The Johnnie Walker Experience: A journey into the relationship between experiential marketing and consumer behaviour

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the dissertation titled 'The Johnnie Walker Experience: A journey into the relationship between experiential marketing and consumer behaviour' is my original and authentic piece of work prepared for submission at the University of Gloucestershire. The information gathered from the literature has been duly acknowledged in text and a list of references provided.

The dissertation has not been submitted in part or in full to any other university or towards any other degree before the date mentioned below.

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Abstract

The issue informing the purpose of this research study is that Johnnie Walker (JW) belongs to a highly competitive market. An effective way for JW to stay competitive in their market is using experiential marketing methods to positively effect consumer behaviour for sales growth. This issue raises a few research questions which the researcher intends to investigate, these are: Can experiential marketing methods such JW offering distillery tours be an effective influence on consumer behaviour and encourage sales post-visit? If customers are satisfied by the experience JW provides, can this encourage loyalty with the brand and inspire brand advocacy? Does JW provide a quality experience and if so, what are the key elements resulting in their success and is there anything they can improve on? These questions inform the overall aim which encapsulates the focus for the entire project: Does Johnnie Walker utilise experiential marketing such as distillery tours as a sales method and effectively influence consumer behaviour, brand loyalty and brand advocacy, is the experience a success in doing so or is there room for improvement? The way the researcher goes about conducting this research is by visiting the JW distillery with his participant researcher to experience the tour, located on Princess Street in Edinburgh. The research methods used to underpin the methodology process are the Blueprint Model (Shostack, 1984) and the Servicescape Framework (Bitner, 1992). The service blueprint (SB) will be used to map out the customer journey throughout the experience and identify the behavioural responses received from customers of each stage — what do these outcomes mean for JW? The Servicescape Framework will be used to establish the behavioural responses from customers of environmental stimuli within the organisation and what does this means for JW? Visual data was obtained from the experience so in terms of how the data is analysed is though the methodology framework of Interpretive Engagement (Drew & Guillemin, 2014). Along with this framework a complete service blueprint of the experience will be developed to determine the key stages. The results of this study consist of themes of pleasurable behavioural responses being evoked from the perceived servicescape and the stages within the experience, leading to increased customer satisfaction and trust. These behaviours correlate with increased brand loyalty and advocacy resulting in the accomplishment of sales growth. Only a singular fail point was identified meaning there is some room for improvement but ultimately the rest of the experience was a success. It can be concluded that the JW experience does positively impact loyalty which has a cause-and-effect relationship with increased sales via customer retention. A link between experiential marketing and positive consumer behaviour can be made, meaning JW are utilising experiential marketing as an effective sales method. Given the lack of research into consumer behavior and experiential marketing for the specific organisation, there's much room for building on top of this study. This includes theory building, further empirical research, and the potential for other researchers to develop new or different methods of research. New ideas for research can also be developed which can be the implementation of quantitative research methods instead of solely qualitative methods.

<u>Acknowledgements</u>

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Introduction

The purpose of this research project is to find out how effective experiential marketing can be on influencing consumer behaviour and whether it can be used as a sales method. The chosen organization that this study is based on is Johnnie Walker (JW) and their Distillery tours as a form of experiential marketing. The issue for JW is its highly competitive market, the researcher intends to understand how well JW performs within this market. So, it is appropriate to be exploring how consumer behaviour can be affected during the JW experience. Paavola (2006) mentions in her study that 'Chivas Regal was and remains the main competitor for Johnnie Walker in the premium Scotch category. In the standard category, Johnnie Walker faced competition from a number of others, including Ballantine's, Dewar's and Famous Grouse.' So, JW's product portfolio consists of many different labels which puts them in the standard category (Red label) but also has labels which put them in the premium category (Blue label) they are faced with a significant amount of competition and one way to increase sales and beat their competitors can be through quality forms of experiential marketing.

This raises questions, the first question is, can experiential marketing methods such as Johnnie Walker (JW) offering distillery tours be an effective influence on consumer behaviour and encourage sales post-visit? The next question, if customers are satisfied by the experience JW provides, can this encourage loyalty with the brand and inspire brand advocacy? The final question is, does JW provide a quality experience and if so, what are the key elements resulting in their success and is there anything they can improve on? These research questions sum up the objectives.

The study being conducted has great relevance in terms of the researcher's degree specialism as his course is based on Advertising, Marketing and Branding, the study is completely marketing orientated and all the subject knowledge included in the study has been covered in the researcher's degree studies, so the research being conducted here is highly informed and most appropriate. In the context of the issue topic, it involves using marketing research models to explore how JW uses experiential marketing methods and how the components of the experience can drive their success and impact consumer behvaiour. These are essential performance aspects which inform how JW competes in their market, it is important to take this into consideration as each competitor in that market will own a percentage of the market share. Increased market share is essential for brand growth which results in more sales. Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001) found that 'Purchase loyalty, in turn, leads to greater market share' So, exploring how the JW experience can affect customer loyalty can have high relevance as increased loyalty has a cause-and-effect relationship with JW's growth in market share.

This study can be considered as a novel topic as its new in terms of the specifications around it, reason being is there are no other original research studies which investigate how the brand Johnnie Walker uses experiential marketing to drive sales and success. Although there are many other research papers which are based around the same premise; how experiential services can achieve positive consumer behaviour, brand loyalty, customer satisfaction and exploring experiential marketing in general, there are

a lack of studies looking into JW specifically. Carmo et al. (2022) can be a good example of a study with a similar premise as they explore how experiential marketing affects satisfaction and loyalty. They found that 'satisfaction is influenced positively and directly by affective and sensorial experience and loyalty is influenced positively and directly by affective and behavioural experience.' Similar and new results should be found in the researcher's study in comparison to Carmo's. So, this research can be considered as building on top of already existing studies which are similar in premise in the hope that new knowledge and perspectives can be discovered meaning the research has value for other researchers in the same field. It is important to explore how the JW experience effects customer satisfaction as Iazzi (2018) in his study found 'the existence of a linear relation between satisfaction and post purchase behaviour.' This can impact how competitive JW are within their market as if high levels of satisfaction are achieved then increased post purchasing behaviours can also be seen giving JW a competitive advantage.

The key research models which will underpin this investigation are the Servicescape framework (Bitner, 1992) and the Blueprint model (Shostack, 1984). The researcher intends to use service blueprint (SB) to map out the customer journey throughout the JW distillery experience and identify what elements contribute towards the success of the research questions and where there might be room for improvement. Theories that are used in the theoretical perspectives section include the Customer Focus Theory (Drucker, 1954) and the Stimulus Organism Response (SOR) theoretical model.

The overall focus of this research project is to use research methods to explore the link between behavioural responses of customers and environmental factors when going on tour at the JW experience — located on Princes Street in Edinburgh. What makes it a successful experience and how it can affect consumer behaviour?

