

**EXPERIENCE ECONOMY: DESIGNING MEMORABLE
TOURIST EXPERIENCES**
Case: Cam Uyen Hotel

Nguyen, Nhu Quynh

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Author	Nhu Quynh Nguyen	Year	2020
Supervisor	Ulla Kangasniemi and Petra Paloniemi		
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It is vital for hotels to create and yield meaningful experiences, which could generate a wide range of benefits for hotel businesses such as tourists' loyalty and positive reputation. The focus of this research paper is on discovery of which elements could contribute to tourists' unforgettable experiences and indelible impressions at Cam Uyen Hotel in Da Lat – the commissioner of the thesis project.

The thesis project aimed to suggest development of unforgettable experiences design framework, including necessary segments in memorable experiences design and a model of memorable experiences design dimensions in the hotel field. With a view to reaching this goal, a good understanding was created with several theories of extraordinary experiences concepts and meaningful design phases that facilitated the basis for qualitative research. Additionally, a qualitative research was conducted, which involved theme interviews and content analysis of experiences and knowledge of participants who stayed in the hotel.

To be specific, a qualitative research revealed higher demands of today's tourists to pre- and post-stay at the hotel as well as the high criteria to design the experiences for the hotel. Furthermore, five dimensions triggered their memorable experiences at the hotel; and all engaged their feelings and senses, namely quality of facilities and services in the hotel, delighters, design of the hotel, environment in the destination and external dimensions. Besides, the content analysis presented their revisit intention and satisfaction to the hotel, which was considered not only opportunities but challenges as well for the hotel due to some customer churns to its competitors in Da Lat market. Due to the higher tourists' needs and wants nowadays and the hotel's desire in delivery of better experiences for its tourists, it is necessary for the hotel to design meaningful experiences in order to gain successes in tourists' satisfaction, loyalty and positive advocacy.

Key words Experience economy, memorable experiences, memorable experiences design, hotel

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FOREWORD

I dedicate my sincere thanks to all my beloved friends, my mother, the commissioner and obviously my two supervisors in my thesis project. To be particular, my friends, Ragnar and Sharlyn and my mom were those who supported and motivated me so much during this intensive time of the project. Besides, the commissioner, Cam Uyen Hotel, tried to find and contact its customers for me to interview. Last but not least, my two supervisors, Ulla Kangasniemi and Petra Paloniemi assisted me so much in detail and suggested valuable recommendations for my thesis. Although they said it was their responsibilities, they were still enthusiastic beyond their missions.

After all, I was grateful to have these beloved people during my thesis project work.

SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
EXQ	Experience Quality
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
WOM	Word-Of-Mouth

1 INTRODUCTION

Tourism and hotel industry are essential as they might draw several businesses' attention in investment in the industry due to economic benefits (Briedenhann & Wickens 2004; Athanasopoulou 2013, as cited in Yadav & Krishnan 2017, 1) or contribute to the country's GDP such as higher employment opportunities. Consequently, as a service industry, the hotel field essentially needs the experience economy to obtain more competitive advantages. In other words, Pine and Gilmore (1999, 12) describe that "experiences are memorable" since satisfaction and quality are no longer sufficient for today's tourists; rather memorable experiences are the heart of the hotel industry nowadays (Tung & Ritchie 2011).

Today's hospitality industry is transforming from a product-focused and physical-asset business to a customer-focused and experience-centric one (Knutson 2006, as cited in Rijal & Ghimire 2016, 43) because no customer wants to purchase service delivery, they buy experiences; no one wants to buy service quality, they buy memories and no one wants to buy food and beverage, they buy meal experiences (Hemmington 2007, 749, as cited in Rijal & Ghimire 2016, 43). Similarly, guests of luxury hotels are satisfied with not only basic service quality, for example, staff courtesy, hotel appearances or food quality but also memorable experiences during their stays (Mohsin & Lockyer 2010; Cetin & Dincer 2014, as cited in Rijal & Ghimire 2016, 43).

The tourists' experience remains in their memory, which leads to their assessment – satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Quinlan-Cutler & Carmichael 2010, as cited in Coelho, Gosling & Almeida 2018, 11). As a result, delivering meaningful experiences for tourists is a key factor in hotel industry (Pizam 2010, as cited in Ye et al. 2020). Nonetheless, "not every tourist experience generates memorable memories" (Coelho, Meira & Gosling 2018, 159). Acknowledging that offering extraordinary experiences for tourists is the essence of marketing strategy in the hotel industry (Park 2016), yet most firms find it challenging creating them (Beltagui, Candi & Riedel 2020) and knowing what is crucial in turning a common experience into a memorable experience (Coelho, Gosling & Almeida 2018, 11). This project presents how a hotel designs memorable experiences for tourists.

The objective of this study is to develop a memorable experiences design framework in the hotel field, in which an extraordinary experiences design dimensions model and the design phases are introduced, especially for the commissioner, Cam Uyen Hotel. This project, thus, facilitates the commissioner to obtain a good understanding of meaningful experiences and the suggested design process of how to create meaningful experiences in the hotel industry for tourists in Da Lat by observations of produced experiences from tourists' perspectives.

The idea of this thesis project came from the author's observations and experiences at many hotels, which provoked the interest of the author in the topic. To be specific, numerous hotels from standard to luxury ones are similar; and higher-level hotels might be just different from facilities and better services, no meaningful experiences are delivered. Poorly, even luxury hotels just focus on their economic benefits or touchpoints having direct contacts with customers. However, it would be better that all employees in a hotel could show the best services and yield memorable experiences for customers when encountering. Accordingly, the author's desire is to develop a memorable experience design model in the hotel aspect in this thesis project.

With a view to gaining comprehension of meaningful experiences design process, the study introduces plenty of basic theoretical concepts and empirical research. In order to indicate the design process in the hotel field in Da Lat, a qualitative research was conducted, including theme interviews with tourists who visited the hotel and content analysis. In addition, the qualitative method can enable the commissioner to gain deeper understandings about their customers in order to build and create meaningful experiences for them.

2 OVERVIEW OF CAM UYEN HOTEL

The commissioner of this thesis project is Cam Uyen Hotel. It is located in ward 3, Da Lat city, which is approximately 15 kilometres far away from Da Lat city centre. Although it is far from the city centre, it is near to some sightseeing and landscapes such as Tuyen Lam lake, Prenn waterfall or Datanla waterfall. (Phung 2020.) Nestled in the Central Highland region of Vietnam, Da Lat is a capital of Lam Dong province, which is located in the Southeast of Vietnam. Due to a special location of Da Lat, its weather is unlike almost parts of Vietnam as a tropical climate. Its climate is mostly mild and cool all year round, which leads to its fame as the city of Eternal Spring. (APEC Energy Working Group 2020, 2, 10.)

Da Lat is a well-known destination in Vietnam. Typically, the city offers numerous French architectures such as Da Lat's railway station due to the history of Da Lat. French colonial union was formed in Vietnam as well as Da Lat during the World War I and French colonizers built many infrastructures and architectures according to French style (Nguyen 2017). Da Lat is, therefore, a romantic and peaceful city nowadays. Besides French architecture, the city also provides various natural attractions such as waterfalls, Langbiang Plateau, flower gardens, Nui Voi, Xuan Huong lake and some pagodas (Guidepost Tours Australia 2020).

The target customers of the hotel are Vietnamese people who mainly reside in big cities, especially Ho Chi Minh city with medium to high monthly income. However, the hotel has welcomed foreign tourists as well, yet a number of them are just a few. In addition, the marketing channel is focused on social media such as Facebook, third-party websites like Airbnb, Booking.com or Agoda and word-of-mouth (WOM). The hotel was founded in 2012, which is still a brand-new hotel with 8 years in operation. Accordingly, there are several stronger competitors which have a longer history than the hotel. (Phung 2020.)

Nevertheless, the hotel itself has tried to yield best experiences for tourists with a principle that the emphasis of producing experiences is more on quality than quantity. Due to that reason, the scale of the hotel is small since they have all enthusiastic employees rather than a wide range of personnel, but no quality is generated. The hotel's architecture is typically unique in accordance with French style as well as decorations of facilities are also French colonial style with the

purpose of delivering the historical story of Da Lat for tourists. Moreover, the hotel offers different styles of villas based on Da Lat's characteristics and tourists' preferences. Those villas are situated in many places around the main hotel reception and themed with different concepts such as French style, flowers style or just a simple villa. Besides the main products and services of accommodation, Cam Uyen Hotel also offers places for organizing conferences and weddings. (Phung 2020.)

3 TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES

3.1 Concept of Experience Economy

Experience economy is deemed to be an essential driver in today's rapidly developing and innovative society (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 1). Following economic movement from manufacturing to service economy, the next would be experience economy (Grönroos & Helle 2010; Matthysens & Vandenbempt 2010, as cited in Beltagui, Candi & Riedel 2020). It has been almost two decades since the next emerging wave of economic history was described as an experience economy (Pine & Gilmore 2013, 21). Zhang (2010, as cited in Ferreira & Teixeira 2013, 2) states that the appearance of experience economy is not accidental but rather an unavoidable trend. These memories or emotions would form core characteristics of products in the minds of customers, which might lead to the rise of experience economy (Tu & Yang 2019, 2).

There are various definitions about experience economy. Pine and Gilmore (1999) define that an experience is the positive emotion when an individual has been engaged on an emotional, physical, intellectual or even spiritual level and no one can have the same experiences as they come from the interaction between the one's state of mind and the staged event. Moreover, Esgate (2002, as cited in Tu & Yang 2019, 3) states "experience makes up the core of a transaction". Furthermore, experience economy can be interpreted as 'experience' and 'economy'. An experience is an interaction between a business's brand, product or service and a customer, which is shaped by the characteristics of the customer and products, company or brand (Same & Larimo 2012, as cited in Ferreira & Teixeira 2013, 4). The economy is explained by its economic offerings for a buyer from a seller (Pine & Gilmore 2013, 25).

Experiences have always been the heart of businesses (Kamel et al. 2008); and experience economy is a topic attracting increasing attentions over the time (Sundbo & Sørensen 2013, 1). "Experiences are the fourth economic offering, as distinct from services, as services are from goods" (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 2), and goods are from commodities. When a person buys a service, one purchases intangible activities; but when one buys an experience, one pays to spend time

enjoying meaningful events that businesses stage to personally engage an individual in the events (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 2).

Commodities are materials extracted from nature like animal, mineral or vegetable (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 2, 6). Goods are physical and tangible offerings made by commodities as raw materials for largely anonymous users. Services are intangible activities customized to client requests. Service providers utilize goods to perform their operations on a particular client such as cutting hair, repairing equipment or washing clothes. Experiences offerings might occur whenever firms use services as the stage and goods as props to engage an individual into memorable events such as musical concerts, far-off destinations or visiting a museum. (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 7, 8; 2013, 25.) While commodities are fungible, goods are tangible and services are intangible, experiences are memorable (Table 1).

Table 1. Economic Distinctions (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 6)

<u>Economic Offering</u>	<u>Commodities</u>	<u>Goods</u>	<u>Services</u>	<u>Experiences</u>
<u>Economy</u>	Agrarian	Industrial	Service	Experience
<u>Economic Function</u>	Extract	Make	Deliver	Stage
<u>Nature of Offering</u>	Fungible	Tangible	Intangible	Memorable
<u>Key Attribute</u>	Natural	Standardized	Customized	Personal
<u>Method of Supply</u>	Stored in bulk	Inventoried after production	Delivered on demand	Revealed over a duration
<u>Seller</u>	Trader	Manufacturer	Provider	Stager
<u>Buyer</u>	Market	User	Client	Guest
<u>Factor of Demand</u>	Characteristics	Features	Benefits	Sensations

An experience is concerned as a mental phenomenon. It serves no physical needs as goods do nor addresses material or intellectual problems as services do. (Sundbo & Sørensen 2013, 2.) Although experiences themselves lack tangibility, people still desire them since the value of experiences generated for them has remained for a long time. Moreover, experiences could create more

harmonies for guests than goods. (Carter & Gilovich 2010; Van Boven & Gilovich 2003, as cited in Pine & Gilmore 2013, 26.)

While prior economic offerings – commodities, goods and services are external to consumers, experiences are inherently personal, existing in the mind of an individual who has been engaged on an emotional, physical, intellectual or even spiritual level (Pine & Gilmore 1998, 99). As a result, enterprises have recognized the need to stage experiences for their guests (Pine & Gilmore 2001, 4). Nevertheless, Halfon (2007, 2) describes “staging experiences is not about entertaining customers or users, it is about engaging them”. Indeed, experiences are not exclusively about entertainment; businesses stage an experience whenever they engage customers in a personal and memorable manner (Pine & Gilmore 1998, 99). According to Pine and Gilmore (1998, 101), experiences include two dimensions. The first corresponds to customer participation as customers play a crucial role in creating performances or events, which would generate experiences. The second one demonstrates connection or environmental relationship which unites customers within the events or activities.

3.2 Need for Delivering Memorable Experiences

Offering memorable experiences could be the key in the hotel industry (Pizam 2010, as cited in Ye et al. 2020, 2). Customers are now decision makers and emotional benefit seekers (Holbrook 2006; Holbrook & Hirschman 1982, as cited in Park 2016, 88). To be specific, their preferences have exerted a significant impact on expectations, consumption experiences and post-experience evaluation (Babin, Darden, & Griffin 1994; Batra & Ahtola 1991; Schwartz & Chen, 2011, as cited in Park 2016, 88).

Indeed, tourists’ experiences might be affected by their assessment and undergoing of events and activities which commence before, during and after their trips (Tung & Ritchie 2011, 1369). For example, tourists spend their money not only just for a standard room in a hotel for their stay but also a more comfortable room, attractive views or additional amenities (Park 2016, 88). Therefore, what they want would be a different and very personal experience (Pine, Peppers, & Rogers 2009, as cited in Herjanto & Gaur 2019, 91). In other words, “customers are looking for memorable experiences” (Hudson 2010, as

cited in Ferreira & Teixeira 2013, 3). Today's economic paradigm has shifted from goods and services to experiences (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 1), or even hedonic and meaningful experiences. Acknowledging this point and the customer's demands, there is a need for providers to improve offerings and deliver more exciting and pleasant experiences rather than goods and services (Oliver, Rust, & Varki 1997; Torres & Kline 2006; Williams 2006, as cited in Park 2016, 89).

On the other hand, ordinary experiences merely are still inadequate nowadays for gratifying the tourist's needs and wants as well as ensuring survival of enterprises in the market competition. As a result, the emphasis is now to deliver unique, extraordinary and meaningful experiences for visitors (Hudson & Ritchie 2009; Ritchie & Hudson 2009, as cited in Chandralal & Valenzuela 2015, 292). This might stress an increasing awareness of extraordinary experiences' essence, as well as enhance memorability of tourist experiences (Kim 2009; Kim, Ritchie, & McCormick 2012; Pizam 2010; Canadian Tourism Commission 2004; Tung & Ritchie 2011, as cited in Chandralal & Valenzuela 2015, 292; Ye et al. 2020, 2).

It is stated by Ye et al. (2020, 1) that creating unforgettable experiences would be the essence of the hotel industry. In contrast, Chandralal and Valenzuela (2015, 292) argue knowledge of meaningful experiences is limited to just a few studies and articles. Although grasping the new expectations of tourist about unique, gratifying and diverse experiences (Azevedo 2010; Lagiewski & Zekan 2006, as cited in Chandralal & Valenzuela 2015, 292) and satisfaction and quality only are no longer sufficient for today's tourists seek (Kim et al. 2012, 13, as cited in Chandralal & Valenzuela 2015, 292), providers still concentrate on amenities and facilities and ignore the increasing visitors' demand for unique and unforgettable experiences, even though they could generate even more profits for businesses (Kim, Ritchie & McCormick 2012; King 2002; Lagiewski & Zekan 2006; Williams 2006, as cited in Chandralal & Valenzuela 2015, 292; Poon 1994, as cited in Forder 2015, 1).

The significance of creating memorable experiences, therefore, should be more highlighted. They are extremely different from ordinary experiences due to their delivery of sustainable competition advantages (Kim 2009, 9–10, as cited in Akkuş & Güllüce 2016, 66). According to Sharma and Nayak (2019, as cited in

Chen, Cheng & Kim 2020, 3), memorable experiences are designed to evoke and consolidate pleasant experiences in tourists' mind, which leads to customers' positive memories about brands, products and services, a key factor in consumer decision-making (Aroeira, Dantas & Gosling 2016; Kim 2010, as cited in Coelho, Gosling & Almeida 2018, 12). This might generate a higher revisit intention, guest satisfaction, customer loyalty and positive WOM (Yang 2009, as cited in Herjanto & Gaur 2019, 91; Canadian Tourism Commission's Report 2004, as cited in Htet, Nonsiri & Daengbuppha 2014, 162; Pizam 2010, 343, as cited in Lin, Tung, Zhang & Gu 2018, 125).

If tourists' trend and demand of memorable experiences are gratified, they could be willing to spend more time and pay higher prices at present and in the future (Pine & Gilmore 2011, as cited in Htet, Nonsiri & Daengbuppha 2014, 162). A business's revenues and benefits, hence, are increasingly reinforced, which results in enterprises' development. It is demonstrated by Chen, Cheng and Kim (2020, 3) that offering unforgettable experiences is valuable for sustainable development of firms. Therefore, creation of extraordinary experiences is extremely necessary for businesses' growth.

3.3 Towards Comprehension of Memorable Experiences

Due to the importance of meaningful experiences, a variety of scholars have tried to conceptualize the true meaning of the memorable experiences (Chandralal & Valenzuela 2015, 292). Larsen (2007, 15, as cited in Ayazlar & Arslan Ayazlar 2017, 138) interprets a memorable experience as "a past personal travel-related event strong enough to have entered long-term memory". According to Lee (2015, as cited in Coelho & Gosling 2018, 15), unforgettable experiences refer to the memory of travellers, particularly their feelings and emotions experienced during an activity; or meaningful experiences are experiences that show personal significance (Kretchmar 2007, 382, as cited in Beni, Fletcher & Chróinín 2017, 291).

It is said by Elands and Lengkeek (2012, 36, as cited in Rahmani, Gnoth & Mather 2014, 360) that meaningful experiences are different from the original experiences. Ye et al. make distinctions between ordinary experiences and meaningful experiences. While ordinary experiences illustrate quality and

satisfaction in customer memorability, extraordinary experiences are created by the effect of novelty and delight (Ye et al. 2020, 9–10). Likewise, Boswijk, Thijssen and Peelen (2007, as cited in Forder 2015, 2) also differentiate between two terms of experience concept. On the one hand, experiences are “an immediate, relatively isolated event with a complex of emotions that leave an impression and represent a certain value for the individual within the context of a specific experience” (Boswijk, Peelen, & Olthof 2011, 60, as cited in Forder 2015, 2). On the other hand, Snel’s concept of memorable experiences is “experience is a continuous, interactive process of doing and undergoing, of action and reflection – of cause and effect – that is meaningful to the individual in (more than one) different contexts of one’s life, an experience causes and individual to change perspective on the world and/or oneself” (Snel 2001, as cited in Forder 2015, 2–3).

Understanding the meaning of memorable experiences is clear by many above definitions and distinctions, yet a deep comprehension of how tourist experiences could be transferred to extraordinary experiences and what makes certain experiences special, spectacular and memorable is a different story. There are numerous characteristics of meaningful experiences suggested by researchers. According to Wikström (2008, as cited in Ye et al. 2020, 5), a high level of memorability refers to an event which is “easier to recall” and “unforgettable”.

Following to Kim et al. (2010, as cited in Cornelisse 2018, 94), “memorability of an event reflects feelings, cognitive evaluation and novel events”. Furthermore, memorable experiences would concern feelings of being present in a place and absorbing the current moment, which is shared with people or created bonds. This significantly boosts emotional effects on designing them (Knobloch, Robertson & Aitken 2014, as cited in Coelho, Meira & Gosling 2018, 159). Additionally, more features are indicated by researchers and authors, such as unexpected surprises, professionalism, personnel responsiveness, courtesy and sympathy or interactions with friends, which could be central in the delivery of extraordinary experiences (Azevedo 2009, as cited in Ayazlar & Arslan Ayazlar 2017, 39).

Together with the features of meaningful experiences, many scholars also identify their dimensions. Various elements have been reported in the literature

of Kim et al. (2012, as cited in Kim 2014, 35) such as hedonism, novelty, knowledge, meaningfulness, involvement, local culture, and refreshment. Tung and Ritchie (2011) have revealed four key components of memorable experiences in their in-depth interviews, particularly affect, expectations, consequentiality and recollection.

Essentially, characteristics as well as dimensions of meaningful experiences are discussed in the hotel industry, which is a vital setting with efforts to achieve the objective of the study. It is said that physical environment and human interaction have exerted an essential impact on memorable hotel guest experiences (Lin, Tung, Zhang & Gu 2018, 125). Physical environment consists of senses, texture, landscaping and lobby music (Walls 2013, 181, as cited in Lin, Tung, Zhang & Gu 2018, 125) as well as “behaviour and appearance of service provider” (Berry et al. 2006, 45, as cited in Lin, Tung, Zhang & Gu 2018, 125). Human interaction refers to interaction between employees and customers, including relationships, responsiveness, professionalism, and reliability (Lin, Tung, Zhang & Gu 2018, 125). In addition, Lo (2012, as cited in Herjanto & Gaur 2019, 91) suggests that positive psychological factors like pleasant surprises might improve a hotel customer’s memorable experiences. Similar to general meaningful experiences features, direct interactions with locals, environment and their culture would provide unique and unforgettable experiences (Gupta & Vajic 2000, as cited in Herjanto & Gaur 2019, 91).

However, regardless of all above-mentioned characteristics and dimensions of memorable experiences, this study focuses on Pine and Gilmore (1999, 30) criteria of creating them – four realms. The four realms or 4E’s are entertainment, educational, escapist and esthetic (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 30), which is discussed below. The four realms are considered as the key success to design them.

3.4 Significance of Quality

Although quality is inadequate for today’s demands of tourists (Tung & Ritchie 2011), it might be still necessary and concerned as an important contributor to memorable experiences. There are three degrees of quality which are product quality, service quality and experience quality (EXQ). Product quality corresponds to collection of the product’s features that meet the customer’s

requirements (Dhanya & Sam 2011). It has played a fundamental role in unforgettable experiences as basic needs of tourists when they travel. It could be, for instance in the hotel industry, comfortable beds for a good sleep after a busy day, cleanliness of the accommodation as well as security of the hotel and destination.

Quality of services includes five dimensions – tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Tangible elements deal with physical facilities, amenities and personnel. Reliability is dependable and accurate service providers' performance. Responsiveness is concerned as willingness of service providers to assist customers and deliver prompt services. Assurance refers to customers' trust to service employees and empathy means personal care and attention to customers. (Parasuraman et al. 1988.) It is noted that service quality in the herein is not a tool but rather an assessment of services about quality.

Service quality is considered as a combination of basic needs and psychological needs in Maslow's hierarchy model, which generates senses of trust and comfort to tourists. Thanks to services quality, businesses might increase customer satisfaction, favourable customer behaviour, repurchase intention and improved organizational performances (Heskett, Jones, Loveman, Sasser & Schlesinger 1994, as cited in Klaus & Maklan 2008, 1; Amoah, Radder & Eyk 2014, 1; Dhanya & Sam 2011, 308). Due to a variety of benefits, quality of services is definitely crucial in memorable experiences design.

The last level of quality is EXQ. Based on Klaus and Maklab's model (2012), Rais, Musa and Muda (2016, 301) present EXQ deals with four dimensions which are product experience, outcome focus, moments-of-truth and peace-of-mind. In another way, EXQ could be interpreted as the impression and memory of guests after their stay (Dhanya & Sam 2011, 309). EXQ represents the highest class of Maslow's hierarchy model – self-fulfilment needs as the key focus of EXQ is to create unique and meaningful experiences that influence emotion and future customer behaviours (Rais, Musa & Muda 2016, 300). In consequence, EXQ would promote revisit intention, positive WOM, customer loyalty and customer advocacy, which might generate higher profits for enterprises and reinforce businesses' brand image due to tourists' willingness to pay high prices when their demands are fulfilled (Sureshchandar, Rajendran & Kamalanabhan 2001 as cited

in Klaus & Maklan 2008, 1; Fernandes & Cruz 2016, 374; Pizam 2010, as cited in Lin, Tung, Zhang & Gu 2018, 125).

In general, quality is the essence in memorable experiences and the design, which would form the basis to create meaningful experiences for any hotel companies. Additionally, with a wide range of competitive advantages generated, quality is deemed to be a significantly necessary factor in the design, especially in hotel context.

4 MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE DESIGN PROCESS

4.1 Market Research

In today's world of marketplace's increasing complexity and consistent changes, ability to access relevant market information would be a key competitive advantage in business operation and decision-making process (Nyukorong 2017, 1; Shukla 2008, 13). In fact, market research has played a core role in the memorable experience design process in hotel context since it has been concerned as the very first and crucial step contributing to success of the design. As a result, there is a need to conduct market research before starting to design them.

The purpose of market research is discussed in some articles. For instance, according to Al-Shatanawi, Osman and Halim (2014, 151–152), enterprises or marketing department in businesses could facilitate market researches to gain better understanding of competitive current markets, notice changes in the markets, improve market awareness, update customers' demands in order to anticipate market trends, reduce risks and uncertainty and provide basic information for marketing decisions. Once the objectives are set, it is clear enough to conduct research.

