



Whitepaper:

**Leisure, Retail & Hospitality:
The Power of First Impressions
2025**

This paper is prepared by  **saturn**

Contents

Introduction 3

Our research 4

 Key findings..... 4

 Age group differences..... 5

 Why it matters 5

Solutions..... 6

 Hospitality: hotels, restaurants, pubs, quick service restaurants (QSR)..... 6

Summary..... 7

Next steps..... 8

Introduction

In hospitality, retail, and leisure, the guest experience starts the moment someone walks through your door. Whether it's a hotel lobby, a boutique entrance, or a spa welcome zone, this first impression immediately shapes how people will feel about your business.

In a sector where experience is everything, a dull or neglected reception can quietly undermine trust, dampen excitement, and turn potential customers away.

Our research shows that nearly three-quarters of people are put off by uninspiring receptions - and many link them to poor service.

With the right approach, your reception area can become a powerful tool to build customer confidence, drive engagement, and leave a lasting positive impression.

This white paper explores how hospitality, retail, and leisure businesses can turn their welcome spaces into brand assets that work harder for them.



Our research

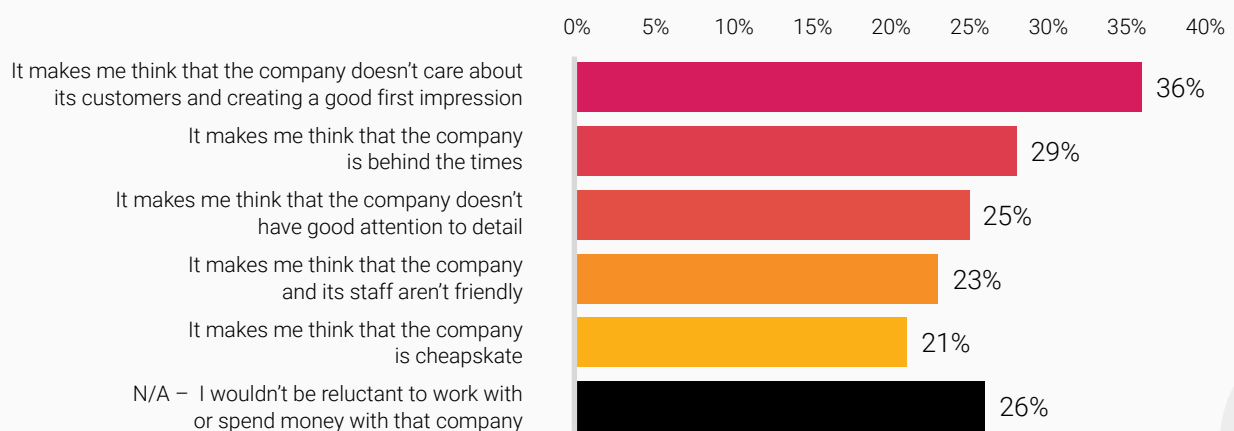
Key findings

Our research shows clear and consistent trends in how people perceive reception and entrance areas across the hospitality, retail, and leisure sectors. First impressions matter—particularly when it comes to trust and the likelihood of doing business with a brand. Below are the most important findings from our survey:

Nearly three quarters of people (74%) said they would have a negative perception of a business with a dull or uninspiring reception or entrance area

- More than a third (36%) said it made them think that the company doesn't care about its customers or creating a good first impression
- 29 per cent said it makes them think the business is 'behind the times'
- 25 per cent said it made them think that the company doesn't have good attention to detail
- 23 per cent said it made them think that the company and its staff were unfriendly
- One in five people (21%) said it made them think that the company was 'cheapskate'

If you enter a hospitality/retail/leisure business's reception area and it's a dull/boring space, what impact does that have on how you feel about the company? (Select all that apply)





Age group differences

Younger adults (18–24) are the most likely to be influenced by the look and feel of an entrance/reception area/lobby

- The 45–64-year-old age group was less likely to be affected, with more than a third (34%) of people saying that a boring or tired-looking reception area wouldn't put them off.
- 39 per cent of 18–34-year-olds thought a poor reception area indicated that a company doesn't care about its customers
- 35 per cent of 18–44-year-olds thought that a dull/tired reception area was a sign that the company was 'behind the times'

Gender differences

Men are more sensitive to first impressions than women. For example:

- 30 per cent of women said a dull reception area wouldn't affect how much they spent with a company. Only 22 per cent of men in the sample group felt the same.
- 31 per cent of men said a tired-looking entrance makes them think the business is behind the times, versus 27 per cent of women.
- Men were also more likely to think that a dull reception area indicated that the company was cheapskate (24%) as opposed to women (19%)

Why it matters

The research findings have clear implications for retail, leisure and hospitality businesses. A significant majority of the sample group would notice and react negatively to tired or uninspiring reception areas.

A dull/dated entrance suggests that your business is run in a lackadaisical fashion, undermining all the other work that goes into it.

Younger consumers and men are most likely to be put off by uninspiring entrance areas. If these groups are your key target audience, then your reception must be vibrant, up-to-date and in line with their expectations.

Solutions

Hospitality: hotels, restaurants, pubs, quick service restaurants (QSR)

The reception area in hospitality, leisure and retail is the first point of contact — a crucial moment for setting the tone of the whole customer experience. Dynamic digital signage can elevate this first impression, making the premises look and feel modern, and showing your business's commitment to customer satisfaction.

Tailored digital messages not only make a place look modern, but also help customers to appreciate a brand or venue's USPs (unique selling points).

Large format displays

For hotels, large-scale video walls or LED displays create an immediate sense of luxury and sophistication whilst also serving a practical purpose and showing visitors what is available. They can project captivating imagery of local attractions or highlight hotel amenities.

In cinema foyers or theatre reception areas, large format displays can create a wow factor on entry, build anticipation for the show or film your customers have come to see, and heighten interest in upcoming shows and films.

Large, vibrant screens in department stores and car showrooms can create a wow factor that's visible from outside of the store and makes the retail space feel modern and dynamic.

Mid-sized displays

Upon walking inside a store or leisure venue, mid-sized digital displays create a premium feel and can be used to immediately draw the customer's eye to specific exhibits and/or experiences. They can also point out information that will improve visitors' experiences, for example pointing out where café facilities are and when they're open.

In hotels where large format displays are too big for the available space, mid-sized screens positioned at or near reception desks can be used to display welcome messages, and to promote in-house dining or spa services.

In restaurants, pubs and fast food outlets, digital signage in reception areas create a vibrant welcome and set customer expectations about the sort of place they're entering and what is available. Displays can show examples of available food/drink options and give information about product quality. They can also promote forthcoming events encouraging customers to return.

Small-sized displays

Small touchscreen kiosks are intended to be used by one person at once. At hotels, leisure venues or retail sites, they allow visitors to access all information that will be useful to them at once – and this can be made available in different languages. In large hotels or gyms, for example, touchscreen displays can be used to not just showcase services available, but to allow guests/members to book services/classes there and then (e.g. dinner reservations, spa treatments, book fitness classes).

Outdoor displays

Outdoor displays are vivid and attract attention from passers-by creating brand awareness, increasing an understanding of the offering inside and encouraging future visits even when the venue is shut. They also create a premium feel for the venue.

Summary

Reception isn't just decoration — it's strategy. It sets the tone for every interaction that follows and can define whether your business is seen as modern, engaging, and customer-focused, or outdated, unfriendly and uninspired. In competitive environments where every detail counts, a poor first impression can cost you valuable opportunities and repeat business.

Digital signage can transform reception areas from passive waiting spaces into active and engaging brand experiences. By using vivid visuals that set visitors' expectations, it can create a sense of belonging for visitors, enhance their overall experience, and position your brand as one that understands and anticipates their needs.

The decision to invest in digital signage for reception areas is more than a visual upgrade — it's a commitment to excellence, relevance, and customer-centricity. Elevate your reception area, and you elevate your brand.



Next steps

Saturn Visual Solutions is a digital signage consultancy with 25+ years' experience in the leisure, retail and hospitality industries, helping to make customer experiences high quality, engaging and fun.

We have worked with a host of businesses, of varying sizes and use this collective experience to create fun, interactive customer/visitor experiences, and to look for ways to improve the financial standing of our clients.

We offer a range of complementary digital signage services to help leisure, retail and hospitality businesses install and manage digital displays with ease, whilst also getting the best possible results from them.

To learn more about how Saturn can help your business, contact us on 0161 222 0706 or email sales@saturnvisual.com

