

Experience as an enhancer in accommodation sector for business travellers

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Bachelor's thesis

Degree programme in Hospitality and

Experience management

2018



Degree programme

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<p>The title of your thesis Experience as an enhancer in the accommodation sector for business travellers</p>	<p>Number of pages and appendices 51 + 3</p>
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<p>Business travellers represent an important segment for the accommodation industry, therefore, is important to address and fulfil all their needs in order to keep them satisfied and build strong and lasting relationships. On the other hand, today's market is getting more and more competitive and simply satisfying their basic demands might soon not be enough. This situation creates an opportunity and a need within the accommodation business, to figure out how to go beyond the simple satisfaction and achieve memorability on their guests' mind.</p> <p>Based on the previously mentioned opportunity, this research aims to contribute by collecting data that can facilitate identifying characteristics, peculiarities and preferences of business travellers. This resulting information is meant to be used by hoteliers, experience designers and further researchers as a starting point to implement and develop tailor made experiences for the accommodation business. To reach that point, there were some steps to be completed, first to mention and explain all distinctive factors that differentiate business travellers from their leisure counterpart. Second, the particularities of their most chosen accommodation units were described, and third the phenomena of experience design were deeply investigated and related with memorability concepts and theories. All of this contributed to create a model of considerations for experience design in the accommodation industry.</p> <p>The research was done via an online survey on Webropol, and data was collected during the month of May 2018. The questionnaire included questions to collect demographic information, and others with multiple choice, which contributed inquiring about travellers' preferences and gathering relevant data about their behaviour as customers. Altogether the survey had 50 respondents from business travellers with different cultural backgrounds. Resulting data was analysed and organized in different tables and figures. Some of the findings might suggest that memorability is only reached to around 20% of the cases, this situation reflects the current situation within the industry.</p> <p>The document closes with the discussion around the results and the debate of those when confronted with the developed considerations model. The conclusions are listing the main findings and creating a starting point for experience designers in the accommodation industry, as well as contributing to further researches and academia.</p>	
<p>Key words</p> <p>Business Travel, Accommodation, Experience Design, Memorable Experiences</p>	

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1 Introduction

This is a research-oriented thesis which will cover different peculiarities of business travellers, their accommodation providers and the potential of experiences as a booster that could be considered. It will identify clue facts about travellers' preferences and behaviour as market segment and will later pair those with new opportunities that can be offered to them (experiences).

The nature of the previously mentioned opportunities will variate depending on the findings of the research. However, the goal is to detect those experiences and services hotel providers could develop and include into their offer. Such implementations would impact positively on their guests' satisfaction and should also present an opportunity to increase their revenue by simply increasing the amount of money guests are spending inside their premises while purchasing some non-traditionally services offered by the hospitality industry. This kind of actions are highly needed since we live in an increasingly global market, in which operators are forced to "think outside the box" (Brotherton, 2003, 204).

The essence of the previously mentioned experiences is very wide and can be one or the combination of some different options, for example: additional services, thematic happenings, wellness activities, new designs or in general any addon or extra that could have a positive impact in guests' memory. Whatever the option they opt for, the clue is to identify why are they more willing to spend their money on experiences instead of other more tangible and socially-visible products (Pearce, 2005, 162).

Business travellers will be the core of this research; therefore, this document will also brief on what has been said about them as a segment and will procure to clarify the concept of who they are, including their tendencies, behaviours and unique characteristics to fully decode them. This will allow readers and hoteliers to have a better understanding of the findings of this research, and subsequently create more interesting and tailor-made experiences for business travellers' needs and likes.

Business travellers as a segment are of vital importance for all hospitality industry in general. There are several reasons for it, but perhaps the most important one is the fact they present higher spending levels than the leisure counterpart (Davidson & Cope, 2003, 14). This characteristic makes them less price conscious, which is a fact that must be taken into consideration

while designing new alternatives for them. It also highlights the type of customer they are, as they want to be pleased and are also willing to pay for it.

Another factor that increases even more the attractiveness of this market, is the significantly increase in the demand of accommodation for business travellers due to the high and fast internationalisation of businesses (Davidson & Cope, 2003, 23). This translates into a higher amount of overnight stays away from home through the year for business travellers versus the once for recreational reasons. This explains the importance of building loyal and long-lasting relationships between travellers and their accommodation providers.

An additional aspect that must be considered when talking about developing new experiences or services for business travellers, is that because of their business trips, they probably have already visited a significant number of different hotels and cities all around the globe, this translates into higher standards than regular leisure tourist. It is possible to infer that they are not easy to impress or to be left completely astonished with something completely new that they have never seen, tried, tasted or experienced before. And is there where this document aims to help hotels, by collecting data to facilitate the design of innovative experiences, that exceeds all expectation guests may have from their hotels.

Some of the previously mentioned characteristics of business travellers do present a challenge, when thinking about what could be offered to them, but it does not mean that they are going to be completely stripped of their “tourist” status due to the nature of their trips. Therefore, they share the same sense of hope than leisure travellers and can imagine themselves at a brighter point in their imminent future (Pearce, 2011, 109), which without a doubt leaves a door wide open for their hosts to surprise them with the unexpected.

Business travellers’ hosts, the hotels, are currently trying worldwide to exceed their customers’ expectations and assure their satisfaction, which is measured intuitively by customers against their expectations (Shaw & Ivens, 2002, 6). This could be a big opportunity or threat, it all depends on the way business faces this challenge and how they procure to achieve it. Certainly, the first step would be to understand who they are dealing with, considering that goal of this thesis will provide findings in terms of demographic and psychographics from business traveller to unscramble their position towards experiences, themes and services and mainly to identify what triggers them as customers.

A subsequent set of findings will be listed, which could be later used as a guide to fully design and implement in-house remarkable experiences for different hotels. The conclusions of this research will help reduce risks and uncertainty about guests' interest and reactions towards the new offered options. (experiences.)

1.1 Research objectives and methodology

The main objective of this thesis is to research business travellers' particularities and preferences to towards potential experiences offered at their hotels during their stay. This data will be collected via an online survey, in which demographic information, personal likings and time related matters will be asked in order to identify the most relevant factor about business travellers' behaviour and tendencies while on the road. Collected data will be listed and analysed with the aim of contributing to the accommodation business by providing useful information that can be used as a guide for developing experiences for business travellers and expanding their service portfolio.

Resulting information will later be related and debated with different types of experiences and themes that can get the attention of business travellers and can be easily staged inside hotel premises. This will be done after understanding and linking all the theories behind them to assure a more reliable result that ultimately will reduce risks of investing time and resources in designing experiences that guests might not be so eager to participate in.

1.2 Justification and relevancy for the industry

Hoteliers all over the world are in a constant quest for new trends and services, not only within their own industry but also keeping an eye on many different fields, for instance technology development, telecommunications, digital security among others. This has led to the point in which 54% of hotels will spend more on technology this year, according to HT's 2016 Lodging Technology Study, and the main reason to keep doing this, is that technology has become critical to attracting and retaining hotel guests (Terry, 2016).

Accommodation industry as any other one is getting tougher, and all biggest hotel chains are constantly investing in reinventing themselves to keep their position in the market, and to

make sure their brands will remain fresh and on top of customers mind. As a business sector, it distinguishes itself from other retail organizations in that the product must be used at the hotel itself (Stephens, 2004). This means the instant guests arrive and start any interaction with hotel staff, premises or services, creates a moment of truth, in which the real opportunities to make a difference on their minds will appear. This presents hotels the challenge of making sure they make the most out of those chances. And without a doubt offering remarkable experiences will put them in a good place in terms of memorability, simply by distinguishing from the somehow homogeneous offer that can be easily found in the market.

Regardless of efforts made by different players within the accommodation industry, the core of the business is still the same for everyone, it consists in providing travellers a place to stay overnight when not being able to pernoctate in their own home. As a consequence, and after the massification of hospitality as a service, there is no more efficient way for hotels to differentiate itself from others than going one step further and creating and offering experiences, offering guests their traditional service just as a stage to engage in a way that creates memorable events (Pine & Gilmore, 1998, 98).

Experience has gotten a crucial role within the hospitality industry, and as stated by Pizam, “creating memorable experiences is the essence and the reason of being of the hospitality industry” (Pizam, 2010, 343). Considering this and the need of constantly developing the services, the author of this thesis found the need of further research and data gathering, with the aim to contribute to the development of experience design for the hospitality business.

This document will present the industry with findings and discoveries about business travellers distinctiveness factors. Which will serve as a guide to service designers to come out with possible themes, and ideas that can be put together to stage memorable experiences that will stay with those who witnessed it for long after their departure.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

This document contains five sections. The first one, presented above, included a summary of the situation in the market, an introduction and stated the objectives and aims of this research as well as the relevancy for the hospitality industry.

Second section will be the literature review, which will later lead to the creation of a theoretical framework. For this section, different concepts and theories were involved in the development of this thesis which are later explained and correlated. It includes a combination of different theories and contributions from other authors that will lead to a better understanding of the subjects of this research (business traveller and experience). This section also describes the details about business travellers' identity as a market segment for the hospitality industry.

The third section will cover the research methodology, in here the document will brief about the method chosen to collect the information, the description of the process and the collection of the data, the resulting questionnaire can be found in the appendix section at the end of this document. Other information about how the data was gathered and who the respondents were is also included. This section will be followed by the fourth one, in there all the data collected will be organized and presented to reveal the findings, facts and figures resulting of the questionnaire. The last section of the report will present the conclusions and will generate a discussion around the topic, in this section the findings are analysed and compared with the theories mentioned in the theoretical framework.

2 Overview of Business Traveller and Experience Design

This chapter covers a variety of concepts, models and theories which relate to business travellers as a segment and how their particularities and preferences relate to different accommodation providers. Right after, the document will discuss experience as a topic, its role, importance and the still underdeveloped relationship with the hospitality industry. As an outcome, and resulting from the combination of different theories, it will create a debate around the most optimal situation for the three key concepts to relate and establish their relationships, those being Business travel, Accommodation for business travellers and Design of memorable experiences. The aim of this section is to facilitate the understanding of ideas and generalities, subsequently simplifying the analysis of these results.

A theoretical framework will be drawn as a result of the analysis of the theories, in there all relevant concepts will be specifically grounded to the accommodation business and the considerations to look at when offering experiences. Findings of this research will be based on the analysis of the collected data and the model previously mentioned, those will be revealed and debated on chapter number four.

2.1 Business travel

The concept of business travel is something hospitality industry has been discussing for decades, and without a doubt is of high importance for many service providers around the globe. To make an attempt of defining who business travellers are and using Rob Davidson's words from his book about business travel, one can define business travellers as someone who is travelling for purposes which are related to their work. As such it represents one of the oldest forms of tourism (Davidson, 2003). It is the same Davidson who frequently refers about business travellers as MICE travellers, which stands for Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Events. This helps creating an idea of what they do and expands the concept of who can be considered a business traveller.

The previous statements serve as a starting point to build a new concept, not completely based on what business travel is, but more importantly on who is a business traveller and what they do. It is worth considering there is a large list of reasons that could be studied as business related, and those are the initial reasons we have business travellers in general. However,

agreeing on a universal statement that can define the profile of a business traveller and the scope of who can be considered one is not an easy task, mainly because of how plural they are, and their activities can be. An example of that can be seen on the figure presented below by Swarbrooke & Horner, (Figure 1) in which a more complete range of reasons that triggers travellers away from home for matters related to their job or occupancies.

