Designing and Delivering Memorable Experiences in the Luxury Hotel Sector

By

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ABSTRACT

Over four decades ago futurist Alvin Toffler (1970) predicted that new industries would develop centered on the design and delivery of experiences. Now recognized as the ‘experience economy’; globalization, advances in technology and rising consumer affluence have motivated producers to adapt products and services to include unique experiences. Profound changes have also been observed in how tourists engage with destinations, attractions and hotels, while increasingly seeking memorable experiences. The purpose of this research was to identify how producers responsible for the design and development of luxury hotel guest rooms, respond to or intend to respond to consumer demands for memorable experiences, now and in the future (to the year 2020).

The study is significant because a review of the literature has uncovered that more in-depth research is required to fully understand customer experience needs, especially in the context of the luxury hotel sector. Consequently, producers must understand these new and emerging consumer needs or the increasingly high investment in luxury hotel rooms may not yield a return. As a result, this research explored both the supply and demand sides of memorable experiences, placing the primary focus on the luxury hotel guest room.

Two groups of participants were engaged in qualitative research conducted in two interconnected study phases. In Phase I, a Delphi-like study involved expert producers. In Phase II, in-depth interviews were conducted with frequent traveling consumers. The analysis of data obtained from producers identified four primary memorable experience generator categories (Services, Atmosphere, Culture and Technology). By applying Pine and Gilmores (1998) four realms of experience framework, the research found that in the future, these producers predicted that more emphasis would be placed on the Entertainment realm. They also agreed that a return-on-investment would occur first in Services and Technology and then in the Atmosphere and Culture categories.

In Phase II, consumers expressed the view that their future experience desires related to entertainment and service-generated experience themes. Specifically, consumers
emphasized memorable experience needs that were personally relevant and meaningful, containing humanistic cues (those that are experienced through the behavior and appearance of staff) and pleasant surprises.

The study also confirmed Pine and Gilmore's (1998) experience framework as an appropriate conceptual model to conduct memorable experience research. The theoretical contributions are relevant to the management, marketing and innovation literature, while the practical contributions will be of interest to luxury hotel operators, business practitioners and service industry managers.
I Dedicate This Work To:

Mein Vater

Dr. med. Henning Bühring
Doktor der Medizin

Universität Marburg, Germany
Magdalen College, University of Oxford, United Kingdom
Universität Hamburg, Germany

1965 Carl-Christiansen-Gedächtnispreis ~ Forschung in der Nuklearmedizin
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In 2010, while residing in New York City, businesses and consumers were experiencing the impact of the Global Financial Crisis that manifested itself from late 2007-09. Against this backdrop and working for a global brand icon, my keen interest to explore, at a deeper level, consumer value creation defined by experience design and innovation, subsequently evolved into the focus area of this dissertation. Today, having reached this point in my doctoral studies would seem quite impossible without the support and dedication of numerous individuals, to who I would like to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude.

Foremost, I like to say thank you to my senior research supervisor, Professor G. Barry O’Mahony, for his immediate and unwavering support in this ambitious journey over the past 4.5 years. Of special note is the support Professor O’Mahony extended over great distances; at times more than 10,000 miles apart, his focused approach to coaching, communication and all-round academic advisory, blessed with an Irish wit, contributed greatly toward my scholarly experience and reaching this milestone. A special thank you to Professor Jukka Laitamaki at New York University, who offered his advice in the research design and initial data collection stages, while acting as my second Supervisor during my posting in the United States.

At Swinburne University in Melbourne, I like to extend a sincere thank you to Professor John F. Dalrymple who became my second Supervisor in 2012. Professor Dalrymple’s priceless research experience and academic perspectives were especially valuable in the data analysis and review stages. A special thank you to B. Joseph Pine II, co-author of *The Experience Economy, Authenticity, Infinite Possibility*, and author of *Mass Customization*, who supported this research in the consumer-directed question design stages. I also like to mention and sincerely thank Associate Professor Stephen Burgess at the Victoria University in Melbourne for his advice concerning Information Systems design issues that helped define the Delphi instrument development stages. A special thank you goes to industry friends that inspired me on this journey, like: Phil McAveety, Paul James, David Udell and Ingo Peters, and to my friend Jeff Monahan in Boston, for his designer input in the illustration of purposed data visualization maps. To
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Gratitude and appreciation goes to all of the research participants and those who assisted in the extensive recruitment stages. Addressing the industry producers who supported this study, I wish to extend a special thank you to both the Chief Brand Officer and the Global Brand Leader at organization “A” in New York. It was their believe in the value and inevitable contribution of this study that lead to the awareness and subsequent participation of many of their most senior executives and subject-matter experts. Addressing each and every producer participant on the Delphi panel, I extend a wholehearted thank you for their precious time and commitment over a continuous six months period.

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Finally, I like to thank my extended family and friends for their belief in me and their support and encouragement throughout lengthy stages in solitude. Yet, no words sufficiently describe the gratitude I feel for my wife and life partner Geraldine who forever inspires me to keep pursuing purposeful and meaningful endeavors. Your support and the unquantifiable sacrifices made, nonetheless, are interwoven into the fabric of this work - thank you Gerie for standing beside me!

I look forward to continue my learning journey, to share and keep inspiring others, and to apply these learning experiences in a wide range of innovative, cross-disciplinary, global and forward-looking perspectives.
DECLARATION

This Thesis:

1. Contains no material which has been accepted for the award to the candidate of any other degree or diploma, except where due reference is made in the text of the examinable outcome;

2. To the best of the candidate’s knowledge contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of the examinable outcome; and

3. Where the work is based on joint research or publications, discloses the relative contribution of the respective workers or authors.

___________________________
Signed: Jörn H. Bühring
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<td>ADR</td>
<td>Average Daily Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIEST</td>
<td>International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism</td>
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<td>AR</td>
<td>Augmented Reality</td>
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<td>ATMO</td>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
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<td>B&amp;B</td>
<td>Bed and Breakfast</td>
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<td>CGM</td>
<td>Consumer-Generated Media</td>
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<td>CRS</td>
<td>Computerized Reservations System</td>
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<td>CSV</td>
<td>Comma-separated Values</td>
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<td>GDT</td>
<td>Generic Delphi Toolkit</td>
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<td>Light-emitting Diode</td>
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<td>LEED</td>
<td>Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design</td>
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<td>ME</td>
<td>Memorable Experience</td>
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<td>NHMRC</td>
<td>National Health and Medical Research Council</td>
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<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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<td>RC</td>
<td>Ritz Carlton</td>
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<td>RM</td>
<td>Relationship Management</td>
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<td>Return on Investment</td>
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<td>URL</td>
<td>Uniform Resource Locator</td>
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<td>USA</td>
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<td>VE</td>
<td>Virtual Environment</td>
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<td>VIP</td>
<td>Very Important Person</td>
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<td>Vice President</td>
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<td>Virtual Reality</td>
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<td>WOM</td>
<td>Word-of-Mouth</td>
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Chapter One – Introduction

1.0 Background

The background to this research lies in the growing individual wealth within many societies, which has been a catalyst for the consumption of luxury goods, leisure and travel (Park, Reisinger & Noh 2010). Consumers today are more independent, better informed, discerning, global, and are presented with expanding leisure consumption options, many of which are pursued by individuals seeking experiences that replace the ordinary with the extraordinary (Scott, Laws & Boksberger 2009).

According to Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), consumers seek playful leisure activities and a ‘…steady flow of fantasies, feelings, and fun…’ (p.132), which places the importance on experiences that delight consumers, giving them a sense of exhilaration and enjoyment that will be long cherished as memorable events (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikzentmihaly 1991). Within this experience-based and consumption-driven society, consumers seek emotional and sensory experiences (Carbone & Haeckel 1994) and utilize consumption to create identities and make statements about themselves (Williams 2002). This heightened desire for unique and “memorable experiences” has motivated many organizations to adapt their products and services to include meaning, stories and unique experiences; a phenomenon that has been termed the ‘experience economy’ (Bille 2010; Boswijk, Thijsen & Peelen 2006; Oh, Fiore & Jeoung 2007; Pine & Gilmore 1999; Sundbo 2009).

Tracing back the origins of this experience economy, it was American writer and futurist Alvin Toffler (1970) who proposed that experiences would be sold on their own merits and that the US economy would be dominated by whole industries that centre their offerings on consumer experiences. Presently, the experience economy is considered to be in its third generation, having evolved since Pine and Gilmore (1998) first introduced the original term in 1998. Initially, generation 1.0 was about staging experiences for the customer. Generation 2.0 is explained by Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004), who maintain that it is about the consumer as a co-creator of experiences, which
implies that there is a practical, active element to memorable experiences. This has now evolved into generation 3.0, where consumers are described as embarking on an autonomous personal journey (Boswijk, Thijsen & Peelen 2006). Additionally, the experience economy is developing further through transformational experiences revolving around new consumer sensibility and business imperatives that are focused on meaning and authenticity (Pine & Gilmore 2011). This transformation is leading consumers to become producers, thereby transitioning them from passive consumption to proactively engage in shaping what organizations will have to offer their customers (Gretzel et al. 2006; Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004).

The primary market forces behind the experience economy are attributed to globalization, advances in technology, and rising consumer affluence (Knutson & Beck 2003; Morgan & Watson 2007; O'Sullivan & Spangler 1998; Schmitt 1999). Organizations faced with global competition are forced to destandardize their goods and services in order to provide consumers with access to a range of unique offerings that can be tailored to their individual requirements and specifications (Gilmore 1993; Shaw & Williams 2004; Toffler & Shapiro 1985). This transition from mass production to mass customization has also influenced service providers, many of whom realized that they needed to become more innovative in order to provide their customers with ‘…anything they want profitably, any time they want it, anywhere they want it, and any way they want it’ (Hart 1995, p.36).

Pine and Gilmore (1999) contend that a product that is customized is automatically turned into a service, and a service that is customized is automatically turned into an experience. It is the level of customization that generates memorable experiences customers are willing to return for (Pine & Gilmore 1999). In other words, as Pine and Gilmore (2002) asserted, experiences become memorable when organizations intentionally use goods as props and services as the stage to engage their customers in inherently personal ways. Within the context of the experience economy, this suggests that producers of experiences have to recognize and act on the correlations between customer expectations, actual customer experiences and economic value drivers that not only generate a return-on-investment (ROI), but also drive profits on existing products and services to new levels. Exploring the experiential aspects of consumption, Holbrook
Jörn H. Bühring
Designing and Delivering Memorable Experiences in the Luxury Hotel Sector

and Hirschman (1982) proposed that ‘...all products – no matter how mundane – may carry a symbolic meaning...’ (p.134), which they argued, is especially rich and salient in the fields of entertainment, the arts and leisure activities.