The main focus of market research is on understanding customer, company and environment including competitors (Smith & Albaum 2010, 1). Pine and Gilmore (2001, 8) states "the customer is the product!". In other words, customers' demands might be challenges for producers to deliver better offerings such as added values by additional services or the core products and services (Jensen 1999; Tarassanen & Kylanen, 2006, as cited in Rijai & Ghimire 2016, 44; Pine & Gilmore 1999). Due to that reason, the competition in updating changes on trends of clients' demands (Rijai & Ghimire 2016, 44) has become fiercer than ever. Indeed, it is significantly crucial to first identify target customers, then understand customers, their aspirations and attention such as social demographic, attitudes and behaviours to brands and products, market sizes; target roles like purchasers, consumers or influencers before providers' desire to engage them to experience offerings (Barabba & Gerald 1991, as cited in Al-Shatanawi, Osman & Halim 2014, 153; Smith & Albaum 2010, 1; Proctor & Jamieson 2004; Pine &

Gilmore 2001, 8; Rijai & Ghimire 2016, 44) and design unforgettable experiences for them.

Research concerning a company includes products, promotion, pricing, placement, services and sales (Smith & Albaum 2010, 1). Product researches provide information about use of existing or potential products and services, grasping opportunities for new product development, product design requirements thanks to products and services tests on potential customers before launch, measurement. Through advertising campaigns, providers could make decisions on suitable methods for promotion, campaign messages to appeal target audiences, effective marketing channels. Similarly, producers might choose appropriate distribution methods, distribution channel members and the best location for warehouses and retail outlets by distribution research. (Proctor & Jamieson 2004.)

Last but not least, environment researches examine four dimensions impacting on the firm's marketing operations, which are political, economic, social and technological influences. To be more specific, changes in government laws could politically influence trading conditions or economic trends might exert an impact on business operations. In addition, population explosions or decreases socially would influence customer demands. Likely, a sudden breakthrough on technologies could impact on a products and services process as well as open opportunities for advanced acquisitions. (Proctor & Jamieson 2004.)

Thanks to market research, enterprises would gain in-depth perceptions about their customers, markets and industry trends. High-quality research would reveal details about current customers or even draw attention to new customers. (Balmer & John 2001, as cited in Al-Shatanawi, Osman & Halim 2014, 154.) As a result, market researches could bring several benefits for businesses such as uncertainties and risks reduce, sales opportunities, new products' development, profitable and cost-effective business management and improving decision-making by clarifying problems and problem-solving (Al-Shatanawi, Osman & Halim 2014, 155; Lappin, Figoni & Sloan 1994, 1; Grubor, 2010, as cited in Nyukorong 2017, 1; Shukla 2008, 14).

4.2 Experience Design Principles

Many researchers have set criteria to design memorable experiences; yet in this study, principles of Pine and Gilmore are applied as they present necessary and crucial stages of meaningful experience creation step by step for experience providers. According to Pine and Gilmore (1999), there are five key principles in the design, namely theme the experience, harmonize impressions with positive cues, eliminate negative cues, mix in memorabilia and engage the five senses. A well-defined theme is a crucial step in staging meaningful experiences. In contrast, a poorly conceived theme or failures to identify a theme deliver no impressions for customers about organizations as well as the experience yields no lasting memory. (Pine & Gilmore 1998, 102.) As a result, creation of a distinctive theme shows that the experience works for tourists. With a view to theming an experience, there is a need for the customers' participation. (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 47–48.)

Nonetheless, businesses find it challenging in creating an appropriate and distinctive theme for experiences. Pine and Gilmore, hence, have introduced five rules which paramount in developing a theme for experiences. First of all, an engaging theme must replace the guest's senses of reality. In other words, successfully establishing a sense of place for tourists means creating a reality other than their usual daily lives. Secondly, the richest venues fully exert an impact on the experience of time, space, and matter. The next one is to integrate space, time, and matter into a cohesive and realistic whole. The fourth one is to generate various places within a place to strengthen themes. (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 49–51.) To be simple, for example, a theme park designs many different play areas for families to discover and enjoy while they are still in one location. Lastly, a theme would meet the character of enterprises staging the experiences. In general, a successful theme must be concise and attractive. (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 51–52.)

The next principle of Pine and Gilmore to design the experiences is to harmonize impressions with positive cues. The experiences created must leave indelible impressions for tourists as impressions are the “take-aways” of the experience and have exerted a significant impact on tourists' feelings (Pine & Gilmore 1998,

103; Chen, Cheng & Kim 2020, 4). Merely words are obviously inadequate; so, enterprises must demonstrate cues affirming the nature of the experiences and each cue needs to support the theme in order to create the desired impressions. Different kinds of the experiences obviously depend upon different impressions. (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 53–54.) In fact, the positive cues could trigger favourable impressions of the themes in the customer's minds (McClellan 2002).

Together with delivery of impressions with positive cues, negative cues should also be eliminated. Experience stagers need to erase what diminishes, contradicts or distracts the customers' attention from the theme. Experiences should be yielded in an appropriate manner; either too many haphazard cues such as over services or no cues like no service-industry could ruin the experiences. (Pine & Gilmore 1998, 103–104.) Even minor cues seem to impair the engaging experiences as well. All of them would lead to customer attrition to competitors who perform better experiences. (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 55–56.)

Mixing in memorabilia is the fourth principle in the design principles. People usually purchase memorabilia as tangible artifacts to recall their experiences because their values are worth far more than the physical elements such as prices (Pine & Gilmore 1998, 104). Some with their higher desires are likely to show others what they have experienced (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 57) or give those memory keepsakes to their beloved people. There are four approaches suggested to reinforce the design with memorabilia. Firstly, experience providers would sell memorabilia associated with experiences or turning items which are parts of experiences into individualized memorabilia is another approach. The third one is to give memorabilia away rather than sell it with cost. Finally, businesses should develop a new set of memorabilia to generate better staging experiences. (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 57–58.) With a proper setting, enterprises can mix memorabilia into their offerings, which significantly contributes to the design success to better deliver memories and indelible experiences.

Last but not least, sensory stimulants engaged in experiences are contributing factors (Saucken, Reinhardt, Michailidou & Lindemann 2013, 7) to enhance the themes of experiences. The more sensory experiences are, the more memorable they will be (Pine & Gilmore 1998, 104). With different target customers, the sensation designs are different. Grasping this point, there is a need for providers

to design proper sensations into cues to enhance extraordinary experiences for tourists. To some extent, a simple cue can strengthen experiences through a single sense. However, it is noticed that not all senses are good and appropriate ones and some integrations barely work (Pine & Gilmore 1998, 105). As a result, it is suggested that firms should commence with those above five fundamental principles to design and stage memorable experiences for their tourists. (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 61.)

4.3 Models

4.3.1 Service Excellence

Service excellence model of Johnston (2007) has successfully performed both primary and dominant features of memorable experience design from either customers' perspectives or businesses' perspectives. Particularly, Johnston (2007) has introduced four features of service excellence to keep the commitments towards customers (Umar, Kasim & Martin 2013, 163), which are delivering the promise, providing a personal touch, going the extra mile and dealing well with problems (Figure 1). In specific, delivering the promise means businesses yield what they market, advertise and say to customers. Customers should perceive products, services and experiences as enterprises have promised. Nevertheless, it does not mean that customers must receive the best products, services or high-quality experiences. The second attribute is to treat customers individually. This can be interpreted as mass customization. Nike has applied this very well. In particular, customers are able to design their own shoes by their styles and preferences.

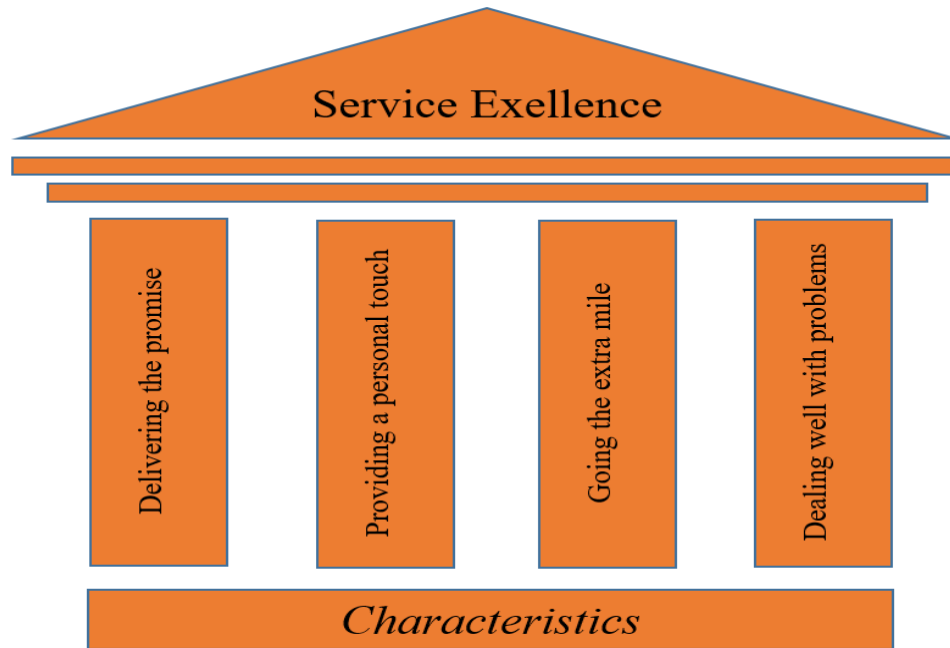


Figure 1. Service Excellence Model (Johnston 2007)

The next one is to offer experiences beyond customers' demands and expectations, which is the so-called delighters. Once mentioning delighters, the Kano model is always highlighted due to its best descriptions of delighters. The emphasis of the Kano model is on three attributes, namely basic attributes, performance attributes and attractive attributes (Figure 2). Basic attributes or must-be attributes are fundamental needs of customers that all firms have to deliver. Due to that reason, an increase in basic attributes does not reinforce customer satisfaction, yet a decrease of these would significantly mean businesses' failure in delivering offerings.

Performance attributes are what customers expect (Mitra 2016, 15). As a result, the more these attributes are yielded, the higher customer satisfactions are and vice versa. Attractive attributes or delighters are unexpected surprises when the enterprise's offerings exceed customer expectations (Augustín and Singh 2005, as cited in Ye et al. 2020, 10). Therefore, if there is a rise in delighters, customer satisfaction level extremely increases while a reduction in delighters have no impact on customer satisfaction.

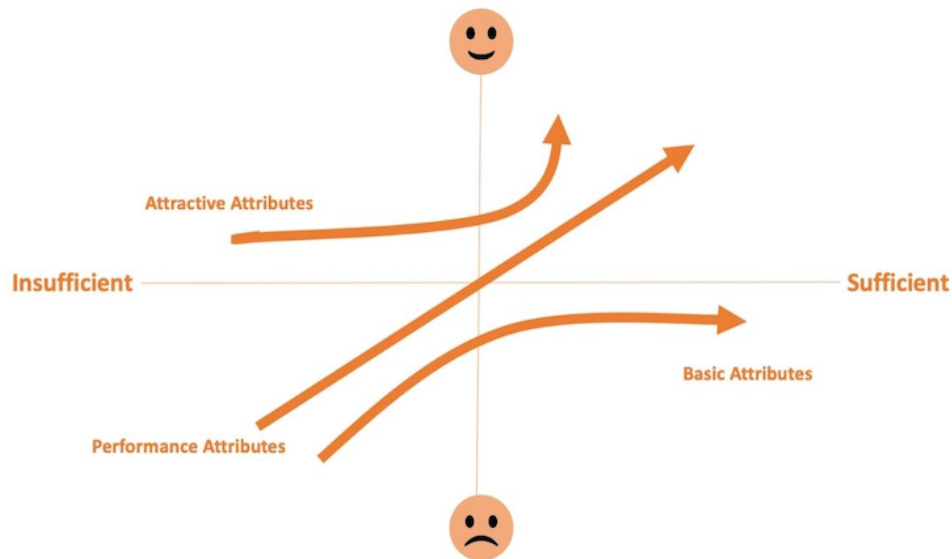


Figure 2. Kano Model (Kano et al. 1984)

The last dimension in service excellence is to address problems and queries from customers. Some businesses, however, have tried to delete negative feedback from customers to leave merely a good brand image in their minds. This action not only shows their misunderstandings about their customer behaviours but also exerts an adverse influence on customer satisfactions. Endeavours to solve problems and answer customers' queries would be the best way in order to enhance their brand image and simultaneously illustrate that they care about their customers.

4.3.2 Four Realms

Pine and Gilmore's experience realms model has stood out among other applications from not only customers' but also experience providers' point of views as it might be one of the pioneer models successfully creating memorable experiences. The framework comprises four realms – entertainment, educational, escapist and esthetic together with the two most important axes (Figure 3). The horizontal axis represents the level of guest participation whether passive or active participation. The passive participation means that customers have no effects on the performance whilst active participation is where customers personally influence on the performance or event that creates experiences (Pine & Gilmore 1998, 101; 1999, 30). The vertical dimension illustrates the connection or environmental relationship, in which absorption captivates customers' attention

of the experiences into their mind; and immersion describes that customers become physically or virtually a part of the experiences (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 31).