The overall aim is: Does Johnnie Walker utilise experiential marketing such as distillery tours as a sales method and effectively influence consumer behvaiour, brand loyalty and brand advocacy, is the experience a success in doing so or is there room for improvement?

Literature Review

Whisky distillation dates back many centuries, thus giving it a lengthy and profound history. The story of Scotch begins as early as the 15th century with the earliest documented record of distilling in Scotland occurring in 1494, which can be found in the tax records of the day, the Exchequer Rolls. 'Aqua Vitae' was the Latin name given to whisky meaning 'the water of life', this is because the distilled product was seen as having 'remarkable restorative properties.' In the 16th century a constant war was waged between the state and private distillers for control of the very valuable commodity. 'The granting of monopolies to surgeons and apothecaries during this time was an attempt to control whisky distilling for use only for medical purposes, but this wasn't very successful because of the ever-increasing commercial pressures.' (Stewart & Russell, 2003) It wasn't until the 18th century where Scotch whisky eventually became a commercially

available commodity and in the 19th century came the rise of renowned whisky brands we know today, such as John Walker who established his business in 1820 and opened the doors for visitors in 2021. The challenges presented for distilleries is the fact that it's a highly competitive market, in 2001 'the market began to be saturated with distillery attractions that were provided essentially the same experience.' (McBoyle & McBoyle, 2008) So, for JW to be successful they need to provide customers with a quality and unique experience which can leave them feeling satisfied. McBoyle & McBoyle also state that 'several distilleries have concluded that a defensive marketing approach – one that aims to encourage loyalty among customers – promises more reliable returns to the company.' This means that for distilleries to succeed in their competitive market they should be aiming to establish more long-term, loyal customers. Experiential marketing can play a big part in achieving that.

Visitor tours of Scottish distilleries is increasingly becoming a more effective way for whisky companies to promote and sell their products. 'The purchasing behavior of a visitor to a distillery during or post-visit will likely be influenced not just by a sampled product, but also by the wider experience provided by the maker of the product, as well as the setting and ambience of the product location' (Hall et al., 2002). It's clear that distillery tours are being used as marketing strategies to provide visitors with a fantastic experience influencing them to purchase the product post-visit. 'Special interest attractions recently developed – connoisseur tours, whisky schools and the Classic Malt Cruise – are examined as examples of distillery marketing strategies that address personal value of visitors to increase market share and encourage customer loyalty in whisky sales.' (McBoyle & McBoyle, 2008) Distillery visits play a big role for the marketing strategies of whisky companies because they add value to their overall brand image. To support this Miller (1994) states 'Distillery centres are part of the overall brand marketing strategy. Their purpose is to add value to the brand image by inviting consumers to visit and identify with the quality traditions and craftmanship of whisky making.'

One example of a sales strategy which whisky companies utilise during a distillery tour are the visitors observing their products and the method of sampling so that consumers can have a quality experience leading to long-term customers. 'Both the standard and the differentiated type of tour are popular visitor attractions at the same time as being tools in an offensive marketing strategy aimed at raising product awareness in potential new customers at distilleries.' (McBoyle & McBoyle, 2008) They also mention that 'the quality of company products can be demonstrated through visitor observation and sampling. Wider brand exposure can be achieved with immediate feedback from potential customers. On-site sales are encouraged and long-term customer relationships may be developed. The provision of a pleasurable experience for the experience for the visitor goes hand in hand with the expectation of increased company profits.' So one key point is that distillery tours offer customers with exposure to the brand and provides these visitors with a pleasurable experience which should lead to them purchasing on-site or post-visit, and long-term relationships can be formed. Loyalty and long-term relationships marketing can be highly valuable to the brands profitability, whisky distillery tours are important for providing customers with that quality experience making them 'feel good' and encouraging them to form long-term relationships. Duffy (1998) pointed towards 'a

worldwide trend towards loyalty or 'relationships' marketing in which the 'feel good' factor for the customer is a key component.' So, it's clear that loyalty can play a big factor in the success of companies.

To assess the value of the service environment and understanding the customer journey throughout the experience the application of the chosen models is important, these models are the Servicescape Model and the Blueprint Model. The original servicescape model was coined by Booms and Bitner (1981, p. 36), who defines servicescape as 'the environment in which the service is assembled and in which the seller and customer interact, combined with tangible commodities that facilitate performance or communication of the service.' By conducting empirical and theoretical data when visiting the Johnnie Walker distillery the researcher and a participant researcher can experience how the servicescape affects the customer journey, leading towards a satisfied or unsatisfied experience which could potentially establish loyalty to the brand. Further development of this model by Bitner (1992) 'demonstrates the relationship between the physical ambience and place and its impact on service delivery and perception.' The conducted research identifies key environmental dimensions, they are: ambient conditions Parallel to Kotler's (1973-1974) atmospheric factors. Spatial layout and functionality and signs, symbols and artifacts.

The Service Blueprint model is the next approach used for gathering data at the distillery. This technique was first introduced by Shostack (1984). In Kostopoulos et al (2012) journal they cite Shostack (1984) and explain service blueprint. 'A tool for designing and managing services processes. A blueprint depicts all sequences and steps of the service delivery process graphically in a two-dimensional flowchart. The design process involves three steps: the identification of all necessary processes, the isolation of fail points and the establishment of time frames.' The other elements that will need to be identified include: Customer actions, Front-stage actions, Back-stage actions, Support processes, physical evidence, inventory and line of visibility. It's the ideal model to identify the points where the service may fail and see how it can be optimised in the future. The customer journey will be mapped out using this model, developed in the customer actions section of the blueprint, meaning the behavioural outcomes of each stage will be identified and what effects consumer behaviour.

The notion of experiential marketing is the process of creating an experience for the customer rather than using traditional marketing methods. By offering tours of their distillery Johnnie Walker is providing their customers with a form of experiential marketing. This can have a positive effect on their sales plus establishing loyal customers. This means that it can be considered as an effective sales method for the brand, 'experiential marketing plays a fundamental role as for consumers influences future purchase decisions'. (Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2013) Experiential marketing focuses on creating a feel-good experience which will be memorable for the consumers and seeks a positive reaction. According to Schmitt (1999), 'experiential marketing has five elements: sensorial, emotional, cognitive, behavioural, and relational value that replaces the functional value of the product or service.' If an emotional response is developed then a bond can be created between the consumer and the brand, resulting in the

establishments of loyal customers positively impacting sales. Therefore, it's clear that experiential marketing can be used as a sales method.

G. McBoyle and E. McBoyle (2008) conducted research while visiting Professors at Scottish Centre of Tourism, Aberdeen Business School and The Robert Gordon University. They concluded that 'visitor tours of Scottish malt whisky distilleries have been used by whisky companies to promote their products' and also suggested that service quality is 'a key component of the attractions' success.' According to Backlund, Jonas (2014) a study was carried out to show the importance of staging an experience in the tourism industry, this goes hand in hand with whisky distillery tourism. The research was conducted with the help of a quantitative study method and consisted of a questionnaire divided into five sections. These sections are 'enviorinment, creation, general impression and elements relating to the situation itself and conduction of the experience.' The results of the study and research 'show that tourism experience is collaboration between the producer and the consumer. Furthermore, it is important to engage all the senses to receive a positive and memorable experience. Also, the experience should consist of many steps that correlate with each other.' They use the concept of servicescape to present the environmental aspects which highlight the value of co-creation as a leading factor.

Methodology

This study investigates how effective JW's experiential marketing methods can be in influencing consumer behavior and whether it can be considered as a sales method. By using the Blueprint Model, the researcher and the other participant researcher seek to find how good the JW distillery tour's customer journey is and how it effects sales. Will it encourage customers loyalty and potentially inspire brand advocacy? 'In customer theory, providing satisfaction is one of the main keys to the birth of loyalty behavior.' (Gunawan, 2022) So for the customers to reach a high level of satisfaction JW will have to provide a quality experience. The establishment of loyalty can occur. How JW creates a quality experience will be investigated. What are the key elements resulting in a successful experience and is there any room for improvement?

The research will take place at the Johnnie Walker distillery located on Princess Street where the researcher will experience the distillery tour for himself and collect data along with his participant researcher who will acquire visual data. In order for this to work the researcher will have to book in the tour for a specific time slot and travel across the country. A complete ethics form can be found in the appendix section which provides the information required to show that the study does meet the ethical standards.

The research that is going to be conducted will be taking a qualitative approach because the data being collated is based on the behaviour response of consumers to the conditions of the service environment and the way the components work together. This is a multi-method design study and the research methods that will be used to collect the data will be the service Blueprint Model (Shostack, 1984) and the conceptual framework of Servicescape (Bitner, 1992). A customer journey map will be developed via the use of

the blueprint model so the researcher can map out the journey through the experience. To find out how effective each stage can be for the customers, which will be able to inform the research objectives in the context of the issue.

3.1 The Blueprint Model

The Blueprint Model is a highly effective research method, Bitner et al (2008) noted that 'the SB technique has a positive influence on the service delivery process when it represents all the activities, relationships, and interdependencies of a service process in an objective and precise manner such that it is methodologically structured, but flexible enough to allow creativity to flow.' After the research has been carried out and the data can be formatted into a flowchart, it can be analysed to see whether the JW tour is in line with the service blueprint by having well-structured processes, but still allows room for creativity so there's an element of freedom instead of it feeling too fixed.

A complete plan of the blueprint method has been devised which will be followed when the data is being collected at the distillery. The blueprint method entails information from the tour to be used for data analysis. This includes: identification of all necessary processes, isolation of fail points and establishment of time frames.

These elements will be used to inform the two-dimensional flowchart which will be developed after the data has been collected. The next set of research points for the blueprint are more specific from the perspective of the customers. These are Customer actions: the steps which customers take as part of the service delivery process; Front-stage actions: steps taken by contact employees as part of the face-to-face service encounter; Back-stage actions: Non-visible steps taken by contact employees behind the line of visibility; Support processes: Activities carried out by employees who are not contact employees, but whose actions are required for the service to be delivered; Physical evidence: Tangible elements associated with each step that has the potential to influence customer perceptions of the service encounter. e.g., uniforms; Line of visibility: Line that separates front-stage and back-stage actions. These elements combine to formulate the service blueprint.

Throughout the tour the researcher will need to map out each section and note down the relevant data in accordance with the elements mentioned above. A series of pictures will be taken as well. Primarily the pictures taken during the tour will be points of analysis so this data collected is considered visual data, this type of data can provide value to research projects as the researcher can interpret what this means for the customers using pictures. Drew and Guillemin (2014) state that 'researchers have recognized the value of incorporating visual approaches as part of their methodological repertoire.' Emmison and Smith (2000) also support the use of visual methodology by stating that 'the use of visual methodologies in research has been gaining increased acceptance.'

Regarding the analysis of the visual data collected, a theoretical framework has been selected as a method of analysis. Drew and Guillemin (2014) proposed a framework of 'Interpretive Engagement as a way of conceptualizing the process of analysis used to

generate meaning from visual images produced in a research context.' The classification of this framework is that the participant provides the picture leaving the interpretation up to the researcher. This will be achieved by the participant researcher will take numerous pictures of each stage throughout the tour which will then be presented to the researcher post-tour giving him the opportunity to analyse the visual data and interpret what this means for the audience.

For further analysis the data received will be depicted into a two-dimensional flowchart. From this a big picture of how the service operates can be seen and highlights what the key elements are in the customer journey, and the effect that each stage has on consumers behaviour. This will allow the researcher to see if the best experience is being provided or whether there's room for improvement. Bitner et al. (2008) states that 'service blueprinting allows the capturing of dynamic processes in a visual manner.' This means that the entire service can be seen visually allowing the researcher to analyse the customer journey in a thorough way to draw specific outcomes from certain sections. This can help determine how JW is doing in comparison with their competition.

The pictures taken throughout the tour requires consent. Consent also needs to be obtained to use the visual data in the study for research purposes. The consent has been confirmed via email from JW's parent company Diageo — located in the appendix.

One limitation of using the blueprint model is that the research being conducted here is only based on a single service industry. Using blueprint for other industries, the data received may be entirely different. So for this reason before generalising my results from this study across different services, additional research is required. For example, other researchers won't be able to refer to the findings in this study if they're using service blueprint in the food industry. Kostopoulos et al (2012) had the same limitation when using service blueprint in the hotel sector. 'The hotel sector mostly offers high-contact services. Clearly other service industries such as the financial or b2b companies may represent a different case. For that reason, before generalizing the conclusions across different services, additional research is necessary.'

3.2 Servicescape Framework

The Servicescape framework is a highly suitable research method particularly for the research this study entails. He wants to find out how the servicescape of the Johnnie Walker experience affects the customers and whether this can influence consumer behaviour. The Servicescape framework can act hand in hand with the research objectives of this study. 'In addition to influencing cognitions, the perceived servicescape may elicit emotional responses that in turn influence behaviours.' (Bitner, 1992) The following section will present a plan that has been developed using all the components which will need to be identified when collecting data in the perceived servicescape:

3.2.1 Ambient conditions

Ambient conditions are the first set of characteristics that need to be established in the servicescape, this includes: Temperature, music, and odor.

It is important to identify these factors as they should have profound effects on the customers. 'Several authors have identified ambient conditions as a factor that affects perceptions of and human responses to the environment. (Baker 1987; Baker, Berry, and Parasuraman 1988; Becker 1981; Darley and Gilbert 1985; Russell and Snodgrass 1987; Sundstrom and Sundstrom 1986; Wineman 1982)' (Bitner, 1992).

3.2.2 Spatial layout and Functionality

These are the next elements which needs noting during the tour, this includes: Equipment and furnishing, the way they have been arranged, the size and shape of those items and the spatial relationships among them. 'Functionality refers to the ability of the same items to facilitate performance and the accomplishment of goals.' (Bitner, 1992)

3.2.3 Signs, Symbols and Artifacts

These are the last set of characteristics and according to Bitner (1992) they involve things like 'Quality of materials used in construction, artwork, presence of certificates and photographs on walls, floor coverings, and personal objects displayed in the environment.' The combination of these components 'can all communicate symbolic meaning and create an overall aesthetic impression.' These are the most important factors of the service environment as 'signs symbols, and artifacts are particularly important in forming first impressions, for communicating new service concepts, for repositioning a service, and in highly competitive industries where customers are looking for cues to differentiate the organization.' (Bitner, 1992) This will help the competitive challenges faced by JW in their industry as these elements will support JW's unique service environment.

Throughout the tour to help capture the data required, pictures will need to be taken, the same ethical concerns for SB apply here so the same consent is required.

The way the data will be analysed will be supported by the framework referred to as 'figure 2' in Bitners (2008) study. After the relevant data has been acquired, the researcher will have a complete view of what characteristics has influence over consumer behaviors. Therefore, providing support for the research questions being explored.

The Interpretive Engagement framework will also be applied here as the pictures taken by the participant researcher will be analysed by the researcher post-tour. What the visual data means will be interpreted and provided within the findings section. Secondary research will also be a big factor to provide support for the outcomes found by using this framework.

A limitation for servicescape is that 'sometimes such dimensions may be totally imperceptible.' (Medabesh & Upadhyaya, 2012) So there might be some elements of data which is unobtainable.

Discussion of findings

4.1 Blueprint Findings

After visiting the Johnnie Walker distillery the researcher gathered the required data to create his blueprint. The completed blueprint can be found in the appendix section of this study. A report of what he found will be presented in this following section. To start off he begins with the customer journey (customer actions) element of the blueprint.

The first stage with the JW experience being the initial interaction with the website. In terms of the Technology input of the frontstage actions involved, the first thing the customer will see is a welcoming message which says 'Welcome to Johnnie Walker Princess Street' in big, bold, bright Orange letters which would stand out to the customer. The reason why this is important is because first impressions matter a lot and would have an overall influence on the customers perspective of the experience. In support of this Himmel (2019) in his article states that 'Your first impressions may seem simple enough, but it does make a difference. It is a great way to stand out from the competition and get a relationship started on the right track.' The next step of the customer journey after visiting the website is to make the booking, in terms of the time frame it took to make the booking it was around 10 minutes so it was a simple process and you receive evidence of your booking immediately (booking confirmation). A downside of this part is that there are no support processes, so a way to improve on this can be by adding a live chat to act as a interactive decision aid to support the customers journey. Häubl & Trifts (2000) suggest that 'interactive decision aids have the potential to drastically transform the way in which consumers search for product information and make purchase decisions.' Customers may have questions which they need answering right away before they make the booking so a live two-way communication method would be ideal in providing crucial customer service. 'One increasingly popular solution to improve customer service is a "live chat" interface that allows consumers to have real time conversations online with customer service agents.' (Mero, 2018) The fact that it's an 'increasingly popular solution' means that JW should adopt this tool so they can improve their service. This is being considered as a key finding as it's something that JW needs to improve on.

The final part of this stage in the journey before arriving at the distillery is taking the flavour quiz, after the booking has been confirmed the customer also receives an email containing the flavour quiz. This is a technique known as interactive marketing as by completing this quiz it assorts you into a category so that the experience can be tailored to a person's unique preferences — improving the customers overall experience. According to Twc-admin (2022) 'Personalisation itself is increasingly becoming a priority for consumers.' So, the inclusion of this part is highly beneficial to JW making their experience the best for its customers and it allows JW to stay competitive in their highly competitive market.

After the initial stage of the customer journey the researcher and his participant researcher arrives at the distillery on Princess street. As part of the frontstage actions from the employee's they are immediately greeted by the tour guide, this brings us back to the point of first impressions, this is where customers are either made to feel welcome or not. So the greeting by the tour guide was very important, 'It is very important to make every client feel welcome.' (Whitford, 2005) After this stage the customer then needs to receive their wristband, so the tour guide can carry out their frontstage action and ask what personalised flavours they received from the flavour quiz. Once everyone has arrived and received their wristband the tour begins. Following the tour guide the group is taken to the first room where the tour guide shows the briefing video but also gets the group to introduce themselves one by one. This is important as the visitors in this group will have a better experience if they feel familiar with each other. Davis J.D., M.A.P.P. (2022) supports this as she makes a key point that 'Studies show that people have more positive experiences when they connect with strangers than when they choose not to.'

Bringing us to the next stage of the experience, the customers are instructed to sit on a long bench facing the stage. On the other side of the line of interaction we have an actor (employee) who puts on a performance as part of his frontstage actions — which is interpretated from the picture presented here. According to the researcher the performance was fantastic and carried out perfectly, he noticed that there were backstage elements going on. The conveyer belts were controlled perfectly in time with the actor to create the best experience for the customers, leading to increased customer satisfaction and an emotional response of arousal and pleasure. This is important because 'many researchers have shown that customer satisfaction has a positive effect on an organisations profitability.' (Singh, 2006)

The next part of the experience is the interactive stage as mentioned prior. This is where customers as part of their journey can create their own whisky cocktails based on their personalised flavour profile. The researcher's thoughts on this were fun, engaging and a perfect way to move on from the previous stage. As you can see by the picture provided it can be interpreted that the physical evidence here is the step-by-step menu which instructs you on how to make your cocktail and provides you with the characteristics of your personal flavour profile. This interactive section of the tour provided the researcher with high levels of satisfaction meaning that the use of interactive marketing within the experience is a key finding which contributes to its success. Aslam et al. (2015) stated in their study that 'Interactive marketing has

positive significant influence on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty.' which supports the point made here.

In the next section the visitors were able to witness the distillation process via an LED show running through the components on the wall. Frontstage actions involved the tour guide elaborating and providing additional information during this part, whereas backstage actions included the show being activated without anyone seeing how. With these actions all participating to create one show, the researcher felt that this was a mini experience within the overall experience. It was as he said fascinating and an important part as it is educational to the customers, particularly to customers that are interested in the JW brand. Blackborow (2019) who directed a report on customer education focused on key findings of his study which consisted of 'customer retention' and 'customer satisfaction' So JW has done well to implement this educational stage in their tour and should be considered as a key finding in the customer journey as they should experience the same outcomes from this section.
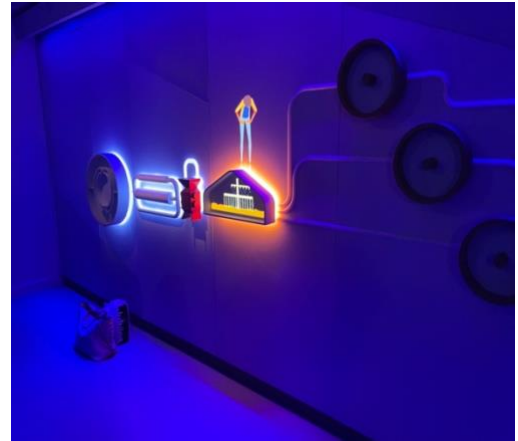
This stage is known as the 'liquid library', a name very fitting as you can see hundreds of displayed whisky bottles around the room. Here the tour guide explains to the customers about the 'journey of flavours' and we learn how these complex layers can be mixed to create a specific blend. As well as the frontstage actions performed by the tour guide the backstage element in this section is a projected lightshow which is activated at a certain point. With the educational side of this collaborating with the exciting lightshow performance, the researcher was able to identify the feeling of satisfaction it gave him and felt that his loyalty was being enhanced. Euis et al. (2021) stated in their study that 'customer satisfaction had a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty. It signified when customer satisfaction increased, customer loyalty would increase.' In consideration of this key finding, the researcher's loyalty was increasing in this section due his satisfaction was also increasing. So, a correlation has been made between the two.