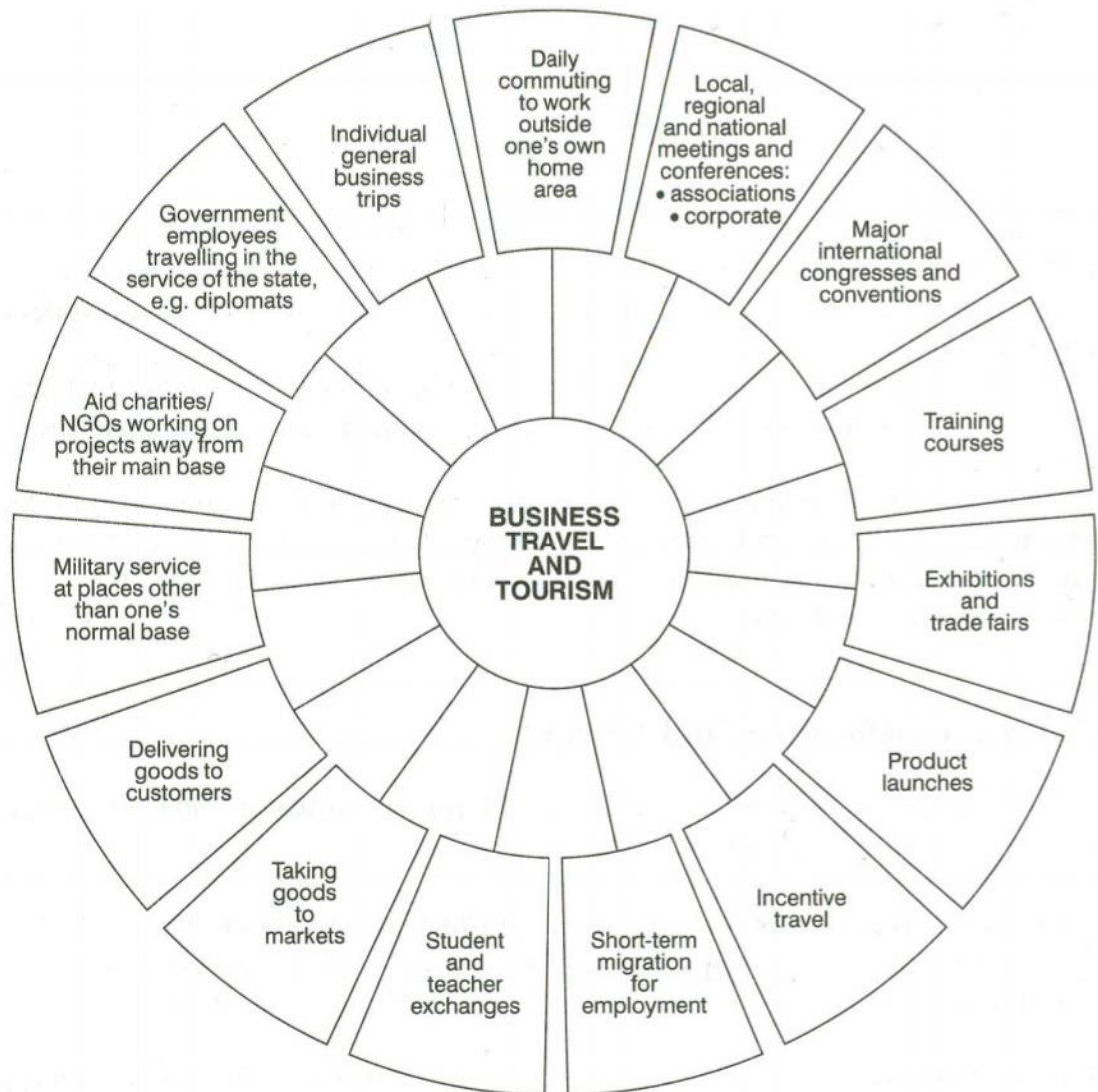


Figure 1. A typology of business travel and tourism. (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2013, 4)

The previous figure, originally presented by Swarbrooke and Horner on their work about Business Travel and Tourism, gives a wider perspective of activities that while performed during trips will grant the status of business traveller to whoever is conducting them.

After building the foundations of what is business travel, what activities can be considered business related and subsequently who is a business traveller, the document will move on to the next stage. Following sub section will dig deeper into their peculiarities and will present different possible divisions to understand them as a market.

2.1.1 Business travellers' peculiarities

In today's world, diversity has spread throughout several areas, businesses and markets, and of course accommodation has not been an exception to this reality. This marks a brand-new scenario for service providers, since their customer come from different places and have an extensive variety of characteristics. It is that large range of characteristics and demographics what comes into play whenever trying to segmentate travellers. This division and decoding is highly needed to better identify and attend their needs. For that reason, in the next following sub sections this document will cover different alternatives to create partitions to business travellers by grouping them into different clusters with similar demographics, preferences and behaviours.

There is a tremendous amount of options to apply to segmentate a market or a group with common characteristics as business travellers, different marketing, psychological or sociological tools could be used. However, and to exemplify some of the most relevant divisions that will contribute to a better understanding of the findings of this research, the author has selected two different alternatives from other writers. In those it is possible to see how distinctive factors can be consider more relevant than others.

Firstly, an example originally presented by Pearce (2005), in his book about tourist behaviour, will illustrate an option to segment travellers into smaller categories based mainly on demographics, and then later considering their travelling style and lastly their product or activity.

The table presented below is relevant for several reasons. First, it presents demographic classification, which is always to be considered due to its high importance when profiling customers and identifying common needs, likes and general characteristics among people on same categories, like gender, age group, nationality or educational level. Secondly it includes style distinctions, and just as the names states, it gives a big clue to classify based on travellers'

interests and behavioural tendencies. For example, the length of the trip or the type of accommodation choose can reveal a lot of information about their habits as guests.

It also includes some divisions based in product or the activity the traveller will take part in while on the trip, in there several options are being listed, most of them being already considered in the model presented in the previous section. All the previously mentioned information will later facilitate finding what are their triggers as buyers and predict more accurately their reaction.

Table 1. Individual variables describing tourist groupings (Pearce, 2005, 27).

<i>Demographic factors</i>	<i>Travelling style distinctions</i>	<i>Product and activity classifications</i>
Age Gender Nationality Additional demographic factors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expenditure • occupation • education 	Accommodation used Activity participation Destination patterns Length of stay Trip purpose Distance travelled Travel party composition Seasonality/travel time Travel arrangements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • independent • package • mixed Transport mode	Cultural tourists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • heritage tourists • ethnic tourists Nature oriented tourists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wildlife tourists • ecotourists Adventure tourists Educational tourists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • science tourists • volunteers Theme park tourists Casino tourists Urban tourists Agricultural tourists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wine tourists • farm tourists Sex tourists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • romance tourists • companionship tourists Business tourists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conference tourists • events tourists

The previous table is helpful when classifying travellers into demographic categories, which can be used to predict tourists' ratings on attractions. But using demographic information

alone can only achieve limited accuracy (Wang, 2012, 97). Nevertheless, the presented model also includes the travelling style and distinctions which can be analysed to complement the segmentation of business traveller.

To complement the idea, the author will relate the collected data from the previous model with the four steps suggested by Dolnicar (2008) on her work Market Segmentation in Tourism. In there we are presented with four basic steps to common-sense segmentate travellers in the tourism industry. The figure presented below, illustrates the steps and the actions needed in each one of those.

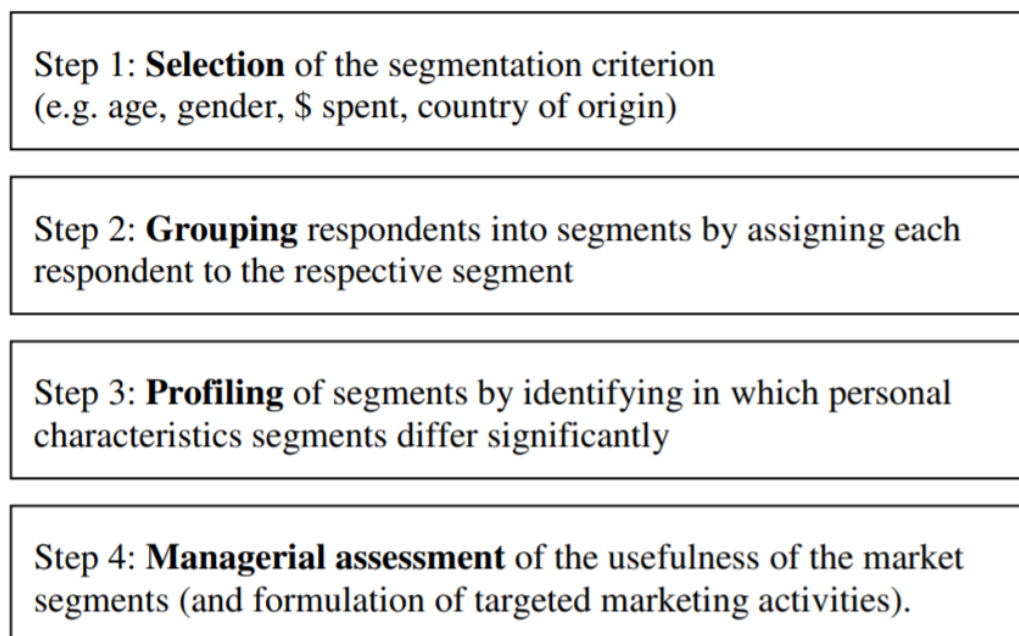


Figure 2. Steps in common-sense segmentation (Dolnicar, 2008, 4)

When putting together the work of Dolnicar and Pearce, it is possible to relate the demographic factors with the first two steps, since this stage is all about getting to know who your customers are and to find out as many details about them as possible. Next, the travelling style distinctions can be associated with the last two steps, since at this point the nature of information gathered is more valuable for profiling and assessing what are the preferences, particularities and behaviours than it is for segmentation.

Combining the previous models presents a way of understanding the possible ways to segmentate business travellers and what information is this grouping based on. For the resolution

of this research, this creates a big contributing by enlightening the type of information should be collected from business travellers via questionnaire to fully identify and acknowledge their uniqueness.

2.2 Accommodation for Business Travellers

The accommodation industry has developed a lot during the last decades. It has certainly moved far from its original two distinctive services: provision of overnight accommodation and sustenance away from home (Jones, 2002, 1). Naturally those two are still offered today to all travellers and will remain being the core of the business. However, a complex variety of additional services and options has been built around it and is on constant development and changing upon guests needs.

Lyn Mettler gives clues about the type of accommodation and necessities business travellers look for in their hotels. In her article published in the US News and Reports, she resumes the four things that business travellers are more interested in, which are: Innovative designs, re-tooling restaurants, seamless service and added wellness- fitness focused amenities (Mettler, 2017).

After considering the specifications listed above, it is possible to identify that not all option in the market do have those or are willing to invest in creating them. This can also be reflected in the division of hotels based on the sophistication of services and premises (Beech & Chadwick 2006, 380), which dives hotels into:

- Luxury Hotels: High personalization, wide range of services and facilities.
- Midscale hotels: Combination of luxury with standardization. Most chosen for leisure and business travellers.
- Budget Hotels: Smaller spaces, narrow wide of options. No personalized service.

Once is combined what business travellers want and what hotels are capable of offering, it becomes evident that this thesis should focus only on the first two. Luxury and midscale hotels are the ones in capacity and willingness to offer their guests additional services with a touch of personalization, as such they are chosen for the study as relevant accommodation type.

2.2.1 Peculiarities of accommodation units for business travellers

Identifying the type of hotel that would be potentially interested in developing experiences for their guests is nothing but the first step of this process. Now when the “who” of this research has been identified (business travellers), and “where” has been clarified (luxury and midscale hotels worldwide), is then moment to take a closer look to find out “why” and “how”.

At first glance there are many reasons to answer the “why” hotels would be interested in developing new services or experiences for their guests. For example, one can tell at top of its mind that it is perhaps a marketing strategy to attract new guests or that they are trying to contribute building their brand or goodwill. Those statements are for sure accurate, however, there might be less obvious reasons that motivates them to spend time and resources in designing new alternatives for their guests.

Some of those motivations respond to the fact that the key of long term growth of a hotel has a direct correlation with the understanding the type of tourist they want to attract and offer them tailor made experiences (Yu & Timmerman, 2014). This helps building a long-lasting relationship whose base is purely emotional and sensitive. When hoteliers have identified that business travellers are constantly on the road, and start providing them with themes or atmospheres that will tune with their preferences, they would be able to grow their loyalty guest database and make them also less price sensitive.

Following question to be answered is “how”. How can a hotel get the attention of business travellers in the luxury and mid-scale market by offering sensitive experiences? Is worth mentioning that there are many different answers to that question, and they could all potentially work depending on the hotels approach. However, the most common ones go from price, to location and from theme to atmosphere (Yu & Timmerman, 2014). By combining those, hoteliers hope they can create a need on their guests’ minds, establishing a connection between them and the brand. However, in a scenario in which all these factors were carefully planned and all details designed meticulously, a guest could still not connect at all, and could produce the inverse effect and cause a bad impression of the hotel and its services, for what reason? poor delivery and staging.

Personnel responsible of staging the experiences and maintaining the right atmospheres are not going to be the general managers, or the service designers, but the everyday employee at

the front desk, bars or those made responsible of guiding more specific experiences. This gives employees the most important role when delivering experiences and strengthening relationships with guests. This interactions with the guests are so relevant, that it has been said that price and location are important to bring the customer the first time but are the employees and the service they offer what brings them a second time (Yu & Timmerman, 2014).

The previous section presented a description of business travellers preferences, its link to accommodation units, and how this last one also prepares and understands for staging different atmospheres to connect with their guests. A combination of some of these aspects will be included in the questionnaire as it is relevant for the findings of this research to find out the, type off hotel business travellers stay at more frequently, and their experience with different themes, atmospheres and employees.

2.3 Experience Creation

Throughout this document, the word experience has been mentioned several times, however, it has not yet been explained. This could be, because despite the extensive use of the term there are no definitions or even solid agreement of how the term experience should be understood (Tarssanen & Kylänen, 2005, 134). So instead of trying to create a definition of what an experience is, this section will cover how is it created and staged to ultimately connect with the people that takes part on it and how is it able produce on them different reactions.

Before discussing what are the possible stages of experience design, is important to understand, why are they important and what is the goal designers are aiming for when producing experiences. Considering the nature of the hospitality industry, the experiences involved must be entertaining, but also should engage in a personal memorable way (Pine & Gilmore, 1998, 99).

Are the same Pine & Gilmore who presented us with the Experience Realms (Figure 3), a model which classifies experiences based on the dimensions customers can get involved in. This realms model can be used as a tool whenever creating and staging experiences, as it is closely related to the reaction and role the participants have. It presented us with four different experience options: entertainment, educational, esthetic and escapist.

This model as well as some others developed by different authors could be partially applied to the accommodation business, naturally the experience essence remains almost the same, but not the technicalities and needs of the accommodation business. Reason why is worth mentioning that not this model or any other presented in the justification and literature review of this research has been specially created for business travellers in the accommodations business.

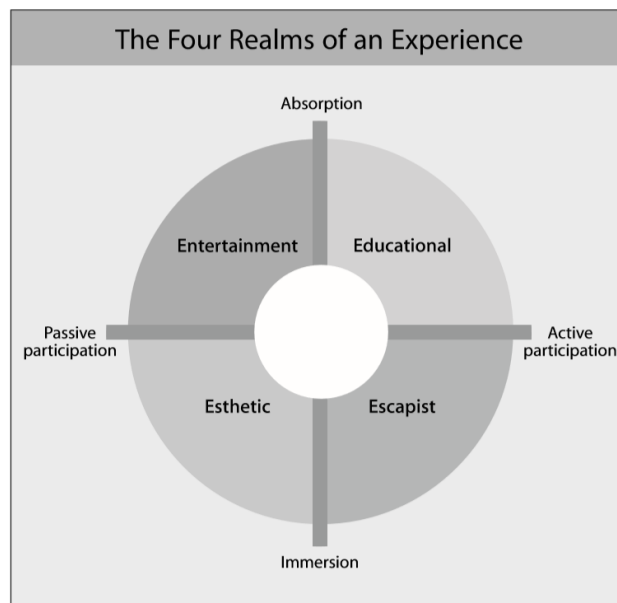


Figure 3. The Four Realms of an Experience (Pine & Gilmore, 1998, 102)

2.3.1 Memorable Experiences

What we need to understand now to be able to continue is, what is a memorable experience? To answer that question, is possible to refer to Tung's work. All over his article about memorable tourism experiences is possible to find different components that contribute to the creation of a memorable experience, at the end of his work he presents four dimensions which represent different aspects of experiences that enable them to be memorable, those are: affects, expectations, consequentiality and recollection (Tung, 2011, 1377), as seen on the figure below, who was put together by the author of this research using Tung's work.

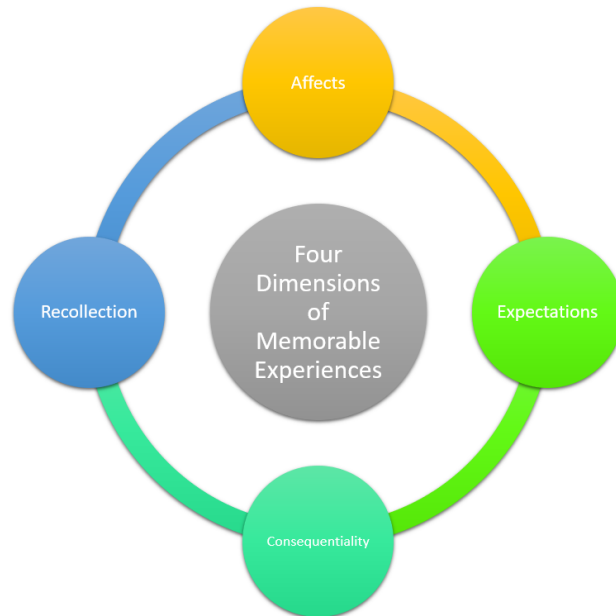


Figure 4. Four Dimensions of Memorable Experiences (Tung, 2011)

In terms of affects, a different set of emotions are mentioned and include happiness and excitement as the primary reason on a customers' mind to remember something in a positive way. When creating experiences, this idea should be really emphasised, so that all components of it are aiming to produce that feeling on the customers. This would bring extra benefits to companies considering this dimension while designing experiences and services as it contributes to build true relationships with customers, who would then become loyal (Shaw & Ivens, 2002, 42).

Secondly, expectations were defined as a response made specifically about fulfilment of intentions and/or descriptions of surprises encountered (Tung, 2011, 1378). What can be extracted from this, is that travellers start building some expectations about a hotel, service or experience way before it is even booked, and it begins on their minds with the first thought they had about it. From there it continues to a second phase when guests are looking for different options available in the market and unconsciously comparing them with the preconceived ideas they already have.

When booking and planning, the expectation goes even higher, because on this customers mind, he has chosen the best or what fits the most to his or her personal preferences. Now, when the customer arrives to the hotel or the place the experience is being staged, he or she

has on mind different ideas about what is about to happen and big hopes that the outcome is up to the expectations.

It is very important that when marketing an experience, no false or unrealistic expectations are encouraged on customers mind, and that the staging is on track to effectively reach and hopefully overcome any prediction or idea they had prior to arriving. Achieving this would assure customers emotions are being considered and taken care of, which is of high importance as those emotions are a differentiator factor and the most underestimated assets available to business today (Shaw & Ivens, 2002, 45)

On third place, we were presented with consequentiality. This refers to the personally perceived importance from the outcome (Tung, 2011, 1379). In this phase, customers are assessing on their minds the outcome of the service or experience and deciding if they either liked it or not. At this point there is not much that can be done, as experience cannot be taken for granted due to its emotion base nature (Tarssanen & Kylänen, 2005, 137), so if all the previous considerations were really taken care of, the positive outcome has been widely enhanced.

For last, there is recollection. This refers to statements specifically about the efforts made throughout the creation and staging process and the fruits coming from those (Tung, 2011, 1380). This is closely related to studies of actual human's memory and how can determined experience stay for long on customers mind and become remarkable. As suggested by Bulencea, a great way to last longer on customers mind and on their memory is offering them memorabilia so that they can easily recall their experience once it is over with the help of the object received (Bulencea, 2016). This and many other tactics could be use as strategies to ensure the experience will be vivid for a long time in the guest memory. However, memory itself is a very complex topic and its understanding goes beyond the scope of hospitality or experience design, therefore is a topic for further research to find out the deep relationship it has with business tourism and experience creation.

2.3.2 Producing Memorable Experiences

After the idea and generalities of memorable experiences have been adopted, is time then to address the main issue. How can a memorable experience be staged and what does it need to

produce on customers emotions to be able to become truthfully unforgettable? To find the answer of that question, the author will use the Experience Pyramid model.

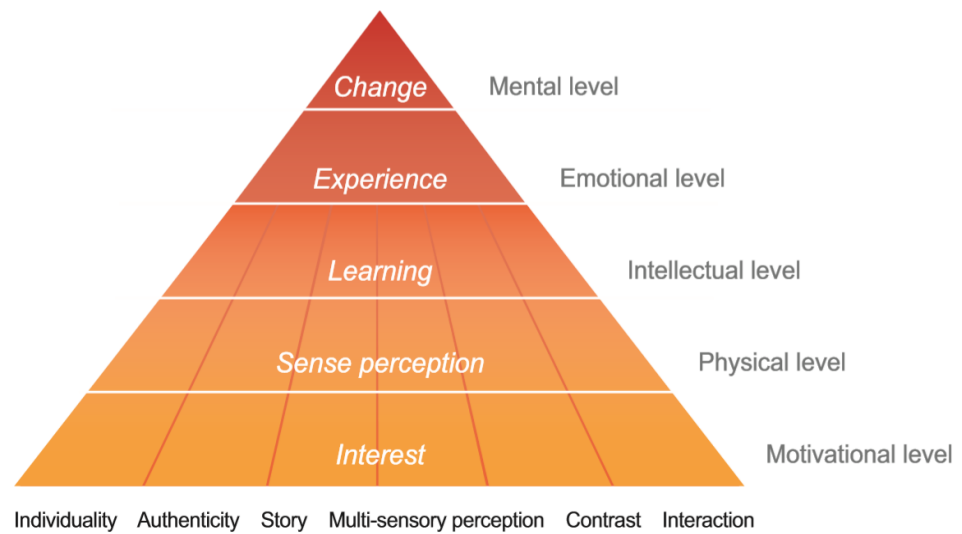


Figure 5. Experience Pyramid (Tarssanen & Kylänen, 2006).

This model presents an idea of what a perfect product would be in terms of experience in which every element of experience is reflected on both the mental and physical levels (Tarssanen & Kylänen, 2006, 138). As illustrated in the figure 5, this model has two different dimensions, the first one focused on the product and the second one takes care of the client and their own experience, so to simplify at the bottom line of the pyramid there are the influential factors and at the right side of it towards the top there are the different levels of experience that customer can reach.

To explain the reach of this model, all its different elements will be described and related with some concepts previously discussed in this chapter and in some cases complemented with the work of other authors. The first part to be discussed will be the elements of experience, in which Individuality comes first. This level refers to uniqueness and superiority of the product, there should not be anything that does the same on the market, to achieve it, it demands that the design to some extension is tailor made, if not possible for a unique person then for a group of people sharing common characteristics. As stated before, the challenge here is to clearly know your customer, so that the customization of the service and experience is easily achievable.

Second and third element are authenticity and story. These two are closely related and mainly associated with the credibility of the experience, which requires the general theme to be well thought out. This does not mean that the theme or topic must be real or physically exist. If it does, it should correspond to the client's perception of authentic reality (Tarssanen & Kylänen, 2006, 143), meaning be as close as possible to the preconceived idea on their minds, and if it is fictional and does not exist, the whole storyline and theme must be compact and without any contradiction. This will ensure the integrity of the customer experience by eliminating negative cues (Pine & Gilmore, 1998, 103).

Fourth element is multy sensory perception. As its own name suggests, it refers to the experience reaching out to as many senses as possible. They must be visually influential, appealing by odour and aroma, as well as audible and capable of being tasted and felt as palpable (Tarssanen & Kylänen, 2006, 145). All those sensations should be harmonized as they support and enhance the theme, besides the more senses are engaged the more likely the experience will be memorable (Pine & Gilmore, 1998, 104).

The fifth element is contrast, this one remarks the importance of the differentiation of the theme and the experience from customers everyday life. Through experiences customers are given the chance to try something new, exotic and exceptional, therefore, the general content and stage should play around with a wide variety of roles, places and identities to facilitate customers setting their reality aside. Doing this allows the experience being more remarkable by taking the guest away from the familiar environment and presenting them with an opportunity that has the potential to affect the way they live their life (Tung, 2011, 1380).

The last element presented in the pyramid is interaction. This represents the relation between the customer, the guide and the other participants (Tarssanen & Kylänen, 2006, 146). Communication is a key factor to assure the success of the interaction, as it makes sure that the message is deliver to the customer and the objective is achieved. In here once again we evidentiates the importance of choosing the right people to stage the experiences as is their responsibility to connect with the customers.

So far, we have discussed the elements of experience, which should be always present to assure customers satisfaction, not only when staging but also when designing and marketing it. Although including all the previously mentioned element enhances the success of the

experience, it does not assure its memorability. In the next section we will present the vertical axis of the pyramid model, in which the different levels of experience are showcased.

Motivational level is the first one we find in the pyramid and it serves as the base for the whole model. This level involves awakening the interest of the customer and build their expectations, the goal is marketing oriented and the approach should be as personal as possible to guarantee a desire of participating has been awaken on customers mind. Once this has been accomplished, is time to move to the second level, the physical. This includes the actual moment in which the experience is being staged and different stimulants are going through customers senses. Its reach goes beyond the content and combines it with the stage or physical place the experience is being delivered, as it should be safe and pleasant. (Tarssanen & Kylänen, 2006, 146)

Third experience level is the intellectual one, in which customers are processing on their mind all the sensory experience and are deciding how to react to it. Depending on the nature of the experience, different reactions could be expected as customers could build a learning outcome, form new ideas on their minds or simply internalize the experience. Whatever there are two very important things happening here. The first one is that in this stage is where customers decides if are satisfied or not with what they just witnessed (LaSalle & Britton, 2003, 9), and the second one, is that this is the end of the scope for the stager, which means after this point they have no direct influence on the assimilation of the experience and its further memorability.

The last two levels are emotional and mental. On the first of those, customers are analysing and processing what happened and further reacting. On a perfect scenario, the stager should be able to recognize on them joy, pleasure, happiness, excitement among others. This reaction on them will assure the experience will stick in their memory for long. The last one, the mental level, goes beyond the experience and actual stage, as it involves future reactions and changes customers may have on their lives, styles or perspectives.

The previous section gave a description of different elements of experiences and the levels those can reach, at the same time it highlighted the importance of the factors that have a direct influence on creating a memorable experience. Some of the concepts and ideas developed above will be taken to the questionnaire to enquire about business travellers' situation and

experience design for accommodation business, all of which will be further elaborated in theoretical framework in the following sub section.

2.4 Developing Experience Design for Business Travellers

In this subsection, the author presents its own model based on all the previously compiled information, theories and concepts. This is a tailor-made model that would help producing and designing experiences specifically for the accommodation business, which will be tailor made and targeted for business travellers, who have been previously identified as one of the most important segments.

After understanding the importance of business travel today, peculiarities of business travellers, the particularities of the mostly common used accommodation for non-leisure travellers and the different components of experience design and memorable experience, the author has now built a cyclical model for experience design. In there it is possible to find different considerations that must be taken into account when designing, producing and staging memorable experiences for business travellers at their hotels, and it is presented below.

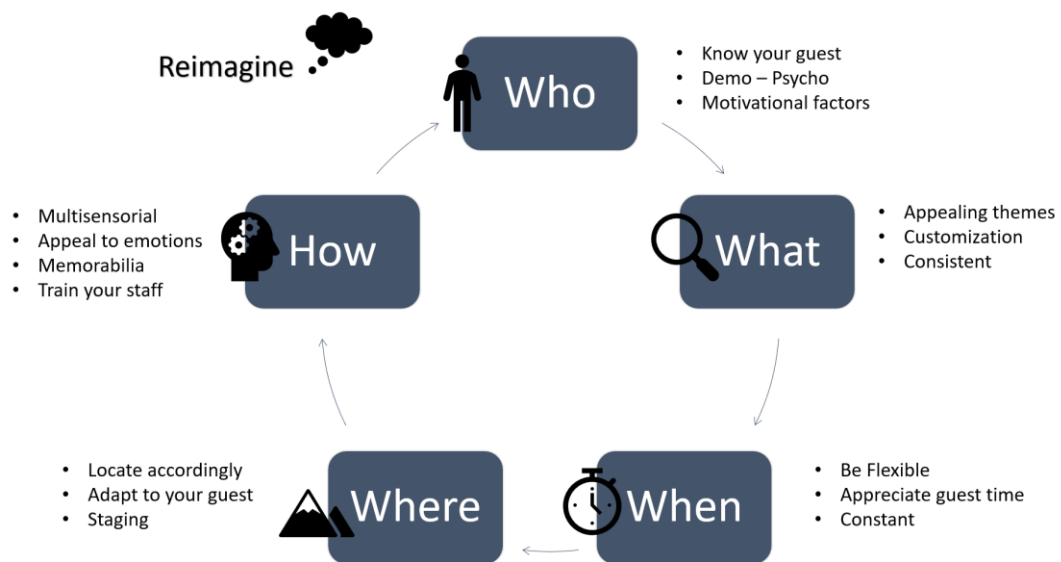


Figure 6. Considerations for experience design for business travellers (Montilla, 2018).

The model raises five considerations that must be addressed to provide business travellers memorable experiences at their hotels. It starts with “Who”, as we learnt before in this

document it is of vital importance to know your guest, for that reason collecting and saving data about guests' demographics and psychographics will facilitate identifying the most effective ways to approach them and to clarify what are their interests and motivational factors that can make the difference between them deciding to take part of an experience or not, this information is not only useful when designing but also when selling and staging. It is also important to consider what is the reason of their trip, even though they are all business travellers, their interests and behaviour might change depending on the reason that took them to determined location on the first place.

As a second consideration we have "What", in here the main aspect to take care of is the experience itself, its content and theme. Coming back once more to Pine & Gilmore (1998), a hotel in question can have different experiences in different realms, and they could all be memorable for different types of travellers. What matters here is they are all appealing, which can only be achieved if the previous task of understanding your customer was well done. The theme and experience need to be customized if not possible to each individual case to smaller groups that share the same preferences, background and values, and whatever the topic, story or theme behind the experience, it must be consistent and not having any loose end that would interfere with its credibility, affecting the overall outcome and even worse hotels goodwill on the long term.

The third consideration, "When" refers to time availability and time windows. This is a component was barely mentioned in any of the theories, as they were not aimed specifically for business travellers. However, as this one has a clear intention to design tailor made experiences for them, it creates the necessity to discuss about time. Flexibility and fast reaction capacity are a must in here, as business travellers' agenda might have some last-minute changes that might open or close time windows they have free. This creates a great opportunity as business travellers do not think of travel time in completely as a benefit or an inconvenience, and chances to switch from working mode to a more relax one can happen at any time, as it was revealed in the study made by the United Kingdom government (UK Department of Transit, 2015, 17) in which they inquire about values of travel time for business travellers. Moments like the ones mentioned above are the ones that should be used to invite guests to take part of determined experiences, offering value for their time.

Another factor in terms of time, is to have available options around the clock. Of course, in terms of costs not all options could be available nonstop, but there should be always some

alternative hotels can offer. The reason behind is their fickle schedules, with different check in and check out times, and sometimes even working on different time zones that they one they are actually in. A closing idea about this consideration is to simply be respectful of their time, and assure schedules run smoothly without affecting their work agenda.

Next consideration is “Where”. As it was early stated in this document, the idea is that the experiences are being offered by the same hotel that is providing the accommodation service, using it as the platform or stage to deliver the experience (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). On an ideal scenario this should mean two things: first the stage and therefore the stager should not be outsourced and secondly, the exact location where the experience will take place at should be inside the house or within a short distance (in this case is recommended that the travel there is also linked with the theme); whatever the case, it should be carefully chosen and conditioned to match with the experience.

Depending on the experience type the stage might not be as relevant, for those cases the hotel should be prepared to stage wherever the customer feels more comfortable or wherever is more convenient to them. Regardless who our guest is, or what theme are we delivering the experience around, the stage is the place where action will take place at, and because of that it has an important role on accomplishing those memorable experiences.

Last consideration is “How” and is without a doubt the one that must be assessed more carefully. Succeeding in all the previous considerations facilitates creating and staging memorable experiences but it is not until this point in when it will be delivered. Every detail must be thought-out (Pine & Gilmore, 1998), yet the author has highlighted four different aspects that based on other models have the biggest impact on the memorability of the experience. To begin with, multisensorial stimuli should be engaged, which will assure guests will be able to remember the experience through a wide variety of sensations (shapes, colours, temperatures, odours, flavours, textures and sounds among others). The emotional part should not be left behind, as producing in guests different sets of feelings will also assure they will remark the moment and what made them feel, usually we would be talking about happiness, joy or excitement (Tung, 2011), and those are the ones that are for sure more pursued but if depending on the nature of the experiences, they can intentionally appeal to a different set of feeling than the ones mentioned before and it is still working on favour of its remarkability.

Another additional aspects to consider is the memorabilia, as it is a tool that allows handing out guests a souvenir they can always come back to automatically increasing its memorability. Finally, the staggers or in general any staff member that interacts prior, during and after the experience must be properly trained, as they carry the responsibility on their shoulders of guiding guests to achieve the goal of the experience (Tarssanen & Kylänen, 2005). This means they should be familiar with all the content and be capable of producing the reaction expected, which demands actions from the employer, in this case the hotel behalf who should deliver constant training and development and care for the wellness of the employees so that they succeed in their tasks.

The previous five considerations should lead to a scenario in which memorable experiences are being staged and delivered easily in the accommodation business. As presented in the visual figure for this model, the author included an extra aspect that must be addressed but is not part of the cycle. This is “Reimagine”. If we stop for a second and analyse, one of the goals that staging and providing memorable experiences is pursuing, is to build loyal relationships leading to returning customers (Tung, 2011). This means that the process of designing memorable experiences is not something hoteliers should do one single time, but that is something that should be fully implemented within their everyday activity and they also need to constantly reinvent themselves and reimagine those experience to keep captivating and surprising the returning guests and strengthening their relationship with every stay.

To close this section and facilitate the analysis and comparison of the results, as wells as possible further researches, a table relating the theories and concepts that contributed to build the different considerations for experience design model, will be presented below.

Table 2. Contributing Theories to the Considerations for Experience Design

Consideration	Contributor	Contribution
Who	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swarbrooke & Horner • Pearce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope of what is business travel • Segmentations of business traveller. (Demographics and Motivational)
What	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pine & Gilmore • Tarssanen & Kylänen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theme the experience • Customization - Individuality

When	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pine & Gilmore 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mention of experience of what a company reveals over a period of time.
Where	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pine & Gilmore 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harmonize impression with positive cues.
How	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tarssanen & Kylänen • Pine & Gilmore • Tung 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of the stager • Engage all the senses • Memorability and memorabilia

3 Methodology

This chapter covers and justifies the research methods chosen to collect and further analyse the pertinent data gathered from business travellers with the aim to contribute to the development of designing experiences. It also includes a detailed description and justification of the research strategy applied for this research, subsequently it elaborates about how the questionnaire was tailor made for this case, describing how questions were designed and what were the intentions behind those. Besides, it mentions details about the process of collecting the data. In addition to that, the reliability and validity of the research are considered and discussed based on the outcome and development of the questionnaire.

3.1 Research Method

Before opting for a specific research method, it is important to clarify once again the objective and reach of this research. The main purpose of this research is to gather information about business travellers as a segment and collect additional information that can help decoding their behaviour and preferences as well as time availability and personal likes. Those aspects were identified after an extensive desk research that covered different topics like business travel, accommodation business and different theories about memorable experiences and experience design.

After analysing and selecting the information needed to be asked from the business travellers, it became evident that the required data was not homogeneous, therefore, and to create a better debate towards how to analyse and collect the data, a brief debate to decide between quantitative and qualitative research will be presented.

A quantitative approach is predominantly used as a synonym for any data collection technique or data analysis procedure that generates or uses numerical data (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009, 151). If we compare this characteristic with our objective, we can identify immediately some factors that are easily collectable using this method, like the demographics of our business travellers or their time availability, and it will allow the author to present average data and tendencies among the respondents. However, some other information such as their likes and preferences are not as easy to approach using this method.

Second alternative is the qualitative approach, which is mostly used in interviews and to categorise data, most commonly with non-numerical information (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009, 151). Once more, and reflecting on this thesis objective, some qualitative data must be gathered to fully identify themes or experiences that would get the attention of business travelers. Therefore, qualitative approach should also be part of the research.

After comparing the research objective with the information needed to achieve it, it became evident that a combination between quantitative and qualitative approach was needed to gather and analyse data to produce accurate and realistic findings. Despite this fact and procuring a more organized and easy to understand result, this research will use both quantitative and qualitative information, yet the whole data will be treated with a more quantitative approach.

This option can be found on the model presented of research choices, where it is categorized as a “Mixed model research”, defined as a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques and analysis procedures, as well as combining approaches. This means that qualitative data can be quantise and quantitative data can also be qualitis (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009, 153).

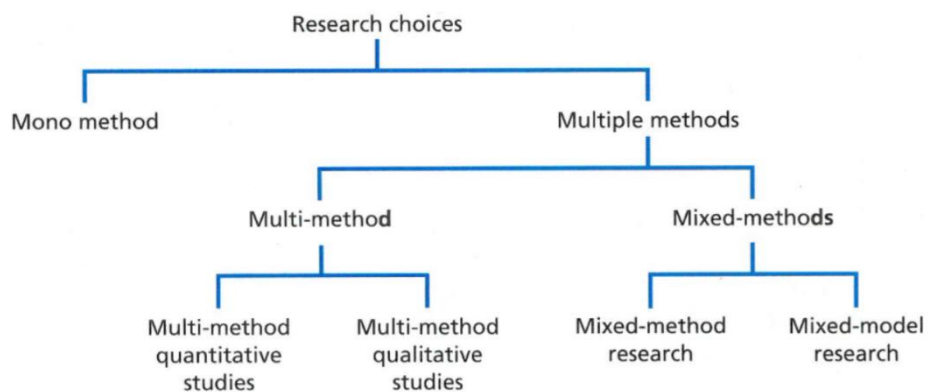


Figure 7. Research Choice (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009, 152).

This model will have unique characteristics that fit the purpose of this research and will facilitate to collect and analyse the information, among the main benefits of this method is that it combines the strengths of each approach and they complement each other while at the same time neutralizes some of the possible disadvantages they may face (Byrne & Humble, 2007, 1).

3.2 Research Strategy

After defining the research method, it is needed to opt for a research strategy, which is the channel the research will use to collect the data through. Considering the wide area and background where business travellers can come from and for this research, mainly be found, the author opted for a survey as the strategy to implement for this case. This in an optimal option as it allows to reach large amount of data and population, some of its more relevant qualities are its time and cost efficiency, is easy to understand, and for the analysis phase, it produces data that can be easily scrutinized in both quantitative and qualitative ways through different methods (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009, 152).

The survey was presented on an online form, which respondents were able to access independently at any time or place on their convenience, making this a self-administrated questionnaire offered via Webropol platform. A possible threat about the chosen method is the low response rate as there is no influence or pressure from the researcher that can boost the rate ratio. To avoid this from happening the researcher followed some of the advises given by Jong on her work about self-administered surveys. First one being to focus on your target population and create a survey according to their literacy level, and second provide clear instructions for filling the survey (Jong, 2016).

Bearing in mind the advises stated before, the author considered that most business travellers are highly literate, however their expertise areas could be quite far from the accommodation or experience business. Therefore, no technical vocabulary was used, and the survey's word choice mainly refers to their personal preferences and previous experiences. This was combined with clear instructions and short questions making it easy for travellers from different backgrounds to understand it and answer it.

The survey was distributed online in different channels and networks where business travellers were able to find it and where it was hoped they were willing to reply. For instance, specialized social media groups in Facebook and LinkedIn were reached, as well as Haaga Helia's and multiple more alumni and employees networks. The questions included in the questionnaire resulted from the analysis of theoretical framework and own considerations model, their aim was to identify demographics and psychographics of business travellers as well as relevant data in terms of their time availability, preferences and behaviour. The goal was to collect as much

data as possible during a period of one week, the main aim was to reach as many different backgrounds as possible, to get a broad perspective of business travellers around the globe.

3.3 Data Collection

As previously mentioned the data was collected using an online survey, which was based on the theoretical framework built from different authors and the model developed for this research of considerations of experience design in the accommodation business. The questions found in there were designed to answer and identify the clue factors on the dimensions model presented on the previous section. Considering that, the questionnaire inquired about demographic information about the traveller, such as age range, gender and nationality. It also covered more deep aspects of their behaviour as guests and preferences as customers. The survey was anonymous to some extent, as it did not ask any sensitive information like names or contact details, however it did ask about other that can help identify not a respondent individually but a whole segment they belong to.

Subsequent questions were digging about travellers' preferences in terms of themes or types of activities that can be used to build the experience around. For this case the author opted for a closed question but allowing the respondent having multiple answers. One of the intentions of this research is to be able to narrow down the most liked topics that can be joint with experiences in the accommodation business, therefore, this type of question seemed as the most suitable option as it helps producing useful data and maximize returns (Fowler, 2002, 62).

Following questions had an easy basic format of a closed question with a unique answer, which helped identifying relevant information related with clue factor of the considerations model like time and place. This approach was chosen as it is the more efficient and satisfactory way to collect data (Fowler, 2002, 91).

The questionnaire included one more type of question, in which respondents were asked to give their opinion based on their previous experiences while on business trips, to do so, they were given a category scale to rate the different aspects mentioned. The categories came from one to five, and the clue give was that one corresponded to unacceptable and five to exceptional, and they were free to label on any category within that range that related more to their feelings and opinions. This style of question provides ordinal data from the level of

satisfaction, making it easier to analyse, nevertheless it also has a threat as different respondents may not have similar opinion and understanding of what the categories are or what scale is being given. Regardless of this, it still provides a measurable and accurate rate of what guests consider either good or bad (Fowler, 2002, 92).

The targeted audience for the survey was business travellers from all possible nationalities and ages (except for minors) and from any gender. During a period of one week, the survey gathered information from 50 different people. This number could be considered a relatively low response rate, however there are two explanations that might enlighten the validity of the results. The first one, the time the survey was available could have ran, and perhaps if the survey would have been up for a longer period it could have gotten more replies. The second one was the non-intervention of the researcher as this was a self-administered questionnaire, eliminating that way the possible pressure that having to face the interviewer brings to the table and therefore many could have not been so willing to open or finish the survey.

3.4 Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are two important factors to consider whenever conducting a research, as the legitimacy of the findings depend on it. This section will cover those concepts, and how were those considered for during the creation and implementation of the survey in question in this research.

Reliability can be defined as the steadiness of the gathered data, meaning that if the same research or measurements would be conducted again, very similar, stable and consist results would be found once more (Taherdoost, 2016, 34). On the other hand, validity of a research is related with the integrity of the conclusions that are related with a piece of research and that those findings were deduced using appropriate research and measuring methods (Bryman & Bell 2007, 41).

When applying those concepts to analyse this research, it is possible to argue that due the enormous amount of business travellers worldwide if a similar research would to be conducted, it is likely that results may differ from the ones in this one. However, and to compensate from that, this researched aimed to reach as many different nationalities and therefore different cultural backgrounds as possible. In a sample of 50 respondents data was collected

from 15 different nationalities in 3 different continents, which backs up the results as a significant sample of tendencies and behaviours of business travellers nowadays.

In terms of validity of the research, it is important to mention that the link to find the survey was never published publicly to all open audiences, but instead it was carefully posted in business related groups and some of the respondents were invited privately to answer the survey as their status of business / non-leisure travellers was known by the author. Despite the fact the research does not count with a big sample, it made sure that respondents were genuinely experienced travellers contributing that way to both reliability and validity of the data.

This section covered the justification of the research method and explained the reasons for the research strategy used, it summarized the questionnaires objectives and reach, and debated the reliability and validity of the eventual results, which will be presented in detail in the following section.

4 Results and Findings of the Research

Results of the research will be presented in the following sections, procuring a better understanding of the outcomes, its reason to be in the questionnaire and its relationship with the previously discussed theories, resulting data is presented and related with the developed model author presented in the theoretical framework. Therefore, all tables and figures present the percentages of respondents opting for different options, and those will be related with the consideration they belong to (Who, What, When, Where and How).

4.1 Findings – Who

As it was constantly mentioned in the development of the considerations model, one of the key factors to design experiences within the accommodation business is to know your customer, reason why the survey inquired about background and demographical information to be able to understand and identify who are part of business travellers as a segment.

To begin with, the survey had a total of 50 respondents, and in the first section they were asked questions regarding data like their gender, age and nationality. To the gender question, the author opted for the traditional binary options of male and female, to which respondents who participated of the research ended up divided in the following way: 46% identified as a female while 54% did it as a male. Despite the difference it is possible to say that respondents are relatively equal divided between men and women.

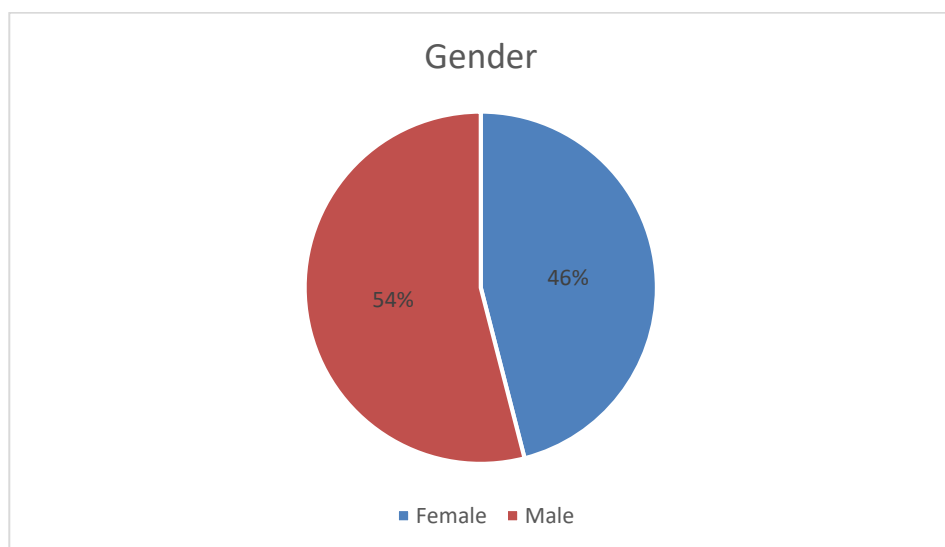


Figure 8. Gender Division

In terms of age, the options offered were divided in ranges of seven years each starting at the age of 18 and finishing with people age 55 and over. The reason behind is to categorize respondents in smaller groups based on their age and the fact that belonging to same generational group makes them share similar characteristics and likes. The complete range of options was from 18 to 25, from 26 to 32, from 33 to 40, from 41 to 47, from 48 to 54 and 55 or over, with the following results:

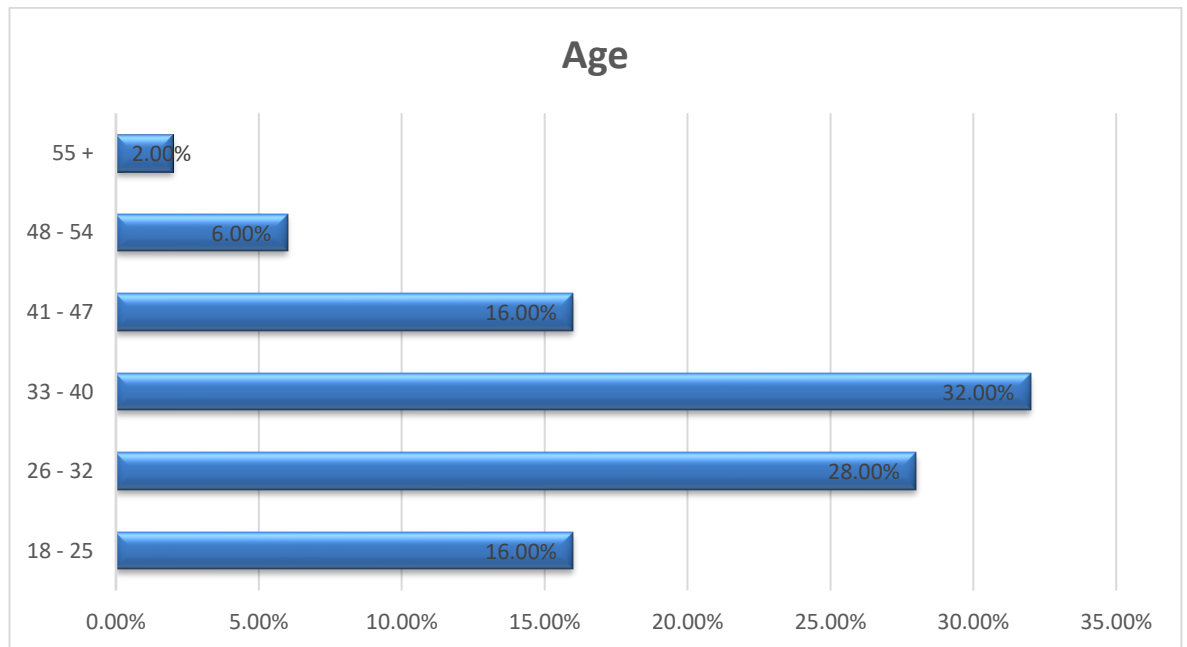


Figure 9. Age Range

In the previous figure is possible to appreciate that the group with the highest participation was the age range between 33 to 40, which could be related with this concrete age range being the one in which the professional and business careers experiment a peak and reaches the maturity in terms of development, reason why they are more commonly chosen to represent companies or close deals away from home.

Following aspect that the survey considered it was nationality, which was included due to the high importance and relation it has with cultural and behavioural background. Two different factors may have influenced the results in this case, one the research being conducted in Finland and this same country being the place of residence of the author, and the other one is the previous networking and professional background of the author which took place in a different country, Colombia to be specific. Results were organized alphabetically and shows the number of respondents based on the country they listed their nationality at.

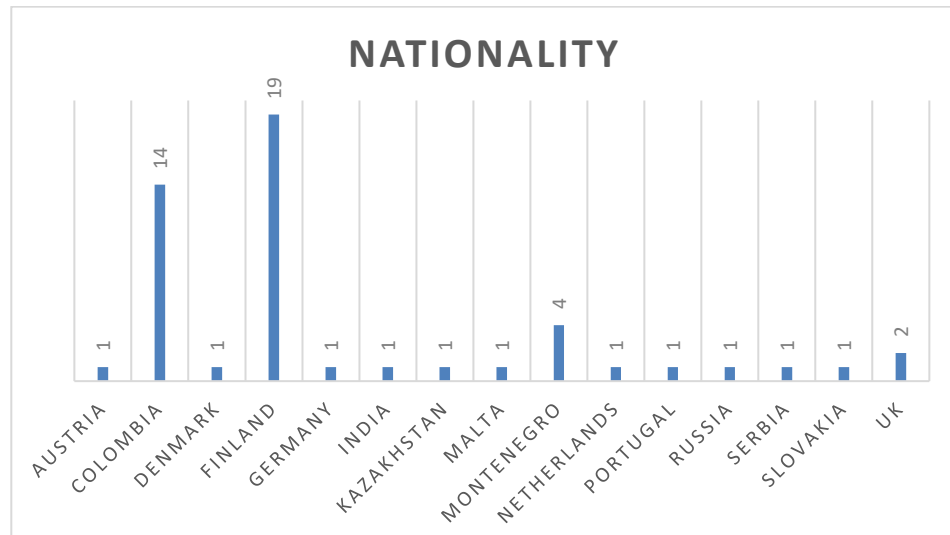


Figure 10. Nationality – Country of Origin.

4.2 Findings - What

As it was explained in the second consideration, for an experience to be memorable, it must be designed towards ideas and topics that are both interesting for guests, appealing to the senses and their development within the accommodation industry is plausible and easily executable. The questionnaire included a question in which respondents were asked from a list of options that had those mentioned characteristics. As interests are always diverse and can change depending on different factors, respondents were also given the option to choose up to three potential activities from the list. Results are shown below in figure 11, which shows the percentage of respondents that marked determined topic or activity among their three options from the given list with the following results:

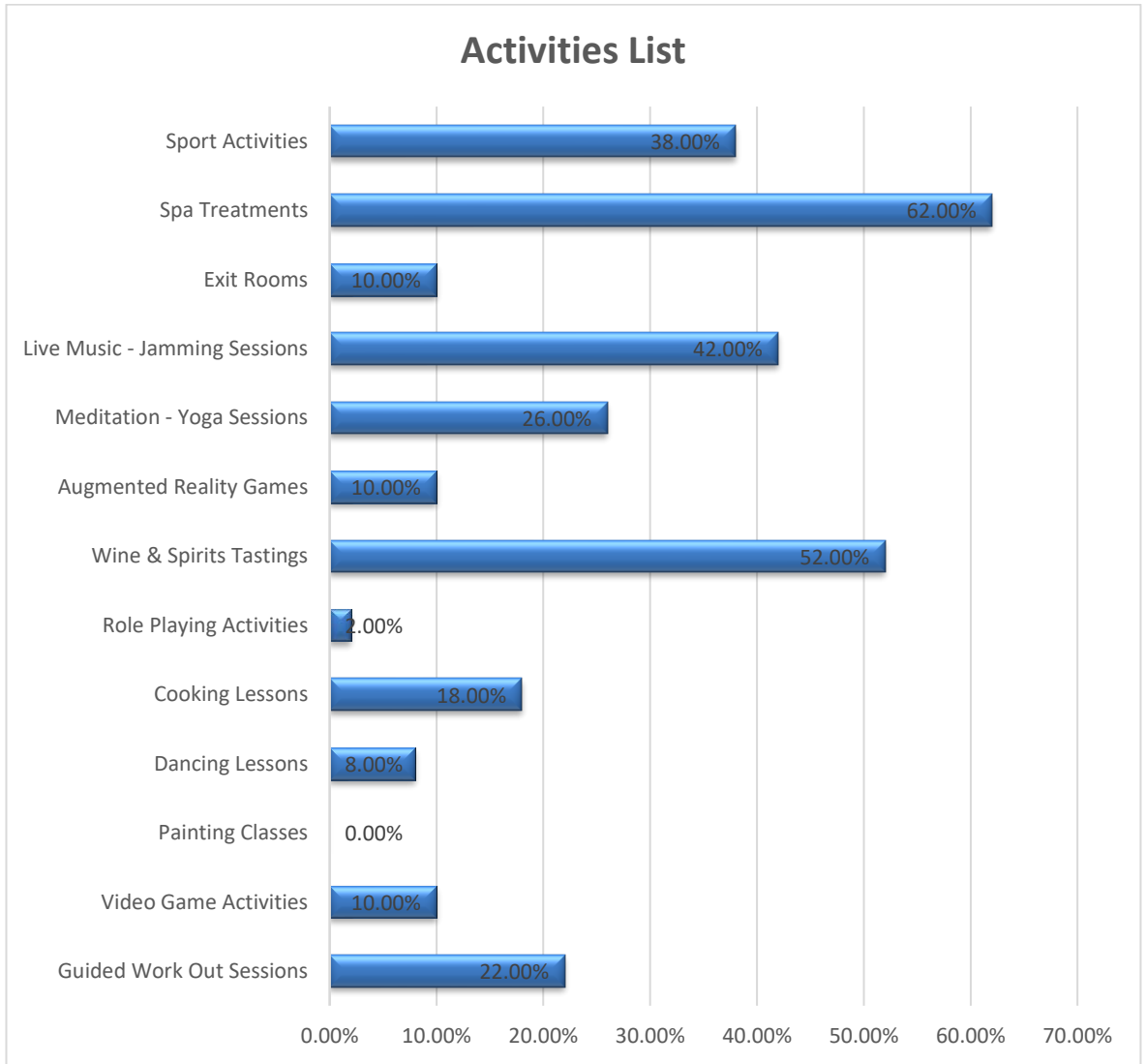


Figure 11. Activities / Topics list

From the given options, it is clearly visible there are four most preferred activities, spa treatments open the list with 62% of the respondents choosing it among their options, it is followed by wine and spirits tastings with 52% selecting this option. Those two options were clearly the most popular ones, but not much behind we found live music & jamming sessions and sports activities with 42% and 38% respectively.

4.3 Findings – When

Third consideration presented in the model was analysing time as a relevant factor to be considered whenever designing experiences for business travellers. For that reason, the author considered imperative to inquire about their times and availability during their business trips.

Respondents were asked about the number of hours on average they spend at the premises of their hotels during their business trips. The options given were 0 hours, between 1 and 2, between 3 and 5 and over 6 hours, with the following results:

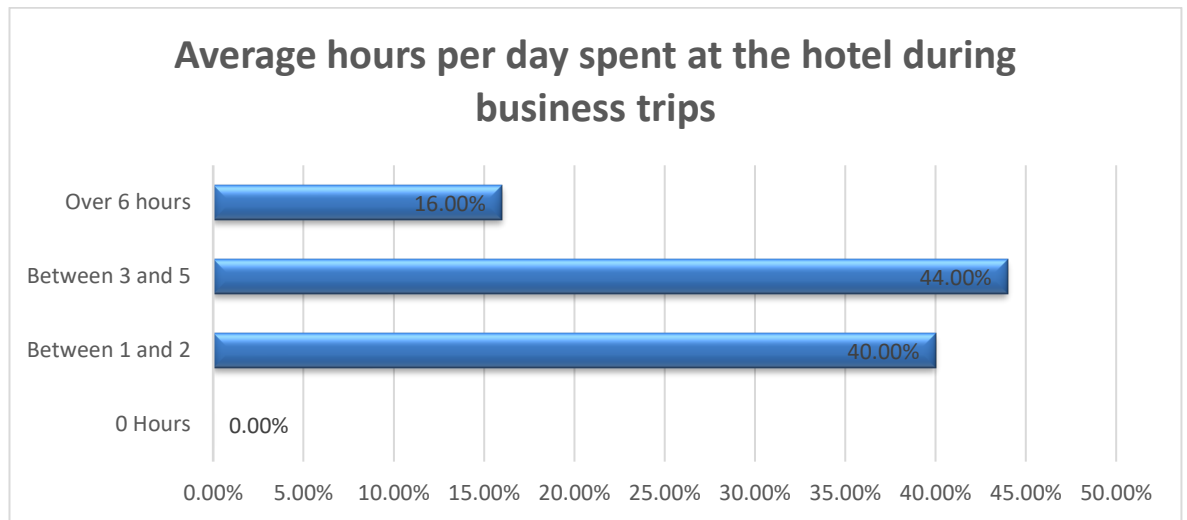


Figure 12. Average hours spent at hotels premises.

As seen on the figure above, 44% of the respondents said they spend between three and five hours at their hotel during their business trips, followed by between one and two hours with 40% of the respondents. Missing 16% stated they spend in average six hours or more at the hotels premises while none of the respondents selected zero as their answer.

4.4 Findings – Where

The survey also considered the location factor and inquired the respondents about their preferred place at their hotels to relax and spend some of the free time they have during their business trips. The question offered some of the most common spaces and facilities that the average midscale and luxury hotels have to offer. The options given were: Restaurant, pool, bar, garden, own room, lobby and terrace. With the following results:

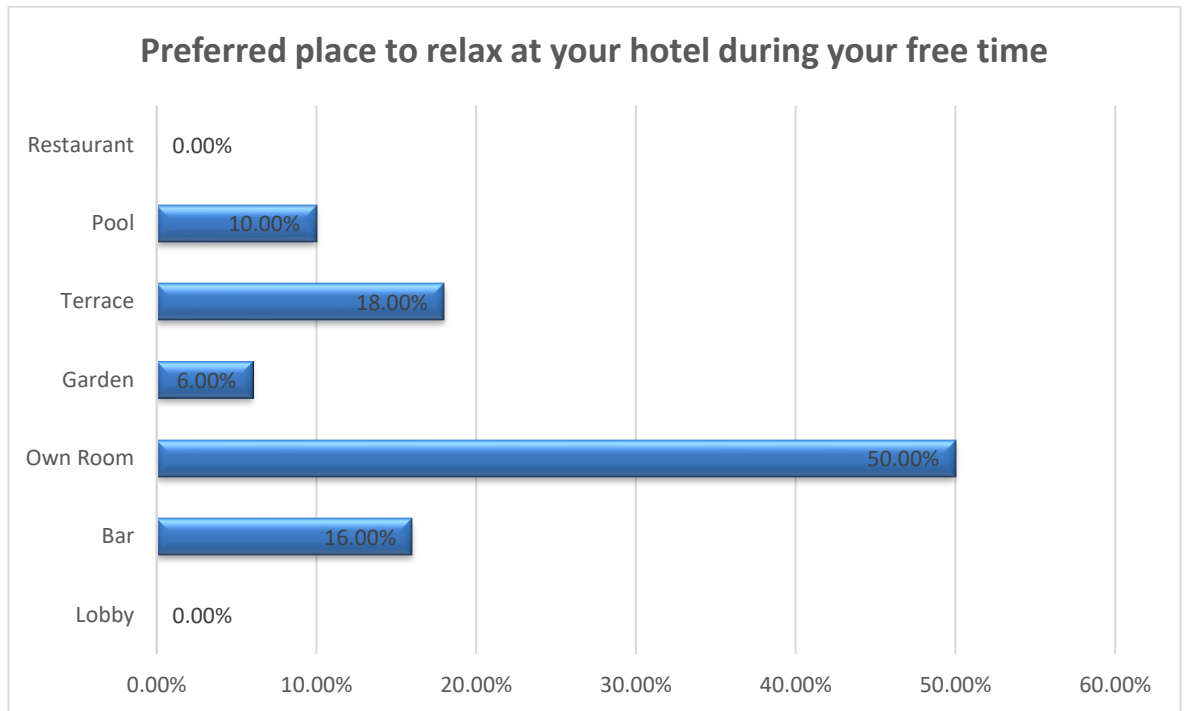


Figure 13. Preferred place to relax at your hotel.

A very clear mode can be identified in this case, as 50% of respondents marked their own room as their preferred place to spend some time and relax, marking a big difference with the second most preferred one the terrace and bar with just 18% and 16% respectively, closing the selected options we have the garden with simply a 6%, this low percentage could be associated with the fact that not all the hotels have one to offer and in some other cases those are only available depending on the season. It is important to mention that the lobby and the restaurant had no respondents at all marking them as their favourite place to relax and spend time, an interesting finding considering they are both almost mandatory touchpoints for every guest.

4.5 Findings – How

During the debate in which the considerations model was built, it became evident that no matter how well planned an experience, it was in this “how” the experience is delivered and staged that the memorabilia can be achieved, therefore, this questionnaire also paid more attention to this aspect and inquired respondents about their previous experiences targeting key factors like the staff delivering the experience or any service in general, the hotel itself as a stage and

atmosphere offered and the phenomenon of memorabilia.

To begin with, guests were asked to rate on a scale from one to five, in which one represented unacceptable and five exceptional the interactions they have had in the past with staff member from the hotels they have stayed at during their business trips. Respondents were told to consider factors like kindness, helpfulness and authenticity. Figure 14 presented below, shows the results, in which mode is easily identified with 50% of the respondents marking four as their score or perception in this factor, 26% of them considered the staff interactions they have had in the past as exceptional scoring them with a five, while the missing 24% gave them a three placing just in the middle of the given options. None of the respondents marked two or one in this matter.

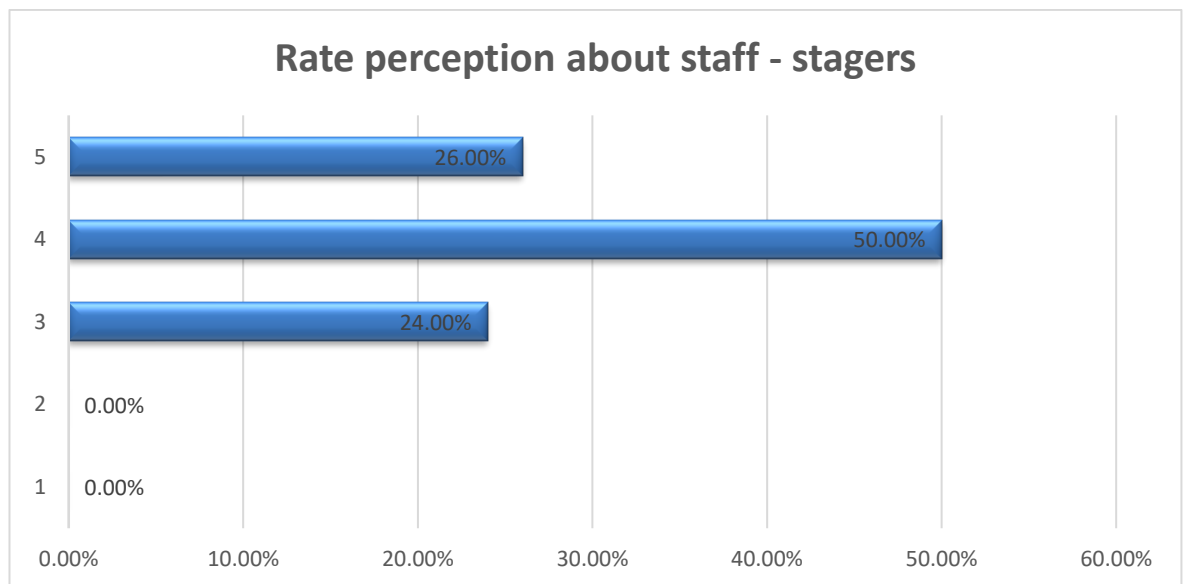


Figure 14. Rate perception about staff - stagers

This result evidentiates that the average level of service and interaction between stager/staff and business travellers is good, however, the memorability of the same one might not rate as high as only 26% gave them the maximum score indicating that something memorable could have happened during their stays.

Using the exact same scale rate from one to five that was described before, respondents were then asked to grade the hotel premises, the service they offered and some other factors that influence overall the perception guest have during their stays like food and decorations but

asked them to appeal to their senses and consider different images, flavours, smells and sounds among others. This question gave the following results:

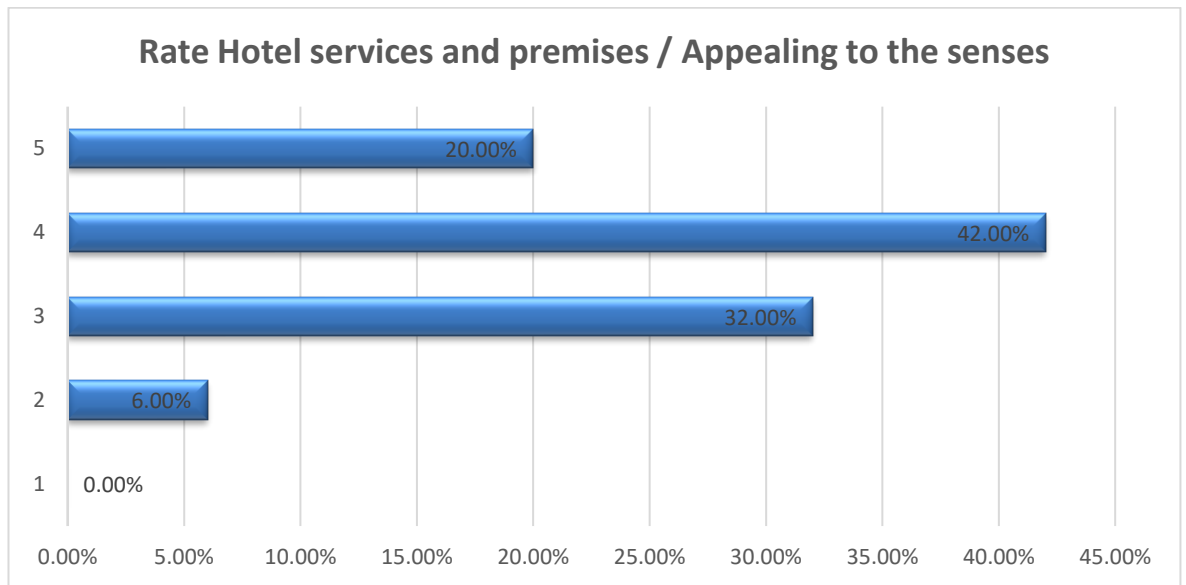


Figure 15. Rate Hotel services and premises / Appealing to the senses

This presents some similarity with the previous questions about the interaction with staff members. Mode for this case placed on the score of four, which was selected for 42% of the respondents, following most selected one was three, in the middle of the scale and therefore considered just as average with 32% of the total. At the top of the scale with a grade of five and being considered as exceptional we have only 20% of the respondents. In this case a grade of two and below average did have a 6% of the total while none of the respondents marked it as unacceptable, leaving the grade of one empty. It is possible to see how in terms of appealing to different senses and involving them throughout the hotel's premises and services, the accommodation business seems to be a little behind reaching memorability and high acceptance only to 20% of the interviewed population, and with 38% of them marking it just as average or below average.

Considering the importance of memorability when designing and staging experiences, this survey also opted to include a question to find out the percentage of business travellers that has ever purchased a souvenir from their hotel (not about the destination but from their accommodation service provider). For this question, respondents were given the option to choose between "yes" and "no", and an alternative option being "do not remember" just to identify

possible cases in which memorabilia is not even easily associated with the hotel they stayed at. Results are shown in figure 16 below.

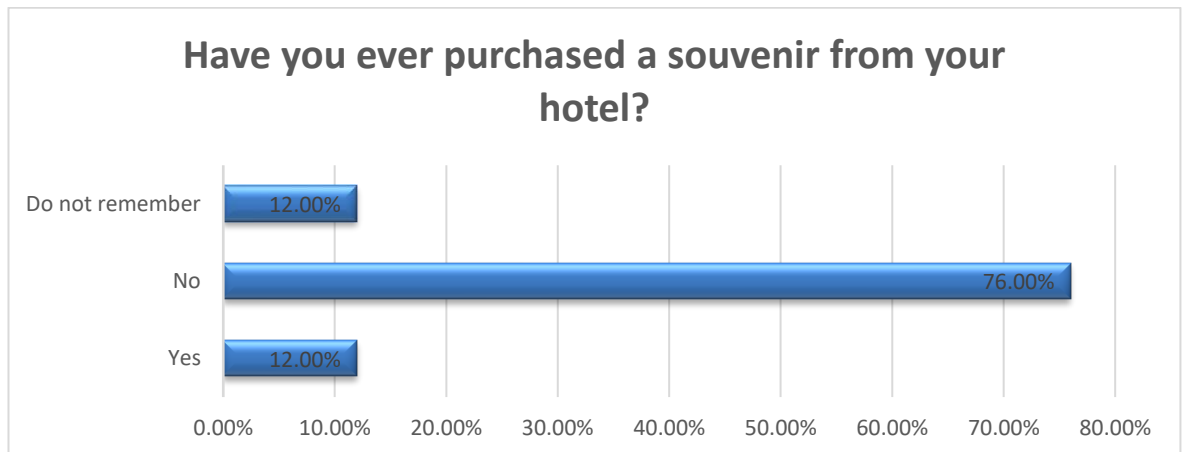


Figure 16. Percentage of guests who have ever purchased souvenirs from their hotels

Results in this case are not surprising and evidentiates a big opportunity area for hotels to sell memorabilia about their stay to guests. This easily done if they have achieved customers satisfaction and delivered a memorable experience, which can push the guests to buy different merchandise related to the experiences they took part of.

The question missing is a combination of three dimensions How, What and Who. It has been established before in this research the importance of knowing your guests, their preferences and how to better approach and stage for him. Hotels and accommodation units in general can achieve some part of it by simply investing in market research, strengthening and tighten up their relationships with their guests. However, the author of this research considered relevant to find out if guests would be willing to provide beforehand very important and personal information about their likes and preferences so that tailor made experiences could be waiting for them at their hotels already. As an example, the question mentioned if they would be willing to grant their hotel access to their likes and activity in different social media channels. See the result below.

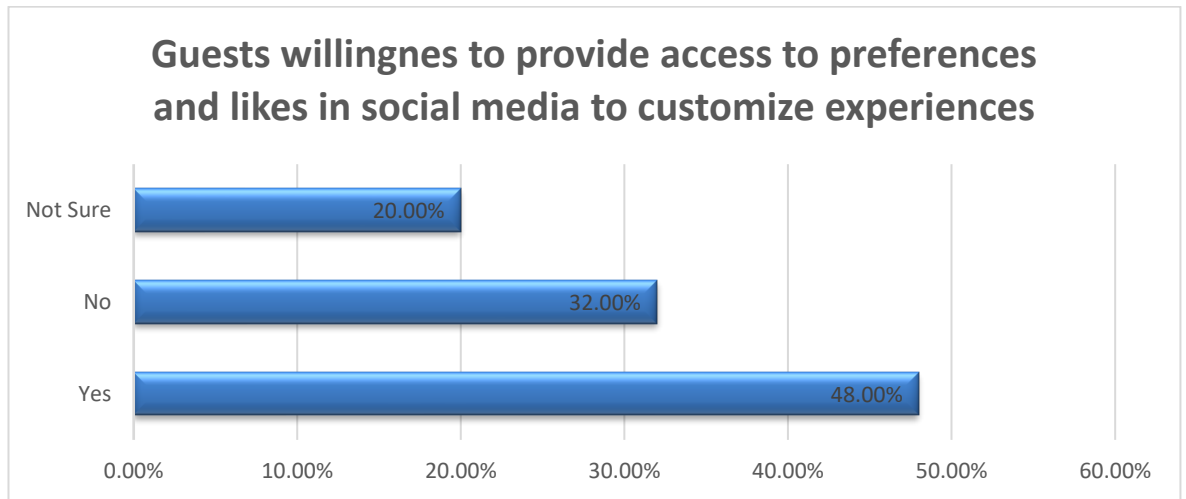


Figure 17. Guests willingness to provide access to preferences and likes in social media

Considering the sensitive topic that is being discussed in this question, respondents were also given the option of answering with a “not sure”, the reason behind it is that nowadays the security of the information and privacy are sensitive matters and perhaps some would not feel comfortable with the option of choosing only between yes and no. The results showed that 48% of respondents would have agreed to grant that access to be able to take part in tailor made experiences build around their preferences and likes. The counterpart of people not willing to give this access to their hotels was 32% of the total and 20% expressed they are not sure if they would or not.

To sum up, all the data collected and shown in this section aims to provide a general idea of the preferences and behaviours business travellers have. As well as give a guide about potential ideas to be developed into memorable experiences that must consider the findings in terms of themes, interests, preferred places, times and perspectives that may influence how guests perceive and react. Those discoveries are meant to be later incorporated into the considerations model to test its effectiveness of it in terms of achieving memorability with the offered experiences.

When cross tabulating the collected data, no significance difference was found in terms the gender of the respondents, but if we analyse the age, we can identify the immediate experiences that should start being designed and soon implemented for the age range with the highest participation from 33 to 40 years, for this specific group, the most selected option was wine & spirits tastings with 69% of the respondents, considerably higher than the total average of 52%. This information allows hoteliers to identify the immediate need to start

implementing and testing experiences by attacking the ones with the highest interest from their most frequent guests.

As it was revealed in this survey, the second age range with the highest participants were those between 26 to 32. In the next couple of years is logic to believe people from this group would mature more career wise and will increase their participation among the total of business travellers. This means that identifying and preparing already now for the preferences that this new generation of business travellers has will facilitate achieving memorable experiences in the next couple of years. For instance, this group also shows a significant difference with the most chosen theme having live music & jamming sessions ranking first with 64% of the respondents, while this option came third in the total average. This gives an idea of the direction possible experiences could take to satisfy the needs of this age range that will increase everyday their presence among business travellers and most likely be the predominant one within the next decade.

This chapter included a detailed description of the results and showed graphics and figures from each one of the questions that were included in the questionnaire, it also organized them and associate them with the respective consideration they belong to. In the next episodes the results presented here will be further analysed and some conclusions and suggestions for the accommodation industry would be listed.

5 Conclusions and discussion

This thesis aimed to research about the potential of experiences as enhancers in the accommodation sector for business travellers, the goal was to collect information that could help understand and decode key factors about preferences and behaviours business travellers may present, and then relate those with different theories and concepts to suggest a tailor-made model that can be applied to successfully design experiences for this specific segment at the comfort of their own hotel. To achieve this goal, it was needed first to conduct an extensive research that would help clarifying business travellers, the relationship they have with different accommodation types and most importantly the phenomena of experience design, memorability and how can they be included in the hotel industry.

Once this research was completed and the model for this unique case was developed, the journey continued with a questionnaire, which was made to gather information from business travellers around the world and inquire about their preferences and memorability of previous experiences. The mentioned survey was shared online via Webropol and the collected data was presented in the previous chapter. One of the main purposes of this document was to provide hoteliers with findings and guidance that can be used further in developing experiences for non-leisure travellers as well as contribute to the general academic research in the matter of the experience design by developing a model specifically created to the accommodation business and its general situation and uniqueness. In the two following sections, recommendations and conclusions will be discussed based on the contributions and impact the model could have made on those two different environments (business and academic).

5.1 Conclusions and discussion – Accommodation business

To analyse the findings the model and the research can bring to the accommodation business, the main key factors in each consideration will be listed and discussed finalizing with some suggestions related with the implementation of experience to enhance business travellers stay. Once more we will begin with the “Who” consideration of this model, in which the survey contributed to identify some of their demographic characteristics business traveller have as a group. Is safe to tell that the differences in terms of gender are not very significant, which means that all experiences that hotels would design should be appealing to both female and

male guests, or there should be a balance in the offer of different experiences that could be considered more oriented towards one of the genders than the other.

In terms of age the 76% of the respondents were between the ages of 26 to 47, this information gives a clue of possible personality traits and characteristics attributed to generational groups, in this case the so-called generation X and Y or early millennials. It is important to understand how people in these groups usually interact with others and how they like to be approached, so that experiences can have the right mix to be attractive to this wide age group. The other aspect this research covered was the nationality or location wise characteristics, in this case hotels need to be fully aware of who are their visitors, where are they coming from and what are those things that attract them the most so that they can identify possible opportunities and threats on time and consider those when designing and staging experiences. General suggestions include creating and constantly updating databases of demographic information of guests and relating those with the most preferred services or products they usually purchase. Once the experiences have been implemented, it might be worth adding to this database the reactions collected and feedback received.

Moving to the second consideration “What”, the model highlights the importance of customization as a key factor to achieve memorability, this was also stated by Tarssanen & Kylänen in their experience pyramid (2006), in which the challenges and difficulties of customization are discussed and later solved suggesting creating smaller groups that shared similar characteristics and likes to customize for those as doing it for every individual guest would be very costly and time consuming for hotels and experience designers. With that on mind and pursuing both, customers satisfaction and hotels interests, it is possible to suggest that experiences should be created around common likes and trends that can get the attention of a larger group of customers. Nevertheless, there should be a variety of options available to make sure different types of business travellers would still have an option to choose from.

The survey gathered important information about those activities or topics guests would be more interested in taking part, and the most selected options are not far from being some of the traditional services hotels offer, they just need to transition from the service economy to the experience one. This transition is nothing but a natural process of customization that happens after identifying smaller segments within the big business travellers market. For example, 62% selected spa treatments, nowadays a considerable number of hotels offer spa or massage services, but are those really being memorable and used at their full potential? Perhaps not,

and further recommendations will be listed on the “How” section. Another case is the wine & spirits tastings, this option was selected for 52% of the respondents and it could have a great impact in guests’ memorability by simply including a theme that gives customers the opportunity of build and organize their impressions as it was said the experience economy of Pine & Gilmore (1998) stay and is easily executable as almost all the midscale and luxury hotels have an inhouse bar. This once more raises the concern regards some of the services and premises not being used to their full potential, as similar examples can be named with their gym or sports facilities, kitchens and others.

Following the order presented in the considerations model, it is time to discuss the finding in terms of “When”. For this consideration, the model brings to the discussion a component that was almost not mentioned in the theories that contributed building it and it is the time factor. It is well known business travellers can often have a hectic schedule full of meetings and commitments at different hours and places, which makes their time availability a sensitive topic that must be researched and discussed. To cover this aspect, the questionnaire asked business travellers about the average number of hours of free time they spend at their hotels during their stays.

Results surprisingly showed that 44% of them does spend in average between three to five hours at their hotel. This gives hoteliers an idea of the type of experience that can be offered to travellers based on the duration of it. This matter must be considered to decide the appropriate length of the experience, as most travellers would not be so eager to use the totality of their free time in determined experience, and because if it does not last long enough to fully deliver the message, the memorability might be compromised. A possible recommendation in this matter is also to design experiences with different durations, and to make sure that the experience delivery will take the exact amount of time the guests was informed to respect their time and not to interfere with their agenda.

Continuing with the consideration we can find “Where”, in which the relevance of the stage and staging are discussed. For this case hoteliers should clearly know their stage as we are talking about their own premises and properties. However, and as it was mentioned it is important to debate if those are being used efficiently and accordingly to the guests needs. First let’s see what the questionnaire found out for this consideration, respondents were asked to choose from different facilities or areas the one they feel more relaxed and more likely to spend their free time, those are characteristics that spaces should have to assure that those taking part of the experience are fully receptive. The findings indicated that 50% selected their

own room as their preferred place. This creates a challenge in terms of efficiency as if this were to be the place chosen to stage the experience, only those staying there would be able to take part, but at the same time it also generates a big opportunity in terms of personalization by creating an atmosphere completely free of any negative cues that can affect the experience outcome, that might be one of the reasons respondents chose that way which matches with what Pine & Gilmore (1998) exposed about stage and making sure negative cues were completely eliminated.

For instance, if we combine this with some of the finding from different considerations, we can already build an idea of experiences that could be easily staged and would likely mark high in memorability. For example, we can imagine a spa treatment or a small wine tasting happening at the comfort and intimacy of the guests own room. Different combinations like this can be plotted and tried to analyse their efficacy, costs and more before being openly offered. Coming second and third in terms of preferred places we have the garden and bar respectively, in those places there are also a large list of combinations that can positively impact the satisfaction of business guests with easily staged experiences, just to name a few maybe a guided sports exercise in the garden or a whiskey tasting in your own hotel bar. A suggestion for hotels in this matter is to fully understand the potential of all their premises and to select the right stage to the right experience.

Closing the considerations we have “How”, as it was discussed during the consulted theories and the development of the model, this is the consideration with the highest and most direct impact on the memorability of an experience, because failing here will immediately destroy all the effort put into it. This consideration covers the actual moment when the experience is being delivered and how are the guests interacting with it. The model mentions the importance of involving all the senses or as many as possible so that guests can later recall what happened through different stimulus, this was a big contribution mentioned both by Tarssanen & Kylänen (2006) and Pine & Gilmore (1998) who agreed on the vital role multisensorial stimulus have.

To broaden on that matter, the survey inquired business travellers to recall their previous trips, and to rate the how appealing to the senses were the food, services and premises they have stayed at. This question is very relevant because it gives us information about the memorability of previous experiences, as a very high or low rate represents something that immediately came to their minds when answering the survey and it pushed them to give this score. The

survey found that 20% of the respondents graded it with a five, the maximum rate possible while none of them graded it with a one. Depending on the perspective, it is possible to deduce that memorability was only achieved for one fifth of the total sample, leaving us with a majority of 80% that may have had some average or good experiences that came short and did not fully accomplish being memorable. A recommendation in this case is to smartly integrate into the experiences and throughout the whole hotel and its services small hints that can appeal to all the senses and contribute to the memorability of the experience and to the overall stay.

Another aspect within the same consideration is the importance of the staggers' performance, as ultimately it is on their shoulders the responsibility to effectively deliver the experience as it was planned as it was mentioned by Tarssanen & Kylänen (2006), and on top of that, they are also the ones representing the hotels name in every single interaction. The survey also involved this factor and it asked the respondents to rate the overall experience they have had with staff members during previous business trips, and were told to consider different factors like kindness, helpfulness and authenticity. The results showed that 26% of the sample marked the highest rate of five. Using the same perspective than we did for the previous component, it is possible to say that a similar scenario happens in terms of memorability of staff related experiences. This increases the importance of properly train and develop your staff, as it is their main duty to procure at all times the guests satisfaction, and whenever staging an experience to pursue a successful completion and to guide guests towards that planned ending that was created with memorability as the main goal.

Following aspect including in the contributing theories, considerations model and therefore also in the questionnaire is the memorabilia, this one might not have such an important role in assuring the guests have witnessed a memorable experience, however, as it was mentioned by Tung in his work about memorability (2011), they are for sure an indicator about success rate that reveals if the business travellers have been reached and touched in a mental way to then point that they feel encouraged to purchase extra souvenirs or memorabilia to extend the memories related with whatever experience they have been just part of.

The results of the survey help disclose this matter, as it reveals only 12% of the respondents have ever purchased a souvenir from their hotel, which evidentiates two different things. First the big majority of business travellers most likely have not been a witness of a unique and memorable experience that could subconsciously trigger purchasing a souvenir or any kind of merchandise to evoke the hotel and its services. Secondly, it creates a big opportunity to

positively impact the memorability of the experiences and to generate extra income to the house by selling these souvenirs. A recommendation for the accommodation business would be to integrate those pieces of memorabilia as an add on to their experiences, however they must be well thought out, relate to the emotions that the experience produce on guests and be an integral part of the experience overall.

This section covered the main findings of the questionnaire and it related them with the theories that contributed to this research and with the consideration model. After analysing those and see the relation they had with what was mentioned in the theoretical framework, different sets of recommendations were given to hoteliers interested in implementing memorable experiences for their business travellers, those suggestion were presented following the same scheme and it discussed each of the considerations. In the following section conclusions will be discussed for the academia and possible further researches.

5.2 Conclusions and discussion – Academia and further research

This research and the developed considerations model have an impact not only on the practice aspects of the accommodation business and experience design, but also on the academia, whom the author suggests to test and run the considerations model in practical and real cases in the accommodation business to analyse its veracity and validity, and to continue developing based on finding after it has been applied.

Experience design is in general a new topic that has not been yet fully discussed and integrated to all different business and areas where it may have an impact, therefore, a further research is highly suggested that can either continue with the considerations model or that analyse the phenomena of memorability and impact of experiences within the accommodation industry. To achieve better results is also suggested that such a research should be done hand in hand with the industry and could even integrate other leisure or complementary business besides the lodging one mentioned in this research. Such a cooperation should not only take place for the specific further researches, but it should also be taken to the classrooms where practice and theory would be mixed to assure the right combination that can give future managers all the needed knowledge in matters related to experience management, experience design and memorability. The goal of this venture is to prepare those who will run this business soon and prepare them to face the different challenges that this industry will present.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Printed version of questionnaire

Business Travellers Demographics and Experiences

The objective of this survey is to gather information about business travellers' preferences and their experiences in hotels. The information will be used for a research thesis in Haaga Helia University of Applied Sciences. Your help is much appreciated.

1. Age *

- 18 - 25
- 26 - 32
- 33 - 40
- 41 - 47
- 48 - 54
- 55 +

2. Gender *

- Female
- Male

3. Nationality *

4. From the following list, please mark 3 activities you would be interested in taking part at your hotel during your next business trip. *

- Guided Work Out Sessions
- Video Game Activities
- Painting Classes
- Dancing Lessons

- Cooking Lessons
- Role Playing Activities
- Wine & Spirits Tastings
- Augmented Reality Games
- Meditation - Yoga Sessions
- Live Music - Jamming Sessions
- Exit Rooms
- Spa Treatments
- Sport Activities

5. Would you be willing to provide your hotel access to some of your preferences (For example your likes on social media) prior your arrival so that they can customize an experience for you? *

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure

6. How many hours an average a day you spend at the hotel during your business trips? *

- 0 Hours
- Between 1 and 2
- Between 3 and 5
- Over 6 hours

7. Considering the regular facilities the hotel you usually stay at during your business trips offer, in which of the following do you feel more relaxed and can spend some of your free time? *

- Lobby
- Bar
- Own Room
- Garden

- Terrace
- Pool
- Restaurant

8. Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5, in which 1 is Unacceptable and 5 is Exceptional, the following aspect: *

Overall the interactions you have had with hotel's staff during your business trips. Consider different factors like their kindness, helpfulness, authenticity, etc.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

9. Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5, in which 1 is Unacceptable and 5 is Exceptional, the following aspect: *

Consider Hotel's premises, services, food and decoration. Was it pleasant and appealing to your senses? Consider aspects, smells, taste, sounds.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

10. Have you ever purchased a souvenir specifically from your hotel? *

- Yes
- No
- Do not remember