for example, which is why it is considered a channel. Pedro highlights the friendliness of the staff as a positive aspect but the frustration of not having a bar weighs on the experience, which is why it only has a positive classification instead of a very positive one. For this service, he recommends having a bar in the pool area and to be allowed to book sun loungers. This persona also uses the gym during the stay, which is included in the price and does not require an interaction with a member of the staff. He considers it a good experience but points out that they could have someone there from the hotel or a personal trainer and that, taking into account the price of the stay and the quality of the hotel, the gym could be better equipped. Pedro also enjoys the hotel's entertainment, which consist in activities and events organized by the hotel that do not need registration. These experiences are provided by the members of the staff and are considered a very good experience for the guest, in which he brings out the fact that they are fun activities that boost the hotel's environment.

The last interaction during the service is the check-out with the front desk staff. In this process the guests deliver the room keys, make the payment of the stay, if they did not do it at the time of the check-in, and leave their luggage stored at the hotel, which Pedro expected to be able to do so. This is a very good experience for him, marked positively by the quick service and negatively by the bureaucracy, which he recommends being reduced.

After the service, the only interaction identified is the evaluation in which he either receives a feedback form personally to evaluate the hotel or heads directly to the Booking website to make his review. He evaluates this phase as a very positive experience and indicates as a point of delight the quick process. As pain points, he pointed out that they only asked to evaluate the hotel services and not other aspects such as the prices paid or the location of the hotel or to write a recommendation or feedback. Therefore, he recommends incorporating these aspects in their forms and, if they do not deliver it personally, for the hotel to send an evaluation form directly.

Cláudia "the girlfriend"

Cláudia (Appendix J) travels for leisure with her partner and the average length of the stay in a hotel in these trips is four nights. For this purpose, she looks for hotels where she can have a couple's retreat and escape the routine, hence she values the hotel experience. She looks for affordable options, within her requirements, with at least breakfast included and in nice locations. Aside from the promotions and newsletters at the end of the experience in the hotel, Cláudia's journey passes through the same stages as the previous persona, Pedro, possibly due to the importance given to the enjoyment of the hotel experience.

This persona searches and compares hotels according to the location, price, quality, amenities, meals included, reviews and the type of bed available. For this stage she uses many channels, namely the Booking website, Airbnb, Kayak, Momondo, Trivago, Hostelworld, Logitravel, Hoteis.com, Skyscanner, TripAdvisor, Trip.com, a travel agency or the hotel's website. She expects to find good hotel options, affordable prices, to have genius discounts and, to sum-up, the best price-quality ratio. This interaction is classified as a good experience, in which she considers as points of delight the pictures, reviews, genius discounts, suggestions of similar options, the intuitive, practical, clear and visual process, the price comparison and the many options available that increase confidence in the consumers' choices. On the other hand, as pain points she indicates the many options available, the lack of effectiveness of the filters in showing the desired results, the long process, when the hotels' websites are basic or not translated properly, the lack of options at an affordable price, the increasing prices through time, the number of emails sent by Booking and the pop-ups. For this stage, she recommends having more filters, a direct link to the hotel's website, a questionnaire to filter the desired options more directly, effective filters, direct client support in the form of chatbots or direct messages, less pop-ups and for Booking to not send emails when the guest has not booked anything yet.

For the booking phase, she uses the Booking website, Hoteis.com, Trip.com, the hotel's website, the Booking app, email and telephone. In this process, she fills her personal data and credit card details, pays for the stay and receives the booking confirmation and information about the hotel

through email. For this interaction, she expects a quick and simple process, genius discounts, for the booking to be confirmed right away and for the hotel to be reliable. In this touchpoint she highlights the free cancellation option, the fact that her data was stored from previous bookings, the direct contact with the hotel, the practical, quick, simple and clear process, the suggestion of other services to add to the booking, the reminder emails, the immediate payment confirmation, the genius discounts, the fact that the hotel informed her of a tourism tax to be paid upon check-in and the hotel options offered prior to the experience. Despite being an overall good experience for this persona, she identifies as pain points the rudimental website of the hotel, the lack of clear information, the long list of rules sent by the hotel, the lack of assurance about the desired type of bed due to high demand, the discount that appeared but that she could not enjoy and the fact that the card was charged later than the moment of booking. For this stage, she recommends having clearer information, a better website and to not show discounts that the customer can not enjoy.

During the service, the first interaction that she has with the hotel is the check-in with the front desk staff, in which she arrives at the hotel by her own means or through the hotel's transfer service, shows the personal documents and booking confirmation, pays for the stay, receives the room keys and relevant information about the hotel, is sometimes shown the hotel and is taken to the room. She expects an easy communication with the transfer to be able to find him and for the check-in to be easy, practical and quick, to have to pay a tourism tax, for everything to be confirmed, to be able to leave the bags stored until the check-in time in case she is early, for the staff to be friendly and to take their bags to the room. She considers this a positive experience, marked positively by the good communication with the transfer and for its practical service, the friendliness and helpfulness of the staff, the free glass of water or champagne offered upon arrival, the practical process, the flexibility of the staff in serving breakfast earlier and for the familiar ambiance. On the other hand, she considers negative the unfriendly and unhelpful staff, the payment that had to be done with the same card used in the reservation, the fact that the staff did not speak English, the confusing hotel with no direction signs and the security deposit for the minibar. For the check-in, Cláudia recommends informing beforehand about the need to pay with the same card of the reservation and about any charges to be done upon check-in, such as the minibar deposit and the tourist tax, which could also be included in the price, having more staff to avoid queuing, having a transfer service and for the staff to know English.

This persona either spends some time in the room during the day or only uses it to rest and shower. The channels identified in this touchpoint are the telephone, the room service and a personalized welcome card and the expectations for it are to have good Wi-Fi, for the room to look like the pictures, to be clean and spacious, to correspond to the hotel's classification, to have a

welcome card and a nice view. This is a very positive stage for Cláudia with many points of delight, specifically the free items available, such as amenities to cook and shower, nail and sewing kit, filtered water, tea, champagne and a safe, the availability of beach towels whenever the guest desires, the comfort, the view, the kitchenette, the readiness of the room before check-in time, the effective room service, the private jacuzzi, the cleanliness, the heating, the space, the welcome basket for her birthday and the fact that the room had a shower and a bathtub. However, there are also pain points, as it is the case of the bad Wi-Fi, the freezer not working well, the bathroom always flooding, the bad soundproofing, the long room cleaning schedules that started very early and finished late, the lack of blinds, the fact that it only had Spanish channels, the room not corresponding to the pictures, the view that was not good for the price paid and a broken curtain. Her recommendations for the hotels to improve this service are to pay attention to the necessary maintenance and to check the room prior to the guests' stay, to have better Wi-Fi and free amenities, such as shower gel and shampoo, for the bathroom to be more functional and avoid floods, to start the cleaning service later or shorten it, to have better soundproofing and blinds, for the room service to have more alternatives for vegetarians and vegans, to show more realistic pictures of the room and to inform about the many types of views so that the guest can choose what she prefers.

Regarding the meals, she either has only breakfast included or all-inclusive, they are buffet style or à la carte, in a separate room or brought to the guests' room and, in the case of being in a designated room, the guests have to tell a member of the staff their room number upon arrival. For this touchpoint, the expectations identified are to have a great variety, to have a simple and practical breakfast and to be buffet style. This is classified as a very good experience for Cláudia, in which she highlights the variety, the quality, the fresh and regional food, the good ambiance, the flexibility of the breakfast time, the friendliness of the staff, the alternatives for food intolerances, a cook preparing hot dishes, the pancake machine, the quick and effective service and the possibility to prepare dishes that were not on the menu. As negative aspects, she pinpoints the many people in the room, the lack of staff and reposition and the storing of food earlier than the closing time. For this touchpoint, she recommends having more variety, increasing the breakfast schedule and to reduce the number of people in the room.

Regarding the other services of the hotel, this persona uses the restaurant that is à la carte and paid separately. This interaction requires the contact with a member of the staff and is considered a good experience. For this stage, she expects the menu to correspond to the one that the hotel had sent before the stay and considers as points of delight the quality of the food and the nice space. As pain points she indicates the slow service, having only one restaurant open and the fact that the restaurant closed some days at lunch time, which she suggests that should be open. Then, the guest

also uses the bar, which is paid separately right away or with room charge, the guests order at the table or at the counter and some drinks were included in the all-inclusive pack. The channel identified in this interaction is the hotel staff and the expectations for it are to have affordable prices and variety. She brings out as points of delight the quick and efficient service, the friendliness of the staff and the comfortable furniture. Even though this is identified as a good experience, she is frustrated by the expensive prices and the lack of variety, which is why she suggests lowering the prices and having more variety and more drinks included in the all-inclusive pack. The following touchpoint of her journey is the pool, in which she just chooses a sun lounger and enjoys the pool but in one case she had to rent a towel and in another case the pool area had a sauna. In this phase she interacts with the hotel staff and has some expectations such as for the pool to look like the pictures, to be spacious and to have a support bar. As pain points she identifies the limited space and reduced privacy owing to the buildings being all on top of each other and the lack of a bar in the pool area, which she recommends having and to let the guests take their own towels. However, this is a very positive experience marked by some positive aspects, namely the chlorine in the pool not being noticeable, the pool being clean and quiet, having a good location and comfortable sun loungers, and corresponding to the pictures. This persona also uses the gym, which is included in the price and does not require interacting with the staff. This is a very positive experience for Cláudia, in which she highlights having the basic machines as a point of delight and suggests having more diversity of machines to improve the service. The next step in Cláudia's journey is the entertainment, that refers to events or activities that do not require a registration to participate. The channels identified in this interaction are the hotel's staff and a placard to inform about the events and activities that take place each day. This persona did not expect the hotel to have this service but classifies it as a good experience. The existence of entertainment and the fact that it was for adults and children are considered points of delight in this touchpoint and the loud volume as a pain point, for which she recommends having better soundproofing in the rooms.

The last interaction during the service is the check-out with the front desk staff, in which she delivers the room keys, pays for the stay, if she has not done so in the check-in, and for the extras and leaves the luggage stored at the hotel. She expects it to be quick, practical, hassle free and to be able to leave the bags safely, but she did not expect to be possible to leave the bags for as long as necessary. She considers it a very positive experience highlighted by the quick, simple and effective process, being able to leave the bags stored, the friendly staff that recognizes their mistakes and by being asked for feedback about the stay. Even though she indicates only one pain point, which refers to when the hotel does not let the guests leave their bags stored, she has many recommendations, specifically to have a check-out until later than 11am, to request the guests' data to send promotions and

newsletters, to request an evaluation directly, to inform the guests about any extra fees beforehand, to have lockers in the luggage room, to allow the guests to leave their bags at the hotel and to have a transfer service.

After the service, she receives a request to evaluate the hotel and the channels identified in this interaction are the email, the Booking app, the Booking website, Trip.com, the hotel's website, and the evaluation form. She already expects to receive this request and classifies this experience as positive with only one pain point which is the exhaustive forms. As points of delight she mentions the fact that other people can base their choice on these evaluations, the easy and simple process, the platform's concern in corresponding their offer to the reality, the fact that they did not send more emails after the evaluation, the points that Hoteis.com give in exchange for the feedback, the importance given to the clients' feedback and the usefulness of these evaluations for the hotel to know what the guest liked and disliked. To improve this service, she suggests having the questions in the forms as optional to be able to submit the answers without being too exhaustive and for the hotel to ask for this evaluation directly. The last stage of the journey refers to the promotions and newsletters that she started receiving from the hotel by email. She considers it a good experience with interesting and diverse content but is frustrated by the fact that the hotel sends many emails, hence the recommendation of reducing the number of emails sent.

Millennials' customer journey in hotels

Bearing in mind the detailed analysis of each persona, some comparisons and considerations can be made about each phase of the millennials' customer journey in hotels.

Regarding the touchpoints identified, differences can be observed between each persona depending on their needs and motivations. As José "the worker" travels for business, he does not have a very active pre-experience, since he does not need to search for a hotel and may have the booking done for him, and does not register a post-experience. However, his presence in the hotel is active, as he spends some time in the room working and resting and enjoys the services that the hotel provides in his spare time, such as the meals included, the bar, the gym, and the pool. Joana "the friend" on the other end, has a very active pre-experience, in which she searches and compares hotel options and books her stay. During the service, aside from the breakfast included and the room, the hotel services have no importance for her as her goal is to explore the destination, and, after the service, she receives a request for an evaluation of the hotel. Afonso "the individual traveler" has a similar journey to Joana "the friend", aside from the fact that the latter values having breakfast included as it is more practical and the former only uses the room. In contrast to these personas, Sofia "the mother" is active throughout the pre, during, and post-experience and uses the hotel services to ease her obligations and entertain her child. She searches, compares hotel options and books her stay, checks

in, uses the room and the pool, has meals included and checks out, and, in the end, receives a request for an evaluation and promotional content. The final two personas, Pedro "the son" and Cláudia "the girlfriend" have the most complete journeys of the traveler types as their focus is to enjoy all the services the hotel has to offer, the former because he is traveling with his family and wants to relax in his vacation and the latter since she desires a couple's retreat.

The search and comparison phase is the first touchpoint identified in every journey aside from José "the worker" and is classified as a good experience overall. The most mentioned expectation for this touchpoint is to find affordable options and every persona values the location and the price when looking for options and add other attributes according to their specific needs. In relation to the channels used, Cláudia "the girlfriend" registers the biggest number of channels in this stage and Afonso "the individual traveler" the fewest. The Booking website is used by every persona in this stage and the hotel's website and direct channels are used by everyone aside from Afonso "the individual traveler". In this phase, in general, the personas stand out negatively the ineffectiveness of the filters, the long process and the many options available, and positively the genius discounts, the many options available, that increase confidence in the consumers' choices, and the user-friendliness. In this touchpoint, it is mostly recommended to show the best price-quality options first instead of the most expensive ones and to have more effective filters.

In the booking phase every persona passes through an identical process and is overall classified as a good experience aside from Afonso "the individual traveler", that regards it as an indifferent touchpoint owing to the lack of clarity and assurance. In this touchpoint the email is used by every type of consumer and the booking website is used by everyone except José "the worker". As this persona travels for business, the channels used to book the stay are more personal and direct, without needing partner-owned platforms. The expectations for this phase are related to the confirmation of the booking and some of the most mentioned positive aspects in this stage are the discounts, the simple and quick process, and the free cancellation option. As negative points the lack of clarity as to when and if the card would be charged and the lack of assurance if the booking had been done are the most prominent ones. Therefore, as recommendations it is mostly suggested that the information should be clearer and explicit and for the hotels' websites to be improved.

The first step of the service in the hotel is the check-in which has a similar process in every persona and the same channel, which is the front desk staff. For this stage, the most mentioned expectations are related to having the reservation identified and confirmed and to be provided relevant information. This is an overall good experience marked essentially by the simple and quick service and the qualities of the staff such as friendliness, helpfulness and flexibility. On the other hand, the unfriendliness of the staff, the queue, waiting time, and the lack of orientation in the hotel are some

of the negative aspects mentioned. In this stage, most of the personas suggested that there should be more people at the front desk to reduce queuing and waiting times. Cláudia "the girlfriend" also emphasizes the need to inform the guests beforehand of any charges to be done upon check-in, which is also relevant to improve this service.

Regarding the room, the personas register slightly different behaviors depending on their motivations. José "the worker" uses the room not only to rest and shower but also to work, which is why he expects having the conditions to do so, Joana "the friend" uses the room only to rest and shower as she intends to visit the destination during the day, Afonso "the individual traveler" also uses the room to rest and shower and leave seamlessly in the next day, Sofia "the mother" and Pedro "the son" only use the room to rest and shower to enjoy the rest of the hotel's services and Cláudia "the girlfriend" can either spend some time in the room or only use it to rest and shower. When it comes to channels, José, Joana, Pedro and Cláudia had a welcome card upon arrival, José, Afonso and Cláudia used the telephone in the room and only Cláudia ordered room service. For this phase, the most mentioned expectation is for the room to correspond to the pictures. This is a good experience for the personas in which the spacious room, the free amenities and the comfort are aspects that are highlighted the most by the personas. The bad soundproofing, the bad Wi-Fi, the view and the maintenance problems are some of the most mentioned negative aspects in this phase. As recommendations, it was mostly suggested that hotels should have better soundproofing, something that shows attention to the guest such as welcome cards, a free chocolate or a welcome pack with water and food, check for maintenance problems before the guests' stay, better Wi-Fi and to show pictures of the room that correspond to the reality.

The meals touchpoint is present in every journey but the one from Afonso "the individual traveler". Although the process is similar for every persona, apart from in some cases existing shifts and tickets for the meals, there is a variety of behaviors. José "the worker" and Pedro "the son" either have only breakfast included or breakfast and a main meal, Joana "the friend" has only breakfast included and Sofia "the mother" and Cláudia "the girlfriend" either have only breakfast included or all-inclusive. The only channel identified in every scenario is the hotel staff and this is generally a good experience, in which the most mentioned expectation is for it to have a great variety and is marked positively by the quality, the variety, the calm environment and the friendliness of the staff, and negatively by the lack of quality and variety. The most mentioned suggestions are to have more variety, of the food in the buffet in general and also of alternatives for food intolerances and preferences, and food prepared at the moment.

Concerning the extra services that the hotel has to offer, they vary according to the persona under study. Joana "the friend" and Afonso "the individual traveler do not consume any of these services as

the former intends to spend most of her time exploring the city and the latter only desires a place to spend the night. José "the worker" uses the bar, the gym and the pool after the day of work, Sofia "the mother" only uses the pool and Pedro "the son" and Cláudia "the girlfriend" use the same services, which are the restaurant, the bar, the pool, the gym and the entertainment. As these services vary depending on the persona, there is also no consensus regarding the expectations for each of them.

The restaurant process is identical in both personas, the only channel identified is the staff and it is considered a good experience. As positive aspects, they mention the good environment, the friendliness of the staff, the food quality and the nice space, and, as negative ones, the slow service and schedules. Its recommendations are related to the portion sizes and to the alteration of the schedules. The bar's actions are also identical across the personas and the only channel is the hotel's staff. It is a positive experience, in which the friendliness of the staff, the quick service and the free appetizers are considered points of delight and the lack of ambience, the waiting time, the quality, variety and prices the most mentioned potential pain points. The overall suggestions for this stage are to lower prices, increase the variety and quality, to have ambiance and a more automatized service. The pool is generally viewed as a very good experience with similar actions, except the cases of having to rent a towel and having a sauna, and in which the staff may or may not be necessary. The points of delight in this touchpoint are mostly connected to the quality of the water, the cleanliness and the location and the main pain point identified is the lack of bar in the pool. Besides the suggestion from Sofia "the mother" of having more activities for children, the recommendations for this step are to allow the guests to take their own towels and book sun loungers, and to have a bar in the pool area. In the gym touchpoint, the personas register slightly different actions, as in most situations it does not need to be booked in advance and to interact with the staff, but in one case the opposite is verified. This is considered on average a good experience, in which José "the worker", who considers it an indifferent stage, points out the lack of modern machines and their maintenance as a pain point and all the personas suggest that, for the improvement of the service, hotels should invest in equipping the gym and maintaining its machines. The last service in this category is the entertainment, which, for both personas that enjoyed this service, consists in activities and events organized by the hotel that do not need registration. In this touchpoint, the channels identified were the hotel staff and a placard where the activities are announced. Pedro "the son" considers it a very good experience that adds dynamic to the hotel's environment, whereas Cláudia "the girlfriend" finds it positive because she was not expecting the hotel to have that service and for it to be for adults and children, but the loud volume is viewed as a pain point which negatively impacts this experience, which is why she recommends improving the rooms' soundproofing.

The last stage identified during the service at the hotel is the check-out with the hotel's staff, in which the process is identical across all the personas, except for José "the worker" that asks for an invoice with the company details and for Joana "the friend", Pedro "the son" and Cláudia "the girlfriend" that leave their bags stored at the hotel. In this stage, the most mentioned expectations are for the process to be quick, to be able to leave the bags stored at the hotel and for the hotel to collect the guests' evaluation of the stay. Almost unanimously, this is considered a very positive experience clearly highlighted by the quick and efficient service and the friendliness of the staff. The negative aspects identified in this touchpoint are the lack of lockers in the luggage room, the bureaucracy, when the staff does not let the guests leave their bags stored, the lack of interaction with the staff, the queues and when the hotel does not collect the guests' information to be able to contact them after the stay. As suggestions, the most mentioned ones are for the hotel to ask directly for feedback, whether it is through a feedback form or feedback machine, and to implement lockers in the luggage room so that each guest can leave their luggage safe in separate compartments.

After the experience at the hotel, every persona except José "the worker" passed through the evaluation touchpoint and only Sofia "the mother" and Cláudia "the girlfriend" started receiving promotional content. Regarding the evaluation step, most of the personas received an email requesting an evaluation of the stay, mostly by Booking, but also from the hotel and Trip.com, or, in some cases, they went directly to the Booking website to review the hotel or received a physical feedback form. Most of the personas expected to receive this request for evaluation after the stay. Joana "the friend" and Afonso "the individual traveler" consider it an indifferent stage whereas Sofia "the mother" and Pedro "the son" find it very good and Cláudia "the girlfriend" only good. In this step, the personas value the usefulness for other people to see the feedback from previous experiences and the easy and quick process. As pain points, they mostly put emphasis on the extensive and tiresome forms and recommend for the hotel to ask directly for feedback, personally or online, to have less extensive forms and Joana "the friend" suggests rewarding customers for their evaluations to encourage them to answer the forms, which could be a useful idea to enhance the service. Lastly, in the promotional content touchpoint there were no expectations identified by the two personas. This is considered a good experience with interesting and diverse content but Cláudia "the girlfriend" is frustrated by the quantity of emails received and recommends reducing their amount.

Taking into account the millennial personas identified, the resulting maps of each one of their journeys and the data analysis conducted in this chapter, the results provide answers to the propositions presented in the conceptual model of the present study. As the journey, motivations and needs of José "the worker" are different than the ones of the other personas, it is possible to affirm that the customer journey map varies according to the travel purpose (leisure or business) (P1). By segmenting

the interviewed millennials according to the traveler type (alone leisure, friends leisure, couple leisure, family leisure, and business travelers), six personas were created and their maps elaborated. These findings revealed that all of these personas experience a hotel in a different way since they have distinct journeys with specific actions, channels, feelings, expectations, points of delight, pain points and recommendations, which confirms that the customer journey map varies according to this segmentation variable (P2). Finally, in every map built in this dissertation it can be observed that results of each aspect of the vertical axis, namely the actions, channels, emotions, expectations, pain points, points of delight and recommendations, vary throughout the many stages of the customer journey before, during and after the service (P3).

6. Conclusion and future research

6.1 Results and discussion

This dissertation aimed at studying the millennials' customer experience in hotels throughout their customer journey. Therefore, in order to understand these experiences better, the present research sought to understand which are the main touchpoints of this generations' journey in hotels (RQ1), whether the actions, channels, feelings, expectations, points of delight and pain points vary across the different touchpoints of their customer journey (RQ2), what is recommended to improve the service in each touchpoint (RQ3) and if there is heterogeneity in the millennials' customer journey in hotels across different market segments defined by traveler type (RQ4).

Bearing in mind the customer journey maps built, one can observe that there is a diversity of customer journeys in the generation under study, the millennials, which confirms the claim made by Veiga et al. (2017) that this is not a homogeneous segment. However, to answer the first research question of the present study, in almost every map the stages of the customer journey can be identified: the pre-experience, the experience and the post-experience (Knutson and Beck, 2004; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Shaw & Williams, 2009). Since within each one of the customer journey stages customers interact with multiple touchpoints (Towers & Towers, 2021), the present dissertation revealed that the steps that characterize the millennials' customer journey in hotels are, in general, before the experience, the search and comparison of hotel options and the booking, during the experience, the check-in, stay in the room, meals included, other services of the hotel such as the restaurant, bar, pool, gym and the entertainment and the check-out, and, after the experience, the evaluation and promotional content.

Even though in the present research the several touchpoints of the customer journey appear discriminated instead of grouped in categories, these findings are in accordance with the touchpoints identified in Rojas et al. (2021) study on the customer experience in the hotel industry, which were,

before the experience, the search for information and book a room, during the experience, the check-in, room stay, visit common areas, which encompasses the interactions with the front desk, hotel lobby, hotel restaurant, gym, bar, hall, among others, order and receive food, that includes any interaction with the restaurant or the room service, and the check-out, and the report experience after the experience at the hotel.

According to Lemon & Verhoef (2016), the touchpoints identified within each stage of the customer journey can differ in terms of strength and importance. In accordance with this and taking into account the maps that resulted from the present study, it can be observed that the variables from the vertical axis, which are the actions, channels, feelings, expectations, points of delight and pain points, vary according to the touchpoints throughout the millennials' customer journey (research question 2).

Each touchpoint refers to a specific interaction with the service that implies certain actions and processes which, since there are no repeated touchpoints in the case of the present study, vary throughout the customer journey. The channels also vary between the many interactions that constitute the customer experience in hotels. In the pre-experience, the customers search and compare hotel options and book the hotel through mainly digital channels such as websites, email and phone calls, but some customers also use human-served ones such as travel agencies and friends for recommendations. It should also be noted that in these two touchpoints prevail channels such as the Booking website which are partner-owned, instead of brand-owned ones, as it is the case of the hotel's website. During the experience, millennials interact mostly with human-served channels such as the hotel's staff and physical ones as it is the case of the welcome card and the placard. After the service at the hotel, customers interact once again mostly with digital channels, such as the email and websites, to receive the request for evaluation of the hotel and to proceed to it, with only a few reports of physical channels such as feedback forms. Similar to the pre-experience, the channels in this phase are mostly owned by partners, such as emails, which redirect customers to the partner owned booking platforms to perform the evaluation, that make the brand-owned ones, such as emails from the hotel that redirect to its website and feedback forms, remain in the minority.

The predominance of digital channels throughout the touchpoints of the pre and post-experience is in line with the fact that the individuals from this generation are known for being digital natives and permanently connected to information (Benckendorff et al., 2010; McMahon and Pospisil, 2005; Veiga et al., 2017), whether it is to search and book a hotel before the experience or to evaluate it and make recommendations after the stay. Regarding the non-digital channels, the results of the present study show that millennials can resort to their friends for opinions in the pre-experience stage of the journey, which is in accordance with another one of their traits pointed out by Benckendorff et al.

(2010), that refers to the importance that this generation places on the opinions of other people, especially their friends. Additionally, the prevalence of the staff as the main channel during the experience highlights the importance of the role of employees in the hospitality industry, as they are present in almost every interaction of the customer journey during the stay and are, therefore, responsible for providing most of the services in hotels (Kandampully et al., 2018; Nixon & Rieple, 2010; Walls et al., 2011b).

Even though there are cases in which the classification of the customers' emotions is the same in several touchpoints, these are associated with expectations, pain points and points of delight that are specific to that interaction and that resulted in an overall evaluation. Both phases of the pre-experience are identified as positive interactions in which the most mentioned expectations are to find affordable options and for the booking to be confirmed, the points of delight are mostly related to the discounts on the platforms, the option of free cancellation, the user-friendly and quick processes and the quantity of options, and the pain points refer mostly to the ineffectiveness of the filters, the long process, the many options available, the unclear information about when the card would be charged and the lack of assurance as to if the booking had been done. During the experience, every touchpoint is considered as overall positive experiences, apart from the pool and the check-out which are classified as very positive. In the process of check-in and check-out, most of the expectations are related to having the reservation confirmed, to be provided relevant information, for the process to be quick, to be able to leave the bags stored and for the hotel to ask for feedback about the stay. In these phases, the positive aspects refer to the quick process and the qualities of the staff, such as friendliness, helpfulness and flexibility, and the negatives to the unfriendliness of the staff, waiting times, lack of lockers in the luggage room and problems with leaving their luggage stored. The room's main expectation is for it to correspond to the pictures and its attributes are related to its physical characteristics and free amenities and the pain points are the bad soundproofing and Wi-Fi, the view and the maintenance problems. In the customers' included meals, the personas expect to have a great variety of options and value the food quality and variety, which, if they do not verify, can be pain points, the calm environment and the friendliness of the staff. Regarding the extra services of the hotel, as they vary according to the persona, there is no consensus in relation to the expectations for each one of these touchpoints. The main points of delight identified in the restaurant and bar were related to the staff and the quick processes, as these are mostly human-served touchpoints, and the waiting times, prices, lack of ambiance and food quality as general pain points. In the pool, customers value its quality, cleanliness and location but the lack of bar in the area represents a frustration, in the gym the only aspect pointed out was the lack of modern machines and their maintenance and the entertainment is regarded positively by adding dynamic to the hotel and negatively by its loud volume.

The evaluation and the promotional content touchpoints are regarded as overall good experiences, as the personas already expected them to happen, in which, in the former, its usefulness to other guests and the quick process are valued, and the extensive and tiresome forms are viewed as pain points, and the latter is marked positively by the interesting and diverse content and negatively by the number of emails received. These differences between touchpoints provide the answer to the second research question of the present study by confirming that the actions, channels, feelings, expectations, points of delight and pain points vary across the different steps of the customer journey.

Bearing in mind the most mentioned expectations, points of delight and pain points of the millennials' customer journey previously enumerated, it can be noted that the waiting times and the long processes were often stated as frustrations for this generation and, on the other hand, the quick services as points of delight. This prevalence is in accordance with McMahon and Pospisil (2005) study, in which they concluded that millennials have a focus on immediacy that translates to an intolerance to delays. Therefore, in the case of the object of the present study, this signifies that hotels should take into account that this generation is particularly sensitive to the duration of processes and delays in providing the service.

Besides of the focus on immediacy, the frustrations and positive aspects of the millennials' experience in hotels reveal that, during the experience, customers mention several aspects related to both the physical environment and the interaction with the hotel's employees. As a result, it can be concluded that the hotel experience implies the combination of the physical and human dimensions in order to offer quality experiences, achieve customer satisfaction and lead to positive consumer behavior in the form of loyalty and recommendation (Cetin and Dincer, 2014; Reuland et al., 1985; Walls et al., 2011b).

In order to improve the service in hotels and appeal to this generation, recommendations from the customer's point of view for each touchpoint identified were collected (research question 3). In the pre-experience phase, the most mentioned recommendations were that websites should show the best price-quality options first instead of the most expensive ones and have more effective filters in the search and comparison touchpoint and that the information should be clearer and the hotels' websites should be improved in the booking phase. In the check-in, it is pointed out the need to have more people at the front desk to reduce queuing and waiting times and for the hotel to inform the guests prior to their arrival of any charges to be done upon check-in. In the room it is mostly suggested that the soundproofing should be improved, for hotels to offer something that shows attention to the guest such as welcome cards and free items, to check for maintenance problems before the guest arrives, to have better Wi-Fi and to show pictures that correspond to the reality. Regarding the meals included, the recommendations concern the increase in variety of the food in the buffet in general

and also of alternatives for food intolerances and preferences, and to have food prepared at the moment. In relation to the extra services of the hotel, in the restaurant the recommendations include having bigger portion sizes and the alteration of the schedules, in the bar to lower the prices, increase the variety and quality, to have ambiance and a more automatized service, for the pool it is highlighted the need to allow the guests to take their own towels and book sun loungers, and to have a bar in the pool area, in the gym the customers suggest that hotels should invest in its equipment and maintenance, and, lastly, for the entertainment the recommendation is related to the better soundproofing of the rooms. In the check-out touchpoint, guests emphasize that hotels should ask directly for feedback, whether it is through a feedback form or a feedback machine, and that lockers should be implemented in the luggage room so that each guest can leave their luggage safe in separate compartments. Regarding the two steps of the post-experience stage, customers suggest, once again, for the hotel to ask directly for feedback, personally or online, to have less extensive forms, to reward customers for their evaluations to encourage them to answer the forms and to reduce the number of emails sent with promotional content.

In their study, Rojas et al. (2020) highlighted the importance of understanding and adapting the services to the different types of customers and their needs, as they can come from different parts of the world, with different travel companions and purposes. Therefore, the current results further extended previous research (Rojas et al., 2021) not only by focusing the study on a specific generation, the millennials, but also by revealing heterogeneous customer journeys in hotels across different market segments. In the present research, six personas were created according to the segmentation variable traveler type, which can be traveling alone, with friends, as a couple and with family for leisure purposes, and business travelers. Moreover, a distinction was made between traveling with family with and without small children as the journeys differed.

The resulting customer journey maps confirm the research question 4 by showing six different journeys, with different stages and touchpoints, associated with six different types of consumers. Guests who travel alone for leisure were represented by the persona Afonso "the individual traveler" who only looks for a place to stay, is not interested in enjoying the hotel's services, which is why he has the smallest customer journey of all the personas, and values quick and efficient processes. Customers traveling with their friends were personified by Joana "the friend" that wants to get to know a destination on a city break, hence the fact that, during the experience at the hotel, besides the check-in, check-out, and the room, she only takes advantage of the breakfast included as it is more convenient to visit the city after. For the millennials traveling as a couple, Cláudia "the girlfriend" was created and she is characterized by looking for a place where she can escape the routine in a couple's retreat and by valuing the hotel's experience as she enjoys all the extra services that the hotel has to

offer. Sofia "the mother" represented the guests traveling with their children and was portrayed as wanting to relax and escape the routine by looking for hotels with at least breakfast included and suitable for families, with activities to entertain her 5-year-old son. For families without small children, Pedro "the son" was created and he enjoys the hotel experience and all its services since he usually has these trips once a year to spend time with his family and to escape the routine and work obligations. The final traveler type refers to people traveling for business purposes, which were depicted in the persona José "the worker", that is characterized by having no active role in choosing the destination or the hotel, which is why he has no search and comparison touchpoint in the pre-experience stage, valuing specific room features that allow him to work, such as a desk, good soundproofing and Wi-Fi, and by enjoying the hotel's services in his spare time to relax after the day of work.

These findings are in agreement with Dhebar (2013), which affirmed that the number and nature of the stages of the customer experience may vary according to, for example, the customer segments. By revealing that the millennials' customer journey differs according to the traveler type (research question 4), the results of the current research add to the literature (Brochado & Brochado, 2019; Brochato et al., 2022) by using this segmentation variable and testing its effectiveness.

Regarding the present study's propositions, the resulting maps reveal that the persona created to represent the millennials traveling for business purposes has a different customer journey than the ones from millennials traveling for leisure (P1) by having different needs and motivations, not registering a search and comparison phase in the pre-experience, since it is done for him, and not having any interaction with the hotel in the post-experience. The six customer journey maps built for each one of the six personas created to portray the millennials according to the different traveler types (alone leisure, friends leisure, couple leisure, family leisure with and without children, and business travelers) confirm that each segment passes through different touchpoints during the customer journey in hotels and perceives the customer experience in these establishments in different ways (P2). Lastly, as it was previously demonstrated, in every map the actions, channels, emotions, expectations, pain points, points of delight and recommendations vary throughout the different interactions that the millennials have with the hotel before, during and after the service (P3).

6.2 Theoretical contribution

This study's findings make potentially valuable theoretical contributions to the existing literature. The results provide a deeper understanding of the millennials' customer experience in hotels through the focus on their customer journey. By employing the customer journey mapping tool, this dissertation intends to fill the literature gap referring to the limited application of this method and research on the

customer journey in the context of tourism in general (Dey, 2019; Taheri et al., 2021) and hotels in particular, as there are only two studies that used this tool to map the interactions between these establishments and their customers (Rojas et al., 2021; Wang & Wu, 2020). Therefore, this research extended previous studies' findings (Rojas et al., 2021) by further exploring the experiences in hotels through the mapping of their customers' journeys and by focusing the research on the millennials, as there is a lack of research on this generation's customer journey (Mele et al., 2021).

Through the analysis of this generation's journey in hotels, the present study's results reveal not only the interactions that they have with these companies but also the actions, channels, feelings, expectations and the positive and negative aspects that are associated to them, hence providing a holistic view of these types of experiences. Lastly, this research contributed to the literature by showing that the millennials' customer journey varies according to the segmentation variable traveler type (alone leisure, friends leisure, couple leisure, family leisure with and without children, and business travelers), therefore addressing the need to understand and disclose the different market segments and their travel experiences within the millennials' generation (Benckendorff et al., 2010). This segmentation resulted in the creation of six millennial personas with distinct customer journeys in hotels, hence contributing to a better understanding of the role of the traveler type as a market segmentation variable.

6.3 Managerial implications

This dissertation reveals some practical and managerial implications for the tourism industry, specifically for hotels. Through the segmentation of the millennials interviewed by traveler type (alone leisure, friends leisure, couple leisure, family leisure with and without children, and business travelers), this study was able to identify six types of consumers with distinct journeys in these establishments that were represented by personas. These findings shed light on the different needs and desires that are present within one generation and how these companies can adapt their services and offers to attract these consumers.

For example, in order to attract millennials traveling alone for leisure, hotels should focus on providing efficient and convenient processes as this segment interacts the most with the hotel in these procedures, such as the search, comparison and booking and personally in the check-in and out from the hotel. To appeal to guests traveling with their friends, hotels should bet on social interactions, by being friendly, offering a map of the city for them to explore and asking for feedback directly on the check-out as they do not have time to answer the forms sent by email, and on the breakfast touchpoint, as this last interaction is of great convenience for them to visit the city after. For couples and families without small children, hotels should invest in their extra services, such as the restaurant,

bar, pool, gym and entertainment, as these two segments, although traveling for different purposes, value the hotel experience and their offer. For families traveling with small children, these companies could provide more activities to entertain them, for example by adding slides to the pool, as suggested in the results. Lastly, for business travelers, hotels should strive to have quick services with no queues and waiting times and to ensure that the requirements that these customers have to be able to work at the hotel, such as soundproofed rooms with good wi-fi, are ensured.

By mapping the different consumers' journeys according to the different aspects incorporated in the vertical axis, this research was able to pinpoint what these establishments need to emphasize, maintain, and discard from their services. The channels associated with each phase of the journey bring attention to the need to incorporate more brand-owned ones in order to reduce the need to resort to partner-owned platforms. The points of delight of each stage allow these companies to see the aspects that the consumers highlight in the direct and indirect interactions with the hotel, so that they can continue to bet and invest in them to improve the service and contribute to customer satisfaction. On the other hand, the pain points enumerated in the customer journey maps reveal the aspects that negatively impacted the service and, consequently, should be eliminated or improved. By identifying the customers' recommendations to enhance the service in each stage of the customer journey in hotels, these businesses are able to understand directly from this segment what needs to be done to improve the negative aspects and what customers want from the service so that it exceeds the expectations of these target consumers.

6.4 Limitations and future research

Even though this research was able to contribute to the millennials' customer experience in hotels through the mapping of their journeys in these establishments, some limitations were identified which can serve as basis for future research on the topic.

The findings of the present study are supported by the qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews to 30 millennials that had been lodged in a hotel in the past 12 months. Despite being within the recommended size by the existent literature, the sample may not be sufficiently representative of the generation under analysis, which is why it could be interesting to use a larger sample in future studies. The requirement that they must have traveled to a hotel within the last 12 months also contributed to the difficulty in getting a larger sample and so it is suggested that future studies do not use this condition. Moreover, future research could also divide the sample in equal parts according to the segmentation by traveler type to have personas based on the same number of individuals and compare the resulting maps.

It should also be considered that, in this research, it was opted for basing the study in hotels in general, which can be enriching for being more comprehensive but can also represent a limitation as there are many types of hotels that differ in their offer and services. Therefore, future studies could overcome this constraint by focusing on a specific type of these establishments.

This dissertation was developed around a specific generation, the millennials, which contributes to the limited literature on the experience and journey of this specific segment in hotels. However, future studies could focus on a different generation, to identify similar or different personas and their specific journeys and compare to the results of the present research in order to increase the usefulness of the findings to these establishments, which may have not only the millennials as target consumers but also other generations. As the research context was shaped by Portuguese millennials, future research could also expand this study and establish comparisons to other nationalities.

Lastly, the personas identified in this dissertation could also be used in future studies about the millennials in the tourism industry as a means of segmentation.

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Appendices

Appendix A- Studies employing the customer journey mapping tool in tourism

Source: own elaboration

Reference	Research Context	Sample	Research Design	Study Objectives/Purpose
Bosio et al., 2017	Tourist Destination - Serfaus-Fiss-Ladis	n=130	Customer Journey Map: mobile ethnography tool "ExperienceFellow"	Uses mobile ethnography to understand the customer experiences and needs of the destination Serfaus-Fiss-Ladis.
Cassia et al., 2021	Accessible Tourism - People with mobility disability	n= 1.	Tourism Customer Journey	Understanding how destinations can provide accessible experiences and how these can be enabled by technology.
Chang & Lin, 2019	Creative Tourism - Jioufen Gallery, Ceramic Art Workshop, and Artist Teahouse in Taiwan	n= each case was supplied with ten customer surveys (total of 30 surveys).	Observation, questionnaire survey, pain and gain points of empathy mapping, and customer journey mapping	The goal of this paper was to identify the elements that affected the tourists' experiences in creative tourism through different creative tourism contexts.
Feng et al., 2019	Tourism - Baotu Spring Park in Jinan	Desk research: - n=3 031 reviews from MAFENGWO website - n=6 379 reviews from CTIRP website Shadow tracking: - n is not mentioned Situational interviews: - $n=10$	Desk research, shadow tracking and situational interviews in order to build a customer journey map	The study intended to explore the tourists' experiences from their perspective in the whole cycle of before, during and after travelling in order to revive the tourism at the destination.
Li et al., 2017	MICE Tourism - Kaohsiung Exhibition Center (KEC), Taiwan	n=12	Customer Experience Journey Map and Service Assembly Concept	Uses Customer Experience Journey Map and Service Assembly Concept to redesign a service and improve the customer experience in the exhibition and tourism industries.

Reference	Research Context	Sample	Research Design	Study Objectives/Purpose
Lin et al., 2020	Agricultural Tourism - Leisure farms, Taiwan	- Visiting and in-depth observing: $n=$ 20 leisure farms of seven different types with Facebook scores above 4.0 (5 points as maximum) - Questionnaire survey: $n=20$ - Online questionnaires: $n=$ 417	Customer Journey Map: - Identification of touchpoints: visiting and in-depth observing - Tourists' motivations: literature review, questionnaire survey and online questionnaires	The study proposes an approach to integrate the customers' motivations, touchpoints and new touchpoint target tools in a Customer Journey Map in order to create and implement innovative service design of touchpoints in leisure farms.
Maslova et al., 2020	Tourism - Unorganized Tourism	Online survey - $n=100$ consumers aged 18-35	Customer Journey Map: - Data from reports, analytical articles, consumer reviews and the results of quality marketing research: researches by Google, PayPal, Booking.com - Online survey	The purpose of the study is to identify the impact of digital technology on the different stages of the decision-making process by tourists.
Rojas et al., 2021	Hospitality	$n=6$ people who had stayed in a hotel in the last 12 months	Customer Journey Map: survey	The study identifies the touchpoints, channels and emotions that characterize the many stages of the customers' experiences in the hotel industry through a Customer Journey Map.
Stickdorn et al., 2014	Tourism - St. Anton, Austria	$n=42$	Customer Journey Map: mobile ethnography tool "myServiceFellow"	The goal of the study is to use mobile ethnography to understand and improve the customer experience in a destination.
Subramaniam et al., 2019	Medical Tourism - Marketing Department of	$n=12$ marketing professionals working for Hospitals/Clinics in Dubai	Customer Journey Map: semi-structured interviews	The study intended to identify the role of digital marketing in medical tourism and how it can be used to attract international

Reference	Research Context	Sample	Research Design	Study Objectives/Purpose
	Hospitals/Clinics in Dubai			patients to Dubai. The importance of digital marketing strategies was evaluated and a systematic digital marketing customer journey map was suggested as a digital marketing strategy for medical tourism marketing.
Veréb & Azevedo, 2019	Tourism - Four different scenarios related to maritime tourism, randomly assigned to each respondent	n=116	Quasi-experiment in which a Tourism Experience Journey Map was built based on an online questionnaire	The study aimed to assess the role of perceived innovation along the travelers' journeys, particularly during the planning phase, according to its antecedents: the level of co-creation, authenticity and the occurrence of potential negative events.
Wang & Wu, 2020	Hospitality - China - Young women aged 18-26	- Questionnaires: n=181 - In-depth interviews: n=16	The methods used were questionnaires, in-depth interviews, user journey map (based on the results of the previous methods) and mirror theory	The paper aims at studying the experiences of individual female travelers in terms of hotel security in China. Based on these, the study intends to design the hotel security service system for independent women.

Appendix B- Model of the Customer Journey Map

Source: own elaboration

JOURNEY MAP

CJM Conceptual Model

Before the service	During the service	After the service

	Substage title	Substage title	Substage title

	Persona	ACTIONS- WHAT THE CUSTOMER DOES

	Persona	CHANNELS- HOW THE TOUCHPOINTS ARE CONVEYED TO THE CUSTOMER

	Persona	EMOTIONAL JOURNEY- HOW THE CUSTOMER IS FEELING

	Persona	EXPECTATIONS- WHAT THE CUSTOMER EXPECTED TO HAPPEN

	Persona	PAIN POINTS- WHAT NEEDS TO BE IMPROVED

	Persona	POINTS OF DELIGHT- WHAT WAS HIGHLIGHTED IN THE EXPERIENCE

	Persona	RECOMMENDATIONS- WHAT THE CUSTOMER SUGGESTS TO IMPROVE THE SERVICE

Appendix C- Interview Guide

Source: own elaboration

Obrigada pela sua disponibilidade em participar nesta entrevista. Este é um estudo para minha Dissertação de Mestrado sobre a experiência do consumidor Millennial em hotéis através do mapeamento da sua jornada antes, durante e após a estadia no hotel, para conseguir entender melhor os clientes deste segmento e o que precisa de ser melhorado e alterado para os atrair. Não há respostas certas ou erradas e gostaria de relembrar que esta entrevista será gravada e transcrita posteriormente, mas dados recolhidos serão submetidos anonimamente. Dá autorização para tal?

Informação demográfica do participante:

- Idade
- Género
- Estado Civil
- Nível de Escolaridade
- Ocupação
- Número de hotéis visitados nos últimos 12 meses

Pense numa destas estadias, a mais recente ou a que se lembrar melhor, e diga-me qual foi:

- Propósito da viagem
- Com quem viajou
- Localização do hotel
- Duração da estadia

Antes da estadia - Mencione as fases ou interações diretas ou indiretas com o hotel que você experienciou antes da sua estadia

- O que você fez nessa fase/interações?
- Que canais usou nessa fase/interação?
- Tinha alguma expectativa em concreto para essa fase/interação?
- Destaca algum aspeto pela negativa nessa fase/interação que poderia ser melhorado?
- Destaca algum aspeto pela positiva nessa fase/interação?
- O que recomenda para melhorar o serviço nessa fase/interação?
- Como se sentiu em relação a essa fase/interação numa escala de 5 pontos que vai de não correu nada bem a correu muito bem?

Durante a estadia - Mencione as fases ou interações diretas ou indiretas com o hotel que você experienciou durante da sua estadia

- O que você fez nessa fase/interações?
- Que canais usou nessa fase/interação?
- Tinha alguma expectativa em concreto para essa fase/interação?
- Destaca algum aspeto pela negativa nessa fase/interação que poderia ser melhorado?
- Destaca algum aspeto pela positiva nessa fase/interação?
- O que recomenda para melhorar o serviço nessa fase/interação?
- Como se sentiu em relação a essa fase/interação numa escala de 5 pontos que vai de não correu nada bem a correu muito bem?

Após a estadia - Mencione as fases ou interações diretas ou indiretas com o hotel que você experienciou após a sua estadia

- O que você fez nessa fase/interações?
- Que canais usou nessa fase/interação?
- Tinha alguma expectativa em concreto para essa fase/interação?
- Destaca algum aspeto pela negativa nessa fase/interação que poderia ser melhorado?
- Destaca algum aspeto pela positiva nessa fase/interação?
- O que recomenda para melhorar o serviço nessa fase/interação?
- Como se sentiu em relação a essa fase/interação numa escala de 5 pontos que vai de não correu nada bem a correu muito bem?

Antes da entrevista terminar, tem mais algum comentário sobre o tema que gostaria de partilhar comigo?

Muito obrigada pelo seu tempo, a entrevista termina aqui.

Appendix D- Demographic and trip-related information of the participants

Source: own elaboration

Participants	Age	Gender	Civil status	Educational Level	Ocupation	Nº of hotels visited in the last 12 months	Purpose of the trip	Travel companion	Hotel's location	Duration of the stay
1	38	Female	Married	Bachelor's degree	Clinical Psychologist	4	Leisure	Family with a 5 year old	Menorca	9 nights
2	20	Female	Single	High School degree	Student	3	Leisure	Friends	Madrid	3 nights
3	22	Male	Single	Bachelor's degree	Student-worker	2	Leisure	Family	Las Palmas	7 nights
4	25	Male	Single	Bachelor's degree	Student-worker	2	Business	Colleagues	Covilhã	1 night
5	29	Female	Single	Master's degree	Doctor	2	Leisure	Partner	Maiorca	9 nights
6	28	Male	Single	Master's degree	Software Engineer	3	Leisure	Partner	Maiorca	9 nights
7	27	Male	Single	Bachelor's degree	Computer Engineer	2	Leisure	Alone	Aveiro	1 night
8	40	Female	Single	Bachelor's degree	Consultant	3	Leisure	Partner	São Tomé	3 nights
9	24	Female	Single	Bachelor's degree	Student-worker	1	Leisure	Family	Alentejo	2 nights
10	34	Female	Single	Master's degree	Manager	4	Leisure	Partner	Mexico	4 nights
11	35	Male	Single	Master's degree	3D Animator	4	Leisure	Alone	Stuttgart	1 night
12	34	Female	Married	Doctoral degree	Pharmaceutical	4	Leisure	Partner	Maiorca	7 nights
13	33	Female	Married	Master's degree	Psychologist	10	Leisure	Partner	Salzburg	2 nights
14	33	Female	Single	Master's degree	Banker	1	Leisure	Friends	Vienna	2 nights
15	34	Female	Single	Master's degree	Marine Engineer	10	Leisure	Partner	Strasbourg	3 nights
16	30	Female	Single	Master's degree	Recruiter	10	Leisure	Family	Cape Verde	7 nights
17	23	Female	Single	Bachelor's degree	Student	5	Leisure	Partner	Barcelona	3 nights
18	34	Female	Single	Master's degree	Food Protection Specialist	14	Business	Alone	Lucera	2 nights
19	23	Female	Single	Bachelor's degree	Housekeeper	5	Leisure	Partner	Santorini	2 nights
20	24	Male	Single	High School degree	Programmer	1	Leisure	Partner	Paris	4 nights
21	22	Male	Single	High School degree	Chef	5	Leisure	Partner	Athens	2 nights
22	27	Male	Single	Postgraduate degree	Banker	4	Leisure	Partner	Monaco	3 nights
23	24	Male	Single	Bachelor's degree	Logistical Assistant	6	Leisure	Friends	Dublin	3 nights
24	31	Male	Single	Bachelor's degree	Golf Teacher	4	Leisure	Partner	Porto Santo	2 nights
25	24	Male	Single	Master's degree	Software Engineer	3	Leisure	Alone	Munich	2 nights
26	30	Male	Single	High School degree	Golfer	6	Leisure	Partner	Sintra	7 nights
27	38	Male	Married	High School degree	Photojournalist	5	Leisure	Family with a 6 year old	Seville	2 nights
28	37	Male	Single	Bachelor's degree	Communications Director	6	Business	Alone	Porto	4 nights
29	40	Male	Married	Bachelor's degree	Agronomics Engineer	15	Business	Colleagues	Cape Verde	2 nights
30	20	Male	Single	High School degree	Student	3	Leisure	Friends	Madrid	3 nights