In the second to last room of the tour it brings us to a small room where the customers are met with JW branded decor all around them. The frontstage actions carried out by the tour guide consist of teaching the group the best way to enjoy whisky along with backstage elements on how the screen in the picture is activated. This section is very brief and is also primarily for any questions that need answering, even though this room doesn't seem as significant as the others the researcher felt that it was still important to the overall service experience. It gives everyone a break from the emotions produced from the previous sections and allows the opportunity for creativity to flow amongst the group, enhancing the quality of the service. De Jonge et al. (2012) states that 'many service firms require their employees to work creatively to improve service quality.' This quote links with the flexibility offered in this section of the tour, as the tour guide primarily dedicates this stage to answer any questions. It ultimately improved the quality of the service. Additionally, 'both researchers and business managers emphasise the importance of having a creative workforce to sustain a competitive advantage, and have offered suggestions for building quality service that increase customer satisfaction and loyalty.' (Hon, 2013) This could potentially be another key finding in the blueprint.

Finally, reaching the last stage of the tour the customers were seated around a bar. As you can see in the picture there are two JW whisky cocktails placed on the JW branded pallet —physical evidence required for this stage of the blueprint. The frontstage actions consist of bartenders behind the bars who fix each customer their chosen two drinks and you are given the opportunity to socialise with the fellow visitors around you. The blueprint states that this section lasted for around 30 minutes giving the customers enough time to consume their drinks and make connections with the people around. According to the researcher this was a perfect way to end the tour as he was able to make conversation with like-minded people and he had strong feelings of satisfaction which he was able to share and relate with his fellow visitors.

4.2 Servicescape Findings

4.2.1 Ambient Conditions

Following the investigation at the JW distillery the researcher gathered as much data as he could in regards to the perceived servicescape, with the first set of data being carried out in terms of the ambient conditions. As a rule for these conditions, they are said to

affect the five senses. So what he was looking out for in the service environment was temperature, lighting, music and scent. 'Sometimes such dimensions may be totally imperceptible, yet may have profound effects.' (Russell & Snodgrass, 1987) So not every dimension of these conditions could be identified which will be discussed in this following section.

In the picture presented here, they arrived to the distillery and instantly the sense of sight was being engaged by the aromatic colour of blue, which is a consistent theme of mood lighting throughout. Cherry (2024) suggests that 'individual experiences have an important effect on the moods that colours can create. If you associate the colour blue with a vivacious and lively friend, you might see it as a high-energy colour that evokes a sense of excitement.' Which according to the researcher was the exact feelings that he developed. So, it is good on JW's part to include this in the meet up room as it gets the customers excited about what's to come.

In terms of the sense of touch, the temperature was a factor which wasn't noticeable as there was no extreme levels to it. Meaning that it was not too hot nor too cold, so the researcher leans towards the fact that JW has done well to keep the temperature at a balanced level to keep the customers satisfied and not in discomfort. If a customer was feeling discomfort in the environment, then it could cause them to have a unpleasant experience which could lead them to abandon the brand post-tour. Harris & Reynolds (2004) suggest that 'bad behaviour is often driven by a perceived need for justice after a dissatisfactory or stressful experience. Making customers feel safe and comfortable is thus likely to reduce the likelihood of this type of behaviour.' So, it is imperative to maintain the customers comfort throughout the whole experience to prevent unsatisfied customers and unwanted behaviour. A big factor of discomfort is extreme temperatures so JW has done well to keep it balanced.

In the meet up room there was light music playing in the background which was pleasurable as it made the researcher feel at ease. What stood out the most was in the first stage of the tour when the employee put on a performance for the group, the music that was played throughout invoked strong feelings of excitement and arousal which had the researcher 'on the edge of his seat.' So, already JW was achieving customer satisfaction.

The sense of smell was one of the conditions which was also imperceptible as there were no changes in scents throughout the tour. However, as you can see in the picture within

distillation process stage the tour guide used a contraption which produced scents of certain flavours, which were pleasurable to smell. According to Rigg (2024) 'research shows that there is a 40% improvement in mood after being exposed to a pleasant odor.' An increase in mood has been proven to translate into higher sales and increased customer loyalty.

4.2.2 Spatial Layout and Functionality

The first set of results recorded for the spatial layout and functionality of these items are captured in the first section where a performance was put on for the customers by an employee. The significance here includes the way the furnishing was laid out. As you can see in the picture provided the long bench allows the customers to sit down in a row facing the stage giving the audience a clear view of actions carried out by the employee. This layout can facilitate the success of the experience in this section, as the employee is able to engage every single customer because of the clean line of visibility between the stage and the long bench. This is being established as a key finding as the researcher feels that the layout contributes to the quality of the service and experience which increased his customer satisfaction. Tjahjaningsih et al. (2021) in his study concluded that 'customer experience and service quality effectively increased customer satisfaction to build customer loyalty.' So, stemming from increased customer satisfaction this can have a cause and effect relationship with customer loyalty.

The spatial layout in the second section is up for discussion as the equipment being used here is the dispenser which allows the customers to receive their drinks. The table furnishing is in the centre of the room, there are four dispensaries which are placed behind the four corners of the table, surrounded by customers. The functionality of the position of these dispensaries is so that everyone can fix their drinks quickly and easily otherwise if the layout was any different then it could obstruct the success of this section. Weerasinghege (2019) states that 'Well-designed layouts are extremely important because they strongly affect traffic patterns in business premises, consumer behaviour, and operational efficiency.' It's clear that having a well throughout spatial layout can reduce undesired traffic in certain sections for maximum efficiency and can facilitate positive consumer behavior.

In the final section of the tour the spatial layout and functionality is particularly important as this is where customers are seated beside each other to allow for socialisation to flow. In a study conducted by Joen & Kim (2012) found that 'the spatial layout and functionality can directly influence people's positive emotions.' So, it gives the opportunity for customers to share their positive emotions with others, essentially comparing their experiences and thus positive conclusions about the brand can be made. This may allow for increased customer satisfaction as the researcher himself felt that reaching the same conclusions with others on the tour was a pleasurable experience, which had a positive effect on his satisfaction. Rashid et al. (2015) stated in his study that 'adequate space and layout of the room that were provided may enhance the pleasure and lead to satisfaction.' Which is exactly what the researcher experienced here so this maybe another key finding as the layout and functionality in this room is ultimately contributing to JW's success of pleasurable experiences and customer satisfaction thus creating a stronger sense of brand affiliation.

4.2.3 Signs, Symbols and Artifacts

The importance of signs and symbols and what they represent in a service organisation is the most significant element as it differentiates their service from others, allowing them to stay competitive. A key symbol for JW can be seen in the picture here which is a statue of John Walker himself, this symbolises the lengthy history of JW and where the brand originated from — providing authenticity and provenance which further enhances the brand image. So this element is useful because it communicates necessary information via JW's brand iconography. According to (Akaka et al., 2014) 'symbols in service ecosystems' can guide the 'communication of information.' Along with the style of décor

presented throughout the experience which is strongly JW branded. This can elicit the emotional response of pleasure as according to the researcher he felt feelings of fulfilment when experiencing the JW interactions. This contributed towards the relationship and trust building between the brand and consumer. 'Symbols (the combination of signs and practices) help to coordinate the provision and exchange of service and the development of relationships within the service ecosystems.' (Löbler & Lusch, 2014)

4.3 Theoretical Perspectives

In this part of the study the researcher gathers each key finding from the data he received from the blueprint method and critically discusses them in relation to theory. The first key outcome of his research is in the early stages of the customer journey where the customers are making the initial booking, by using the blueprint research method the researcher was able to identify a fail point, this being the lack of a support process when

a bookings being made. Customer service is crucial for companies to stay ahead of the competition and tend to customer needs consistently, without having a 'live chat' option to support customer enquiries JW is failing at meeting customer needs in this section. Applying the Customer Focus Theory which can be traced back to the 1950s where Drucker (1954) argued that 'customer focus should be the main strategic aim of any organisation and that customer should be the main reason for the existence of the organisation.' If JW was fully customer centric then there would be no fail point in this section. So it is imperative that JW focuses on the customer needs for each stage of the customer journey.

The researcher uses the theoretical model of Stimulus Organism Response (SOR) to sum up the key findings of his study. This theoretical model was first proposed by Russell & Mehrabian (1974) and a depiction of this theory can be found in the appendix section of this paper. Applying the model here shows how emotional responses can be triggered by environmental stimuli and what customer behavioural outcomes are as a result. Many of the key findings of the blueprint model and concept of Servicescape have a theme of evoking emotional responses of pleasure and arousal. Pleasure refers to the feelings of happiness and satisfaction which the researcher was able to identify in several points of analysis. Arousal can also be linked to customer satisfaction, 'literature has reported that pleasure and arousal play an important role in customer satisfaction.' (Das, 2013) After the first two components of this model, it brings us to the last component (R), this can either be a positive behavioral response known as 'approach' or the opposite which is known as 'avoidance.' Since there was little to no negative feelings developed during the tour and it was primarily pleasure or arousal, it's safe to say that JW provides an extremely good experience to the customers making them lean towards the approach response. Sullivan (2002) states that 'when users feel pleased in an environment, they are more likely to spend time and money in the business environment.' So, the satisfying experiences that JW provides can have a positive effect on consumer behaviour. Furthermore, a correlation can be made between experiential marketing and positive consumer buying behaviours.

Conclusion

To conclude, the projects outcomes will be reviewed in relation to the research questions and the aim set for the study. The research objective asking, 'if customers are satisfied with their experience, can this lead to brand loyalty and inspire brand advocacy?' It seems that almost every stage in the customer journey throughout the experience evoked similar behavioural responses which were feelings of pleasure or arousal. As a result of these consistent feelings customers will constantly become more satisfied throughout the experience and according to Bigné et al. (2005) 'pleasure is strongly linked to customer satisfaction and loyalty.' So, the common theme throughout the findings was feelings of pleasure, leading to increased satisfaction which means the JW distillery tour did provide a highly pleasurable experience for their customers. It's appropriate to state that brand loyalty is being achieved, as the more pleasurable their experience is, brand loyalty also increases. In further support of this Sahin et al. (2011) found that 'brand experiences, satisfaction, trust have positively effects brand loyalty.' A

positive effect can be made on brand advocacy also as Quaye et al. (2022) found results that 'customer advocacy is positively related to brand loyalty through a serial mediation of brand trust and brand relationship.' So, brand advocacy can be inspired by brand loyalty. Furthermore, the researcher found outcomes of environmental factors of the experience encouraging relationship building and increasing trust. Along with the support of Darmawan (2018) who states that 'brand experience has a positive effect on brand trust' it's clear that the JW experience has positive effects on the customers trust of the brand which can mediate brand loyalty into brand advocacy.

In relation to the objective which explores whether JW provides a quality experience and if so, what are the key elements resulting in their success and is there anything they can improve on? In the first part of the customer journey, the researcher was able to identify a fail point by using the blueprint model meaning that there is room for improvement. They fail to include an interactive decision aid on the website such as a 'live chat' which can prove useful to customers when trying to decide to go ahead with the booking, essentially improving the customer journey. McLean & Osei-Frimpong (2017) supports this by stating that 'customers seeking information provided by a live chat representative to be of high quality, based on the reliability and assurance offered by the live chat representative will result in a positive experience, particularly those seeking decision support.' So, it would be beneficial for JW to implement this into their service. As for the rest of the customer journey there has been no other fail points identified, instead only positive findings have been made so it can be concluded that JW provides a quality experience. Some of the key elements resulting in their success can include the interactive stage which involved customers making their own personalised whisky cocktails.

Can experiential marketing methods such as Johnnie Walker offering distillery tours an effective influence on consumer behaviour and encourage sales post-visit? This Is the next objective up for review. In terms of the objectives reviewed prior, it's been established that the JW experience plays a massive part in behavioural outcomes which leads to increased brand loyalty among customers. Curtis et al (2022) in their study resulted that 'loyalty and repurchase/repurchase intent indicate the strongest positive relationship.' So by the experience increasing loyalty among customers, a correlation can be made between customer loyalty and repeat purchases. Therefore, experiential marketing methods can effectively influence consumer behaviour. In addition, Cuellar et al. (2015) conducted their own form of experiential marketing which involved winery tasting rooms. In the results of their experience they found that 'tasting rooms as a form of experiential marketing for wineries, creating brand awareness and generating greater growth in off-premise retail sales.' These results can be generalised to the results in this study as JW does provide whisky tasting experiences within the tour. So the JW experience can generate growth for sales in off-premise retail environments. Overall, experiential marketing can be an effective way to influence consumer behaviour and encourage sales post-experience.

In regard to the aim of the study it can be concluded that JW accomplishes the utilisation of experiential marketing as a sales method. Primarily in each stage of the

customer journey positive effects on consumer buying behaviours can be seen, particularly with increased brand loyalty influencing repeat purchases. So, as a result of these positive outcomes from each stage, correlations can be made between the elements of the service and positive consumer buying behaviours. So JW will ultimately see growth in sales. In support, Kailani & Ciobotar (2015) concluded that 'experiential marketing is not only communicating messages as traditional marketing does, but is creating a strong and direct toll with a considerable impact on consumer behaviour.' It was also found that JW only had a single area to improve on, which means that the rest of the experience was highly successful and a quality service is provided. Oversll, JW does well to compete in their highly competitive market.

5.1 Research Implications

By using the Blueprint model and the conceptual framework of servicescape in this study there's much opportunity for further research possibilities. Given the lack of research into consumer behaviour and experiential marketing for the specific organisation this means that there's room for building on top of this study for example: theory building, further empirical research and even the potential of better method development. In the findings section, the researcher found a theme of pleasure being evoked in certain sections of the experience so positive customer satisfaction was consistently being affected. This could encourage other researchers in the same field to develop new theoretical perspectives for these behavioural responses, or with other methods to see if the same data can be replicated.

In terms of new ideas which can be beneficial for future research, by using quantitative research methods such as the use of surveys, this can help researchers receive more accurate and personalised data from the sample of participants. This is because the questions can be designed in terms of the topic being investigated and numerous questions can be asked, allowing the opportunity for extensive flexibility in data analysis. Another idea which could be highly useful for research of this topic is the facilitation of whisky tasting rooms as a form of experiential marketing. By seeing how the participants respond to the experience in regard to the behavioural outcomes, conclusions can be drawn and the results can potentially be generalised to other brand experiences such as the JW experience. So, the conclusions made from the JW experience can be supported by the conclusions of the experience developed by the researcher.

5.2 Reflection

Reflecting back to the development of this research project the researcher was able to apply his degree modular knowledge and skills acquired from his studies. This includes the knowledge of service marketing and how the environments can illicit specific emotions, how brands use their marketing to positively affect consumer behavior, the development of theoretical perspectives and effective research planning. The modular knowledge also informed the chosen research methods as the best approaches in obtaining the desired data and how the data is analysed. The researcher also felt that

the planning and management of this project was also impacted by the skills developed in his studies which includes time management and writing skills.

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Appendix:

A) A complete service blueprint of the Johnnie Walker distillery experience. Created via Figma.com - https://www.figma.com/file/sRi3HGspa4wtwHfymWzef9/Service-Blueprint-(Copy)?type=whiteboard&node-id=13-145&t=vZLbMcKbtxN0bwFF-0
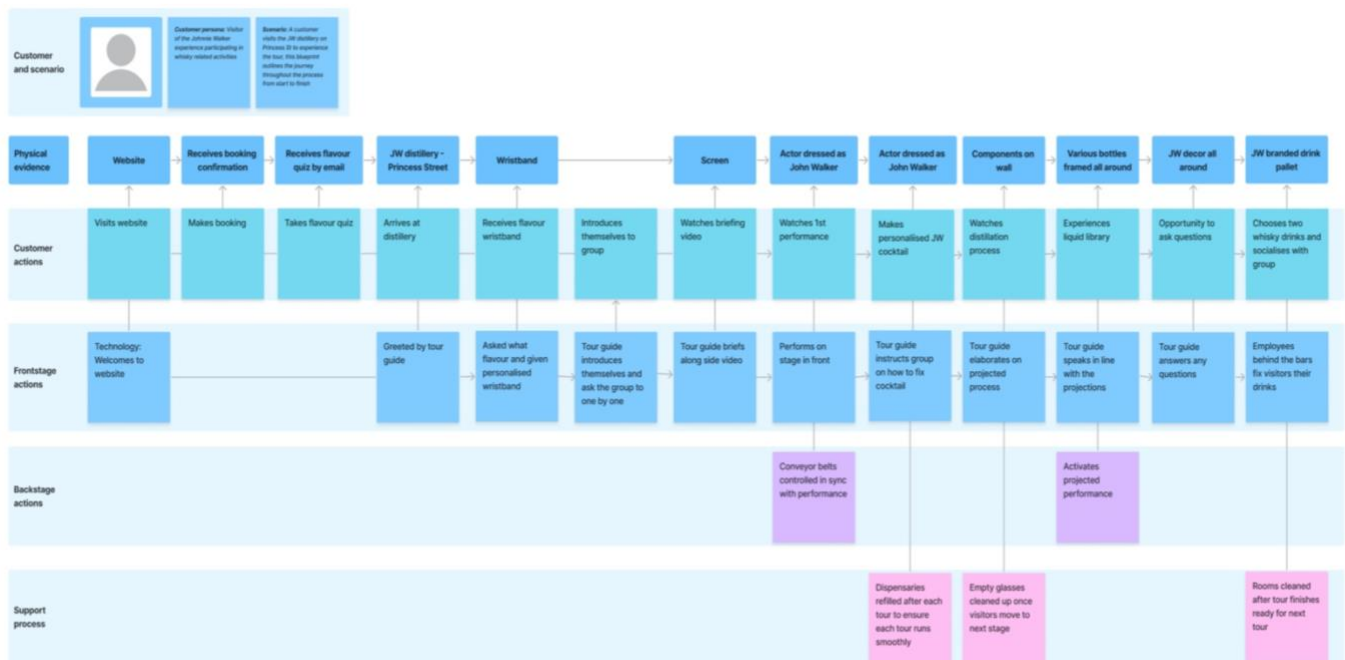
B) A depiction of the SOR model (Russell & Mehrabian, 1974) used in theoretical perspectives section proposed by - Gatautis, R., Vitkauskaite, E., Gadeikiene, A., & Piligrimiene, Z. (2016). Gamification as a Mean of Driving Online Consumer Behaviour: SOR Model Perspective. *Engineering Economics*, *27*(1). https://doi.org/10.5755/j01.ee.27.1.13198
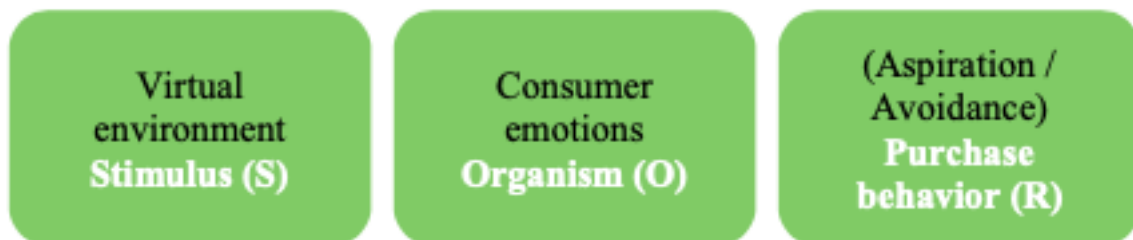
C) Framework (Figure 2) used to guide analysis for Servicescape - Bitner, M. J. (1992). Servicescapes: The Impact of Physical Surroundings on Customers and Employees. *Journal of Marketing*, *56*(2), 60. https://doi.org/10.2307/1252042
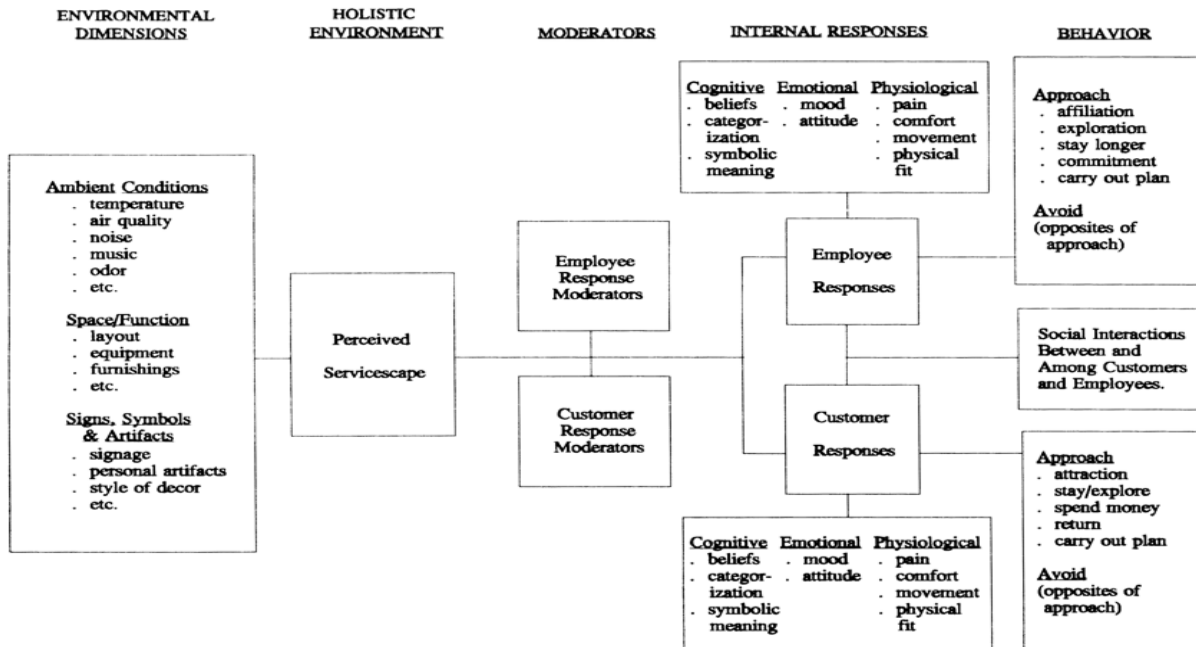
D) The first email contains the consent from Johnnie Walkers parent company Diageo confirming that the researcher is allowed to take pictures during the distillery tour, which was further confirmed by the tour guide once they had arrived at the distillery. The second email contains the consent to use the visual data in the researcher's dissertation for research purposes.

< 143   JW distillery tour   ∧ ∨

<paris.cowley@diageotrade.co.uk>
Subject: Re: JW distillery tour

Good morning Paris,

Thank you for your email, I hope you are well.

As far as we are aware, you should be able to take pictures whilst on the JW tour.

If you wish to confirm this I would recommend contacting Johnnie Walker directly. You will be able to do this through the link below.

Contact Us | Johnnie Walker UK

Hope you have a lovely time whilst there.
Kind regards

Holly Davies | Diageo Technical Servicesl
DIAGEO GBl

Register to Diageo One and be the first to hear about Diageo's latest product launches, special offers and more.

PC **Paris Cowley**   Monday
To: kai_cowley@hotmail.com >

Fwd: JW distillery tour

Sent from Outlook for iOS

From: enquiries <enquiries@diageotrade.co.uk>
Sent: Monday, April 8, 2024 1:29:22 PM
To: Paris Cowley (CPM UK)
<paris.cowley@diageotrade.co.uk>
Subject: Re: JW distillery tour

Good Afternoon Paris,

Hope this email finds you well.

I can confirm it is okay to use the pictures in the dissertation for research purposes.

If you require any further assistance, please do contact us.

Kind Regards,

Christopher Conibear | Diageo Technical Services| DIAGEO GB|

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E) A complete ethics form stating the ethical guidelines of the research study.

GBS Ethics Questionnaire 2023-4

Response ID	Completion date
1025636-1025618-122348752	1 Mar 2024, 20:14 (GMT)

1	Forename	Kai

2	Surname	Cowley

3	Student number	S4002087

4	Award Programme (DBA, PhD, Masters, Undergraduate)	UDG

5	Research title or topic (From your Research Proposal)	How Johnnie Walker uses experiential marketing methods like distillery tours to guide customer journeys to establish new customers, encourage loyalty and drive sales.

6	Involve assent-based participation, that is where agreement to participate is neither verbal nor written?	No

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7	Involve people other than the researcher(s) as participant researchers?	Yes

8	Offer financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) to participants?	No

9	Risk damage or disturbance to culturally, spiritually or historically significant artefacts or places and/or human remains?	No

10	Require the use of environmentally toxic chemicals or involve ionising radiation?	No

11	Cause any negative impact on the environment over and above that of normal daily activity?	No

12	Will the research involve children and young people under 18?	No

13	Involve potentially vulnerable individuals or groups (e.g.: people with cognitive impairments, members of minority ethnic, cultural or social groups, migrants)?	No

14	Involve medical research with humans (including clinical trials)?	No

20	Involve participants (e.g.: colleagues, students, business contacts, persons in high office) whose engagement may be influenced by the power relationships between yourself and them?	No

21	Require the cooperation of a gatekeeper for initial access to documents, data sets, a research site or research participants (e.g.: employees, school children, members of self-help groups, residents of care homes, prison inmates, charities, museums, government departments, international agencies)?	Yes

22	Does this research involve work outside the UK except for in a 'low risk' country which is your normal place of residence (please email insurance@glos.ac.uk for more information on a country's risk status)?	No

23	Involve any risk to the researcher (e.g.: lone working, international fieldwork)?	No

24	Contain elements that you or members of the research team are not trained to conduct?	No

25	Potentially involve researchers and/or participants in the disclosure of illegalities?	No

26	Present a risk of breach of confidentiality/anonymity to either individuals and/or participating organisations?	No

27	Involve administrative or secure data that requires permissions from the appropriate authorities before use?	Yes
28	Involve internet participants or other visual/vocal methods whereby participants may be identified?	Yes
29	Relate to military sites, personnel, equipment and/or the defence industry?	No
30	Involve the recruitment of NHS patients because they are NHS patients?	No
31	Involve the recruitment of children in the social care system?	No
32	Involve participants recruited because they are currently subject to a custodial order in the criminal justice system?	No