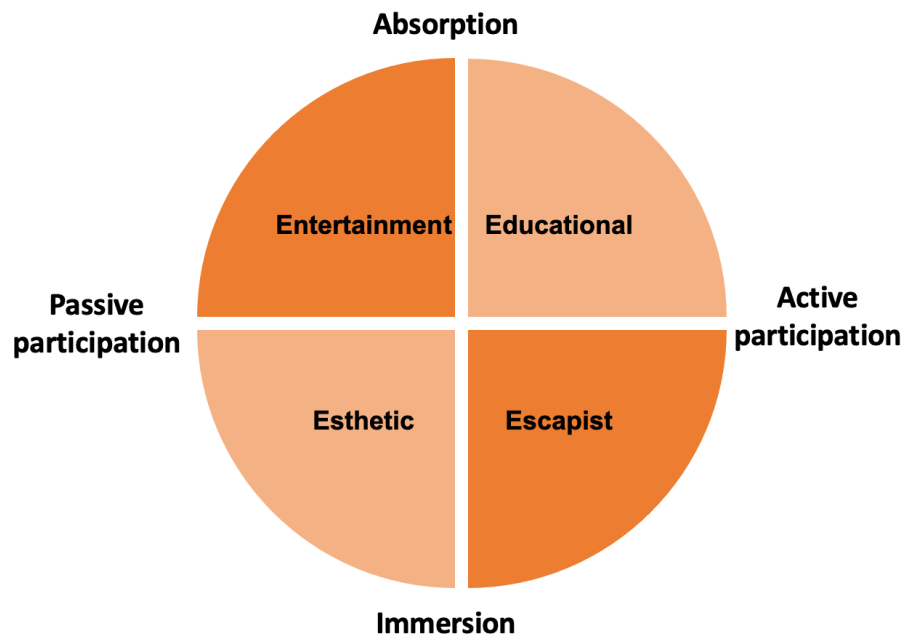


Figure 3. Experience Realms (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 30)

While entertainment experience is passively absorbed by senses, customers in education experiences actively absorb the events with the desire “to learn”. Thirdly, escapist experiences encourage customers “to do” in order to actively take part in an immersed environment. (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 31–33; Chang 2018, 84.) The final realm is esthetic experience, where customers immerse themselves in an event but remain passive (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 35). In other words, in esthetic experiences, guests desire to be present without changing the events (Chang 2018, 84; Halfon 2007, 5). The richest experiences would occur when encompassing all four realms, which forms a “sweet spot” in the centre of the model (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 39; Rijal & Ghimire 2016, 46).

4.3.3 Experience Pyramid Model

Experience pyramid model of Tarssanen and Kylänen (2009) has successfully indicated key dimensions of memorable experiences design from both customers’ aspect and experience providers’ viewpoints, which might leverage benefits of the model to the design. Simply put, the pyramid model exams experiences from two perspectives, which are products drivers affecting customer experience on the horizontal axis – individuality, authenticity, story,

multi-sensory perception, contrast and interaction and the level of the guest's experiences on the vertical axis (Figure 4).

Individuality is interpreted as uniqueness. To be simple, it is the ability of businesses to yield customized experiences based on customers' preferences and needs. Authenticity refers to lifestyle and culture of products; and a coherent story can generate appealing experiences toward customers. Next, multi-sensory perceptions are designed to reinforce the experience theme and support immersion. Contrast means differences from the customer's daily life; hence, customers should perceive experiences out of the ordinary ones. Lastly, the interaction is success in communication between experience providers and customers. (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2009, 11-14.)

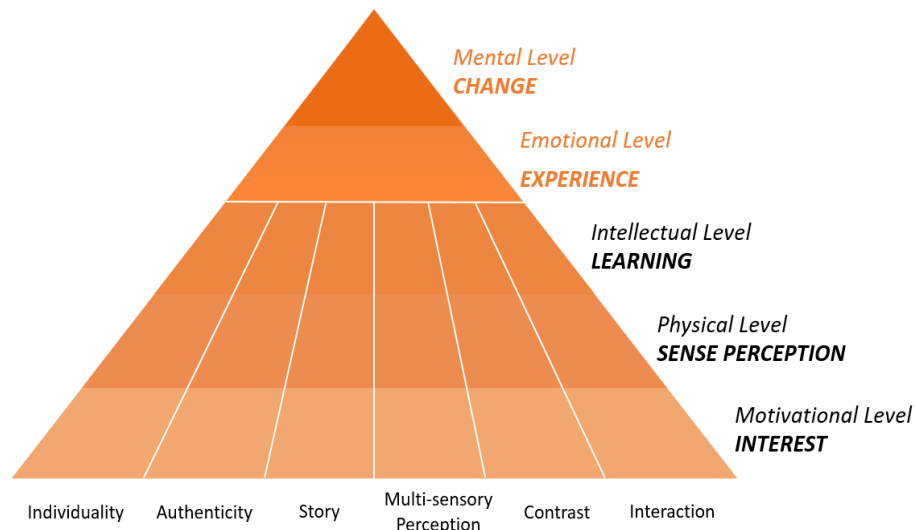


Figure 4. Experience Pyramid Model (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2009)

There are five levels of customer experience, which are motivational, physical, intellectual, emotional and mental level. The mission of motivational level is to awaken customer interest and on the physical level, customers perceive experiences by senses (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2009; 15). Intellectual level happens for customers to gain new insights (Riivits-Arkonsuo & Leppiman 2013, 3) and emotional level is where customers undergo memorable experiences (Riivits-Arkonsuo, Kaljund & Leppiman 2014, 10). The highest level of experience is mental level, which could result in an experience of personal change (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2009; 16).

4.4 Opportunities and Challenges

There are obviously numerous opportunities for hotel businesses when memorable experiences are designed such as tourists' satisfaction and loyalty. Tourists' satisfaction would emerge once their perceived experiences by providers meet their expectations and demands. Tourists' loyalty is commonly measured by favourable outcomes such as their satisfaction, revisit intention, positive WOM or online review (Ye et al. 2020, 11; Park 2016, 1; Lin, Tung Zhang & Gu, 124). To be specific, recommendation intention is considered as psychological behaviours to encourage family, friends, colleagues and people surrounding to undergo the experiences that tourists have had pleasant experiences (Chen, Cheng & Kim 2020, 4). These opportunities might contribute to companies' profit (Chen, Cheng & Kim 2020, 5) by an increase in the number of tourists and enhance their brand image.

On the other hand, businesses might find it challenging when creating meaningful experiences for tourists. The experiences seem to be fragile since if they are delivered in an inappropriate way, minor cues can ruin all the experiences. To be specific, too many cues are integrated in an experience like "overservicing" or no-service industry can also impair experiences. (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 55–56.) In another more serious circumstance, 60% of tourists still switch to another brand even though they are satisfied with the experiences. Due to this fact, it is stated that satisfaction and quality alone are no longer sufficient to yield experiences. (Kim, Ritchie, & McCormick 2012, as cited in Rahmani, Gnoth & Mather 2015, 360.) As a result, despite the desire of generating memorable experiences for tourists due to their higher demands nowadays and merits from extraordinary experiences, companies might confront unexpected outcomes and uncertainties when designing memorable experiences.

5 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN DESIGN PROCESS

5.1 Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative method was utilized in both collection and analysis of the data due to its merits gratifying the objectives of the project. In other words, it is an effective model in a natural setting and it allows the author to acquire in-depth responses to questions in actual experiences rather than rely on a set of finite questions categorized and forced-choice responses for open-ended replies to questions as quantitative method does (Creswell 2009, as cited in Mohajan 2018, 1; Jackson II, Drummond & Camara 2007, 22–23). Qualitative method is, thus, less structured in description since it is bound to build new theories (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001, as cited in Mohajan 2018, 2). In addition, because its emphasis is on words rather than numbers, a sample group of participants is small and the interviewees are not selected randomly (Mohajan 2018, 2; Hancock, Ockleford & Windridge 2007, 7). Besides, unlike quantitative research, the role of the researcher in qualitative research tends to be more personal than impersonal (Jackson II, Drummond & Camara 2007, 23).

Many authors as well as researchers have tried to conceptualize qualitative research definitions. The first definition of qualitative research was generated by Denzin and Lincoln's research (1994, as cited in Bashir, Afzal & Azeem 2015, 38) in which qualitative research is "multi-method in focus" that engages an interpretive and naturalistic technique to its issues. Moreover, Kielmann, Cataldo and Seely (2012, 7) adhere that qualitative research refers to "a constructivist view of the world", so that there is no single reality for a phenomenon but various and relative segmentations of reality.

Qualitative method is a social science research that develops interpretations of social phenomena (Punch 2013, as cited in Mohajan 2018, 2; Hancock, Ockleford & Windridge 2007, 7). The roots of qualitative research lie in social and cultural anthropology, philosophy, psychology, history and sociology (Mohajan 2018, 2). As a result, its goal is to gain deep understandings of participants (Domholdt 1993, as cited in Mohajan 2018, 2) about their experiences and knowledge in social life. It has investigated local understandings of people's experiences,

meanings, relationships and social processes in order to explore behaviours, perspectives, feelings and experiences of people (Mohajan 2018, 2).

During the thesis process, the author obviously faced some challenges. First of all, the process timetable was relatively intensive within three months of actual work in the thesis project although it had already started in January. As a consequence, the author had to work harder with the best endeavours in order to keep pace with the thesis timeline and accomplish it on time under pressures and stresses caused by the deadline. Besides, it was considerably challenging for the author to search for different hotels in Da Lat as initial target interviewees since the situation of the covid-19 pandemic did not allow the author to find hotel businesses. This led to the author's decision to change the target interviewees to tourists of the hotel.

5.2 Theme Interview

The qualitative theme interview is one of the most crucial and common methods of data collection in social science research (Bradford & Cullen 2012, as cited in Evans 2018, 2). Essentially, it is valuable since it can quickly generate rich and detailed data for researcher to gather in-depth information and an accurate assessment of characteristics from people's knowledge and experiences in phenomena (O'Keeffe, Buytaert, Mijic, Brozovi'c & Sinha 2016, 1912; Evans 2018, 2). Qualitative theme interviews are widely used to deem and uncover experiences, meanings and the presence of participants' experiences; and knowledge might be informed by assumptions or ideas (Braun & Clarke 2006, as cited in Evans 2018, 2). In particular, this is a significant advantage of qualitative theme interviews that new and novel information is likely to emerge (O'Keeffe, Buytaert, Mijic, Brozovi'c & Sinha 2016, 1913).

Similarly, an opportunity for previously unknown information and qualitative trends could be produced once an interview schedule is set (O'Keeffe, Buytaert, Mijic, Brozovi'c & Sinha 2016, 1913). During the interviews, the researcher describes a defined topic whilst respondents have played as a role as experts to speak freely in their own terms and perspectives on discussed issues and topics (Choak 2012, as cited in Evans 2018, 2; O'Keeffe, Buytaert, Mijic, Brozovi'c & Sinha 2016, 1913). The researchers, however, should guide the interview in

accordance with the flow conversations of the topic and simultaneously allow other relevant themes and additional questions to develop throughout the interviews (Evans 2018, 2).

Because of those advantages and suitability, this paper used the theme interview for the qualitative research to discover participants' experiences at Cam Uyen Hotel for the goals of identifying which elements create memorable experiences in the hotel field to build a design dimensions model. In specific, the interviews were conducted in many ways such as face-to-face or online interviews such as through Skype or Messenger. However, the duration of theme interviews had ranged from 20 up to 45 minutes with an average of 30 minutes in accordance with the interviewees' schedules since some had very tight schedules. Due to the discussed characteristics of qualitative research, the size of target participants was relatively small with eight respondents although there were actually ten tourists that were willing to take part in the interviews. Yet because of some reasons such as busy schedules or personal reasons, there were eight participants (from P1 to P8) in the end. It was noted that the participants in the interviews were those who stayed and had experiences at Cam Uyen Hotel.

The theme interview questions were classified into five segments for each purpose although they were deemed to be a story of interviewees' journey in the hotel in general. To be particular, they are customer behaviours information, memorable experiences perception, their experiences before, during and after their stay at the hotel (Appendix 1). Nonetheless, it should be noted that there were some changes in the questions order and questions after the first two interviews as well as additional questions throughout the interviews.

5.3 Qualitative Content Analysis

According to Downe-Wamboldt (1992) and Schreier (2012), Elo et al. (2014, 1) indicate that qualitative content analysis is defined as a research method that represents "a systematic and objective means of describing and quantifying phenomena". Accordingly, it involves interpreting, theorizing or making sense of data by initially dividing it into different sections to be categorized following by each purpose of segments and coded and then developing a pattern for the entire data (Gubrium & Holstein 1997, as cited in Jackson II, Drummond & Camara

2007, 24). The purpose of qualitative content analysis is to explore the “general abstract meaning underlying a group of related statements”. This meaning is produced by overlaps among different specific statements of respondents. Content analysis, thus, is indeed a procedure of gathering structures of meaning in overlapping statements. (Cropley 2019, 115.)

Content analysis includes three main phases which are preparation, organization and reporting of results. Initially, the preparation stage consists of collecting data for content analysis, making sense of data and selecting the unit of analysis. Secondly, the organization period in qualitative approach means coding, dividing data into categories and abstraction. Finally, in the reporting phase, results are presented by the content of different classifications that describes a phenomenon by chosen qualitative method. (Elo et al. 2014, 1–2.) Particularly, the data was classified into categories by marking data in different colours (Appendix 2).

5.4 Reliability and Validity in Research

The herein project used qualitative methods to achieve the aim of developing a memorable experience design model in the hotel field. Many qualitative researchers use other terms such as credibility and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba 1985, as cited in Cropley 2019, 116–117) to describe reliability and validity term in qualitative researches although they are all in the same purpose of proving trustworthiness of qualitative researches. However, this study still discusses the reliability and validity term to present trustworthiness of the qualitative research as it is sufficiently capable of delivering the same goals as other terms. Furthermore, according to Patton (2001, as cited in Golafshani 2003, 601), reliability and validity, two elements in any qualitative research, should be taken into account while researchers design a study, analyse results and assess the quality of the paper.

Bashir, Afzal and Azeem (2008) demonstrates an intimate relationship between reliability and validity, in which the role of reliability is the basis to establish validity through the research of Lincoln and Guba (1985). Reliability indicates the consistency, stability and repeatability of information and researchers' capability of collecting and recording data in an accurate manner (Selltiz et al. 1976, 182, as cited in Brink 1993, 35). In other words, it presents the ability of the qualitative

research to generate consistently the same results after testing stages (Brink 1993, 35). Indeed, the herein presented the same data results about respondents' experiences at the hotel in Da Lat after eight interviews and the researcher also asked for the transcripts checking again from participants by audio records. A good qualitative study can enable readers to understand a phenomenon without confusion (Golafshani 2003, 601).

The validity concept in qualitative researches refers to accuracy and truthfulness of scientific findings. To be simple, a valid study should illustrate the actual existing phenomenon and a valid instrument should measure data based on the purpose of the research. (Brink 1993, 35.) In fact, the study's paper made use of qualitative method as the need of the project was to discover previous experiences of the interviewees at the hotel, which focused on in-depth information rather than numbers and the study's goal was to develop a memorable experiences design model in the field of hotel. Additionally, the interviewees were selected followed by rules of tourists who stayed in the hotel before to strengthen the validity of the research study.

6 TOWARDS DESIGNING MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES FOR TOURISTS IN CAM UYEN HOTEL IN DA LAT

6.1 Customer Behaviour Research

Customer behaviour research is the very first step in designing memorable experiences for tourists in any businesses. In hotel industry, it is even more crucial because through it, experience providers are able to better understand their customers, including their behaviours, attitudes to perceived experiences and factors affecting their experiences at the hotel (Nyukorong 2017, 1; Shukla 2008, 13; Al-Shatanawi, Osman & Halim 2014, 151–152). With a view to yielding better meaningful experiences for tourists and perhaps captivating new tourists to undergo the experiences at Cam Uyen Hotel, a customer behaviour research is necessarily conducted.

Year 2020 has seen an economic crisis in many industries, especially tourism and hospitality industry, and human-beings like a significant loss of jobs caused by the pandemic, Covid-19 (UNCTAD 2020, 7). Indeed, it has prevented the participants' desires from travels, which leads to the significantly decreasing number of travels due to some political and social reasons. Consequently, participants had to postpone their trips, go around their areas or stay at home with desperate hopes of going back to normal in order to travel as desired. In fact, political and social factors could impact on tourists' behaviours (Proctor & Jamieson 2004), which might lead to a significant impact on the hotel's strategies and operation due to the massive changes in the customer behaviour research.

Before covid-19, I can travel around 3 times per year, but during this time maybe [...] I have to postpone maybe because it's not so suitable to go travelling at this time. (P6)

I usually travel 4 to 5 times per year. New Zealand was lockdown 3 months and I couldn't travel during that 3 months but New Zealand is no longer lockdown, so I'm [...] really happy that I can go back to travelling. So it's affected but moving forward I don't think it will [...]. (P7)

Normally [...] once [...] 2 months I travel [...] But the covid-19 [...] affect a lot but I'm still travelling around Taiwan, about once a month. [laugh]. (P8)

Nowadays, with the innovation in technology, there are a variety of channels for tourists to seek for a favourite hotel such as social media, third websites or just googling it. However, Cam Uyen Hotel might successfully reach the tourists through positive WOM although they have their own Facebook page. From that, the hotel could promote its brand's image through appropriate promotion, communication campaigns and marketing strategies, which are also the targets of product research (Proctor & Jamieson 2004) after determining its main marketing channel. Nevertheless, its main marketing channel, WOM, is not only an advantage for the hotel since they can gain tourists' loyalty, but a disadvantage for the company also as all participants had indirect awareness about them.

My friend introduced me [...] It's a good hotel. (P1)

I just [...] normally before I go anywhere, we search on the Internet, mainly through Agoda and booking.com. That's this one particular hotel in Da Lat I knew from through the recommendations of a friend of my friend. (P4)

The major purpose of almost all the interviewees' trip to Da Lat was for leisure. However, there are different types of their entertainment motivations. Some considered that trip as an occasion to gather with their family, to visit a different environment from their daily lives under the pressure of work or even enhance their job performances through this trip. Clearly, some tourists literally desired to enjoy their trip with senses of relaxation or just visited for the special events. As a result, it is vital for the hotel to create meaningful experiences as the participants' purposes encompass two out of four realms of Pine and Gilmore (1999) which are entertainment and escapist.

Usually after 2 or 3 months of hard working, my family usually travel to different places to enjoy the fresh air and different environment. (P1)

I've worked for a long time, so usually I'll travel just for relaxing [...] to recover the energy, to refresh ourselves and sometimes to [...] find a place to [...] improve and to create some new ideas for the job. (P5)

So we were just visiting Da Lat city because it was a flowery festival. (P7)

Together with the growth of economy and society, tourists' demand is even higher, which significantly highlights the need of delivering extraordinary

experiences for today's tourists. In fact, participants became stricter on their decision of booking a hotel with more criteria. Besides basic elements such as prices and location of the hotel, more values were taken into consideration, like services, special offerings and designs of the hotel through reviews from former tourists. The hotel, thus, might make decisions on proper strategies to involve tourists in its experience offerings, anticipate future trends to reduce risks and unexpected outcomes by updating somewhat tourists' demands as well as explore opportunities for memorable experience offerings development (Lappin, Figoni & Sloan 1994, 1; Nyukorong 2017, 1; Shukla 2008, 14).

[...] if very a few years ago, it's economic factor that plays a big role but later more driven [...] I value some other factors such as the conveniences of the place whether you have a good service or not or some special [...] offerings such as special decoration or the event or the location. (P2)

I would take a look at the facilities of the hotel and normally the architectural design of the hotel that would attract me at first [...] And also the location [...] and I look at the reviews [...] if the staff are good and the staff are friendly or helpful. (P4)

[...] I normally look for their decorations, location, is it a good location or not, reviews from other tourists and price, of course [laugh]. (P6)

Da Lat is a compelling and well-known destination; therefore, competitions among different hotels there are inevitable. Indeed, some participants had meaningful experiences with competitors in Da Lat with either positive or negative experiences that they might never forget there. Through valuable information of the research, Cam Uyen Hotel would determine specific and proper strategies in memorable experiences design to gain more tourists' loyalty in the competitive market of Da Lat as well as increase its revenues after acknowledging somewhat experience offerings of its competitors and awareness of the competitive current Da Lat market in the hotel field (Al-Shatanawi, Osman & Halim 2014, 151–152).

Another hotel in Da Lat I have been best memorable is [...] Golf Valley Hotel. It's quite of big hotel. The staff is very friendly and the hotel is brand-new hotel so it's very clean and the design is very new, so I really like it. (P1)

[...] I remember one time I booked a hotel, called Muong Thanh. After that I never want to come back there [...] because the room was so dirty and that like how, the bed [...] itchy. They have a small restaurant there, so I would like to enjoy the good food, so I don't need to go out [...]. (P6)

Overall, Cam Uyen Hotel is able to somehow obtain deep insights and valuable information and update customer behaviour trends about its customers through the conducted interviews, which could facilitate the hotel to make decisions on appropriate strategies and methods to market its brand's image to obtain more tourists' loyalty and advocacies. Their purposes of travel are mainly for leisure and their demands and criteria leading to their decisions to book the hotel are relatively high. However, this year has prevented them from travelling due to the pandemic. Besides, the hotel's marketing channels are mainly from positive WOM and its competitors in Da Lat market are also stronger with the interviewees' satisfaction.

6.2 Tourists' Perceptions about Memorable Experiences

In order to create memorable experiences for tourists, extraordinary experiences perception must be initially well-defined from tourists' point of view. There might be, however, a gap between meaningful experiences perception of the hotel and their customers. As a consequence, there is a need for the hotel to discover unforgettable experiences' meaning and importance in customers' mind.

According to the interviews, some perceived memorable experiences as a long-term memory or positive feelings in an event or a combination of two concepts from participants. Both of them are true and associated with the definitions and features from literature. In specific, strong emotions could provoke tourists' memory in the long run and vice versa meaningful experiences would trigger feelings and unforgettable memories at ease (Ayazlar & Arslan Ayazlar 2017, 138; Beni, Fletcher & Chr  in  n 2017, 291). Capturing this point of view from tourists about memorable experiences, the hotel needs to create meaningful experiences that leave indelible impressions in their minds.

Memorable experiences in my perspectives is the [...] the memory that I would remember for a long time to count. (P2)

Memorable experiences is like memory that you cannot forget. It's always in your mind and [...] when you think about that, you can like [...] smile or laugh or cry in it. (P5)

[...] It's something that you always remember. It's memorable in kind of it's hard to forget. It's driven from some kinds of strong emotions. (P7)

There are obviously many different perspectives on memorable experiences concept. Unlike the above definitions of meaningful experiences as unforgettable memories with feelings when they recall the experiences, memorable experiences in this participant's perspective consists of three key elements in the tourist's journeys, which are partners, destinations and places to stay. In fact, these factors correspond to foundations and characteristics of unforgettable experiences. In other words, these components would form an extraordinary experience concept, which is discussed above in literature of Coelho, Meira and Gosling (2018). Nevertheless, two components, partners and destinations, are out of control of the hotel to design memorable experiences for tourists in the hotel.

Memorable experiences [...] I think it's about [...] who you go with and where you go and which hotels you stay. (P3)

The essence of memorable experiences has been seen from many viewpoints of different interviewees. In fact, meaningful experiences are extremely crucial for them due to various reasons. Extraordinary experiences, for example, might trigger their emotions, considerably affect their loyalty to a brand, are an ideal occasion to strengthen relationships, or are an escape to explore new and different events to have an indelible memory once in their life. It is, therefore, necessary for the hotel to yield memorable experiences for tourists because of several benefits, including economic advantages such as revenues, profits, high prices customers would be willing to pay and customers' assessment like customer loyalty or positive WOM (Herjanto & Gaur 2019, 91; Htet, Nonsiri & Daengbuppha 2014, 162; Lin, Tung, Zhang & Gu 2018, 125).

I believe it's very important. When I travel, I want to relax and I want to refresh myself. So good memorable makes me feel happy and I decide next travel when I come back. (P1)

It is [...] really important because for every trip I go with my husband and my family, and we just want to spend the time being together and I can keep the memory to me and to marriage life. (P4)

[...] It's quite important because everyone looking for memorable experiences for their travel [...] especially one they don't forget. That's the reason that people do crazy stuff [...] they just go one different kinds of experience [...] that they don't wanna forget. They can travel because they want to immerse it. (P8)

On the other hand, memorable experiences seem to be usual for some participants since they have no seek for meaningful experiences in their trips. On the contrary, it is still a plus to deliver extraordinary experiences in their journeys. As a result, there is still a need for the hotel to create memorable experiences in order to enhance better performances and gain more tourist revisit intentions, tourists' loyalty (Htet, Nonsiri & Daengbuppha 2014, 162). Especially, delivery of distinctive experience offerings like extraordinary experiences might increase higher chances for the survival in the competitive market (Chandralal & Valenzuela 2015, 292) of Da Lat in the field of hotel.

[...] It's good to have but not that must-have. (P2)

That's fine to have memorable experiences and also it's okay if memorable experiences don't happen. If memorable experiences occur, it makes the trip [...] to have stronger impression. But if not, it doesn't destroy the whole journey. (P3)

In general, after gaining insights about unforgettable experiences from its tourists and the importance of meaningful experiences in their journey, Cam Uyen Hotel needs to create and provide extraordinary experiences for tourists while they stay at the hotel. Essentially, the hotel could leave indelible memories for them in the long term, which might result in an increase from tourists' loyalty or new customers.

6.3 Tourists' Expectations

Tourists' expectations are highly important for the hotel to yield memorable experiences for them. Understanding about their expectations, therefore, are a determining driver in the design as it would form the basis to develop a memorable experience design framework. From that, the hotel might create and deliver memorable experiences beyond their expectations to benefit more.

Indeed, tourists' expectations are higher over time, even basic needs such as cleanliness or services of the hotel. Along with fundamental needs and wants, their advanced demands are also increasingly more customer-oriented requests. Accordingly, there is a need to yield memorable experiences to gratify the customer's high demands in order to gain more benefits such as tourists revisit intention, tourist loyalty and positive recommendations (Htet, Nonsiri & Daengbuppha 2014, 162). From that, the hotel would constantly update new trends and envision future tourists' expectations in order to design and provide extraordinary experiences exceeding their expectations to survive in today's competitive market in Da Lat. However, it is a note for the hotel not to integrate too many details in the design to avoid customers' disturbance.