Appendix E- Customer Journey Map of José "the worker"

Source: own elaboration

JOURNEY MAP

José "the worker"

DESCRIPTION

Age: 34
Gender: male
Marital Status: single
Education: Bachelor's Degree
Occupation: Account manager
Number of hotels visited in the last 12 months: 9
Trip purpose: business
Travel companion: alone/colleagues
Duration of the stay: 2 nights

	Before the service	During the service					
	Booking	Check-in	Room	Meals	Bar	Gym	Pool	Check-out

Persona — ACTIONS

Booking	Check-in	Room	Meals	Bar	Gym	Pool	Check-out
- Received information about the trip - Contacted directly or someone from the company contacted the hotel to book the stay - Receive booking confirmation	1. Arrived at the hotel 2. Headed to the front desk 3. Showed personal documents 4. Received room keys 5. Made gym and breakfast time reservations 6. The guest was taken to the room	- Used the room only to rest and shower - Used the room to work - Used the telephone to ask for information	- Only breakfast included or half board - In a separate room - They had to tell the staff the name of the company or the room number - Buffet style - In one case he had to choose the schedule	- Paid separately right away or with room charge - Ordered at the table or at the counter	- Booked in advance - There was a member of the staff controlling the entrances and giving gym towels	- The guest could just choose a sun lounger and enjoy the pool	- Headed to the front desk - Delivered room keys - Paid for the stay with the company's credit card - Asked for an invoice with the company's details

Persona — CHANNELS

Booking	Check-in	Room	Meals	Bar	Gym	Pool	Check-out
- Email - SMS - Telephone	- Front desk staff	- Telephone - Personalized welcome message on the TV screen	- Staff	- Staff	- Staff		- Front desk staff

Persona — EMOTIONAL JOURNEY

Persona — EXPECTATIONS

Booking	Check-in	Room	Meals	Bar	Gym	Pool	Check-out
- Since he booked with the manager, he expected to have some benefits such as free parking - Expected to try a new hotel	- Expected the staff to show more concern for the guests' well-being by asking how their trip went - Did not expect to have someone taking the bags to the room - Friendly staff - To be provided relevant information about the hotel - To have everything confirmed	- Good Wi-Fi - A place to work - Spacious room - Good soundproofing	- Good quality - Typical food of the region		- Modern machines	- Did not expect the hotel to have a pool	- Expected someone from the staff to be there to thank them and say goodbye - Expected the hotel to collect the guests' evaluation - She was worried about the invoice because normally there are mistakes - To be charged correctly - Quick process

Persona — PAIN POINTS

Booking	Check-in	Room	Meals	Bar	Gym	Pool	Check-out
- Lack of relevant information about the stay in the company's email - They only answered the phone at the 4th try	- The staff did not show concern for the guests by, for example, asking how the trip was or having water bottles to offer - Queue - Not enough members of the staff	- Twin bed instead of a singular bed - Lack of variety of TV channels - Bad soundproofing due to the fact that the room shared a door with another room	- Quality - Lack of variety	- The bar was a bit dull with no background music - Waiting time	- Old machines without maintenance		- Lack of interaction with the staff - The hotel did not collect customer data to contact the guest after the stay - Queue

Persona — POINTS OF DELIGHT

Booking	Check-in	Room	Meals	Bar	Gym	Pool	Check-out
- The direct contact with a member of the hotel's team	- Simple - Quick - Free parking - Friendliness of the staff - They provided relevant information about the hotel - Familiar ambiance	- They offered two bottles of water from the region - Wi-Fi - Working space - Smart tv - Familiar ambiance - Spacious	- Quality - Friendliness of the staff - The schedules avoided having many people at the same time having breakfast	- Friendliness of the staff - Quick service - They served free appetizers with the drinks - The staff advised the guests on the drinks that were best for each occasion and the portion sizes	- The gym overlooked the indoor pool	- Spacious - Salt water	- Quick and efficient - The invoice was passed correctly - They had his data stored from previous stays

Persona — RECOMMENDATIONS

Booking	Check-in	Room	Meals	Bar	Gym	Pool	Check-out
- For companies to send an email with more detailed information about the stay - To have someone always paying attention to the phone calls - The hotel should have a direct number for frequent guests so that he does not have to bother the manager	- For the staff to show more concern for their guests by asking how their trip was or by offering a water bottle - More people at the front desk to reduce waiting time and queueing	- Bigger variety of TV channels - To inform the guests previously that the room has a sharing door and give the option to change rooms	- Have an à la carte service so that the guests can stay seated talking to each other - Bigger variety of table sizes instead of only big tables because the guest had to sit alone in a big table - More variety	- To have background music - Quicker process at least when ordering	- Invest in the gym by changing and maintaining the machines		- Someone from the staff should be available at the group's departure - To collect the guests' information for future contact and evaluation of the hotel - More people at the front desk - Feedback machines for a quick evaluation of the stay - Feedback form

Appendix F- Customer Journey Map of Joana "the friend"

Source: own elaboration

PROJECT
CJM Conceptual Model

JOURNEY MAP
Joana "the friend"

DESCRIPTION
Age: 22
Gender: female
Marital Status: single
Education: High School Degree
Occupation: student
Number of hotels visited in the last 12 months: 3
Trip purpose: leisure
Travel companion: friends
Duration of the stay: 3 nights

Before the service — **During the service** — **After the service**

	Search and Comparison	Booking	Check-in	Room	Meals	Check-out	Evaluation
ACTIONS	Compared and searched for a hotel according to: - Good location - Good accessibilities - Breakfast included - Reviews - Price	- Booked the hotel on booking/contacted the hotel directly - Filled personal data - Filled credit card details as a security measure - Received booking confirmation - The hotel sent a message about the time of arrival	1. Arrived at the hotel 2. Headed to the front desk 3. Showed booking confirmation 4. Showed personal documents 5. Made payment 6. Received room keys 7. The guests were taken to the room	- Only went to the room to rest and shower	- Only breakfast included - In the meals' room - The guests had to give the room number - Buffet style - In one case they had to book a schedule	1. Headed to the front desk 2. Delivered room keys 3. Made payment 4. Left luggage stored at the hotel	- Received an email requesting an evaluation of the hotel from Booking and from the hotel
CHANNELS	- Friends - Booking website - Trivago - TripAdvisor - Hotel's website.	- Booking website - Email	- Front desk staff	- Personalized welcome card	- Staff	- Front desk staff	- Email
EMOTIONAL JOURNEY							
EXPECTATIONS	- Lower prices		- Expected the staff to identify her reservation - Expected to be given relevant information about the hotel - Long and complex process	- Expected to have a free chocolate - Expected the room to correspond to the pictures	- A lot of variety and alternatives - Expected it to correspond to the hotel's classification	- To be asked for concrete feedback - To be possible to leave the bags at the hotel	- To be asked for feedback at the hotel and not after the stay - To receive an email from booking but not from the hotel
PAIN POINTS	- Long and stressful process - Have to resort to filters - Tripadvisor has many positive and negative reviews which makes it difficult to draw conclusions - Higher prices than the hotel's website - The most expensive options appear first - Many options which makes it confusing to find the best options	- Lack of clarity as if the credit card will be charged or not at the time of booking	- The unfriendliness of the staff - The hotel was confusing	- The room was not soundproofed, the guest could hear the other rooms - The windows did not open - View	- Lack of variety of warm foods - They did not have alternatives such as other types of milk - They had to wait for the people from the previous shift to finish their breakfast	- The luggage room had no lockers	- Lack of time and patience to answer the feedback form after the stay - Very extensive and tiresome form with a minimum number of characters to allow the submission of feedback
POINTS OF DELIGHT	- Genius discounts - User friendly - Free cancellation which allows the guests to book hotels and cancel them - Every option is condensed in one place	- Discount associated with the booking account - Simple - Quick - Friendliness of the staff - Free cancellation - Has the option to choose when the guest wants to pay for the stay	- The friendliness of the staff - Communication	- Balcony with a nice view - Spacious	- Familiar environment - No confusion	- The friendliness of the staff	- Quick and simple process - Interest in the guests' opinions
RECOMMENDATIONS	- To show the best price-quality options instead of the most expensive ones first	- To be more explicit about if the card will be charged at the time of booking - An email should be sent before charging the card	- The staff could have been nicer - The hotel could provide a hotel tour or a map of the facilities - The hotel should have direction signs	- To have free amenities such as shampoo and shower gel and a treat such as a chocolate or a welcome message - The rooms should be soundproofed - For the windows to open	- More toasters to reduce the waiting time - Have more variety of consistent and warm foods such as eggs - To have alternatives and variety - They should have a tolerance of 15 minutes between shifts	- The hotel should have lockers so that each person can leave their bags safe in separate compartments - To ask more feedback questions to understand if the person was pleased with the stay	- The hotel should send an email directly marking the end of the stay - Booking should reward their clients with genius discounts for example but leaving a review to encourage answering the forms - Less extensive feedback form

Appendix G- Customer Journey Map of Afonso "the individual traveler"

Source: own elaboration

Appendix H- Customer Journey Map of Sofia "the mother"

Source: own elaboration

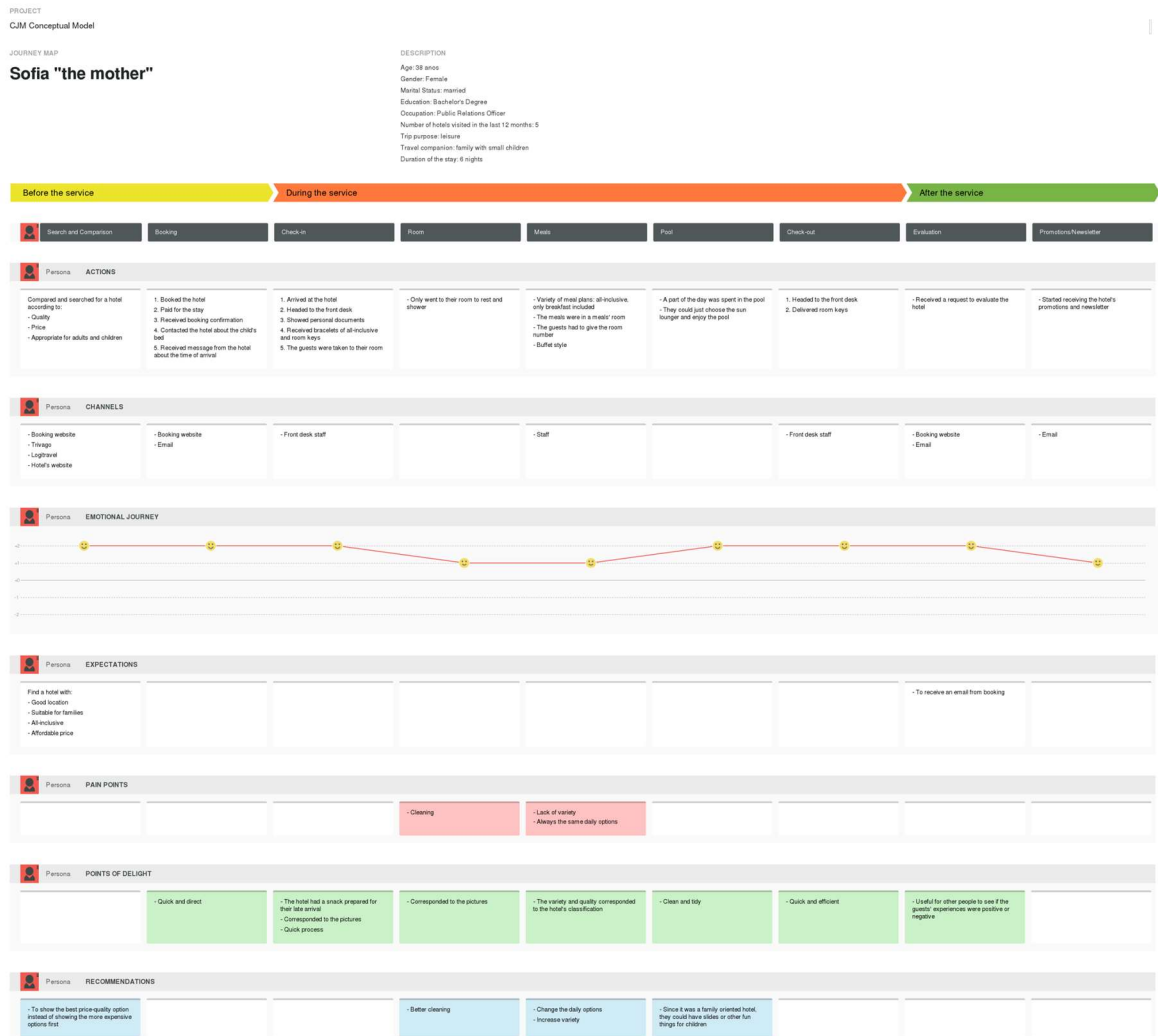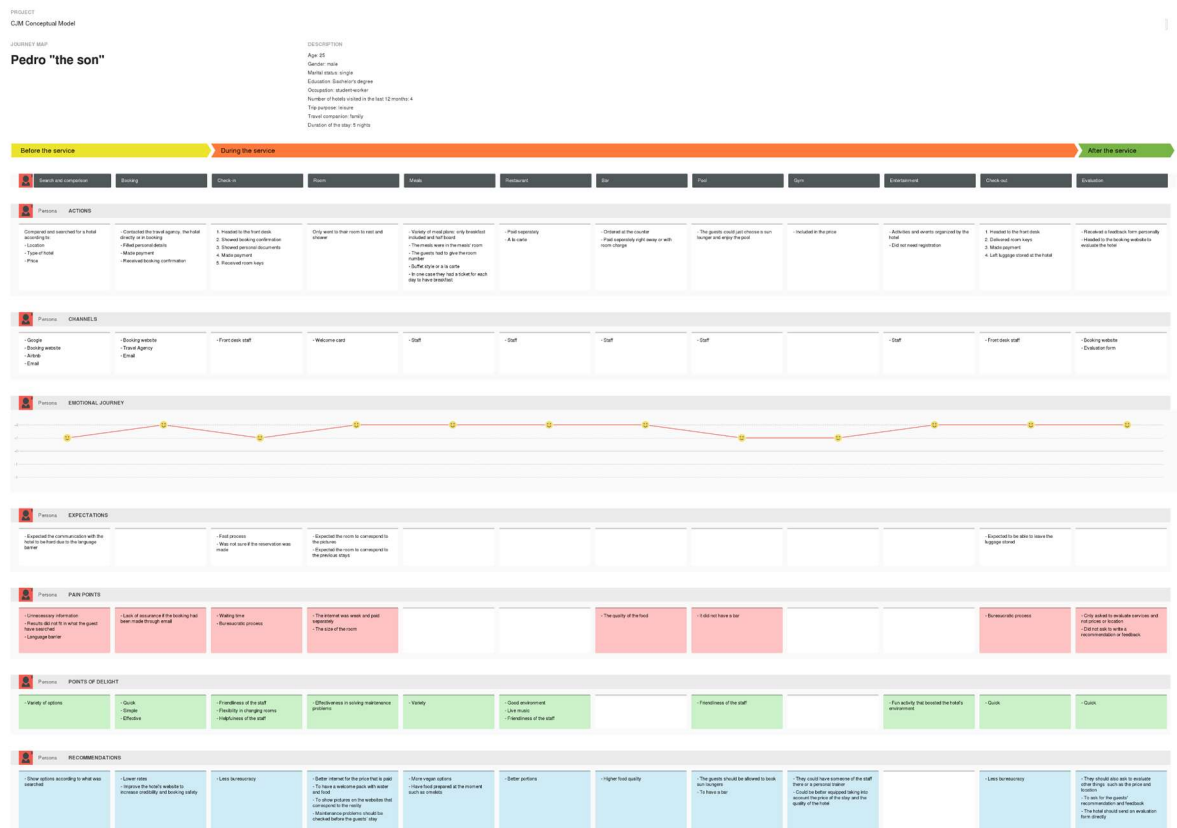**Appendix I- Customer Journey Map of Pedro "the son"**

Source: own elaboration

Appendix J- Customer Journey Map of Cláudia "the girlfriend"

Source: own elaboration