

Unpacking the affective dimension of memorable hospitality experiences

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Unpacking the Affective Dimension of Memorable Hospitality Experiences

Abstract

Memorable experiences have received considerable attention in tourism research. Yet, there is a lack of a consensus among scholars regarding the elements within the servicescape that contribute to the creation of memorable experiences. Based on this research gap, the present study aims at understanding which elements within the servicescape have a greater impact on guests' emotions when recalling memorable hotel experiences.

A sample of one thousand Italian consumers were asked to share their memories regarding positive, and negative memorable hotel experiences, which were later analyzed with a mixed-research approach. The response rate of the survey was 100%, however 256 responses were discarded during the qualitative analysis because they did not contain any information related to the accommodation.

The recollection of negative emotions in memorable experiences appears to be affected by the physical and social dimension of the service environment and influenced by the fading affect bias.

Keywords: memorable experiences, hospitality, rosy view, fading affect bias, antecedents, emotions

1. Introduction

Ensuring that guests maintain the right set of memories of their stay is among hoteliers' biggest concerns. Memories contribute to the creation of guests mental maps and shape their behaviours, including word of mouth and purchase intentions (Chandralal and Valenzuela, 2013; Coudounaris and Sthapit, 2017). In highly experiential settings and in hedonic consumption, for example in the case of tourism, the creation of positive memories is an integrant part of the core product, as their impact on the consumer is long-lasting (Coudounaris and Sthapit, 2017). Therefore, the creation of long-lasting positive memories is a more desirable outcome than satisfaction because long lasting memories imply a higher level of customer emotional and cognitive involvement (Sipe and Testa, 2018; Tung and Ritchie, 2011). In fact, engaging customers with emotional, physical, spiritual and intellectual impressions in a way that generates memorable events, can result in a competitive advantage for firms belonging to the hospitality industry (Gilmore and Pine, 2002; Pine and Gilmore, 2011, 1998).

31 Nonetheless, research on memorable hospitality experiences remain scarce to the point that Hosany *et al.*,
32 (2022) in their recent literature review have identified only 5 works that explore the characteristics of
33 memorable experiences in hotel settings and 2 that explore memorable experiences in Airbnb. These studies
34 have been mostly focused on identifying the dimensions and the antecedents of memorable hospitality services,
35 by adopting qualitative methodologies. As an example, Buehring & O'Mahony (2019) have shown that
36 services, atmosphere, culture, sensory stimuli, and hotel technology influence the creation of memorable
37 hospitality experiences. Sipe and Testa (2018) have demonstrated that memorable experiences in hospitality
38 are the result of a combination of aesthetic appreciation, escapism and service quality. Sthapit (2018, 2019) has
39 shown that memorable experiences in hospitality are characterized novelty and refreshment and are facilitated
40 by the presence of a comfortable bed, friendly staff and good breakfast. Finally, Sthapit & Jiménez-Barreto
41 (2018) and Sthapit *et al.*, (2020) have explored the antecedents of memorable experiences in Airbnb and have
42 shown that guest-host interaction is an essential component of the experience, that can positively or negatively
43 affect the evaluation of the stay. Nonetheless, there remains a lack of consensus among scholars regarding
44 which aspects of the servicescape contribute to creating memorable hospitality experiences. Additionally, a
45 gap persists in understanding the relationship between the antecedents of memorable hotel experiences and
46 their impact on the affective dimension of guests' memories, despite the recognition that affect is a crucial
47 component of autobiographical memories (Kensinger and Schacter, 2006; Levine et al., 2009; Mitchell et al.,
48 1997). Therefore, understanding the extent to which each antecedent influences the affective dimension of
49 these experiences could provide valuable insights for developing more experiential hospitality offerings and
50 suggest new directions for future research.

51 Moreover, existing research on memorable experiences rarely incorporates memory biases, even though its aim
52 is to understand how experiences shape our mental maps. Research on memory suggests that a) positive and
53 negative events are not recollected with the same frequency, and b) memory tends to favour the recollection of
54 positive emotions over the recollection of negative ones (Fading Affect Bias). However, to our knowledge,
55 only Kim et al. (2014) have examined the impact of the fading affect bias on restaurant service failures over
56 periods of 10 and 14 days. Other studies on the fading affect bias outside the tourism and hospitality context
57 suggest that the fading of negative emotions can persist for several months after an experience, with some
58 research indicating it may last up to four years (Gibbons et al., 2011). Thus, it remains unclear to what extent
59 time affects the recollection of emotions in memorable experiences, especially over longer timespans. In this
60 context, exploring the mechanisms that affects the recollection of memorable experiences could expand our

61 understanding of customer attitudes and behaviours. Additionally, integrating existing frameworks on
62 memorable hospitality experiences with memory biases could provide useful information for the development
63 of more reliable surveys.

64 Therefore, to fill the abovementioned research gaps, the present article will adopt an approach based on the
65 analysis of recalled memorable experiences, drawing on a dataset of 1000 short narratives of customer
66 memories of hotel stays that took place between 2020 and 1999. The present paper will therefore introduce the
67 dimensions and antecedents of memorable hospitality experiences, and the processes that shape customer
68 memories. Starting from this theoretical background four research hypothesis will be developed and tested with
69 the use of mixed-methods.

70

71 1.1 From experiences to memorable experiences

72 Research on memorable experiences stems back to the concept of hedonic consumption, which was first identified
73 by Hirshmann and Holbrook who noticed that customers are not only driven by practical reasons, but also by
74 emotions, the senses and intellectual motivation (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Holbrook and Hirschman,
75 1982). Starting from this idea, Pine and Gilmore suggested that companies can obtain a competitive advantage in
76 the service economy by explicitly selling experiences. Furthermore, they indicated that experiences can be created
77 by engaging customers with emotional, physical, spiritual and intellectual impressions, in a way that generates
78 memorable events (Gilmore and Pine, 2002; Pine and Gilmore, 2011, 1998).

79 Thus, it becomes important to make a distinction between the moment in which the service encounter takes place
80 (the experience) and the moment in which it is recalled (memory retrieval). The first includes on-site experience,
81 which can be described as customers' mental state during the service (Otto and Ritchie, 1996), while the second
82 involves customers accessing the memorial representation of the service off-site. This distinction leads to two
83 possible approaches to the study of memorable experiences; one focused on the initial perception of the experience
84 right after it has been lived, the other more oriented towards the study of memories. In the first case memorable
85 experiences are defined by the perception of the consumer, so experiences are memorable if they are considered
86 worth to be remembered at the time (Coudounaris and Sthapit, 2017; Zatori et al., 2018). In the second case
87 cognitions with respect to the experience are approached from an objective perspective and they are considered
88 as memorable to the extent that recollection has persisted in time (Kim et al., 2012; Tung and Ritchie, 2011). In

89 the present study memorable experiences are approached according to the second perspective by analysing which
90 memories are retained and how.

91 An understanding of both onsite customer experiences and recollection processes are then necessary to enquire
92 customer memorable experiences. To fulfil such requirement the present literature review will introduce the
93 foundational conceptual frameworks of this study in two sections, the first one revising the existing approaches
94 towards onsite customer experience (or the antecedents of memorable experiences), and the second introducing
95 memory functioning and memory biases.

96 *1.1 Antecedents of memorable hospitality experiences*

97

98 In line with the concept of hedonic consumption, hospitality experiences are often associated with the
99 dimensions of pleasure and refreshment. For example, Voigt et al. (2010) identify refreshment and pleasure, as
100 hedonic characteristics of guest experiences in wellness hotel, while Sthapit (2018) highlights that refreshment
101 and novelty are the main recurring dimensions of memorable experiences in hospitality. These findings clearly
102 suggest that memorable hospitality experiences are characterized by moments of hedonic happiness. Hedonic
103 happiness is defined by the presence of positive affect, pleasure, and comfort, as well as the absence of negative
104 affect (W. Lee & Jeong 2020). Consequently, understanding the existing relationship between the antecedents
105 of memorable experiences and the recollection of positive and negative emotions can provide valuable insights
106 into how cherished memories are formed. Following this logic, the research on services and experiences has
107 paid considerable attention to the problem of identifying the key elements that contribute to the perception of
108 the servicescape. In fact, based on the stimulus-organism-response theory, it is often assumed that the
109 servicescape can be leveraged to elicit positive emotional responses (Baker and Kim, 2020; Rosenbaum and
110 Massiah, 2011). In hospitality, the social and physical characteristics of the servicescape have been identified
111 as essential aspects for the evaluation of the service and the creation of optimal experiences (see table 1), and
112 they have been shown to influence guests' emotional responses, and satisfaction (Brunner-Sperdin and Peters,
113 2009).

114 **Table I**

115 *Literature review of existing studies on the servicescape in hospitality*

Author/ Year of Publication	Dimensions of the servicescape	Findings
Brunner-Sperdin & Peters (2009)	Hardware, humanware, software	Human interactions show a stronger correlation with guests' emotions than physical factors such as design, lighting, colour, scent and sound.
Ariffin et al. (2013)	Facility exterior, facility interior, other tangibles	Hotel physical servicescape moderates the relationship between hospitableness of hosting behaviour and satisfaction.
Loureiro et al. (2013)	Atmospheric cues	Atmospheric cues influence relaxation, pleasure, and satisfaction
Jani and Han (2015)	Ambience	Extraversion, openness to experience, and agreeableness moderate the relationship between ambience and emotional response, and between emotions and loyalty.
Chang, (2016)	Substantive and communicative servicescape	Substantive and communicative staging of the experience influence customer emotions and behavioral intentions
Hemsley-Brown and Alnawas, (2016)	Staff behaviour and quality of physical environment	Physical quality has a stronger and more significant effect on brand passion, brand affection, and self-brand connection compared with staff behavior
Gupta et al.(2019)	Ambient design (interior and exterior), design (functionality) and aesthetics), social dimensions (staff and other customers)	Ambience, design, and social dimension of the servicescape influence trust and patronage intention
Choi & Kandampully (2019)	Social, public design, room design, ambience	Social, public design, room design, ambience contribute to customer satisfaction. The room design has the greatest effect, followed by the social factor.
Lockwood and Pyun (2019)	Aesthetic quality, functionality, atmosphere, spaciousness, physiological conditions	The hotel servicescape significantly affects both emotional and behavioral responses.
Nanu et al. (2020)	Contemporary vs. outdated design; biophilic vs. non-biophilic design	Lobby interior design (contemporary vs. traditional) has a significant impact on the booking intention among different generations. However, the presence biophilic design does not impact satisfaction or emotions.

So et al. (2021)

Authenticity, social
interaction, home benefits

Authenticity, social interaction, and home benefits
impact perceived enjoyment and repurchase intention
in Airbnb

116

117

118 More comprehensive models of the servicescape offers a detailed description of the physical and non-physical
119 characteristics of the servicescape that can potentially influence guests' emotional response. For instance, Bitner
120 (1992) identifies ambient conditions (e.g. music and air quality), signs and symbols and the space layout as
121 important characteristics of the servicescape for the creation of positive customer experiences. Rosenbaum and
122 Massiah (2011) further expand this model by proposing a framework that includes the physical, social, symbolic,
123 and natural dimensions.

124

125 *The physical dimension*

126 The physical environment includes all the observable and measurable stimuli of the servicescape, such as
127 visual, olfactory and auditory stimuli. The physical dimension includes also the atmospheric which is defined
128 as the sum of the background environmental stimuli that affect human sensation (Kotler, 1973). According to
129 (Loureiro et al., 2013) hotel atmosphere contributes to a sensation of pleasure and relaxation in hotel guests.

130

131 *The social dimension*

132 The social environment can influence guests' responses through their interaction their interactions with staff
133 and other guests (Rosenbaum and Massiah, 2011). Kindness, professionalism, and staff appearance are often
134 considered by the customer when evaluating a service. Moreover, staff intervention is critical in cases of service
135 failures. When staff apologize, display empathy, and give explanations, they increase the probability of a
136 service recovery (Lewis and McCann, 2004). Additionally, other individuals in the servicescape can affect
137 customer perceptions through factors such as crowding, displayed emotions, and interactions with one another
138 (Rosenbaum and Massiah, 2011). The interaction with friends and family is also important in the creation of
139 positive experiences. In this regard, some service establishments fulfill both a utilitarian and a social role
140 (McGinnis et al., 2008; Price and Arnould, 1999). Such social role is prominent in the case of tourism and
141 hospitality services, given that improving existing social relationship and creating new social bonds are

142 recognized to be common motivations to engage in tourism activities (Egger et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2015;
143 Moscardo, 2017).

144 *The symbolic environment*

145 In the service industry, signs, symbols, and artifacts that convey socio-cultural meaning can be purposefully
146 used to attract customers from specific communities (Rosenbaum and Massiah, 2011). In hospitality services
147 the use of signs, symbol and artifacts that belong to an ethnic group can be attractive to hotel guests' who are
148 looking for an authentic experience or are interested in discovering the local culture (S. Lee & Chuang, 2022).

149 *The natural dimension*

150 The natural dimension can influence the customer by restoring attention and improving their well-being, as in
151 the case of hotels biophilic hotel designs (S. H. Lee et al., 2022). Nonetheless, Nanu et al. (2020) show also
152 that biophilic design in hotel lobbies do not influence guests' preferences.

153

154 *1.3 Memorable experience as autobiographical memories*

155 Understanding the relationship between environment and emotions is essential for approaching memory
156 functioning and identifying which factors influence the affective dimension of memorable experiences. Indeed,
157 perception and emotions impact memory encoding, the process through which the stimuli we encounter are
158 prepared to be stored in our memory (Squire and Kandel, 2003).

159

160 During the process of encoding, sensory information of an object is initially stored for a few seconds in sensory
161 memory, which is the short-lived memory for the sensory details of events (Cowan, 2008). This information is
162 later transferred to short term memory, if there is sustained attention toward that specific stimulus (Squire and
163 Kandel, 2003). Meanwhile, the sensory system influences our emotional responses, which subsequently affect
164 memory encoding and retrieval, as information linked to positive or negative emotions is often recalled in
165 greater detail than emotionally neutral information (Kensinger and Schacter, 2006). This difference is due to
166 the impact of the amygdala, an area of the brain involved in the processing of emotions. In presence of

167 physiological arousal, the amygdala interacts with the hippocampus and facilitates the encoding of new
168 information the long-term memory (Phelps, 2006).

169

170 Later, during the process of retrieval, our brain reorganizes sensory and emotional information in a coherent
171 whole (Levine et al., 2009; Squire and Kandel, 2003). This means that memories are constantly updated by
172 recombining information in ways that allow our memory system to fulfill its primary functions, which are
173 creating social bonding, building a consistent and functional self-image, and directing ones' behaviour in the
174 present/future (Kensinger and Ford, 2020). Consequently, the process of retrieval affects how memories are
175 recalled and influences their content, by making irrelevant details less accessible, filling missing information,
176 or emphasizing important aspects (Kensinger and Ford, 2020; Squire and Kandel, 2003).

177

178 This ongoing process of selection and reframing is thought to underlie two important phenomena that have
179 been observed in autobiographical memories: the rosy view phenomenon and the fading affect bias (Levine et
180 al., 2009). The rosy view phenomenon is the tendency to focus on positive past experiences (Mitchell et al.,
181 1997), while the fading affect bias is associated with autobiographical memories rather than the content of the
182 memories themselves. In fact, the intensity of negative emotions associated with past experiences tends to
183 decrease faster than the intensity of positive emotions (Skowronski et al., 2014; Walker et al., 2003).

184

185 The fading affect bias is influenced by various factors including social and private rehearsal (Ritchie et al.,
186 2006; Skowronski et al., 2014; Walker and Skowronski, 2009), but also by the characteristics of the recalled
187 event. For instance, memory of close events, relevant to the self, and uncommon have an enhanced fading
188 affect bias for negative emotions (Skowronski et al., 2014). This aligns with the nature of vacation and
189 hospitality experiences, which I) are often relevant to the self, because they rely on meaningful interactions
190 with friends and family (Lehto et al., 2009), and II) tend to be atypical as they include elements of novelty and
191 escapism (Kim et al., 2012). On the opposite, emotions associated with traumatic and highly significant
192 negative events tend to fade slower and remain intense over a longer period (Berntsen& Rubin (2002).

193

194 Research on the fading affect bias, identifies a variety of mechanisms that can lead to a faster decline of negative
195 affect. The existence of those mechanisms is backed by two main theoretical perspectives, the broaden and
196 build theory, and the presence of coping mechanisms (Skowronski et al., 2014). The broaden and build theory
197 suggest that positive emotions are essential to stimulate learning processes, psychological growth, and
198 exploratory behaviour. Part of the literature on memorable experiences, looks at the broaden and build theory
199 to explain why some memories of past vacation are more long-lasting than others (Tung & Ritchie, 2011b).
200 According to this theory, our brain tends to favour positive emotions and to reframe negative emotions under
201 a bigger perspective, this allows the individual to function in an adaptive manner (Tugade & Fredrickson,
202 2004).

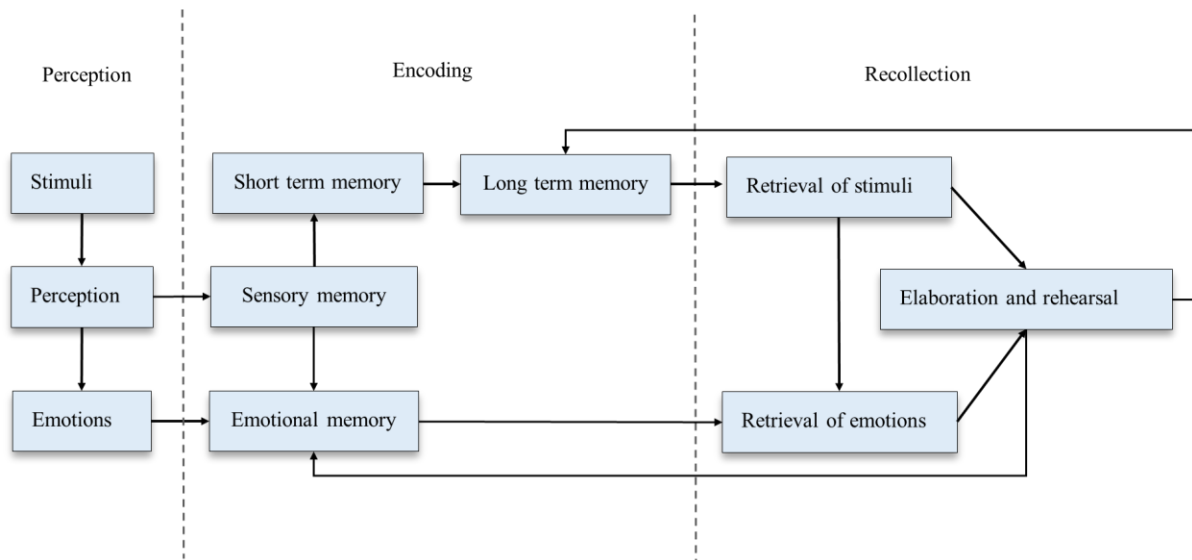
203

204 Another explanation for the fading affect bias lies in the presence of positive coping mechanisms. These
205 mechanisms allow individuals to manage stress and build resilience, by engaging in cognitive processes that
206 reinforce a positive perception of the self. Some examples of positive cognitive mechanisms include
207 trivialization (minimization of the importance of the event), inclusion in a broader story, and exclusion from
208 the domain of the self (viewing the experience as something that does not belong to the self, to the which the
209 current self is not bounded)(Jersild, 1931; Walker and Skowronski, 2009).

210

211 **Figure 2**

212 Summary of memory processes as described in the present literature review



213

214 1.1.1 1.4 Hypothesis development

215 To understand how positive and negative emotions influence the evaluation of memorable service experiences
216 over time, we theorize a recollection process divided in two phases: the memory process and the evaluation
217 process. The memory process consists of retrieving the facts occurred during the service experience and
218 associating them with the recalled emotional details. The evaluation process consists of reorganizing this
219 information in a way that allows the customer to express a judgment about the experience (positive/negative).

220

221 During the memory process customers initially retrieve information about the servicescape, as memories of
222 past hotel experiences are likely to include details regarding the comfort of the bed, the room, and the
223 interaction with the staff (Sthapit, 2019, 2018). Furthermore, as sensory memory transfers information to short-
224 term memory, sensory information loses some of its richness in favour of a higher level of categorization
225 (Cowan, 2008). Consequently, we can expect to find recurring themes in customer narratives that reflect how
226 the characteristics of hotel services are categorized. Based on the literature on memorable hotel experiences
227 and the servicescape, we hypothesize, that these themes reflect the physical, social, symbolic, and natural
228 dimensions of the servicescape (Rosenbaum and Massiah, 2011). Additionally, we can anticipate that this
229 information will be linked to the recollection of past emotions, as emotions play a crucial role in the memory
230 encoding process. Specifically, emotional valence and intensity are associated with improved accuracy in
231 recalling past events, regardless of their emotional valence. For instance, Kensinger and Schacter (2006) show

232 that individuals exposed to the same event tend to recall more details if they associate positive or negative
233 emotions with it, compared to those who perceive the event as neutral. Therefore, we can expect the memory
234 of environmental stimuli to be associated with positive (negative) emotions in the recollection of memorable
235 experiences. It is argued here that the presence of information regarding the four dimensions of the servicescape
236 (natural, social, physical and symbolic) is associated with a higher level of emotional detail in customer
237 memories.

238

239 H1: the presence of details regarding the natural, symbolic, social, and physical service dimensions influences
240 the level of positive (negative) emotional details present in customer narratives of memorable experiences.

241

242 Moreover, time may influence the relationship between the presence of details regarding the servicescape and
243 the emotions evoked in the customer narrative. Research on memory indicates that the emotions felt when
244 evoking past experiences fade over time, with negative emotions typically fading faster than positive ones.
245 Differences in how emotions fade are likely influenced by two key mechanisms: the need to explore and
246 broaden our knowledge, as suggested by the Broaden-and-Build Theory, and the need to cope with negative
247 emotions. The desire to explore and expand knowledge leads to a tendency to recall positive events more
248 frequently, while the need to manage negative emotions prompts customers to minimize the impact of negative
249 experiences or reinterpret them more favourably. Together, these tendencies decrease the frequency of recalling
250 negative emotions, whereas positive emotions tend to remain stable over time. Therefore, we can expect that
251 customers recalling older experiences will associate them with less intense emotions and, consequently, will
252 use fewer emotional details in their narratives. This effect is expected to be particularly pronounced for negative
253 emotions, as they are more likely to be forgotten and to fade faster than positive ones (Mitchell et al., 1997;
254 Walker and Skowronski, 2009). It is then hypothesized that:

255

256 H2: the time passed since the service experience occurred moderates the relationship between the presence of
257 negative stimuli and the level of emotional details present in customer narrative

258

259 The evaluation process reorganizes the existing information in a way that allows the consumers to assess their
260 experiences. It is reasonable to expect that a positive evaluation of the experience is associated with positive
261 emotions, particularly in the context of hospitality services where memorable experiences are often associated
262 with pleasure, hedonism, and refreshment (Sthapit, 2018; Voigt et al., 2010). Existing literature on hospitality
263 services indicates that positive emotions are associated with overall satisfaction (Loureiro et al., 2013), overall
264 online ratings (Liu et al., 2022; Xu, 2020), and positive word of mouth (Chang, 2016). Therefore, a greater
265 presence of positive emotions is likely to be associated with an overall positive experience.

266

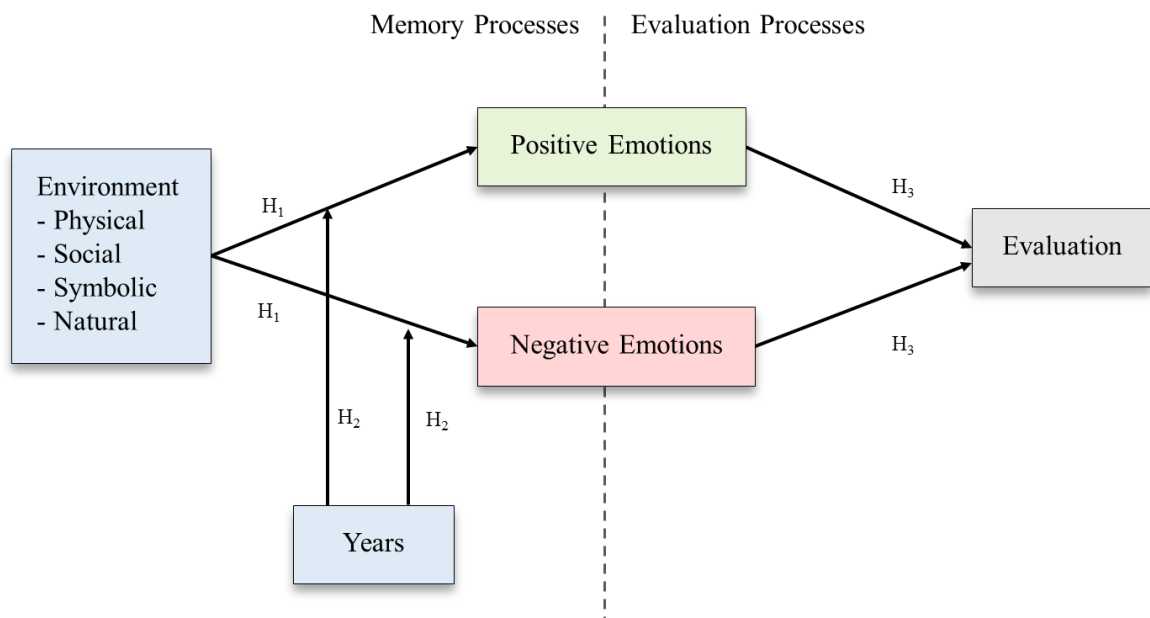
267 H3: the number of positive (vs. negative) emotional details in customers' narratives influence the overall
268 evaluation of the experience

269

270 **Figure 2**

271 *Theoretical model*

272



273

274

275

276 2 **Materials and methods**

277 2.1 *Mixed method research and philosophical standpoint*

278 To investigate the memorability of service encounters, this research project employs data collected from hotel
279 guests. Both qualitative and quantitative data are used since the research questions are well suited for the
280 adoption of a mixed method approach. Indeed, the identification of recurring topics and emotions in memorable
281 experiences can benefit from the use of a qualitative approach, which allows the research to avoid the use of
282 self-reported data. However, measuring the impact of time and emotional valence on the recollection process
283 requires a quantitative approach. Employing natural language derived data perfectly combines these
284 necessities. For these reasons, Mitchell et al., (1997) adopt a mixed approach to study the rosy view
285 phenomenon and Skowronski et al. (2014) suggest to examine the language used in the description of past
286 experiences to study the fading affect bias.

287 In the present case a concurrent nested design was adopted. Concurrent nested designs integrate quantitative
288 and qualitative methods at the level of the data collection and the data analysis. Their design is characterized
289 by a simultaneous qualitative and quantitative data collection and by the consequent integration of the two
290 types of data (Plano Clark and Creswell, 2021). In the present case, the data were collected by means of a
291 survey integrating open ended and closed questions. A qualitative content analysis was later used to code open-
292 ended questions and get a deeper understanding of the presence of protective frameworks in customer
293 memories. The categories obtained through the qualitative content analysis were later transformed in
294 categorical variables to allow the integration of qualitative and quantitative data. For instance, the overall
295 evaluations of the experiences were transformed to a dichotomous variable where 1 indicated a positive
296 memorable experience and 0 a negative/mixed experience.

297

298 The dimension of the sample was chosen to ensure enough experience variety, which is essential to capture the
299 presence of negative emotions in memorable experiences. Moreover, the use of mixed methods requires a larger
300 dataset than the use of qualitative methods.

301 The present work adopts a post-positivist perspective, meaning that objectivity was sought as far as possible.

302 2.2 *Sample*

303 For the study presented in this paper a questionnaire was distributed to a large, representative panel. The panel
304 was designed to be projectable to the Italian population in terms of gender, age, and region of origin. It consists
305 of one thousand participants, of whom 496 are female (49.6%) and 504 male (50.4%). Participants were
306 categorized as belonging to one of five different age groups 18-29 (16.9%), 30-39 (16.1%), 40-49 (20.6%), 50-
307 59 (21.6%), 60-75 (24.8%), and come from different areas of Italy: northern (45.6%), southern (34.8%), and
308 central Italy (19.6%).

309 2.3 *Data collection*

310 Data collection took place between 23 November 2020 and 30 November 2020. Participants were asked to
311 describe a memorable hotel experience as follows: “Please think of a hotel experience that you had while you
312 were on holiday and that you remember in a particular way. Now we invite you to describe the hotel experience,
313 indicate whether the experience was positive or negative and why you remember it in a particular way”. In
314 addition to that qualitative question, further questions were posed as to their stay, reasons for travel, and type
315 of accommodation. This measurement approach presented two advantages. First of all, it allowed the
316 respondent to describe memories belonging to a longer timespan than the one covered by online reviews. Most
317 of the collected experiences took place between 2020 and 1999, with a few experiences being even older.
318 Secondly, it allowed the respondent to freely describe their experience, without being compelled to merely
319 provide an evaluation of the hotel. Consequently, some experiences present an important personal component,
320 without including a real description of the accommodation. For this reason, even if the survey had a response
321 rate of 100%, during the qualitative analysis we had to discard 256 responses as they did not contain any
322 relevant information regarding the accommodation.

323 3 **Data analysis**

324 Initially, an overall evaluation was assigned to each experience by two researchers, who worked separately on
325 the coding and later compared their evaluations. Three categories for the overall evaluation were created:
326 positive, mixed/ negative, and not related to the question. The experiences classified as positive contained only
327 positive events or expressions such as “positive experience”, “perfect”, “fantastic”, or “we were satisfied”. The
328 mixed experiences contained mixed feelings or were evaluated as average by the respondent. The recurring
329 expressions found for this kind of experience were “average hotel”, “good but” “negative but”, and “nothing

330 exceptional". Negative experiences contained accidents, negative evaluations of the hotel, or moments of
 331 embarrassment, thus including the following sorts of expressions: "negative experience", "not a positive
 332 experience", "awful". The answers that did not contain any relevant information about the experience were
 333 coded as not related with the question and removed from the data analysis, 256 replies were dropped as a result
 334 of this operation. Such answers usually contained a single term such as "positive" or "negative", or information
 335 about the habits and preferences of the respondents. The overall evaluations of the experiences were
 336 transformed to a dichotomous variable where 1 indicated a positive memorable experience and 0 a
 337 negative/mixed experience.

338 In a second instance, following previous studies on memorable experiences, the number of emotions presented
 339 in each narrative was counted (Servidio and Ruffolo, 2016). Initially, a list of the words appearing in the corpus
 340 was created with Nvivo. Starting from this list, only the words potentially referring to emotions were retained
 341 and later divided between positive and negative emotions. The words were selected following the Russell et al.
 342 (1981) classification, since it was specifically developed to study the emotions elicited by physical
 343 environments. Based on this framework, the emotions falling under the domains of excitement, pleasantness
 344 and relaxation were classified as positive, the emotions falling under the domain of distress, unpleasantness,
 345 and gloominess as negative (see Table 2). Two researchers worked separately on the list and later compared
 346 their choices. When common agreement about the list was reached, the number of times these words appeared
 347 in each answer was manually counted. The counting was performed manually to avoid miscounting due to
 348 sarcasm or double negatives. This choice allowed the researchers to check for the meaning of each word in its
 349 context. Table 2 shows an example of coding.

350

351 **Table II**

352 *Example of coding*

Q1	Experience	Positive emotions	Negative emotions	Coding
There was a fire I was a kid and it scared me	Mixed/Negative	0	1	-
I stayed in a hotel in Friuli Venezia Giulia on the Cadore. This immersion in the green of the mountains with all the Tyrolean-style buildings,	Positive	3	0	-

the warmth of the people and the good genuine food made the vacation a beautiful and natural experience. The sense of respect for nature and animals is very much felt. This makes it a place where I would return to learn about nature and its respect.				
Positive and very relaxing experience, impeccable service from the staff.	Positive	3	0	Staff
Partly positive and partly negative experience. It dates back to February 2020, before covid broke out. We were able to make the most of the first days of vacation to visit the most important places and, sensing the first hints of a possible closure, we returned earlier, giving up the last two days. A week later a state of lockdown was declared	Mixed/Negative	2	1	Control frame; safety frame;

353

354 **Table III**

355 *Description of coding dimensions*

Dimensions and subdimensions	Description	Example
Overall experience		
Positive	Positive/ fantastic experience	Positive I was in a hotel with a swimming pool great food and lots of kindness
Mixed/negative	Average stay/ negative experience	Paris 2017 took a hostel. Definitely cheap experience but the room windows were broken.
Servicescape		
Physical	Upkeep, architecture, room, food	I remember a holiday in Trentino in a small village, Scena. The family-run hotel was a real gem. Pampered in everything. Really wonderful cuisine with typical dishes. A solarium with a swimming pool where you could relax.
Social	Staff, animation	Positive and very relaxing with impeccable staff service.
Natural	Gardens, landscape, proximity to attractions	Beautiful experience in a truly idyllic place.

Socially symbolic	Typical architecture, showing/sharing traditions	In Rhemes-Notre-Dame, a comfortable and quaint hotel, positive experience, good food and friendly staff.
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356

357 Later an inductive coding procedure was used to analyse which dimensions of the servicescape influenced the
 358 creation of memorable experiences. Deductive coding consists of connecting prior formulated theoretical
 359 frameworks with textual data. Such result is obtained by defining categories and subcategories based on an
 360 existing theoretical model (Mayring, 2000). In the present case the analysis focused on the dimensions of the
 361 servicescape that influence the creation of memorable hotel experiences. So, in a first step the subdimensions
 362 referring to positive and negative aspects of the hotel experience were extracted from the text. The coding
 363 procedure led therefore to the identification of eight subdimensions, including upkeep, architecture, service,
 364 room, staff, animation, location, and traditional elements. Later they were regrouped under the four dimensions
 365 of the servicescape identified by Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011), namely the physical, social, symbolic and
 366 natural dimensions. The physical dimension included all the physical element of the hotel, such as architecture,
 367 upkeep, room characteristics, and food quality. The social dimension included the interactions with staff, the
 368 entertaining activities organized by the hotel (animation). The symbolic dimension included all the
 369 characteristics of the hotel experience that were viewed as typical or traditional by the customer. Finally, the
 370 natural dimension included references to the location of the hotel, which included descriptions of the landscape,
 371 the hotel gardens, or the surrounding nature.

372 Based on the developed coding the most recurrent dimension was found to be the physical dimension, appearing
 373 in 252 memories, followed by the natural (163), and the social dimensions (145). The symbolic dimension was
 374 found in only 20 memories and was only associated to a positive evaluation. The dimensions were later
 375 transformed to a categorical variable where 0 indicated their absence and 1 a positive evaluation and 2 a
 376 negative evaluation.

377

378 3.1 *Estimation and fit of the regression model*

379 Three regression models were estimated to verify the developed hypotheses. Two regression models were used
 380 to test the hypotheses regarding the memory process, and one regression model was used to estimate the

381 evaluation process. The hypotheses regarding the memory process were estimated by regressing the time passed
382 since the experience took place and the recalled characteristics of the servicescape on the number of positive
383 emotions present in the narrative (model 1), and on the number of negative emotions present in the narrative
384 (model 2). The hypotheses regarding the evaluation process were tested by regressing the protective frames
385 and the number of positive and negative emotions present in the narratives on the overall evaluation of the
386 experience (model 3).

387 Initially a Poisson regression was chosen to test model 1 and model 2, since Poisson regression specifically
388 suited the study of count data. Consequently, the data were tested for equidispersion. Equidispersion is one of
389 the main assumptions of Poisson regression. Data are equidispersed when the conditional variance of the
390 outcome variable is equal to its conditional mean, overdispersed when the variance is bigger than the mean,
391 underdispersed when the variance is lower than the mean (Coxe et al., 2009). To check the assumption of
392 equidispersion the likelihood ratio test and the Wald are commonly used (Legler, 2021; Yang et al., 2009).
393 The likelihood ratio test compares the deviance of a model in which the scaling parameter ϕ has been fixed to
394 a specific value to the deviance of a model in which the scaling parameter is estimated. This allows testing of
395 the presence of overdispersion by comparing the difference in deviances to a chi-square distribution with one
396 degree of freedom between two nested models (Coxe et al., 2009). In the present case a standard Poisson
397 regression was tested against a Quasi-Poisson and a Negative Binomial regression for model 1 and 2. In model
398 1 the Poisson regression performed significantly better than a negative binomial ($\chi^2(1) = 0, p=1 (N=744)$), or
399 a Quasi-Poisson regression ($\chi^2(1) = -429.270, p=1 (N=744)$). In model 2 the Poisson regression performed
400 significantly better than the Quasi-Poisson regression ($\chi^2(1) = 0, p=1 (N=744)$), but the Negative Binomial
401 regression performed better than a Poisson ($\chi^2(1) = 58.584, p<0.001 (N=744)$). Consequently, a Poisson
402 regression was used to estimate model 1 and a Negative Binomial was used to estimate model 2. Moreover, the
403 variable representing the symbolic dimension was not included in model 2 since no negative evaluation of the
404 symbolic dimension was found. Model 3 was estimated using a logistic regression.