I expect that it is clean, good service, have a space for my kids and barbecue space. (P1)

[...] I actually have quite high hope for that [...] it was beautiful [...] so with such a price, so such location and such reviews I would expect to be, you know, very well accommodated. (P4)

I highly appreciate about the [...] cleanliness of the hotel, the view, the decorations and the people, the service of the hotel. They're willing to help the customers anytime when [...] the customers got any troubles or problems during a trip. (P5)

Nonetheless, some have no expectation before staying in the hotel. It is, therefore, much easier for the hotel to design meaningful experiences and gain their loyalty to the hotel as expectations are concerned as a zero and experiences which are over than zero are beyond their expectations. However, the hotel could hardly rely on that. It still needs to design the most memorable experiences for

guests with a view to survival in the competitive market among other competitors with updated experience offerings, otherwise there would be emergence of customer attritions to other hotels performing better (Chandralal & Valenzuela 2015, 292; Pine & Gilmore 1999).

I don't have any expectation before I go there. (P2)

[...] I didn't really think much about it [...] I didn't expect much. (P7)

Overall, tourists' expectations are much higher than ever before, so Cam Uyen Hotel should design and provide the most meaningful experiences for tourists. Although there are some tourists with no demand, the hotel still must create memorable experiences for them with its best endeavours. The hotel, therefore, might leverage a wide range of benefits through meaningful experiences delivery by updating Da Lat market trends nowadays.

6.4 Design Criteria

It is essential for any hotels to determine principles beforehand to design memorable experiences. It would be, thus, much more valuable for the hotel when the design criteria were set by their customers due to the fact that customers play a key role in yielding unforgettable experiences. By observing the produced experiences from customers' viewpoints, the hotel might have higher chances to succeed in the creation. There are five criteria identified through the interview with the hotel's tourists, which are services, facilities, the design of the hotel, partners who went with and occasion, and extraordinary offerings.

Initially, the hotel's service is the fundamental and dominant driver in the design. It includes many kinds such as process services for the whole customer journey, customer services from all employees in the hotel and the hygiene of the hotel. Service of the hotel is the first and most important factor in the design because it is a determining part in memorable experiences. In particular, it could evoke senses of satisfaction and happiness for tourists while they stay at the hotel, which involves two of the five principles from Pine and Gilmore (1999), namely harmonize impressions with positive cues and engage five senses in experience offerings. As a result, the concentration of the hotel should be on the services to boost more meaningful experiences for tourists.

The most important factor would be [...] how easy it was to [...] the booking experience [...] everything to be smooth or be communicated clearly for that. (P2)

The most important, I believe, it's human factor, so the staff, especially the one that you see, all of the receptionist and everyone even cleaning people as well [...] they're friendly, they're helpful, we instantly feel better [...] hygiene factor is also very important when we stay at the hotel. (P4)

[...] the attitude of employees [...] the receptionist [...] they have to be polite and they have to professional and they have to [...] talk to customers in the way that [...] please customers. (P7)

The next element in the design criteria is facilities which are an indispensable factor to create better meaningful experiences. However, besides basic facilities such as furniture in the room, tourists' principles for advanced facilities are much higher nowadays according to their preferences and demands, which might trigger their positive feelings of relaxation and happiness as well as create activities for them at the hotel through innovative facilities. In fact, leaving impressions with positive feelings and involving senses of taste, sight, smell, touch and sound in experience offerings by enhanced facilities could stimulate memorable experiences. Due to that reason, Pine and Gilmore have set harmonize impressions with positive cues and engage the five senses into their experience design principles (Pine & Gilmore 1999). Hence, with a view to success in memorable experiences delivery, the hotel needs to take superior facilities into account in the design.

[...] I need a space for kids [...] space for family to enjoy, to talk and to have food together like barbecue, barbecue space. (P1)

[...] depending on type of guests, they need to have certain facilities like [...] dining area or [...] a big yard to play in or maybe, swimming pool. (P4)

Thirdly, design of the hotel is taken into consideration to create better meaningful experiences from tourists' opinions. It is, for instance, the architecture or some decorations of the hotel, which could generate atmospheres in the hotel. This might positively not only stimulate different feelings but also leave the first

impression for tourists about the hotel. Indeed, not only is the theme of experience offerings extremely crucial as it would shape tourists' general perceptions about the hotel's experiences but generating positive impressions has played a key role in the design criteria as well (Pine & Gilmore 1999). Due to the essence of the design, the hotel needs to design an impressive and appealing view from outside to inside the hotel to provide unforgettable experiences for its tourists.

[...] the highest [...] priority when I choose a hotel is about the view of a hotel [...] usually brings me some [...] new, creative ideas and some inspiration. (P5)

[...] the atmosphere of that area, is like it's romantic or not [...]. (P6)

[...] from the architecture of the hotel to the [...] in-door decoration of furniture [...]. (P7)

Memorable experiences are also derived from partners going with the participants and special holidays they travel on. Although this principle is out of the hotel's control, it could be an opportunity for the hotel to create meaningful experiences. In specific, the hotel could leverage benefits from this principle by, for example, designing large areas for a group of friends or family or private and cosy spaces for couples; or on special occasions like the mid-autumn holiday, decorating the hotel with lanterns. Essentially, the hotel could even leverage its profits by selling souvenirs in these events or typical objects of Da Lat city. These all might strengthen their intimacy with partners on their holidays by the atmosphere in the hotel, which generates a higher chance for the hotel to yield extraordinary experiences for tourists. In fact, theming experiences and mixing experiences in memorabilia could significantly enhance tourists' long-term memory with favourable feelings; thus, it is encouraged by Pine and Gilmore (1999) to involve these two elements in the memorable experience design criteria.

Element is who you go with [...] the time you go [...]. (P3)

I mainly focus on who I'm with at that time and [...] is it a on a special day for us [...]. (P6)

[...] it's like [...] first of all is [...] who is the memorable I share with. Second one is in what event [...]. (P8)

Last but not least, the design criteria focus on extraordinary services and activities which could be called as delighters. Delighters would provoke positive feelings for tourists with higher chances for the hotel to gain their loyalty and positive WOM. In other words, delighters in Pine and Gilmore principles (1999) are converted into the delivery of indelible impressions with positive cues that the two researchers set it in their design principles due to its benefits in providing extraordinary experiences. As a consequence, it is necessary for the hotel to create delighters for its tourists based on the theme of experience offerings from the hotel. There is, however, a need for the hotel to keep updating the delighters, otherwise the delighters become a basic need along the time, which might cause a sense of frustration for tourists without delighters offerings.

[...] if the place can offer something that, some services that is outstanding [...] the surrounding activities they can offer, you know, some activities new that is worth visiting, worth doing. (P2)

All in all, in today's world of social and economic development, tourists' demand is significantly increasing. As a result, the more rise of their needs and wants is, the higher their criteria for creating memorable experiences are. Essentially, Cam Uyen Hotel needs to keep updating changes in their demands to design and deliver the most meaningful experiences for them while they stay in the hotel.

6.5 Dimensions

With a view to designing memorable experiences for tourists, dimensions are an indispensable component, especially these dimensions are driven from tourists' unforgettable experiences at Cam Uyen Hotel. The herein introduces five major dimensions that truly yield meaningful experiences for tourists at the hotel, namely quality, delighters, design of the hotel, environment, particularly Da Lat and extra dimensions (Figure 5). As a result, the hotel's success in the design means a successful engagement of five dimensions.

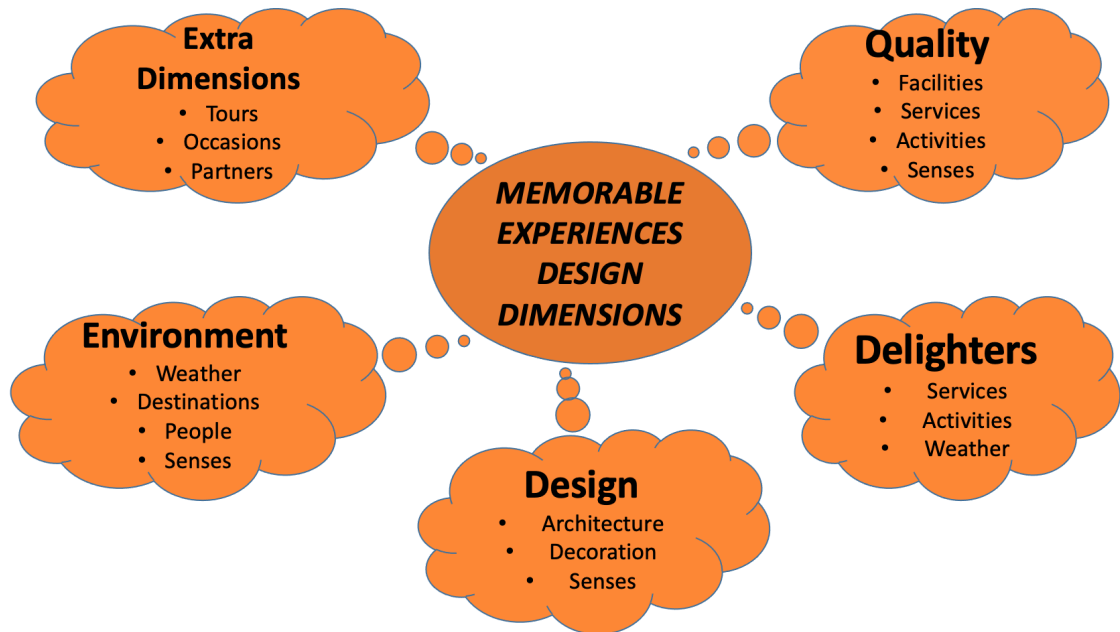


Figure 5. Memorable Experience Dimensions

Quality is an important dimension in the creation, especially about facilities since it would exert a significant impact on tourists' feelings and their journey. Facilities quality not only has played a role as a fundamental needs in Maslow's hierarchy model but also presents motivational level by evoking their interest (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2009) in of tourist experiences in the hotel field as it allows them to recover their energy in order to continue their journey at Da Lat. High-quality facilities might, furthermore, reinforce positive feelings, which could lead to tourists' satisfaction about the hotel because their purpose when staying at the hotel is to have senses of relaxation and a good sleep. The hotel, therefore, needs to initially build commitments concerning quality of facilities for tourists.

[...] the room is [...] simple and clean. They have lots of thing in my room and I think [...] it's so clean [...] I like this hotel [...] nice restroom, it has a space to relax [...] I feel comfortable and fresh when I sleep in that hotel [...]. (P3)

[...] everything there is very clean, tiny and organized [...] because I love cooking [...] there's a kitchen as well [...] I love the [...] atmosphere, the style and in living room, in the bedroom, I love the bedroom, especially, the bedroom has the balcony with a lot of armchairs. (P5)

[...] at the small restaurant, they have one small corner for the pub [...]. (P6)

Besides amenities quality, quality regarding services has also played a key role in the design, particularly the customer services of the hotel's personnel. Besides professional attitudes, their inner enthusiasm and kindness toward tourists are much more essential, which could provoke tourists' senses of comfort like their home. In the field of hotels, it is somewhat different from tours that tourists' demands integrate feelings of both escape from usual atmosphere and solace like at home. Indeed, service quality is concerned as an integration of basic needs and psychological needs of customers in Maslow's hierarchy model. Additionally, quality of services has also triggered tourists' favourable feelings by eliminating negative cues in experience offerings and addressing well with customers' problems (Pine & Gilmore 1999; Johnston 2007). Essentially, there is a need for the hotel to design memorable experiences that engage high-quality services based on not only tourists' interest but employees' sincere attitude from the bottom of their heart also by simply treating them well like the way they treat customers.

[...] They kind of responded to every request [...] I had some [...] problems with the door and they sent somebody just fix it very very quickly. (P2)

[...] they also have butlers for the villa. So whenever we go out and we come back to the hotel, everything is already clean [...] the butler they take care and they really put their heart into that [...]. (P4)

[...] They don't bother us [...] they limit time, only until 11pm every night. Then after that they close their pub, let the peaceful back [...] for us can get a good sleep. (P6)

Quality of services is regarding not only courteous attitudes of staff toward tourists, but activities offerings as well. Quality of activity services is considerably highlighted because of its higher chances to trigger meaningful experiences for tourists at the hotel. In other words, quality of activities itself could significantly generate desirable atmospheres at ease where senses and emotions could be stimulated since service quality of additional activities would satisfy tourists' psychological needs in Maslow's hierarchy model and reinforce tourists' immersion into experiences offerings by engaging entertainment with multi-sensory perception in physical level of experience pyramid model (Pine & Gilmore

1999; Tarssanen & Kylänen 2009). Due to its essence, it is highly recommended for the hotel to stage experiences with high-quality activities offerings.