Nowadays, some of the fastest growing economic sectors are related to the consumption of experiences (Oh, Fiore & Jeoung 2007; Pine & Gilmore 1998; Richards 2001) and the tourism industry with its prime business centered on products, services and the value that consumers attribute to the tourist experience, is suggested to be inextricably linked to the experience economy (Stamboulis & Skayannis 2003). Pine and Gilmore’s (1999) review of US leisure and tourism attractions, such as destination theme parks, live concerts and sporting events, found that tourism and leisure businesses out-performed traditional industry segments, showing higher sales and profits. They assert that the major attractions for consumers are unique and memorable experiences, which add additional value for both the consumer (the buyer) and the producer (the seller) (Pine & Gilmore 1999).

Responding to these growing consumer interests, tourism producers seek innovative products and services that can satisfy their customer’s quest for novel and enjoyable experiences, while at the same time, presenting their businesses with new forms of competitive advantages and economic value through the development of unique and memorable experiences (Azevedo 2010; Pine & Gilmore 1998). In this way experiences are seen as a new form of economic value that will motivate organizations to go beyond mere product and service excellence. Instead, designed, orchestrated and co-produced experiences all have the potential to delight the consumer, who in return is willing to pay a premium for the experience offering and for the time they spend in a particular place (Gilmore & Pine 2002). Consequently, with consumers willing to pay a premium for memorable experiences, an understanding of the experience dimensions, and the design and development of experiences is deemed critical to achieve financial success in the hospitality sector within today’s global, competitive environment (Kandampully 2006; Oh, Fiore & Jeoung 2007; Pine & Gilmore 2011; Pine & Gilmore 1999).

Another major force behind the experience economy phenomenon is the advancement in technology. Over the last decade, competition between providers of tourism products
and services has further intensified as a result of growing access to the internet. Access to vast amounts of information allows consumers to review consumer-generated feedback, and compare prices and offers between competing hotels within a chosen destination. This further drives the need for companies to explore new ways of creating competitive advantages and customer experiences are increasingly being recognized as an important point of differentiation (Fornell et al. 1996; Schmitt 1999; Stamboulis & Skayannis 2003). Indeed, according to Janiszewski (2009), social scientists and consumer researchers have long been calling for a better understanding of consumer consumption experiences, asserting that ‘…we will have to focus on the richness of the consumer experience and the consumer’s role in the management of this experience’ (p.4).

In an effort to examine what constitutes a commercial experience and how experiences create value for the consumer, Poulsson and Kale (2004b) discovered, after a careful review of extant marketing literature, that a definition of an experience was nowhere to be found. Similarly, Knutson, et al. (2009) maintained that ‘…[there] is a void in hospitality research relative to identifying and measuring the dimensions of the guest’s hotel experience’, noting, ‘…even as hotels are aware of the need to create value for their guests in the form of experiences’ (p.2).

Tourism is considered to be at the forefront of staging experiences, and growing individual wealth is seen as a catalyst for the consumption of luxury leisure and travel. Accordingly, luxury hotels provide the ideal backdrop for staging consumption experiences to attract and retain affluent consumers. This implies, that producers will need to know what consumers may want to experience and what they have to settle for (Pine & Gilmore 1999), suggesting that producers involved in the design and development of luxury hotel guest rooms need to research, observe and capture their guests desires for memorable experiences (Leonard & Rayport 1997).

More recently, Andersson (2007) has argued that the experience is the ultimate output of goods and services, and that, in the context of tourism, the purpose of producing products and services is to yield experiences. Dilthey (1976) offered a dichotomy between mere “experience” (an acceptance of events) and “an experience”, which
Chapter One - Introduction

Turner (1986, p.35) described as ‘…a structure of experience that stands out like a rock in a sand Zen garden’. These, according to Carù and Cova (2003), are important distinctions for producers to differentiate between, and influences whether experiences are considered as mundane, extraordinary or memorable (Schmitt 1999).

Within the global hospitality industry, and in particular within the lodging sector, a range of factors are at play when it comes to operating upscale or luxury hotels. In an effort to attract and cater to affluent consumers, hospitality producers need to think and act globally (Harvey 2007; Kandampully 2006) while at the same time, being mindful of local customer preferences relating to guest room design, amenities, and services.

Importantly, the prevailing business model in the lodging industry is that the capital-intensive guest room continues to be the primary product focus within the luxury hotel sector (Jones & Paul 1993; Voss 2004). In other words, sales of hotel rooms are more profitable by far than sales of food and beverages or other hotel product and service offerings (Cross, Higbie & Cross 2009; DeVea 1996). Yet surprisingly, most hoteliers charge their guests a set room rate as the price for the ‘…collection of services performed [for example preparing the room, making the bed, cleaning the room], rather than a fee guests pay for the portfolio of experience encountered during the time spent in the hotel…’ (Gilmore & Pine 2002, p.90). The guest room, consequently, represents the most appropriate link between the producer and consumer, offering an ideal lens into how producers currently address consumer desires for unique and memorable experiences, and how they plan to do so in the future (Yuan 2009).

The focus of this thesis is to develop a deeper understanding of both the supply and demand sides of memorable experiences within the context of the experience economy. Directed at the luxury hotel sector, the research has been conducted in two interconnected study phases. Guided by an existing experience framework, in the first phase, the inquiry involved producers who are responsible for the design and delivery of memorable experiences in the special setting of the luxury hotel guest room. By taking a current and forward-looking perspective, this research examined the types of memorable experience generators that are being designed and delivered in the current guest room setting, and captured what producers plan to do in the future to the year
2020. In the second phase, the results from the producers were presented to a sample of frequently staying luxury hotel guests, extracting the notion of value they attributed to memorable experience generators previously identified by the producers, while at the same time, identifying future experience desires among this group. This research strategy was used in order to both triangulate the results and to identify any contradictions between producer and consumer perceptions of essential experiential needs.

American English spelling has been adopted throughout this thesis, primarily because the engagement with expert producers (based in the United States of America and Canada), took place in North America.

1.1 Research Problem

Increasingly, in both the conceptual and research literature, the term “experience” appears as diverse a field as design, architecture, gaming, human-computer interaction, education, retail, marketing, healthcare, tourism and leisure, where the common focus is centered around the role of the customer. As consumers will seek out memorable consumption experiences (Keng et al. 2007), companies will respond by selling memorable experiences (Pine & Gilmore 1999). Some researchers have argued that producers from varying industries are beginning to invest in designing and delivering experiences in an attempt to create new forms of value, while at the same time, increasing consumer satisfaction that may lead to sustained customer loyalty (Davenport & Beck 2002; Schmitt 1999).

Among these industries, tourism is reported to be the biggest experience generator and researchers concur that consumers in the developed world spend their time on leisure and tourism as a statement of quality of life (Binkhorst 2006; Carbone & Haeckel 1994; Williams 2002). In the context of the luxury hotel sector, and with a focus on its diverse stakeholder community, there is a growing need to better understand how producers, directly or indirectly responsible for the design and development of luxury hotel guest rooms, respond to consumer demands for memorable experiences.
Although several researchers in the field of tourism have put forward experience concepts, very few have focused their research on the lodging sector, and more specifically, the hotel industry's most capital-intensive investment - the luxury hotel guest room (Mcintosh & Siggs 2005; Pullman & Gross 2004; Walls et al. 2011b). Furthermore, there is general agreement among scholars that more research is needed to better understand the structural components of experiences, their relationship between physical and virtual environments, consumer interactions and the perceived value customers (guests) place on unique and memorable experiences (Davenport & Beck 2002; Pine & Korn 2011; Tung & Ritchie 2011; Verhoef et al. 2009).

A review of the research literature suggested that experiences were predominantly sold as additions to goods and services and that very little was known about their independent economic value (Sundbo & Darmer 2008). Products and services that do not have those experiential attractions are, nowadays, treated as commodities and, as a result of globalization and technology, are increasingly bought and sold on the basis of price (Morgan & Watson 2007). Some scholars suggest that research needs to move beyond the more dominant organizational perspective and encourages researchers to also take into account the individual’s perspective (Snel 2011). Here, it is assumed that the organization is the one adding value to the economic offering, whereas it is the individual that plays an increasingly active role in generating experiences (Janiszewski 2009).

This has major implications for the hospitality and tourism industries, and there is consensus within the literature that more research is needed to fully understand customer experience needs and desires, experience concepts and especially the experience attributes (or generators) that make certain experiences memorable (Arnould & Price 1993; Bille 2010; Carù & Cova 2003; Gilmore & Pine 2002; Knutson et al. 2009; Schmitt 2003; Titz 2008; Tung & Ritchie 2011; Verhoef et al. 2009; Walls et al. 2011b; Williams 2006).

This is particularly important in the design and development of luxury hotel rooms. Firstly, due to the cost of development and secondly, because of the time lag between the beginning of a hotel building project and the opening of a hotel. To this end, the
time lag can mean that market conditions have fundamentally changed from when the project was first envisioned. It is therefore important for hotel operators to determine in the planning stages the room layout, design themes, in-room configurations (fit-out), and the mix between standard rooms, deluxe rooms and suites. However, these decisions are often made without the benefit of consumer research (Ogle 2009).

1.1.1 Research Aims / Objectives

The main focus of this research was to develop a deeper understanding of the memorable experience generators producers are designing and delivering within the experience economy, and what type of memorable experience generators they anticipate guests will desire within the context of the luxury hotel guest room between now and the year 2020. To address the previously stated research gap, consumer participation is considered critical in investigating how today’s producers are responding to their customers’ desire for memorable experiences. Hence, a key objective of this study was to compare and contrast the findings obtained from the producers against the views expressed by consumers (guests).

By soliciting the views of producers and then conducting a separate inquiry involving a group of consumers, the aim of this research was to investigate the memorable experience generators that producers considered important to consumers, and what the consumers recalled were memorable events. Furthermore, by soliciting the views of producers on the memorable experiences they are planning to design and deliver in the future luxury guest room, this research study involved consumers and to uncover how guests perceive these memorable experiences being of value in the future luxury hotel room. These memorable experience generators could then be identified for their economic importance and value-producing qualities within the luxury accommodation sector.

By employing an existing conceptual experience framework, current and future memorable experience generators could be linked to experience dimensions and the nature of the environmental (physical and virtual) relationships of consumer participation. Specifically, this research study made use of an existing conceptual experience framework (the four realms of experience developed by Pine and Gilmore),
and, as such, this study was also able to report on the effectiveness of this framework for current and future experience concepts across its four experience dimensions. These are entertainment, esthetics, education, and escapism, and are fully explained in Chapter 2.

The place where the experience is consumed plays an important role in the production of the experience, where the total atmosphere contributes to the experience (Pine & Gilmore 1998). Hence, this study directed the focus of experience design and delivery on the hotel guest room. As stated previously, this is appropriate because the revenue gained from room sales makes up the bulk of total revenue and profits for a hotel (Cross, Higbie & Cross 2009). In summary, the research sought to:

1. Contribute to the increasing focus on distinct experience offerings by developing a deeper understanding of both the supply and demand sides of memorable experiences within the context of the experience economy.

2. Provide a critical evaluation as to how effective for producers Pine and Gilmore's (1998) four realms of experience framework was, when designing and delivering memorable experiences within the luxury hotel guest room.

3. Conduct an inquiry into what producers consider were important current and future memorable experience generators that created value for both them and the consumers within the setting of the current luxury hotel guest room.

4. Identify from the producers, which experience offerings they expected would generate a perceived return-on-investment in the future.

5. Explore with frequently staying luxury hotel guests, the value they attributed to the memorable experiences previously identified by the producers, while at the same time identifying experience generator themes they might desire in the future.
6. Compare and contrast the findings obtained from the producers with those from a group of consumers by identifying any contradictions or gaps between producer and consumer perceptions about essential experiential needs.

1.1.2 Research Questions

To support these research aims, five core research questions were developed. These were:

1. What type of memorable experience generators and dimensions do producers consider address current and future guest experience needs within the luxury hotel guest room?

2. Which memorable experience generators and dimensions do consumers perceive as valuable in the context of the current luxury hotel room?

3. What type of future memorable experience generators and dimensions are producers likely to design and develop within the luxury hotel guest room that will generate new forms of perceived economic value (ROI)?

4. What type of luxury hotel room related experiences will consumers desire between now and 2020?

5. What are the gaps between producer and consumer perceptions of essential experiential needs in the future luxury guest room?

1.1.3 Contribution of the Research

This research made a number of theoretical and practical contributions. Firstly, the research produced important business and consumer insights into the design, delivery and consumption of memorable experiences placed within the current and future luxury guest room environment. Secondly, the research identified the most important generators of memorable guest experiences based on the views of experts within the luxury hotel sector. Thirdly, the research presents individual perceptions of luxury hotel guests about their experiences of what has been memorable, and what they considered were likely to produce memorable and valued stay experiences in luxury hotels in the
future. From the results obtained over these two interconnecting study phases, this research has theoretical and practical significance for academics and hospitality industry professionals.

1.1.3.1 Contribution to Knowledge (Academic Contribution)

As the world’s largest service-sector industry, the need for today’s tourism and lodging industry producers to recognize that experiences have become central to consumption activities, is well documented (Abrahams 1986; Arnould & Price 1993; Bille 2010; Binkhorst 2006; Pine & Gilmore 1999; Walls et al. 2011a; Yuan 2009). At the same time, the literature has raised the importance of the experience economy, however, empirical research directed at the lodging sector remains scant (Ferreira & Teixeira 2013; Hemmington 2007; Ritchie & Hudson 2009).

This research adds to the body of literature by presenting academic insights into how guests perceived memorable experiences, how they articulated their experience desires and the value that they ascribed to them, and more specifically, as this relates to the current and future luxury guest room stay experience. As such, the research extends our knowledge of the experience constructs that contribute to the formulation of experience dimensions, offering deep insights into the significance of experience generators and the relationships between producer and consumer perceptions of memorable experiences within a tourism and hospitality context (Pine & Gilmore 1999; Ritchie & Hudson 2009).

Thus it addresses apparent gaps in the experience literature, describing important memorable experience generators and forward-looking trends as perceived by luxury hotel room producers and their most valuable guests. The study draws further attention to the importance of guest experiences from both the supply and demand sides within the experience economy and sets the scene for further discussion as well as future areas of research and industry applications.

1.1.3.2. Statement of Significance (Practical Contribution)

As a result of the focus on the luxury hotel guest room experience and how various stakeholders respond to customer desires for memorable experiences, there is a strong link between current knowledge, and the practical contribution of this research. Firstly, it relates to the luxury hotel industry's most capital-intensive investment, the hotel guest
room. Secondly, as will be evident in the review of the literature, marketers are faced with a growing need to gain a deeper understanding of how the producers can satisfy customers’ leisure experience desires, while at the same time, responding to behavioural changes in tourism consumption (So et al. 2013; Stamboulis & Skayannis 2003; Walls 2009).

Of specific interest to the hospitality industry, the research uncovers apparent gaps between what consumers may want to experience and what they have to settle for, by highlighting differences between the design and development of luxury hotel guest rooms and consumer needs and wants. Marketers and producers not only benefit from understanding the type of experiences guests desire, they also gain insights into the design, delivery, co-creation and management of customer experiences, which are crucial to achieve sustained financial success (Ferreira & Teixeira 2013).

Additionally, producers can benefit from the outcomes of this study by reviewing their own practices to innovate, design and deliver memorable experiences. Producers of luxury hotel guest rooms can gain further insights into consumer perceptions of the relative value in terms of memorable experiences (Sundbo & Darmer 2008). Moreover, because this study takes a forward-looking perspective to the year 2020, industry producers, and those associated with the broader tourism community, will gain insights into future consumer experience needs. As a result, the outcomes derived from this research could assist producers to conceptualize and develop new forms of economic value (Pine & Gilmore 2011; Pine & Gilmore 1998).

1.2 Justification for the Research

1.2.1 Research Problem

The review of literature presented in Chapter 2 acknowledges that experiences are difficult to measure (Jurowski 2009; Oh, Fiore & Jeoung 2007; Ooi 2003). As a result, a number of existing conceptual frameworks were reviewed and carefully considered for this study. Close attention was given to frameworks that had either been used in recent empirical research in tourism, or those that were adapted to suit a specific research purpose. In their recent comprehensive review of proven experience research frameworks, Ritchie and Hudson (2009) argued that Pine and Gilmore’s four realms of
experience model (framework) prompted widespread interest amongst producers in utilizing and understanding experience concepts in a systematic manner.

In what appears to be the only study within the lodging sector that has empirically tested the four realms of experience constructs (Ferreira & Teixeira 2013), Oh et al. (2007) operationalized the four realms, capturing guest experiences in a rural bed-and-breakfast (B&B) located in the United States. Their study concluded that the four realms framework offered a conceptual fit in tourism experience research (Oh, Fiore & Jeoung 2007), but that more work was needed to uncover the relationships between each of the four realms of experiences and their consequences, when determining outcomes based on rich experiential consumptions experiences that are well balanced across the four dimensions.

Given the limited use of the four realms experience framework and its application within experience research in the lodging sector, this research sought to address this gap by applying Pine and Gilmore’s framework to this sector. By uncovering the nature of environmental relationships and the experience dimensions of consumer needs and wants in terms of the development of memorable experiences, this research investigated how today’s producers were addressing both the design and development of memorable experiences using the luxury hotel guest room as a lens.

1.2.2 Importance of Experience Creation in the Luxury Hotel Sector

With the cost per luxury guest room in the United States ranged between US$419,600 and US$1,496,400 (Sahlins 2011), guest rooms are the foundation on which hotel products are developed (Jones & Paul 1993). Indeed, revenue gained from the rooms division makes up the bulk of total revenue and profits within hotels (Cross, Higbie & Cross 2009; DeVeau et al. 1996). Whatever the purpose of travel might be, the luxury hotel guest has come to expect more than just a clean and safe environment and a place to sleep overnight. Hence, the guest room provides a meaningful backdrop for staging consumption experiences that attract and retain affluent consumers.

A paper presented at the International Association of Societies of Design Research (2007), called on the hospitality design community to take a holistic approach to design
when it comes to understanding and interpreting real-world experiences from the consumer’s perspective, moving away from artifacts and guest room look and feel toward a greater concern for the guest’s experience (Lo 2007). However, for the tourism industry to take full advantage of the experience economy, products and services will need to be repackaged and co-produced in order to add value for the guest (Mossberg 2007). For example, whilst customer experiences are generated through tangible and intangible service elements, Poulsson and Kale (2004a) argued that producers need to understand which elements contribute to an experience, and in which distinct areas this may take place. The hotel guest room is also considered a key factor in guest satisfaction and a prime consideration for repeat guest patronage (Ogle 2009). Indeed, DeVeau et al. (1996) argued that no matter how lavish the hotel lobby or outstanding the restaurant, it was the appeal of the guest room that directly influenced repeat stays. To this end, this research set out to uncover specific insights into how today’s producers were addressing or intend to address the design and delivery of memorable experiences within the luxury guest room environment.

1.2.3 Justification of Method

Due to the nature of tourism and more specifically the nature of experiences, qualitative research methods were most appropriate as researchers are required to distinguish between business and social activities (Tribe 1997). By engaging two distinct groups of participants to inquire and elicit the meaning they attributed to experiences, a naturalistic understanding from each participant group’s perspective was required (Denzin & Lincoln 2000). This, Minichiello et al. (1995) suggest, inevitably involves a deeper understanding of perceptions and emotions that in the case of experiences, cannot be easily measured in quantitative terms.

Ritchie and Hudson (2009) suggest that qualitative methods are favoured in experience research. Referring to a vacation experience study, for example, only the in-depth interview method was able to elicit the spiritual connection travelers had with the environment and the activities they performed. With the customer experience construct being holistic in nature (Verhoef et al. 2009), focus was placed on the meaning that producers and consumers attribute to experiences. This constructivist perspective allows
researchers and participants to capture multiple constructed realities of meanings and explanations (Ritchie & Lewis 2003).

With this in mind, in order to address the specific aims of this research, a qualitative research design framework was selected to guide the research. Describing the three fundamental facets of research, Cater and Little (2007) argued that epistemology, methodology and method form the framework for planning, implementing and evaluating the quality of qualitative research. Close consideration was therefore given to the appropriate methods that would engage both groups of research participants, thus addressing and answering the core research questions introduced earlier.

1.2.4 Potential Applications of Research Finding’s

The findings and results from this research will benefit organizations participating in the design and development of hotel accommodation: in particular those brands that cater to, or aspire to attract affluent consumers. Tourism and hospitality firms increasingly have to engage more effectively with consumers, moreover, they have to continuously find ways to differentiate their offerings from their competitors while looking for innovative ways to increase value. Based on the insights gained from this research study, producers will be able to review their current experience design, innovation and management practices, explore memorable experience generator categories and themes identified as important, and validate forward-looking experience concepts shared by industry experts and their frequent-staying guests.

Furthermore, insights from this research can assist firms to explore the intangible elements associated with their offerings, thus assessing the emotional value perceived by guests that could lead to predictive consumer behavioural intentions and, potentially, their willingness to pay for the experience itself. As mentioned earlier, a growing desire for memorable experiences has motivated many organizations to adapt their products and services to include unique experiences that consumers are willing to pay a premium for. In current practice, however, hoteliers are still charging their guests a set daily room rate as the price for delivering services, rather than a fee based on uniquely staged, orchestrated or co-produced experiences encountered before, during and after their stay.
Chapter One - Introduction

1.3 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis is structured into seven chapters. A brief outline of each chapter follows:

Chapter One: Introduction
This chapter provides the introduction and general background to the research problem. The research aims and objectives are outlined, the academic and practical contributions are presented, and the justification of the research is discussed.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature
This chapter provides a review of the research issues pertaining to the broader aspects of the experience economy phenomenon and its driving market forces. With specific focus placed on the luxury hotel sector, this chapter identifies the experiences of consumption, exploring both the business and consumer perspectives. In the context of this research, and specifically directed at the luxury hotel guest room, the four realms of experience framework is reviewed as a practical solution by which experience concepts can be designed and developed.

Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology
This chapter introduces qualitative methods and applications in tourism, the development of the research design and the epistemology and theoretical perspectives that underpin this research. It explains in detail the model development and chosen data collection and sampling methods, engaging both the producer and consumers in two interconnected study phases.

Chapter Four: Analysis of Data (The Producers)
This chapter presents the qualitative data analysis of the Web-based Delphi-like study involving the producers. It explains in detail the data collection method and analysis performed for each of the study rounds, concluding with a summary of the key findings obtained from this data collection phase of the study.

Chapter Five: Analysis of Data (The Consumers)
In this chapter, the qualitative data collection and analysis methods of face-to-face, semi-structured interviews involving the consumers is presented. Additionally,
demographic and travel-related information of participants, as well as their responses to their ranking of statements previously obtained from the producers, are presented.

Chapter Six: Discussion
In this chapter, the collective findings of qualitative data and insights involving the producers (data obtained via the Web-based Delphi-like method) and the consumers (data obtained via face-to-face, semi-structured interviews) are discussed. The gaps between producer and consumer perceptions are also discussed.

Chapter Seven: Conclusions and Implications
In this final chapter, the research aims are restated and the research questions are answered. Furthermore, the contribution of this thesis and implications of the study for future research are identified.
Chapter Two – Literature Review

2.0 Overview

This research aimed to identify critical aspects to the success in designing and delivering memorable experiences, and to develop a leading understanding of both the supply and demand sides of memorable experiences within the context of the experience economy. With a particular focus on the luxury hotel industry and its most significant capital investment – the hotel guest room, this research set out to examine how producers respond to the consumers’ desires for memorable experiences, and how consumers value these memorable experience generators being of value - now and in the future.

The conceptual framework for the research (the four realms of experience) was briefly introduced in Chapter 1; this chapter will present the background that supports this model as a valuable framework for the purpose of exploring experience concepts, including those within tourism related studies (Oh, Fiore & Jeoung 2007; Pine & Gilmore 1999). In keeping with the purpose and aims of this research, the review of literature is presented in five major sections. The first section discusses the experience economy background and the evolution of consumption experiences that underpin the development of the concept. This includes the driving forces behind this phenomenon, both from a producer and a consumer perspective. Section two reviews the human experience dimensions that are considered to be a critical cornerstone of the experience economy, where experiences must be developed as a new aspect of business and a distinct economic offering (Pine & Gilmore 1999).

Sections three and four examine the links between memorable experiences and the value generated for both producers and consumers. In section five, insights into experience design fundamentals are presented, explaining the theoretical underpinnings of this research, and the justification for using Pine and Gilmore’s four realms model. The chapter closes with a discussion of the implications this research has on both the supply and demand sides of designing and delivering memorable experiences, specifically focused within the luxury hotel guest room environment.
The review of the literature included published empirical studies, journal articles, industry reports and books that are focused on the following topics: economic cycles, business and market drivers, technology and innovation, tourism and lodging practices, consumer trends, human behavior, sensory evaluation, customer experiences, value attributes, value creation, definitions and standards. The review found that the search for a deeper understanding of consumer experience desires and how these desires are being recognized and satisfied by producers in leisure and tourism, has become an increasingly important research focus (Arnould & Price 1993; Boswijk, Thijssen & Peelen 2006; Janiszewski 2009; Morgan & Watson 2007; Pine & Gilmore 1999; Ritchie & Hudson 2009; Sundbo 2008; Walls et al. 2011a).

As a result, the literature review is necessarily eclectic, drawing on sources from a variety of disciplines and perspectives, to uncover the experience economy phenomenon. The most pertinent literature is presented here to support the objectives of this thesis and to review this phenomenon from the various perspectives that have an impact on the research questions.

2.1 The Experience Economy and its Origins

2.1.1 Background

As we advance into the future, more and more experiences will be sold strictly on their own merits, exactly as if they were things (Toffler 1970).

The origins of the experience economy and its principles can be traced back to American writer and futurist Alvin Toffler and his book, “Future Shock” published in 1970. At that early stage, Toffler foreshadowed that the US economy would be dominated by industries that centre their offerings on experiences, hence predicting an emerging experience industry. Factors behind this new industry, Toffler proposed, were related to affluence and transience. Toffler (1970) asserted that both would become drivers for consumers to collect experiences as passionately as they once collected tangible things.

Toffler’s predictions went mostly unnoticed until Gerhard Schulze published his book “Die Erlebnis Gesellschaft - The Experience Society” (Schulze 1992), in which he
demonstrated how experiences and their pursuit had become a very important component in people’s lives. Schulze (1992) produced the first major piece of academic research into cultural behavior in different social strata. These changes in society are likely causes of an emerging experience economy that began to affect consumer decision making and consumption behaviour. More specifically, people are stimulated through rising affluence and expanding possibilities, influenced by an informational and networked world, and transformed from a solely external oriented view on life, to one that is becoming more concerned with an internal, inner self and one’s own personal experiences (Van Doorn 2006).

According to Lorentzen (2011), affluence is a key condition of the experience economy because ‘…the locus of development of the experience economy is determined by factors of affluence, lifestyle, leisure, and demography…’ (p.10). Additionally, and within the hospitality and tourism context, technological innovations and a more demanding consumer, have added to the competitive pressure that requires producers to adjust their offerings to include customer-centered experiences (Sundbo & Bærenholdt 2007).

Arguably, the attention to experiences as an important component of consumer consumption has existed much longer, even before the suggestion of an emerging experience economy was first introduced. For example, authors Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) drew attention to ‘…multisensory, fantasy and emotive aspects of one’s experience with products…’ (p.92); and MacCannell’s (1976) widely cited book “The Tourist”, described a type of traveler that is on a continuous search for touristic experiences. Even before Toffler (1970) spoke of an entirely new and emerging experience industry in his book “Future Shock”, authors like Boorstin (1964) raised awareness of fabricating experiences, and Levy (1959), highlighted the symbolic meaning of consumption that requires the consideration of the customer and his or her evolving consumption behaviors, as an important feature of the delivery process.

The notion of experience as an important component of consumption has since become a key element of understanding consumer behavior (Addis & Holbrook 2001), and is the foundation of the experience economy (Pine & Gilmore 1998), which Carù and
Cova (2003) suggest, are reflected in ‘…consumer behavior research that has adopted a conceptualization relatively close to that used in the social sciences and philosophy’ (p.273).

Examining the motivation and resulting demand for experiences, Scitovsky (1976) cites Jeremy Bentham as an early pioneer who initiated major research into both psychology and economics issues, when he discovered (at the end of the 18th century) that the second serving of an afternoon cup of tea did not give him the same pleasure as the first. Bentham’s research, according to Andersson (2007), represents the ‘…origins of economic thought that defined hedonism, or happiness, as the most important standard in individual lives as well as in society’ (p.48).

Industries most affected by these changing consumption behaviors are Leisure, Sport, Tourism and Hospitality; their common existence being centered on the provision of consumer experiences (Morgan & Watson 2007). Here, ‘…the market [economy] is central to the exchange of experiences as a new source of value creation for businesses around their product and service offerings…’ (Bille 2010, p.2), whereby the customer expects this experience exchange to have a positive, emotional and memorable impact (Barlow & Maul 2000).

The tourism literature provides numerous examples of consumer experiences that are offered by industries like entertainment and leisure, recognizing the commercial value of experiences added to products and services: Examples like a day at Disneyland, a Broadway show, a river-rafting or bungee jumping experience, or a thrill helicopter ride over Las Vegas and the Grand Canyon, are commonly referred to when describing (and visualizing) experience venues that attract consumers in search of extraordinary and memorable experiences (MacCannell 1973; Pine & Gilmore 1999; Poulsson & Kale 2004a; Urry & Larsen 2011; Yeoman, Munro & McMahon-Beattie 2006). Nonetheless, as tourist experiences can only take shape in the mind of the tourist, producers of tourist experiences can merely provide input that addresses the needs of the tourist at that particular time, and only the tourist can turn this input into a tourist experience (Andersson 2007).
Over the last three decades, consumer experiences have been recognized as an important part of consumption, which is evidenced in such a broad and varied mix of experience product and service offerings. Since this rise in recognition, managerial interest in hospitality and tourism has begun to centre on the link between customer satisfaction and the experiential elements of service consumption (Janiszewski 2009). This is due to the notion that providing unique guest experiences can add value to the consumption experience resulting in a series of positive outcomes such as customer loyalty, positive word-of-mouth communication and premium prices (Schulze 1992).

As a result, a number of companies began to focus their offerings on unique and extraordinary consumption experiences, which they believed would lead to an increase in competitiveness. This emerging need was reinforced by several studies that suggested that it was no longer possible to simply offer consumers products and services. These studies confirmed that such products and services needed to be accompanied by experiences (Pine & Gilmore 1998; Schmitt 1999; Voss 2003). Consequently, progressive businesses are moving away from traditional features-and-benefits marketing and a product-centric view of consumer value creation, toward a customer-centric and experience-focused approach toward the co-creation of value (Kotler & Caslione 2009; Ramaswamy 2009; Samuelsen & Olsen 2010; Schmitt 1999; Vargo & Lusch 2004; Walls et al. 2011b). Here, companies are said to compete best when ‘…they combine functional and emotional benefits in their offerings…’ (Johnston & Kong 2011, p.85), indicating that customer experiences are determined based on their rational and emotional assessments (Barlow & Maul 2000).

Schulze’s (1992) concept of “experience creation” was among the first major academic contributions to highlight the need for businesses to better understand and prepare for a fundamental change in future consumer behavior. However, it was Pine and Gilmore’s 1998 article and subsequent book “Welcome To The Experience Economy” (1999) in which the authors argue a transition from a services economy into what they identified as the experience economy, that raised renewed interest in viewing experiences as a distinct economic offering. According to Pine and Gilmore (1999), the experience economy represents an important strategic opportunity for firms to strengthen their competitive position in the market, which in turn will earn them new sources of
economic value. They declared: ‘Experiences are a fourth economic offering, as distinct from services as services are from goods, but one that has until now gone largely unrecognized’ (Pine & Gilmore 1999, p.9). Using metaphors from the theatre, they write:

The company – we’ll call it the experience stager – no longer offers goods and services alone but the resulting experience, rich with sensation, created within the consumer. All prior economic offerings remain at arms-length, outside the buyer, while experiences are inherently personal. They actually occur within any individual who has been engaged on an emotional, physical, intellectual, or even spiritual level (Pine & Gilmore 1999, p.12).

With growing attention diverted towards the role of the consumer, Pine and Gilmore asserted that goods and services were becoming commoditized, advising that economies had evolved over four stages (Figure 2.1), from ‘…commodities to manufactured goods, then service, and now to staged experiences…’ that businesses create for their customers, which they suggest will matter most (Pine & Gilmore 1999, p.97).

An argument is therefore being made for the progression of value by driving competitive differentiation through experiences. That is, the economy has evolved from one that was based on extracting fungible commodities to making tangible goods and as
a result, adding value through the ability to differentiate products. The 1980s, for example, was the era of products and goods made with zero-defects and driven by quality standards in order to achieve high customer satisfaction as a key competitive advantage (Bell 2002). In the 1990s, the focus switched from goods to delivering intangible services, customized to individual consumer requirements, thereby extending value around products to include services, with the focus placed on service quality as a strategy for differentiation (Bell 2002; Jiao, Ma & Tseng 2003; Victorino et al. 2005).

The notion of added value is not new; it has been a central tenet in agriculture and the resources sectors for some time. Dairy producers, for example, are well aware that transforming milk into high value end products such as yoghurt and cheese provides a far better return to the seller. Similarly, Pine and Gilmore’s notion of the experience economy includes customizing services to transform them into experiences and presenting or staging those experiences to create additional value for the customer. This implies, that the focus is shifting from the utilitarian functions associated with goods and services, toward the consumer experience of consumption itself (Argenton 2011).

Pine and Gilmore (1999) stated that this requires businesses to shift their focus more toward the customer by staging unique and memorable experiences. This is in keeping with Scitovsky’s (1976) earlier argument that consumer behavior needed re-examining based on consumer choice psychology. For example, a bottle of wine purchased at a supermarket compared to the same brand bottle being consumed at an up-market restaurant. In this scenario, the consumer not only pays for the product but the overall value derived from the consumption which includes the restaurant atmosphere, service and unique experience associated with both the purchase and the consumption.

In other words, businesses are said not only to achieve a competitive edge, but to also harness opportunities to increase profit margins by ensuring that customers will choose their offerings not solely based on price, but on the overall consumption experience. Following the zero-defect products and customized services era of the 1980s and 1990s respectively, in the first decade of the 21st century, quality goods and services are no longer sufficient to achieve a competitive edge; they are now expected as ‘…the price of entry into any market segment…’ (Knutson & Beck 2003, p.50).
Arguing for the experience economy as a new phenomenon, and using metaphors from theatre and stage, Pine and Gilmore proposed that companies need to understand the fundamental drivers behind this new economy before developing their abilities to design, produce and ‘stage’ experiences that involve the consumer in a personal way. Pine and Gilmore’s (1999) book subtitle reads: *Work is Theatre and Every Business a Stage*, which they explain requires businesses to adjust their focus from merely delivering quality products and services, to ‘staging’ experiences that engage their customers, thus creating memorable consumption experiences (Oh, Fiore & Jeoung 2007).

The evolution of this new economy is best exemplified through early pioneers like Charles Looff who designed and named the first Luna Park (Coney Island) in 1903 and later in 1955 by Walt Disney and his visionary theme park concept ‘Disneyland’, which was designed for both adults and their children to have fun together. More recently, companies such as Starbucks, Apple, Nike, Lego and Starwood Hotels and Resorts, are epitomizing further acceptance of the experience economy phenomenon (Bille 2010; Binkhorst 2005; Morgan, Elbe & de Esteban Curiel 2009).

While the experience economy represents an important strategic opportunity for firms to strengthen their competitive position in the market, the underlying concepts that determine customer experiences and the broader notion of experiences as economic offerings, are theoretically in their infancy. Here, Cronin and Taylor (1992) highlight the complex relationship between service quality, customer satisfaction, perceived value, and the experience. Addressing the competitive position achieved through service quality, the management and marketing literature offers well-researched and documented constructs and dimensions. While not a primary focus of this research, it nevertheless forms an important part of measuring concepts within the complex nature of tourism and hospitality product, service and experience consumption.

For example, Parasuraman, Zeithmal and Berry (1988) introduced the service quality measurement concept “SERVQUAL”, therein, proposing that service quality is based on five core dimensions, namely reliability, assurance, responsiveness, tangibles, and empathy. The SERVQUAL concept was designed to measure services as perceived by
customers and offers researchers a useful gap model whereby services are measured based on the gap between customer expectations and their perceptions. This implies that guests can evaluate a company’s service quality by comparing their experiences of what was delivered with their expectations prior to delivery (Asubonteng, McCleary & Swan 1996; Berry & Parasuraman 2004; Saleh & Ryan 1991; Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry 1990).

In other words, if guest’s expectations have been met then the customer is said to be satisfied. Conversely, if the guests’ expectations have not been met, this is likely to produce a dissatisfied experience. Therefore, controlling the tolerance of what guests’ perceive their expectations to be versus what they actually experience, is a key motivator among service organizations that are not merely aiming to satisfy their guests, but to delight them (Magnini, Crotts & Zehrer 2011; Oliver, Rust & Varki 1997; Schlossberg 1990). Here, Johnston (1995) suggested, that organizations will need to critically review their customer services for potential fail-points, designing positive transactions that ensure customers’ perceptions are those of delight. In doing so, they are likely to produce more than just satisfactory outcomes. In other words, within the experience economy, elements of the guest experience will need to go beyond “satisfactory” to the point of delight before memorable experiences can be produced.

Within the leisure and tourism industries, this emerging transformation from merely delivering quality products and services to focus on customer experiences, was perhaps best understood by destination theme parks, live concert organizers, and by entire urban destinations such as Las Vegas, where almost every offering is designed around the consumer experience (Knutson et al. 2009; Pine & Gilmore 1999). In an effort to differentiate a firms’ offering within well-established categories, a new experiential marketing and advertising approach emerged, whereby brand messages were redirected from “functional benefit claims” to one of “experiential claims” (Sørensen & Sundbo 2007).

This shift in focus toward the experience has indeed raised much attention which, as Schmitt (2011) points out, is evidenced within the current literature and the increasing number of studies in the field of marketing, academia and practices that focused on the
concept of experience. On reviewing the literature, the three main areas in which these experience concepts have been covered, are the “importance of the customer experience”, the “nature of the customer experience” - and of specific interest to this research, the “design of the customer experience” (Berry, Carbone & Haeckel 2002; Johnston & Kong 2011; Schmitt 2010; Verhoef et al. 2009).

Among the phenomena behind the developing experience economy is the supply and demand of consumption experiences that, in addition to products and services, memory itself becomes the product that has the potential to create new forms of economic value (Boswijk, Thijssen & Peelen 2006). From the consumer perspective, the behavioral literature offers insights into recurring themes surrounding consumer psychology: for example, the shift from ‘…rational to emotional aspects of consumer decision making…’, and the ‘…transition from satisfying needs to fulfilling aspirations, desires and dreams…’ (Morgan, Elbe & de Esteban Curiel 2009, p.203).

To support the specific aims of this research, the two primary forces (economic and societal) behind the experience economy are reviewed from the managerial perspectives, namely, the experience economic dimensions, and from the consumer perspectives, drawing on psychology and sociology, the societal fundamentals (Carù & Cova 2003). While much of the literature acknowledges the presence of the experience economy (Bille 2010; Binkhorst 2005; Morgan, Elbe & de Esteban Curiel 2009; Oh, Fiore & Jeoung 2007; Poulssoon & Kale 2004b; Quadri-Felitti & Fiore 2012), research in tourism has predominantly been focused on consumer behavior and marketing practices (Boswijk, Thijssen & Peelen 2006; Oh, Fiore & Jeoung 2007; Pine & Gilmore 1999; Sundbo & Darmer 2008; Voss 2004).

The literature also suggests that a growing number of studies are beginning to examine the importance of customer experiences (Gilmore & Pine 2007; Johnston & Kong 2011; Pine & Gilmore 1999; Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004; Schmitt 1999; Shaw & Ivens 2002; Smith 2006; Voss 2003), which, in turn, suggests that companies are starting to differentiate their offerings to capture consumers’ experience needs. However, significant research into the customer experience as a dedicated field of research is in its early stages compared, for example, to the services literature, which has been
extensively researched in relation to service quality, perceived value, loyalty and customer satisfaction (Johnston & Kong 2011; Liljander & Strandvik 1997; Mascarenhas, Kesavan & Bernacchi 2006; Ritchie, Tung & Ritchie 2011; Zomerdijk & Voss 2010).

**Defining the “experience economy”**

The experience economy has been presented from a number of perspectives. For example, as building sustainable competitive benefits (Destot 2000); individuals or organizations whose sole purpose is to create experiences for clients (O'Sullivan & Spangler 1998); consumers willing to pay an admission fee for a meaningful and memorable experience (Walls et al. 2011b) and, more broadly speaking, whether the experience economy is indeed a real economy. For the purpose of this research, the researcher has characterized the experience economy and the key influences that reflect the many perspectives found within the literature as follows:

Compelled by economic (technology, innovation, globalization) and societal (affluence) market forces, the experience economy evolves around businesses within customer-centric industries (for example, Tourism and Hospitality) that compete beyond products and services by offering their guests positive feelings and emotions that through personal engagement, become memorable events. Driven by the supply and demand for experiences, this (experience) exchange is leading to highly individualized content and value creation for both experience-seeking consumers and experience-generating producers.

Considering the managerial and the consumer perspectives, the following section addresses the market forces primarily surrounding the experience economic and the societal fundamentals.

**2.1.2 Market Forces**

It is important to understand the economic (GBTA BTI United States 2013 Q1 Report) and societal (Gardial et al. 1994) forces that motivate consumers to purchase unique and memorable experiences, particularly those related to the luxury hotel sector, and to address the aims of this research. Specifically, market drivers such as technology, innovation, and societal changes influenced by increasing consumer affluence; and globalization, affording consumers almost unlimited choices of products and services.
Indeed, in today’s rapidly evolving, interconnected world with wireless access to a seemingly unlimited amount of information, new forms of technology-enabled experiences are emerging (Morgan & Watson 2007). Largely driven by increasing affluence amongst societies within western and emerging economies, experience industries are assumed to provide new forms of economic momentum, further intensified by global competition (Buhring 2009). Goods and services have increasingly become commoditized with prices driven down, in large part due to online buying where automation and end-user direct distribution have become common-place (Knutson & Beck 2003; Lindgreen, Vanhamme & Beverland 2009a; Pine & Gilmore 1999).

Consumers too are driving change, as noted in their consumption behaviors and lifestyle aspirations. At the same time, they seek positive experiences and emotional value from their product and service choices within an evolving experience economy (Pine & Gilmore 1999). Returning to Toffler’s (1970) forward-looking predictions in his book “Future Shock”, he challenged the concept of property, suggesting that, in the future, this concept will be reduced to meaninglessness. In other words, society will experience a shift in values whereby new levels of human needs will advance from pure material to the experiential or non-material needs. This phenomenon has also been examined as a critical driver of economic growth. Florida’s theory of a “creative class”, for example, suggests that human creativity will not only become an important resource for businesses, but also require experience-based offerings catering to a ‘…society that wants to live within stimulating and dynamic environments…’ (Florida 2004, p.13).

This societal tendency to demand experiences that are life-enriching, have become the drivers behind firms offering experiences as a core product and those that add experiential value to their products and services as a key competitive differentiator. As a result, consumers no longer make purchasing decisions based on their product preferences alone, but on the basis of how it will fit within their political, social and moral thinking (Bonini 2009). Further defining this economy and the societal influences that underpin it., Sundbo and Bærenholdt (2007) offer the following argument:

Experiences play an increasingly more central role in the development of society. In the prevailing discourse, it is argued that society has been
transformed and that the creative industries, culture and experiences play a key role. In economic terms this transformation is summed up in the widespread use of the concept experience economy (Sundbo & Bærenholdt 2007, p.11).

As stated earlier, the main business drivers behind the experience economy, are the convergence of three major forces; namely new technology driving innovative experiences, well-informed, sophisticated and affluent consumers, and globalization leading to new forms of competition (O'Sullivan & Spangler 1998; Schmitt 1999). While a product is a thing, a service is an activity that can comprise of tangible and intangible processes (Gummesson 1997), either involving the customer or something belonging to the customer (Sampson & Froehle 2006). Within this experience economy, service firms are increasingly managing the customer experience to promote competitive differentiation and customer loyalty (Zomerdijk & Voss 2010).

From a business perspective, the development of economies of scale - as seen in manufacturing and even within the service economy, puts the primary focus on efficiency and improvements of the overall delivery performance. This approach contrasts with the experience economy phenomenon, whereby consumers are seeking highly customized and personalized content, which has led the way toward “mass customization” (Pine 1993; Stan 1987). Each of the market drivers (technology / innovation, globalization, and affluence) are now comprehensively discussed.

**2.1.2.1 Technology / Innovation**

Industrial revolutions in the last two centuries brought on changes to the way businesses deployed technology to further increase productivity and efficiency (Knutson & Beck 2003). These are also the primary forces that heralded in the mass production of products and services and an enormous increase in consumer choices (Pine & Gilmore 1999). Toffler (1970) saw economists as having great difficulty in imagining a society in which the consumers’ material needs were being satisfied, implying that their attitudes were stuck in the past, where technological advances were a non-revolutionary extension of the known. Toffler argued, that:

> Under conditions of scarcity, men struggle to meet their immediate material needs. Today under more affluent conditions, we are reorganizing the economy to deal with a new level of human needs. From a system designed to provide material satisfaction, we are rapidly creating an economy geared
to the provision of psychic gratification. This process of "psychologization" - one of the central themes of the super-industrial revolution, has been all but overlooked by the economists. Yet it will result in a novel, surprise-filled economy unlike any man has ever experienced (1970, p.117).

This mass production of products and services was predominantly a response to satisfying consumers’ basic needs, which later evolved around a growing desire for materialism (Sundbo 2008). Pine and Gilmore reasoned that it is the consumer who is moving toward the experience economy, no longer solely satisfied with the consumption of products and services that merely address basic needs. Furthermore, consumers are no longer seeing, or to be more precise, ‘…experiencing any differences between largely undifferentiated goods and services…’ (Pine & Gilmore 2011, p.ix), which suggests that businesses will need to shift their focus away from a company-centric and product-and-service-focused mindset to one that creates ‘…value though co-creation of experiences…’ (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2003, p.13).

New technologies, largely experienced in forms of video gaming, motion-based attractions (theme parks), and computer-aided virtual worlds (immersive online experiences), gave consumers new ways of occupying their minds and bodies. Technology, for example communications technology, production technology, and microsystems technology; became key drivers for innovation. Accelerated in a global economy, it was information technology that was heralded as the major force driving both economic growth and improved quality of life (Atkinson & Castro 2008). This led to technology innovation focused on the consumer experience, whereby producers and consumers became motivated to exchange economic value for better quality, such as faster processing speed, higher screen resolution, life-like sound, and increasingly high-speed internet bandwidth (Oberst 2001).

Technologies that in the 1960’s led to breakthroughs in manufacturing (for example, plastics), driving vast economic growth and improvements to the quality of life (Atkinson & Castro 2008), have progressed to breakthrough innovations as seen in ‘…state-of-the-art technological advances in product categories that significantly alter the consumption patterns of a market…’ (Florida 2002, p.43). From a business perspective, these technology and breakthrough innovations have arguably increased a
firms’ performance and competitive advantage; however, the sustainability of such competitive advantage depends on broader market forces that a firm may encounter (Porter 1980). Aside from technological turbulence and competitive intensity, the demand uncertainties represent the influence of customers (Li & Calantone 1998).

Brought on by changes to the way businesses deployed technology to further increase productivity and efficiency (Boswijk, Thijssen & Peelen 2006; Toffler 1970; Van Doorn 2006), and driving mass production of products and services, Toffler proffered:

The very excitement aroused by the mushrooming growth of the service sector has diverted professional attention from another shift that will deeply affect both goods and services in the future. It is this shift that will lead to the next forward movement of the economy, the growth of a strange new sector based on what can only be called the ‘experience industries’. For the key to the post-service economy lies in the psychologization of all production, beginning with manufacturing (1970, p.118).

Whilst technology and innovation are well-documented drivers of economic growth, non-technical innovations, like those that are critical to the development of offerings across industries focused primarily on co-creation of experiences involving the individual users, are less visible (Jacobs 2007). Innovation ‘…something new with added value…’ (Jacobs 2007, p.32) is not restricted to technical context. Instead, it has much more far-reaching implications that can be applied to marketing, design, human interactions and experiences (Oksanen et al. 2012).

Specific to the broader tourism industry, technology has played a major part in automating and connecting core business functions through the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) introduced in the 1980s (Garzotto et al. 2004). Applications dating back to their beginnings in the 1970s, drove advances in “Computerized Reservations Systems” (also known as CRSs), and the “Global Distribution Systems” (GDSs), which placed the tourism industry among the first business sectors to embrace technology (Garzotto et al. 2004). With the advent of the Internet in the late 1990s, tourism too was among the more successful users of e-commerce (Wang, Yu & Fesenmaier 2002). This is largely due to the consumer being at the centre of exchange. Wethner & Klein (1999) argued that tourism is a hybrid industry reliant on ‘…seamless integration of information and physical service, with flexible
configurations of the physical and the informational parts’ (p.257).

These early technological influences on the tourism industry, further fueled by the rapid expansion of the Internet, brought about entirely new dynamics between organizations and consumers. This allowed ICT enabled organizations to customize product and service offerings to the needs and desires of individual consumers, whilst consumers themselves began to change their consumption behavior (Buhalis & Law 2008). Since the Year 2000, the effects of communication technologies have transformed the industry, accelerating further innovation around the interactions between technology, tourism provider and consumer. Buhalis, et al. (2008) stated:

ICTs place users in the middle of its functionality and product delivery. Every tourist is different, carrying a unique blend of experiences, motivations and desires. To an extent the new sophisticated traveler has emerged as a result of experiences (p.4).

Through this technological transformation, largely accelerated by ICTs and the Internet, consumers are now empowered to share their travel experiences via Social networking and virtual communities, like TripAdvisor (TripAdvisor.com). This allows them to review hotel stay experiences from other travelers and tap into an encyclopaedia of information (TNS Global, 2008). The Internet has irreversibly given consumers a platform to produce consumer generated media (CGM), thereby transitioning from a single-directional flow of information between the producer and the consumer, to information and experiences shared among consumers. This shift in power has further brought about the need for producers to transition from a product-centric marketing focus to one that is more concerned with the individual consumer and the relationship itself (Allison et al. 2005; Wang & Fesenmaier 2004). This has also increased their abilities to better design and deliver guest experiences that are not only meaningful to the individual, but represent memorable moments that are shared among social networks.

Advances in technology have also been transforming tourism via online extensions of service offerings, which the ICT industry refers to as eTourism (Buhalis & Law 2008). Leading these new technology advances is virtual reality (Adner et al. 2003), also defined as the use of a computer-generated 3D environment, called a ‘virtual environment’ (VE), that one can navigate and possibly interact with, resulting in real-
time stimulation of one or more of the user’s five senses’ (Guttentag 2010, p.638). Commonly used in design, entertainment and simulation (for example, flight simulations), the tourism sector has ‘…great potential for VE mainstream applications such as planning, management, marketing, entertainment, education, accessibility and heritage preservation…’ (Guttentag 2010, p.637).

Allowing both physical immersion and psychological presence (Gutiérrez et al. 2008), VR can ‘…transport the user into a place of presence without leaving the actual location where the participant is based’ (Sanchez-Vives & Slater 2005, p.333). Another promising application of VR, is augmented reality (AR), which is defined by the projection of computer-generated images onto a real world view (Vince 2004). This technology is already well embedded in, for example, modern navigation systems and holds great promise for the tourism sector, where the user experience can be further enhanced through content overlay. Given the nature and forward-looking perspectives of this research, both groups of participants producers and consumers, were probed on their consideration and acceptance of virtual reality as memorable experience generating dimensions in the future luxury hotel guest room.

2.1.2.2 Globalization

Globalization too, is said to be a driving force behind dynamic changes in production and consumption behaviors, influencing entirely new market economies and previously unimaginable ecosystems build up on a worldwide exchange of national and cultural resources (Al-Rodhan & Stoudmann 2006). As discussed in the previous section, where technology and breakthrough innovations are contributing factors behind business performance and competitive differentiation, it is the influence globalization has on the consumer, that requires increased focus (Li & Calantone 1998). Rifkin states, for example:

More and more cutting edge commerce in the future will involve the marketing of a vast array of cultural experiences rather than just the marketing of traditional industrial based goods and services. Global travel and tourism, theme cities and parks, destination entertainment centres, wellness, fashion and cuisine, professional sports and games, gambling, music, film, television, the virtual worlds of cyberspace, and electronically mediated entertainment of every kind are fast becoming the centre of a new hyper-capitalism that trades in access to cultural experiences (2000, p.44).
Influenced by globalization, the world becomes seemingly more accessible through communication and travel, while unlimited access to goods and services by cultures able to interact, are said to be contributing factors in new consumer attitudes and consumption behaviors (Larsson 2001). These new behaviors have been at the centre of recent tourism and leisure studies (Opaschowski 2004; Reiter 2004; Swarbrooke & Horner 2007), which Pikkemaat and Schuckert (2004) have suggested, hold unique challenges for experience producers needing to ‘…satisfy multi-optional (life-hype and calming) consumption experiences desired by consumers…’ (p.197).

For international hotel companies, globalization requires a rethink of their product and service offerings in order to strike a balance between the effects of globalization and localization when entering new markets (Ernst & Young, "Global Hospitality Insights: Top thoughts for 2010"). The following statement is taken from the “2013 Ernst & Young Hotel Industry Report” directed at hotel investors, brands and management companies. It captures the impact globalization has on the hospitality industry:

> The world continues to become increasingly globalized, and millions of tastes and preferences are changing as a result of shifts in class and a rapidly growing population with increasing amounts of disposable income (Global Hospitality Insights - Top thoughts for 2013, p.15).

Even before the Internet and emerging technologies became major market forces (as highlighted earlier), the impact globalization would have on the tourism industry had become a core concern. For example, the key theme of the “46th Congress of the International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism” (AIEST) held in New Zealand (1996), was centered on “Globalization and Tourism”. In a keynote paper cited by Ryan (1997), then President Peter Keller (University of Lausanne), shared his views on an evolving society that developed along similar global patterns, suggesting that providers will need to ‘…transition from a competitive strategy focused on price, to one that is focused primarily on quality improvement standards…’ (Ryan 1997, p.184).

In other words, an increasingly affluent consumer, able to improve on a standard of living, and driven by a desire for a quality life, would have real implications for how producers needed to prepare for a consumer that demanded choice, quality, greater
satisfaction and better experiences. Globalization has already had an irreversible impact on changes occurring in consumer socio-economics and socio-demographics, which became major market forces that required tourism and its associated industries to adapt (Yeoman 2010). In the following section, the impact surrounding increasingly affluent consumers, are discussed further.

2.1.2.3 Affluence

Toffler’s prediction of an emerging experience economy was predominantly focused on societal (Gardial et al. 1994) drivers, namely the desire for leisure and luxury consumption expressed by the affluent consumer. Van Doorn (2006) concurred, that changes in society were the likely cause of an emerging experience economy, whereby people stimulated through rising affluence and expanding possibilities, influenced by an informational and networked society, were causes for a change from a solely external oriented view on life, to one that was becoming more concerned with an internal, inner self and one’s own personal experiences.

Influencing the consumers’ decision-making and consumption behavior, these broader social drivers may be behind the increasing interest in consumers seeking unique and meaningful experiences. Firat (1993) attributed post-modernism, fueled by a new perspective on life, as a ‘…force that drove society onward through the emergence of complexity, diversity, multiplicity of narratives, and freedom to experience as many ways of being as desired’ (p.227). Furthermore, companies have achieved a consistent high-level of product and service quality output, which according to Pine and Gilmore (2008), no longer satisfied consumers in search of differentiation; this, they proposed, pushes forward the concept of the experience economy.

It is within this new experience economy that lifestyle-seeking consumers search for additional value and points of differentiation amongst competing product and service providers (Pine & Gilmore 1999). Indeed, a consumer trend in pursuit of ‘self’ has emerged, which Yeoman described as a ‘fluid identity’ that would render entirely new consumption behaviors difficult to predict, as they are based on behaviors and attitudes that are constant and fluid (Yeoman 2010).
The concept of fluid identity deserves further consideration by organizations active within the experience economy, for example, as financial income or overall wealth declines, the attitudes and behaviors of consumers will change (Flatters & Willmott 2009), thereby necessitating staged experiences to be adjusted to emerging consumer desires and changing consumption patterns. Identifying the key drivers behind emerging consumer behaviors within the tourism and leisure sectors, Pikkemaat and Schuckert (2004, p.2) offered a summary of behaviors from the literature, which were argued to reshape the tourism industry. These have been presented below in Table 2.1.
### Table 2.1. Emerging consumer behaviors, Pikkemaat and Schuckert (2004, p.2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Drivers (Determinants)</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multiculturalisation</td>
<td>Acceptance and consumption of other cultures leading to changes in everyday life cultures including a blending of other foreign cultures and/or cultural dimensions in the form of acculturation to new forms of every day life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi Media</td>
<td>Acceptance of new information and communication technologies in many spheres of our lives, including the presentation and interpretation of culture in its various forms of expression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel experience</td>
<td>The combination of the twin forces of accumulated travel experience from the past plus aging implies that today’s traveling public has become much more quality conscious and ‘travel smart’ wanting at the same time to have the options and/or combinations of old and new, traditional and modern, active and passive, authentic and derived goods and services including cultural goods and/or cultural encounters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time matters</td>
<td>More often, more frequent and more diverse breakaways from everyday life seem to characterize travel trends among Western societies. Shorter average stay of visitors implies that the travel intensity has to increase, culture sites have to be visited faster and/or more efficiently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health awareness</td>
<td>At the same time often even with the same visitor there exists the contrasting preference for time intensive consumption or slower experiences frequently associated with health-related activities (‘wellness’).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authenticity</td>
<td>The combined forces of increased individualism, heightened accumulated national and international travel and vacation experiences and cultural saturation lead – for a vast majority of today’s travelers - to the desire for having vacation and/or travel experiences which are personalized and personally perceived as ‘authentic’.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These emerging consumer behaviors are reflective of the findings in this research, where both producers and consumers reference the effects of experiences, time, well-being and authenticity in their collective and individual contributions. These findings are fully discussed in Chapter 7.
Chapter Two – Literature Review

Toffler (1970) predicted that increasing affluence among consumers would alter their needs from pure material satisfaction to seeking psychic gratification. Indeed, Toffler (1970) first predicted that businesses would treat experiences on their own merits. Pine and Gilmore (1999) argued later that if done so decisively, ‘…advanced experience businesses will begin to charge for the value of the transformation an experience offers…’, for example, in the form of admissions to purposefully staged experiences (p.279).

Since Toffler's (1970) early predictions and Pine and Gilmore's (1998) introduction to the experience economy, much focus has been directed toward industry and business, stressing how they needed to better understand and prepare for a fundamental change in consumer behavior that, with the goal of remaining competitive, will lead producers to transform their offerings to include experiences. Although the experience consumption phenomenon is not new, advanced research into the expanding consumer behavior interests from both academia and industry suggests that experience creation is derived from a multitude of factors, such as design, marketing, usage and symbolic value; even the stories that emerge from the experience itself (Desmet 2002; Payne, Storbacka & Frow 2008; Pullman & Gross 2004; Quadri-Felitti & Fiore 2012).

These main forces behind the experience economy are therefore to be seen from two distinct perspectives. On the one side are consumers that have become increasingly sophisticated, transient, interconnected, knowledgeable, and in search of new stories that are meaningful and memorable; and on the other side, the producers that need to recognize and respond to these changing consumer desires by designing and delivering unique experiential value as a point of differentiation to their already high-quality products and services (Pine & Gilmore 1999; Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004). Both groups are considered key stakeholders in this research of luxury hotel experiences and it is therefore apt to now explicitly discuss how tourism has embraced the experience economy.

2.1.3  Tourism and the Experience Economy

Specific to the tourism industry, Sternberg (1997) maintained that tourism is at the forefront of staging the types of experiences that consumers find to be unique and
memorable. Sørensen (2007) supports this view adding that tourism has been producing experiences for centuries – even before tourism became a term. Yet despite general agreement and recognition of experience as a phenomenon in early studies (Cohen 1979; MacCannell 1973), managerial insights into the distinguishing characteristics of the tourist consumption experience are relatively scant (Hjalager 2010; Nam, Ekinci & Whyatt 2011; Perdue 2002; Tung & Ritchie 2011).

In view of this research’s prime purpose - the understanding of how producers are designing and delivering memorable experiences, much of the literature reviewed either makes mention of, or draws on, Pine & Gilmore’s 1998 article and subsequent book “Welcome to the Experience Economy”. When it comes to designing and delivering experiences in a systematic manner, Pine and Gilmore’s (1997) introduction to the experience economy phenomenon is seen as one of the most important catalysts behind industry awareness and managerial applications. Particularly in the tourism industry, the concept of experience research is still very broad and experience definitions for both academics and practitioners remain vague (Ritchie & Hudson 2009).

Without a clear understanding of the experience concept and how this affects experience design across product and service offerings, industry practitioners are considered to be losing out on future economic value (Oh, Fiore & Jeoung 2007; Otto & Ritchie 1996; Pullman & Gross 2004). It is here that economic subtleties ought to be established between experiences and services, which are seen as two distinct economic offerings, whereby experiences must be understood as a progression of economic value (Holbrook & Hirschman 1982; Jensen & Dahl 1996). In the context of this research and with specific focus on the producers, the purpose of this thesis was to examine the current approach to designing and delivering memorable experiences and to explore whether these would be recognized as emerging offerings that would add real value to customers.

According to Pine and Gilmore (1998), staging experiences has the potential to delight the consumer who, in return, is willing to pay a premium for the experience offering itself. Pine and Gilmore’s (1999) book focuses on this consumer phenomenon, suggesting that some industries fail to recognize the commercial value that can be generated by staging experiences in a manner that consumers can draw enjoyment from,
thereby making the consumption memorable. They predicted that producers, recognizing the importance of experience offerings in the hospitality industry, will need to become experience gatekeepers in order to compensate for traditional hotel pricing strategies, that in the eyes of the consumer, turn hotel rooms into commodities (Pine & Gilmore 1999).

Furthermore, for experience production to become profitable, producers need to become experience innovators to stay competitive, whilst finding efficient and effective ways to operationalize the delivery of memorable experiences (Olsen & Connolly 2000). Here, Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) add that with the focus on play, leisure and entertainment, the conventional view was that consumers are only constrained by monetary income and the effects on price. They posited that ‘…consideration of consumers time constraints may help unravel the mysteries of the psychotemporal expenditures involved in experiential consumption…’ (Holbrook & Hirschman 1982, p.135). Hence, the experience economy phenomenon has created a situation where consumers care less about the quantity of products one can purchase, than the quantity of experiences one can consume in a certain amount of time (Argenton 2011).

Examining consumer consumption behaviors within the hospitality sector, the academic literature has been predominantly centered on service quality, loyalty, value and satisfaction (Barsky & Labagh 1992; Bojanic & Rosen 1994; Getty & Thompson 1995; Knutson, Stevens & Patton 1996; O’Mahony, Sophonsiri & Turner 2013). As introduced earlier, more and more consumer researchers have aimed to establish a link between consumer behaviors (for example, customer satisfaction) and the experiential elements of service consumption (Holbrook 1990; Janiszewski 2009). They recognized the importance of the experiential perspective of consumers, whom Addis and Holbrook (2001) suggest, are ‘…feelers as well as thinkers and doers and who have a need for fun and pleasure…’ (p.52). The following section examines the luxury hotel segment presenting the background and context in which this research took place.

2.1.4 Defining the Luxury Hotel Segment

This research was centered on the luxury-lodging sector, using the luxury guest room as a lens to identify the experience generators that trigger memorable guest experiences,
now and into the future. Hotels operating within the luxury lodging segments are typically rated based on industry standards, of which the “Forbes Travel Guide” (formerly known as “Mobile Travel Guide”) is a widely accepted star rating system. Based on this rating system, signifying the highest achievable standard among Luxury Hotels is the “Five Star Hotel” category. This category is awarded based on rigorous standards, which are enforced by frequent and anonymously conducted evaluations. A “Five Star Hotel” is defined as follows:

These exceptional properties provide a memorable experience through virtually flawless service and the finest of amenities. Staff are intuitive, engaging and passionate, and eagerly deliver service above and beyond the guests’ expectations. The hotel was designed with the guest’s comfort in mind, with particular attention paid to craftsmanship and quality of product. A Five Star property is a destination unto itself (Forbes Travel Guide, What's a Five Star property? 2013).

Representing the producers in this research were industry experts operating within the five star segment; they were either suppliers of technology and services, associated with standalone boutique hotels, or hotel groups that comprised of multiple brands; collectively they catered to an affluent consumer cohort.

Whilst the Forbes rating standard provides guidance as to what determines an accepted industry standard for hotel operators, defining the meaning behind what constitutes luxury in the eyes of the consumer is not an easy task as the term means different things to different people. Coco Chanel famously defined luxury as ‘a necessity that begins where necessity ends’ (Okonkwo 2007, p. 7). However, a common denominator across the usage of ‘…the term luxury lies in the references made to products, services and a certain lifestyle…’ (Wiedmann, Hennigs & Siebels 2007, p.2), and the symbolic meaning consumed in the form of image (Firat & Shultz II 1997).

The literature on the concept of luxury is extensive both in the social and economic context. For the purpose of this research, however, it was deemed less important to explore varying memorable experience concepts based on a property’s star rating, than to understand both the producer perspective and the value they place on designing and delivering lasting experiences within the luxury guest room, with those of the affluent consumer.
As established earlier, the meaning of luxury signifies different things to different people; a correlation of human perception and their involvement, moods and individual experiences is implied (Kapferer & Bastien 2009). The Ernst & Young (*Global Hospitality Insights - Top thoughts for 2013*) annual report: “Global Hospitality Insights” suggests that this understanding is important as the lines between industry definitions of what constitutes a luxury hotel, be it listed as a “super luxury”, “hyper-luxury”, “ueberluxe” or “upper-upper class” hotel, or as a trendy “boutique/designer” and “lifestyle” hotel, are often blurred.

In the service and lifestyle context, the perceptions of what determines luxury vary greatly as well (De Barnier & Valette-Florence 2013), as these depend on the consumers’ subjective evaluations (Crosby 1979). Luxury may also be regarded as combined experiences of facilities, style and events that are not typical in everyday life. In her book “Deluxe: How Luxury Lost its Luster”, Thomas highlights a concerning realization among luxury producers, in that quality, craftsmanship and elegance are no longer the key determinants – these are nowadays replaced by the profits that govern the business of luxury (Thomas 2007). Hilton et al. (2004) argued that the focus on luxury is not only determined by economic factors experienced through wealth creation, but that an on-going focus on non-economic characteristics also requires the consideration of the moral aspects of luxury purchasing and consumption habits. Kapferer (2009, p.19) points out that ‘…luxury needs to be seen as a culture, which needs to be understood as such…’ in order to successfully engage with it.

When defining luxury within the lodging sector, perhaps the following quote by the Joint Managing Director of “Small Luxury Hotels of the World”, cited in the “Hospitality Directions Europe Edition”, is indicative of a transformation from luxury defined by industry standards or a self-proclaimed status to one that is now defined by consumer expectations: “The word luxury has certainly become an overused term…but that said, the standard of luxury is now defined by the consumer’s expectations and experience” (Milburn & Hall 2007, p.3).

For the purpose of this research, the Forbes definition of what guests should expect from a “Five Star” luxury hotel experience supports the selection of producers from within this category segment, as the Forbes rating definitions provide important clues
that are closely linked to this research’s primary focus: namely, the ‘attention to detail [design concepts to quality of products]’, and generating of ‘memorable [guest] experiences’.

2.1.5 The Luxury Hotel Guest Room

Guest rooms offer ideal experience staging opportunities, which Pine and Gilmore (1999) suggested could benefit organizations through customization initiatives that extend unique offerings to their guests. The average guest spends four waking hours per day at the property, with the bulk of the remaining hours spent asleep (Marsan 1999). These active hours, according to Lundberg (1990), are either spent in the guest room or at an alternative venue within the hotel. Here, Negrusa and Ionescu (2005) see a lack of industry initiative as an inherent weakness, proposing that hotels need to be designed on the basis of how guests are interacting within them and maintain that room design needs to be underpinned by the five human senses to create the memorable experiences that drive the experience economy. Companies that have successfully harnessed this growing market were noted to have striking features that centered on the design and delivery of unique customer experiences, leading to an increase in customer loyalty (Dubé & Renaghan 1998).

Just as experience-based products may vary in space and time (Sundbo & Darmer 2008), they can also vary according to the socio-economic situation of the customer (Lorentzen & Hansen 2009). The place of the experience consumption also plays an important role in the production of the experience, whereby the total atmosphere contributes to the experience (Pine & Gilmore 1999). Whilst Pine and Gilmore noted that every business is a stage, some businesses lend themselves more easily to the staging of experiences than others. The hospitality sector is a fertile stage for experiential development, because there is ‘…an immense variety in the types of performance needed to accomplish certain hospitality tasks…’ (Darke & Gurney 2000, p.81).

Indeed, empirical research into customer value creation highlights the importance placed on the link between price and perceived value, placing the guest room amongst the five most important value attribute drivers (Kapiki 2012). However, whilst
referencing ‘hotel attributes that matter’, Dolnicar and Otter’s (2003a) extensive analysis of empirical studies (between 1984 and 2000) confirm that more research is needed to justify consumer-appreciated attributes in the high-investment hotel industry. Citing the importance of ‘…evaluating hotel attributes on the bases of guest trade-offs…’ (p.15) like, willingness to pay, as these are important determinants of the consumer purchasing decision.

In other words, whilst attributes such as location, services, cleanliness and facilities are seen as the main important hotel attributes (Dubé & Renaghan 2000; Lockyer 2005), consumer perspectives of a product occurs on two dimensions. These are perceived value (willingness to pay) and the reduction of risk (unfamiliarity) with the hotel or destination (Dolnicar & Otter 2003a). Consequently, these are important considerations for experience producers, as guests in the future will want to consider their choices on both location and the content of the guest room, where the range of options include the floor level, corridor and room location, guest room and bathroom size, room shape and number of windows, views, furniture type and layout (Talwar 2010).

2.1.6 Concept of value creation

In this section, the link between memorable experiences and the value created by both producers and consumers is further examined. The creation of value is a fundamental concept to any company (Keller 2009), in particular at times when market forces, those that were introduced earlier, dramatically affect the way businesses will need to innovate and deliver value to their stakeholders (Kaplan & Norton 2000). This research is focused on the experience phenomenon, where the review of literature, thus far, has established that in this experience economy, the exchange of experiences is central to the creation of new sources of value and competitive differentiation. Pine & Gilmore (1999) suggest that experience-seeking consumers are setting their expectations beyond merely high-level product and service quality; they are seeking unique and lasting experiences that are of value to them. This new form of consumer expectation, according to Oh, et al. (2007), motivated producers to develop a distinctive value-added proposition to their already high-quality products and services.
Researchers agree that value, in itself, is difficult to define (Dubé & Renaghan 1998; Helkkula, Kelleher & Pihlström 2012; Oh, Fiore & