Unpacking the affective dimension of memorable hospitality experiences

Bartaloni, Cecilia; Osti, Linda; Hofacker, Charles F.

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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).

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

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

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

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

1.1 From experiences to memorable experiences

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

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

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

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

1.1 Antecedents of memorable hospitality experiences

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

Table I

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

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

The physical dimension

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

The social dimension

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

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

The symbolic environment

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

The natural dimension

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

1.3 Memorable experience as autobiographical memories

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

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

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

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

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

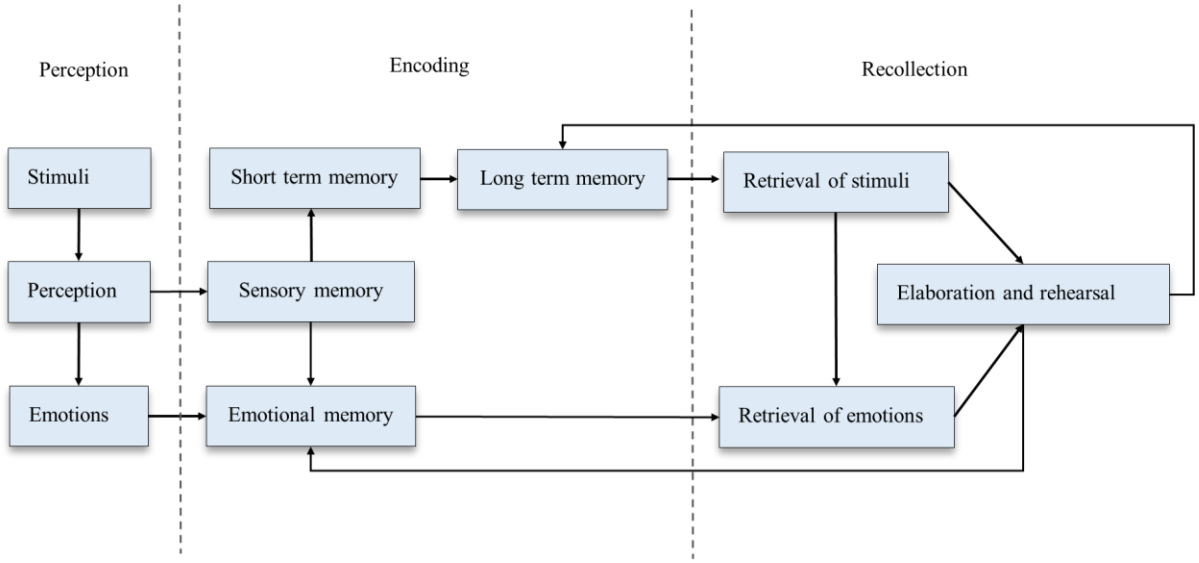
The fading affect bias is influenced by various factors including social and private rehearsal (Ritchie et al., 2006; Skowronski et al., 2014; Walker and Skowronski, 2009), but also by the characteristics of the recalled event. For instance, memory of close events, relevant to the self, and uncommon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

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

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

Figure 2

Summary of memory processes as described in the present literature review



1.1.1 1.4 Hypothesis development

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

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

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

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

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

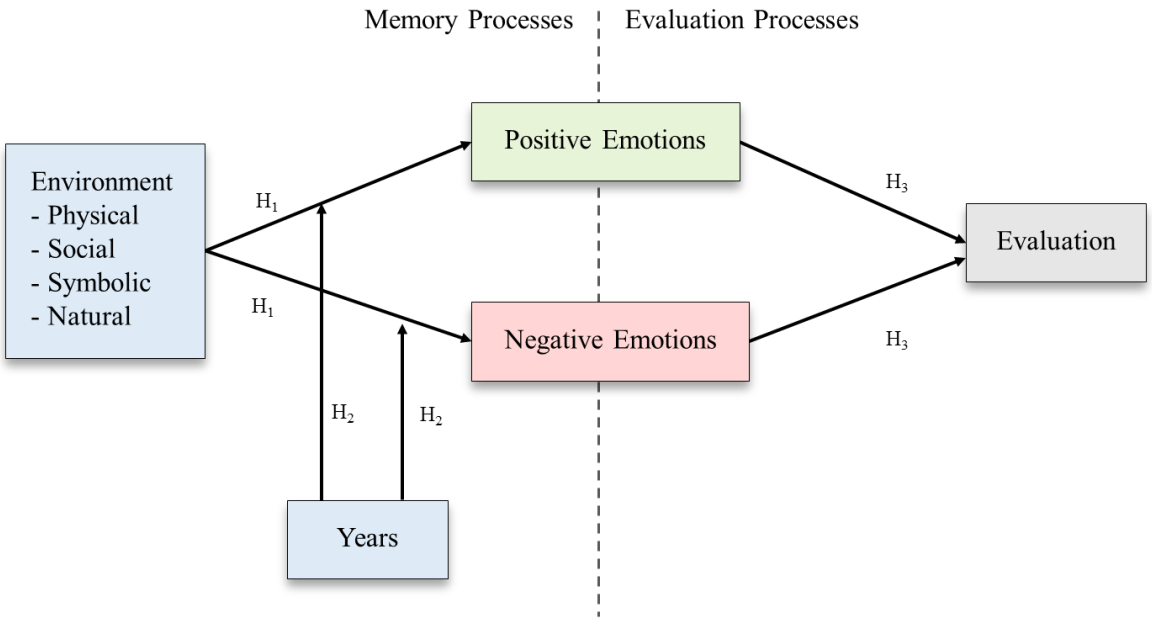
H2: the time passed since the service experience occurred moderates the relationship between the presence of negative stimuli and the level of emotional details present in customer narrative

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

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

Figure 2

Theoretical model



2 Materials and methods

2.1 *Mixed method research and philosophical standpoint*

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

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

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

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

2.2 Sample

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

2.3 *Data collection*

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

3 Data analysis

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

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

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

Table II

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;

Table III

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.

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

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

3.1 *Estimation and fit of the regression model*

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

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

Initially a Poisson regression was chosen to test model 1 and model 2, since Poisson regression specifically suited the study of count data. Consequently, the data were tested for equidispersion. Equidispersion is one of the main assumptions of Poisson regression. Data are equidispersed when the conditional variance of the outcome variable is equal to its conditional mean, overdispersed when the variance is bigger than the mean, underdispersed when the variance is lower than the mean (Coxe et al., 2009). To check the assumption of equidispersion the likelihood ration test and the Wald are commonly used (Legler, 2021; Yang et al., 2009). The likelihood ratio test compares the deviance of a model in which the scaling parameter ϕ has been fixed to a specific value to the deviance of a model in which the scaling parameter is estimated. This allows testing of the presence of overdispersion by comparing the difference in deviances to a chi-square distribution with one degree of freedom between two nested models (Coxe et al., 2009). In the present case a standard Poisson regression was tested against a Quasi-Poisson and a Negative Binomial regression for model 1 and 2. In model 1 the Poisson regression performed significantly better than a negative binomial ($\chi2$ (1) = 0, p=1 (N=744)), or a Quasi-Poisson regression ($\chi2$ (1), = -429.270 , p=1 (N=744)). In model 2 the Poisson regression performed significantly better than the Quasi-Poisson regression ($\chi2$ (1) = 0, p=1 (N=744)), but the Negative Binomial regression performed better than a Poisson ($\chi2$ (1) = 58.584, p<0.001 (N=744)). Consequently, a Poisson regression was used to estimate model 1 and a Negative Binomial was used to estimate model 2. Moreover, the variable representing the symbolic dimension was not included in model 2 since no negative evaluation of the symbolic dimension was found. Model 3 was estimated using a logistic regression.

3.2 Regression analysis results

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

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

Table IV

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

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

Table V

Regression results for model 2

	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

Moreover model 3 shows that the recollection of positive (β=1.728 $p<0.001$) and negative (β=-4.025 $p<0.001$) emotions significantly impacts the overall evaluation of the experience.

Table VI

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

4 Discussion

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

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

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

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

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

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

5 Conclusions

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

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

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

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

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

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