[...] they play a very nice music. You can recommend like [...] they ask you what kind of music, what kind of song that you would like love to [...] hear, so from there, they can play based on your requests [...] They make us love that atmosphere more. (P6)

[...] we have the barbecue and we have some beers, some wines and [...] we have some tart and [...] they even like [...] play some very romantic music. And we [...] do barbeque and we drinking and we listen to music [...]. (P8)

Secondly, delighters might considerably generate memorable experiences for tourists since they would stimulate a sense of impression and surprise. Especially, extraordinary experiences could be derived from service delighters that are built based on understanding of tourists' preferences, which might create higher chances to gain more tourists' loyalty and positive advocacy. In specific, delighters could significantly represent the emotional level of tourists by delivery of personal touches as well as individual treats and unexpected offerings for them, which might generate several benefits for the hotel (Johnston 2007; Tarssanen & Kylänen 2009; Ye et al. 2020). The hotel, hence, needs to deliver more service delighters in the design by conducting customer research to obtain insights tourists' interest.

[...] They have the choices of pillows which I have never seen anywhere. They have choices of differences of sorts of pillows with different scents for you to choose, and I chose lavender. It was a very relaxing sleep for me there. (P4)

[...] Once we think for the receptionist to serve us, they offered us those of fresh fruit and one thing [...] fruit juice and one more cool towel to wipe our face after a long journey in the bus. So it's quite impressive. (P6)

[...] they offer us one more small cake [...] I'm so surprising, a small cake and hot drinks before we sleep. It's so kind and thoughtful of them. (P6)

Delighters themselves are a plus which has already gone beyond tourists' expectations. As a result, the combination between activities and delighters could extremely reinforce feelings of tourists staying at the hotel, which would obviously provide memorable experiences for them at ease. Due to that reason, it is necessary for the hotel to merge activities offerings with delighters in the creation. Unexpected surprises from delighters would never cause frustrations for tourists even if there is no delighter; and entertainment and escapist realms from activities provided could probably trigger their favourable feelings and immersions into the experience offerings with either active or passive participations (Kano et al. 1984; Pine & Gilmore 1999).

[...] they even had like a [...] theme park [...] I played the electric car, bobby car for a lot, I really like. The theme park was one of the best parts where [...] I could stay, I could be there for like whole day as play as many games as I wanted. (P2)

[...] later that night, there was like a show the theme park that which built in the hotel. The show was cool. I was really surprised and the level of [...] quality they put into the show [...] So I was really surprised that oh my god! Can they do that here? The show [...] so was really [...] memorable to me. (P2)

Moreover, the design of the hotel is one of the crucial dimensions in the design. In particular, architecture of the hotel is a prerequisite in the design as it might yield unforgettable experiences with feelings of impression and comfort for tourists as well as a unique atmosphere in the hotel. In fact, the experience theme is well-defined by the hotel's architecture, which creates a sense of authenticity, contrast and story in tourists intellectual and emotional level in experience pyramid model or educational and escapist realms when tourists could obtain new insights about the destination's cultures and life in the different environment (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2009; Pine & Gilmore 1999). The hotel has leveraged natural benefits of Da Lat such as spectacular landscapes and splendid hills and mountains by its location and design of rooms. The hotel, therefore, just needs to keep this creative architecture and improve more in it if applicable.

[...] I think I'm impressed by its location. Around the hotel is really great, it has [...] pine tree hills, I can see beautiful far views like [...] Tuyen Lam lake or big lakes [...] the back door [...] I can go directly to the hill below by the small road behind the hotel, it's quite convenient. (P3)

The setting of the hotel was actually groups of villas from the French time, so they have the stuff like Indo-Chinese and colonial feelings, so it's a [...] plus for being in Da Lat for architecture design [...]. (P4)

[...] the view of the room to the mountain is so wonderful and make me enjoy my journey so much. (P6)

Decorations are one of the most vital parts in the design since memorable experiences could be triggered by decorations of the hotel. Decorations have exerted a strong impact on tourists' feelings and can afford to stimulate the senses of tourists such as sight or smell by generating different atmospheres and environments inside the hotel according to different themes. Indeed, decorations could definitely contribute to the design since decorations might promote not only esthetic and escapist realms but physical, intellectual and emotional levels as well by generating multi-sensory perception, authenticity and contrast of the experiences for tourists to enjoy in the different environment and obtain new knowledge about cultures and history of the destination (Pine & Gilmore 1999; Tarssanen & Kylänen 2009; Riivits-Arkonsuo & Leppiman 2013).

It was a good memory because I was attracted by the decoration of the hotel [...] they decorate everything well. I was [...] in part by the [...] colour of the light [...]. (P5)

They know how to make and mash the colour, give you a feeling that so more relaxing. When you sit on the sofa, or even the mirror, even go inside the toilet, all decoration is just correct. (P6)

[...] The room smell was really good because they put like [...] perfume oil and I think each room has different smell [...]. (P7)

In addition, due to the fact that Da Lat itself is different from most parts of Vietnam, Da Lat is an appealing destination for tourists to travel and it has annually welcomed an increasing number of tourists on average. Despite an external

element, the environment of Da Lat, especially its weather, is a major design dimension that yields meaningful experiences for tourists. The typical weather of Da Lat city might provoke tourists' feelings of comfort and excitement in the different space and environment from their usual life, which presents escapist realm in Pine and Gilmore realms (1999) or contrast in experience pyramid model of Tarssanen and Kylänen (2009). Captivating this advantage from Da Lat's natural conditions, the hotel has offered some activities or just let them freely enjoy their stay, which can already evoke their positive feelings and unforgettable memories.

I usually stay in a hotel in big cities, everything is similar, nothing [...] impressive. I really like atmosphere there [...]. (P3)

Just the fact that it is located Da Lat city and it's already made differences [...] the cool weather, so different from the most part of Vietnam that [...] make people more relaxing there [...] we also went for afternoon tea [...] under the pine tree of Da Lat and the chilling weather of Da Lat. (P4)

[...] the weather of Da Lat is so cold at night time and it would be better to gather around the wooden burning stove [...]. (P5)

Because of the natural conditions of Da Lat, many different senses were triggered during the interviewees' stay at the hotel such as sight, sound and even smell from Da Lat's environment. In other words, the natural beauty of the destination would evoke both multi-sensory perception in physical and emotional levels and the escapist realm for tourists to undergo in the distinctive environment (Pine & Gilmore 1999; Tarssanen & Kylänen 2009) of Da Lat city. Essentially, it is a merit for the hotel as Da Lat itself can generate unforgettable experiences for tourists. As a consequence, the responsibility of the hotel just conserves this natural environment of Da Lat and delivers sustainable memorable experiences; otherwise, it is impossible for the hotel to design meaningful experiences in the condition of diminished nature.

[...] the air is very fresh [...] around the hotel have flower, a lot of flowers, trees and sometimes you hear the bird sing. Feel really really enjoyable. (P1)

I saw many beautiful views and I smell the fresh air in Da Lat [...] I hear something natural [...]. (P3)

[...] it's actually quiet, you can hear the bird chirping in the morning, you could [...] sounds of wind in trees [...] it's all quiet, very peaceful [...]. (P4)

Besides its nature, there are also other vital factors that affect the participants' feelings and memorable experiences at the hotel such as the courtesy of Da Lat locals or unique facilities of Da Lat. Indeed, these additional elements are also deemed to be a part of extraordinary experiences design as they have strengthened tourists' favourable feelings for their stay by illustration of authenticity or educational realm of the experience offerings where tourists could gain insights about the local cultures and customs at the destination (Pine & Gilmore 1999; Tarssanen & Kylänen 2009) through interactions with the outside environment. The hotel, hence, would gain tourists' satisfaction and loyalty through involvement of these components in the design.

[...] the people of Da Lat as well, they are particularly friendly [...]. (P4)

[...] I talked to a lot of people from Da Lat and I feel they're very friendly, hospitality and enthusiastic. They usually give you a hand when you need some helps. (P5)

[...] there's no traffic light in Da Lat, so [...] it's so really light. (P7)

Finally, extra dimensions also contribute to the design such as participants' tours, sensitive time of the pandemic or intimate partners. In particular, these additional dimensions would generate positive feelings for tourists by description of entertainment and esthetic realms with visits to attractions, escapist realm with special occasions (Pine & Gilmore 1999) and interactions with their partners. In fact, those which seem to be out of the hotel hand could turn into advantages if the hotel could successfully optimize them. Consequently, in spite of either internal or external factors, if those have effects on memorable experiences, the hotel is able to discover and leverage their benefits to design meaningful experiences for tourists.

They give the best tours for us and make sure that city tour is the best tour for us. (P1)

[...] actually I visited during the Covid time, the Covid-19 time, so it was not a crowded that, maybe that's why I like it more. (P2)

[...] because the person I'm with at that time. It's important because who I go with at that time, so I feel relax at the moment. (P6)

In general, five suggested dimensions have played a key role in the hotel's success of the design due to their higher opportunities to gain tourists' loyalty and advocacy. As a result, it is highly recommended for Cam Uyen Hotel to engage all five dimensions in the creation process.

6.6 Touchpoints in Pre-Experiences as Extra Tools

Touchpoints before tourists' stay are considered as contributing factors in the design. Touchpoints are defined as distinct experiences of contacts between the company and the customers, involving cognitive, emotional, behavioural, sensorial and social elements (Aichner & Gruber 2017, 132). They are also crucial to design memorable experiences for tourists as they are deemed to be a representative for the hotel's image before tourists actually stay in the hotel. Hence, it is necessary for the hotel to take touchpoints in tourists' pre-experiences into account in building meaningful experiences for the tourists' whole journey.

It seems that the hotel has done very well with the touchpoints support in the participants' pre-stay. Touchpoints before tourists' stay at the hotel are an important component in the creation, especially to a certain extent if unexpected circumstances might emerge, tourists need support from touchpoints. In specific, touchpoints have played a key role in the design as touchpoints demonstrate not only the level of interactions between the providers and tourists but how well the providers deliver their promises to customers also (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2009; Johnston 2007), which would exert an impact on tourists' feelings at the beginning before their stays at the hotel. Due to that, the hotel might count touchpoints in the design to provide perfect memorable experiences for tourists' whole stay.

When I decide book a hotel, I usually have a phone call first to ensure that the information is correct and about the price, the room, the food is correct. (P1)

[...] I called in, quite late at night cause I arrived, and I called them to ask them to accommodate me and [...] ask for the direction to our room. So they were very [...] they were indeed, yeah, very helpful. They waited for me in the night at midnight [...]. (P4)

[...] She's very friendly and hospitality and she's funny as well. She tried to explain for us and [...] provide us [...] a lot of information. (P5)

Touchpoints before tourists' stay at the hotel have exerted a vital influence on tourists' experiences at the beginning. As a result, the touchpoints are one of marketing strategies of the hotel, which evokes tourists' interest in the hotel and their decision to book the hotel. In addition, tourists' satisfaction, loyalty and advocacy are affected by those touchpoints. In other words, touchpoints might be an additional dimension in the experience design because touchpoints would illustrate the interactions between businesses and tourists by how the providers deal with customers' inquiries and problems (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2009; Johnston 2007). Essentially, if the hotel delivers poor touchpoints experiences at the first stage, its image might be diminished due to negative WOM from customers. The hotel, hence, needs to concentrate on touchpoints of tourists' pre-stay in the design since there will be no memorable experiences generated if tourists' first impressions about the hotel are ruined.

[...] those services is important and make me decide when I come back. (P1)

It is one of reasons and [...] motivations to let the customers book the hotel. Because if [...] they're friendly, they're enthusiastic in case you got any problems when they're [...] in there, you can ask them for a hand or for a support. (P5)

It's important because [...] the experience stuff, the moment they know about your hotel. (P7)

Touchpoints in tourists' pre-stay at the hotel are not really essential from some participants' viewpoint for some reasons. However, the touchpoints service still contributes to the design since all hotels' ambition is to yield the best experiences, especially meaningful experiences for tourists. Thus, it is always better to engage

touchpoints in the design rather than not. It is a positive news when the participants trust their friends' advocacy that there is no need for them to encounter those touchpoints. This means the hotel has successfully provided memorable experiences for their friends that their friends were satisfied with experience offerings. The hotel, therefore, still needs those touchpoints in its design anyway since touchpoints could demonstrate either direct interactions between the hotel to its tourists by providing necessary information or indirect interactions by descriptions of marketing experience offerings and triggering positive WOM (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2009; Johnston 2007).

[...] it's also a good but not like must-have. (P2)

[...] if you don't have any information about that hotel, something like the service, the way they answer your question [...] is very important. But if you have information about that already like [...] you have friends stayed there already and they said it's good, I think it's [...] not important. (P3)

Overall, touchpoints before tourists' stay are also vital and contributing components to the creation. It is considered as the image of the hotel that partly illustrates experiences at the hotel for tourists as tourists have had no experiences at the hotel yet. Because of that, the hotel also needs to count touchpoints services in the creation to evoke their interest so that memorable experiences could probably happen.

6.7 Opportunities and Challenges Through Post Tourist Experiences

It is extremely crucial to identify opportunities and challenges that the hotel might seize and face because the hotel can design better memorable experiences only when it gets to know about its current situation, the level it is at the moment. Especially these opportunities and challenges are driven from evaluations of the hotel's tourists, not from the hotel's recognition. As a consequence, it is more valuable for the hotel so that it could have specific strategies in the design to ascertain solutions for risks and optimize chances.

It might be successful for the hotel to trigger delighters in its existing experiences offered for participants. There is, hence, a higher chance for the hotel to design meaningful experiences and better yield memorable experiences for them to gain

their loyalty and advocacy. Indeed, extraordinary experiences might lead to tourists' favourable emotions beyond their expectations about experiences offerings of the hotel, which might promote the hotel's advantages such as their satisfactions, more economic benefits and even their loyalty to the hotel's brand (Ye et al. 2020; Chen, Cheng & Kim 2020, 5). Capturing this opportunity, the hotel could reinforce delighters more in the design next time.

It's beyond my expectation because some free gifts. [laugh]. (P1)

[...] it's exceeded my expectations. it was even better than I expected. (P4)

It's over my expectations because they never mention on their marketing those kinds of service. (P6)

It is an advantage for the hotel when participants' perceived experiences at the hotel is better than other competitors in Da Lat market. There are, thus, higher chances for the hotel to survive in the competitive market of Da Lat in the field of hotels. In other words, memorable experiences might allow the hotel to obtain more tourists' loyalty by their satisfactions and favourable feelings (Ye et al. 2020, 11; Park 2016) in comparison with other hotels and captivate new tourists to the hotel to undergo memorable experiences at ease. From that, the hotel might leverage competitive advantages such as increasing revenues and profits (Chen, Cheng & Kim 2020, 5).

This hotel is [...] I have better experiences from compared to other hotels in Da Lat because it was a nice memorable moment [...]. (P1)

It's [...] much better than Muong Thanh hotel because hotel all about the service, how they serve us, how they give special services to us. (P6)

[...] the experience in the hotel is much better than other hotels. (P8)

Actually, this is relatively high opportunities for the hotel to gain more tourists' loyalty and positive WOM when some interviewees revisited and recommended the hotel to their friends and relatives to stay in Da Lat. Indeed, the hotel would seize these opportunities to reinforce its experience design to a higher level, extraordinary experience creation, through tourists' loyalty which is defined as their revisit intentions and either offline positive or online advocacy and reviews

to their relatives, friends and people around them (Ye et al. 2020, 11; Park 2016, 1; Lin, Tung Zhang & Gu, 124; Chen, Cheng & Kim 2020, 4). As a result, these would significantly lead to the hotel profits (Chen, Cheng & Kim 2020, 5) by tourists' willing to pay high prices and the increasing number of travellers. Moreover, despite some participants' evaluation, this still proves the hotel's success in yielding existing experiences. The hotel, hence, just needs to promote existing positive elements from the past experiences in the design.

I did recommend other people to go there [...] sometimes a few years I decided to go that place again. (P2)

Yeah of course because it's over my expectation and I think I'm a difficult, tough customer, so when I do some reviews to my friends and I think they will trust me it. (P5)

Yes, of course I will visit it again if I have time. [laugh]. (P8)

Although the participants were satisfied with their perceived experiences at the hotel and even, they revisited and recommended or have had plans to return to the hotel, some still plan to switch to the hotel's competitors with hopes to undergo new and better experiences at other hotels in Da Lat. In fact, it is significantly tough challenges for the hotel to ascertain proper solutions to reduce customer churn with its already success of obtaining participants' loyalty and advocacy (Kim, Ritchie, & McCormick 2012, as cited in Rahmani, Gnoth & Mather 2015, 360). As a result, the design of memorable experiences is much more crucial in this circumstance to improve and provide even better experiences that leave indelible and meaningful impressions for tourists.

[...] I will choose the new hotel when I come back in Da Lat [laugh] because I want to [...] have a new experience. Just because I want to have more new experience, not that [...] this hotel isn't good. (P3)

9 over 10 [...] and I still keep 1 point for myself [laugh] because I think in the future, I can experience other hotels that better than this [...]. (P6)

All in all, there are higher chances for the hotel to gain both advantages and disadvantages. In other words, tourists' satisfaction can lead to either tourists' loyalty or tourist's churn to other brands in Da Lat market. Memorable

experiences design, hence, has played a vital role ever in the hotel to turn challenges into opportunities.

6.8 Acquisitions for Design Process

With a view to building extraordinary experiences, there is an essence for the hotel to consider tourists' feedback to improve its experience design. From that, the hotel could enhance its experiences into meaningful experiences by improving negative aspects or develop better with its lacks. The design, thus, needs tourists' support and contribution from their past experiences to create better memorable experiences for them.

Although the main marketing channels of the hotel are Facebook and positive WOM, which might be an advantage for the hotel, there is an essence to possessing its own website. To be specific, the website is also a marketing tool for the hotel as well as services, which could generate more benefits for the hotel such as smoothy services, tourists' recognition or even tourists' advocacy and new tourists. The hotel's own website would remarkably contribute to the design through those competitive advantages (Ye et al. 2020, 11). Due to those merits, the hotel needs to have its own website to survive in this competitive Da Lat market.

[...] they should have [...] their own website to make the guest find information and contact easier [...]. (P1)

I think [...] the hotel should design their websites, so customers can easily book direct through the website. (P5)

Indeed, quality of facilities and services has played an important role in the design as it is concerned as primary needs and physical needs in Maslow's hierarchy model for meaningful experience creation since it could directly affect tourists' feelings, which might cause unexpected outcomes such as customer attrition to the hotel's competitors in the market of Da Lat. Nevertheless, no matter what the concept of the hotel is, quality of the hotel should be customer-oriented in accordance with tourists' preferences demands, which might have a significant impact on their satisfaction and advocacy (Park 2016). In other words, tourists' demands are extremely vital in the design as these might lead to tourists'

evaluations of experience offerings, which are satisfactions or dissatisfactions. Consequently, the hotel might be flexible in quality of the design with tourists' preferences.

I think it could improve from the food. It's wasn't [...] particularly very good.
(P4)

They need do the survey before like what kind of food they can give, what kind of food guests are allergic with, what kind of things we prefer to spend our time in the hotel, the small, the little services before we reach the hotel to serve us better to get our needs and wants. (P6)

[...] they need to like [...] upgrade some of their facilities. Yeah, maybe because many people or they go there, sometimes I feel a little bit [...] old. I think that the most of facilities, they can like make a little bit better modern [...]. (P8)

In general, through participants' suggestions in experiences improvement, the hotel needs to have its own website and deliver experiences based on tourists' preferences to design better memorable experiences for them.

7 CONCLUSION

In today's world of increasingly developing and innovative society, the emergence of experience economy is inevitable (Zhang 2010, as cited in Ferreira & Teixeira 2013, 2). Due to high demands of tourists, the necessity of producing meaningful experiences is much more emphasized. The focus of this paper was on the design in the hotel field. Therefore, good understandings of memorable experiences concept as well as the design were well-defined. In particular, comprehension of memorable experiences as the design's steps such as market research, memorable experiences principles, models to create unforgettable experiences and opportunities and challenges during the design were well discussed.

The target of this study research was to develop the design model for hotels to deliver better experiences for their tourists, especially leaving indelible memories for them. This paper used qualitative methodology to achieve the objective by conducting theme interviews and making content analysis through customers who stayed in Cam Uyen Hotel, the commissioner of this thesis project, in Da Lat, Vietnam. Those tourists' experiences and knowledge allowed the author to explore more about the creation in hotels, particularly, which dimensions create their unforgettable experiences at the hotel.

The qualitative methodology generated somewhat the best results for the goal of this study project. The theme interviews actually revealed dimensions which might yield unforgettable experiences and indelible impressions at the hotel in Da Lat in the participants' mind until now. Accordingly, the author developed a model of five memorable experiences design dimensions, in which quality of a hotel, delighters, design of a hotel, environment at a destination and external dimensions were taken into account. Quality of the hotel was a basis to generate extraordinary experiences whilst delighters could leave a feeling of surprise for participants. In addition, the hotel's design allowed interviewees to enjoy the atmosphere not only inside the hotel but at the destination as well.

The environment of the destination, specifically Da Lat, was also concerned as vital factors which had a significant impact on the participant's meaningful experiences at the hotel. Finally, external dimensions such as tours, special

occasions or intimate partners who travelled with interviewees also relatively contributed to their memorable experiences at the hotel. Besides, touchpoints had played a role as contributing factors in the creation as touchpoints were considered as a representative of experiences in the hotel in tourists' imaginations before they reached a hotel. In specific, touchpoints were concerned as first impressions for customers about the hotel, which showed the hotel yielded best experiences at the beginning. It should be noted that all five dimensions could provoke favourable feelings and different senses for participants.

On the other hand, the content analysis indicated the suggested design phases as well as factors. Customer behaviour research was initially implemented that the majority of their journeys' purpose was for entertainment and leisure. Their desires to travel, however, were prohibited in this year of 2020 due to the epidemic. Moreover, effective marketing channels of the hotel were based on positive WOM, which were both advantages and disadvantages for the hotel, especially with its strong competitors that generated their satisfaction in the Da Lat market.

Secondly, with a view to creating unforgettable experiences, understandings about memorable experiences concept from customers' perspectives were extremely vital for a hotel. Almost participants concerned meaningful experiences as a long-term memory involving their feelings. The content analysis also showed their considerably high expectations about the hotel as well as strict principles to design unforgettable experiences with many requests. Nevertheless, their promised loyalty and positive advocacy toward the hotel were opportunities for the hotel to develop the design; albeit there was still customer attrition from some interviewees who, even though, were satisfied with perceived experiences at the hotel. As a result, it was recommended from participants that the hotel needed to improve its quality in services and facilities; and it was relatively important for the hotel to have its own website.

Due to several benefits from yielding memorable experiences, it will be a competitive advantage if there are any future deep researches in the design process. Essentially, it can also attract researchers to dig into memorable experiences design process as well, especially from perspectives of hotel

businesses; therefore, the whole model of memorable experiences design could be perfectly developed from both businesses' aspect and customers' aspect. It is, however, merely a suggestion of the design model from the author; hence, it is up to the hotel decision whether it takes this supposed model to the next level or not.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Theme Interview Questions

Appendix 2. Qualitative Content Analysis

Appendix 1. Theme Interview Questions

General Issues about the Interview

This interview is confidential. I ask permission for tape recording the interview as well as for using the research material in Multidimensional Tourism Institute for research purposes.

General Information about the Interview

- 8 participants (from P1 to P8)
- Conducted in both English and Vietnamese
- Conducted by in-person meeting, Skype and Messenger
- Theme interview, including open-ended questions
- Research question: How to create memorable experiences for tourists in the hotel aspect?
- Target is to collect desirable information and data

Interview Order

1. Describing the thesis topic and research question to the interviewee based on the rules of theme interview process
2. Asking permission for recording the interview
3. The interviewee behaviour research
4. The interviewees' memorable experiences perception
5. The Interviewees' experiences before their stay at the hotel in Da Lat
6. The Interviewees' experiences during their stay at the hotel in Da Lat
7. The Interviewees' experiences after their stay at the hotel in Da Lat
8. Thanking the interviewees for their time to join the interviews

<p>PERSONAL INFORMATION AND (CUSTOMER) BEHAVIOUR</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is your name and your current job? • Where are you from and where are you living now? • What are your hobbies? • How many times do you usually travel per year? • How did you know the hotel? • What was your purpose of that journey? • Which factors caused your decision to book the hotel?
<p>MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES PERCEPTION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you define memorable experiences? • In order to create memorable experiences, which elements should be included in memorable experiences in your perspectives? Which one is the most essential in memorable experiences? • How important are memorable experiences to your journey?
<p>BEFORE YOUR STAY AT THE HOTEL IN DA LAT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What have been your best memorable experiences in other hotels in Da Lat? • Which services (advertising, phone calls, answering your questions, customer services help, etc..) of the hotel did you encounter before your stay and how did you evaluate them? • How important were those services to your journey and your decision? • What were your expectations about the hotel before your stay?
<p>DURING YOUR STAY AT THE HOTEL IN DA LAT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were your memorable experiences during your stay? Could you describe them in detail? • Why were those experiences memorable to you? • How did you feel at those meaningful moments? (free, comfortable, excited?) • Which elements caused those feelings? (senses, personal treat, entertainment, beauty of the hotel, authenticity, environment?) • What were you impressed by in the hotel? Why? • Were there any “wow” emotions (unexpected surprise, negative event?) during your stay? If yes, please specify • What factors affected your stay and feelings? (interaction, environment?)
<p>AFTER YOUR STAY AT THE HOTEL IN DA LAT (How do you evaluate your experiences at the hotel after all? Why?)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you evaluate the quality of the hotel? (products, services and experiences) • How important was quality to your journey? • How do you evaluate your perceived experiences compared to your expectations? Why? • How do you assess your perceived experiences at the hotel compared to your best memorable experiences at other hotels? Why? • What does the hotel need to improve in order to deliver better memorable experiences in your perspectives? • Will you revisit the hotel? • Will you recommend this hotel to your relatives and friends?