405 3.2 *Regression analysis results*

406

407 A Poisson regression analysis was used to estimate model 1 (see Table 4). Table 4 shows that the servicescape
408 influences the recollection of positive emotions. A positive evaluation of the physical ($\beta=0.219 p=0.002$), social

409 ($\beta=0.551$ $p<0.001$), natural ($\beta=0.388$ $p<0.001$), and symbolic ($\beta=0.411$ $p=0.017$) dimensions of the
 410 servicescape, significantly increase the presence of positive emotional descriptors. The number of years passed
 411 since the experience took place do not have a significant influence on the number of emotional descriptors in
 412 model 1 ($\beta= -0.011$ $p=0.149$).

413

414 **Table IV**

415 *Regression results for model 1*

	Estimate	SE	z value	p	95% CI	95% CI
(Intercept)	0.335	0.121	2.778	0.005	0.097	0.57
age	0.001	0.002	0.346	0.729	-0.003	0.004
hotel region	0.009	0.022	0.427	0.669	-0.034	0.053
hotel type	-0.007	0.011	-0.588	0.557	-0.029	0.015
physical positive	0.219	0.072	3.041	0.002	0.078	0.36
physical negative	-0.482	0.172	-2.798	0.005	-0.834	-0.157
social positive	0.551	0.078	7.11	0.000	0.398	0.702
social negative	-0.047	0.169	-0.281	0.779	-0.392	0.271
natural positive	0.388	0.073	5.321	0.000	0.244	0.53
natural negative	0.177	0.476	0.372	0.710	-0.84	1.043
symbolic	0.411	0.172	2.395	0.017	0.063	0.737
years	-0.011	0.008	-1.442	0.149	-0.026	0.004
physical positive* years	0.017	0.011	1.529	0.126	-0.005	0.039
physical negative* years	0.023	0.024	0.964	0.335	-0.027	0.068
social positive* years	-0.01	0.012	-0.776	0.438	-0.034	0.014
social negative* years	0.032	0.028	1.157	0.247	-0.026	0.084
natural positive* years	0.000	0.012	0.033	0.974	-0.023	0.023
natural negative* years	0.053	0.129	0.41	0.682	-0.207	0.306
symbolic* years	-0.007	0.023	-0.312	0.755	-0.054	0.036

416 Model 2 was estimated using a negative binomial regression. This model shows that the presence of negative
 417 emotions was mostly driven by a negative evaluation of the physical ($\beta= 3.023$ $p<0.001$), and social ($\beta= 1.424$
 418 $p=0.003$) dimensions of the servicescape. The number of years passed since the experience took place has a
 419 significant influence on the number of emotional descriptors in model 2 ($\beta= -0.070$ $p=0.009$). A significant
 420 negative interaction between the physical environment and the number of years was observed in model 2 ($\beta= -$
 421 0.125 $p=0.015$).

422

423 **Table V**

424

	Estimate	SE	z value	p	95% CI
(Intercept)	-3.591	0.584	-6.146	0.000	-4.775
age	0.000	0.008	0.057	0.955	-0.017
hotel region	0.180	0.109	1.657	0.098	-0.029
hotel type	0.011	0.048	0.230	0.818	-0.090
physical positive	-0.081	0.477	-0.169	0.865	-1.069
physical negative	3.023	0.373	8.096	0.000	2.290
social positive	-0.237	0.527	-0.450	0.653	-1.334
social negative	1.424	0.474	3.007	0.003	0.376
natural positive	0.018	0.401	0.044	0.965	-0.800
natural negative	4.568	2.786	1.639	0.101	-0.606
symbolic	0.476	1.383	0.344	0.731	-3.101
years	0.070	0.027	2.603	0.009	0.014
physical positive* years	-0.107	0.090	-1.190	0.234	-0.340
physical negative* years	-0.125	0.052	-2.430	0.015	-0.236
social positive* years	-0.147	0.144	-1.024	0.306	-0.551
social negative* years	0.000	0.069	0.000	1.000	-0.164
natural positive* years	0.008	0.063	0.126	0.900	-0.142
natural negative* years	-2.363	1.823	-1.296	0.195	-6.185
symbolic* years	-0.019	0.291	-0.067	0.947	-1.192

426

427

428

429 Moreover model 3 shows that the recollection of positive ($\beta=1.728$ $p<0.001$) and negative ($\beta=-4.025$ $p<0.001$)

430 emotions significantly impacts the overall evaluation of the experience.

431

432 **Table VI**

433

434

435 *Regression results for model 3*

	Estimate	SE	z value	p	95% CI	95% CI
(Intercept)	-0.215	0.697	-0.309	0.758	-1.589	1.152
age	0.014	0.010	1.343	0.179	-0.006	0.035
hotel region	-0.060	0.130	-0.464	0.643	0.317	0.194
hotel type	0.003	0.063	0.053	0.958	-0.116-	0.133
negative	-4.025	0.563	-7.145	0.000	-5.213	-2.989

positive	1.728	0.244	7.075	0.000	1.279	2.237
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440 **4 Discussion**

441 A gap in the literature was identified concerning the relationship between the antecedents of memorable hotel
442 experiences and their impact on the affective dimension of guests' memories. Hence the initial aim of this study
443 was to explore how positive and negative characteristics of the servicescape impact the affective dimension of
444 memorable experiences. To fill this gap the present study drew on the research on hospitality experiences and
445 on memory biases to develop a model describing the recollection of memorable hospitality experiences. The
446 results of this study show that existing models describing the impact of the servicescape in hospitality can be
447 expanded to capture and describe the antecedents of memorable hospitality experiences, as long as they account
448 for the presence of memory biases. More precisely, the social, physical, natural, and symbolic dimensions of
449 hotel experiences were related the presence of positive emotions in guests' narratives. The social, and physical
450 dimensions, and the time passed since the experiences took place affected the presence of negative emotions.

451 The use of a qualitative approach in the first part of the research allowed to identify some antecedents of
452 memorable experiences that had been overlooked in previous studies. This is the case of the natural dimension,
453 that had been initially introduced by Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011) in their model of the servicescape, but
454 that has been rarely integrated in the hospitality literature on memorable experiences. However, the natural
455 dimension was among the most recurrent dimensions in guests' narratives, proceeded only by the physical
456 dimension. Indeed, landscapes and gardens were recurrent in the description of memorable hospitality
457 experiences. Therefore, existing models on the memorable hospitality experiences should be expanded to
458 include this dimension.

459 The quantitative approach provided a more in-depth analysis on the relationship between antecedents and
460 emotional dimension of memorable experiences. Most precisely three hypotheses derived from the literature
461 on hospitality experiences and memory bias were tested. Hypothesis 1 stated that a positive (negative)
462 evaluation of the natural, symbolic, social, and physical dimensions influences the level of positive (negative)

463 emotional details present in customer narratives of memorable experiences. This hypothesis was partially
464 confirmed. The results of the regression analysis show that the natural, symbolic, social, and physical
465 dimensions significantly influenced the presence of positive emotions. However, in the case of negative
466 emotions, only the social and physical dimension had a significant impact. This result is aligned with the study
467 conducted by Sipe and Testa (2018) which provide empirical support for the progression of value existing
468 between satisfaction and memorable experiences. It furthermore suggests that positive and negative emotions
469 in service settings tap on different dimensions.

470 Hypothesis 2 stated that the time passed since the service experience occurred moderates the relationship
471 between the presence of positive and negative stimuli and the level of emotional details present in customer
472 narratives. This hypothesis was partially confirmed. The number of years passed since the experience took
473 place significantly affects the number of negative emotions in guests' experiences. No significant relationship
474 was found between the years passed since the experience took place and the number of positive emotions in
475 the description of memorable experiences. This result supports the hypothesis that the fading affect bias
476 influences the recollection of memorable experiences. This is an interesting result, because the methodology
477 adopted overcomes the problem of self-reporting emotions identified by Skowronski et al. (2014), but also
478 because the fading affect bias has been seldom observed in the context of tourism and hospitality studies
479 (Skavronskaya et al., 2017). Moreover, evidence of the rosy view phenomenon was found in the structure of
480 the dataset, since positive experiences largely outnumbered, negative experiences.

481 Hypothesis 4 stated that the number of positive (vs. negative) emotional details in customers' narratives
482 influences the overall evaluation of the experience. Hypothesis 4 was confirmed by the data analysis, since
483 both positive and negative emotions significantly influence the overall evaluation of the experience.

484 **5 Conclusions**

485 The article provides an interesting contribution both for researchers and practitioners. From the point of view
486 of researchers, it provides support to the use of Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011)'s model of the servicescape
487 for the study of memorable hospitality experiences. Indeed, it shows that existing models of the servicescape
488 can capture the antecedents of memorable hospitality experiences, although they need to be expanded to
489 incorporate new subdimensions and the impact of memory biases on customer emotional response.

490 Furthermore, the study shows the importance of the natural dimension for the creation of memorable hospitality
491 experiences, this dimension remains rather understudied in the literature on hotel servicescape since, to our
492 knowledge, this is the first study to identify it as an antecedent of memorable hospitality experiences. From the
493 point of view of practitioners, the present research provides useful information for the creation of memorable
494 hospitality experiences. Notably it shows the importance of considering biophilic design and the value of
495 landscape when designing hotel experiences. In fact, hoteliers can leverage beautiful landscape and relaxing
496 gardens to create memorable hospitality experiences. These results show also that it is in the best interest of
497 hoteliers and hoteliers' organizations to protect the landscape and the natural environment surrounding their
498 facilities. Moreover, the study shows that not all dimensions equally impact the recollection of negative
499 emotions, negative emotions being influenced mostly by the social and physical dimension of the servicescape.
500 This result is aligned with the study conducted by Sipe and Testa (2018) which provide empirical support for
501 the progression of value existing between satisfaction and memorable experiences, and it has interesting
502 applications for researchers and practitioners. From the point of view of researchers, it shows that the study of
503 positive and negative memorable experiences cannot be assimilated to the study of customer satisfaction. From
504 the point of view of practitioners, it highlights the importance of investing in the social and physical dimensions
505 of the servicescape to avoid negative service experiences.

506 The study also shows that the fading affect bias impacts the recollection of emotions related to service
507 experiences over long periods of time. Acknowledging the existence of the fading affect bias can equally help
508 researcher and practitioners. Researchers can use their knowledge of the fading affect bias to develop stronger
509 theoretical approaches towards the study of customer memories. Practitioners can use the fading affect bias
510 to better manage service failures and online reviews. Indeed, inviting customer to leave a review after a longer
511 period of time could reduce the likelihood of receiving extremely bad ratings.

512 The study presents some limitations, for instance it includes exclusively a panel of Italian customers with the
513 result that it does not capture cultural differences in the perception of memorable hotel experiences. The study
514 also makes use of Russell et al. (1981)'s model of emotions, which was specifically developed to capture the
515 emotions elicited by the physical environment. Consequently, the research may fail to capture complex
516 emotions, such as pride and guilt, that are better represented in other models. Future research could focus on
517 understanding how these emotions influence memorable experiences in hospitality, and how their recollection
518 is impacted by memory biases. Another limitation of this study is represented by the fact that the coded

519 information was not compared to self-reported measures of emotional intensity. The initial idea of the authors
520 was to avoid self-reported emotions as suggested by Skowronski et al., 2014, however we recognize that
521 comparing self-reported emotions with textual data or other indirect measurements of emotional intensity could
522 provide interesting insights about the functioning of the fading affect bias. Moreover, the study focuses
523 exclusively on the emotional dimension of memorable hospitality experiences, future studies should therefore
524 look at capturing more dimensions and at developing quantitative measures specifically designed for describing
525 memorable hospitality experiences. Finally, further research should aim at better understanding how customers
526 coping mechanisms influence the recollection and re-encoding of memorable hospitality experiences.

527

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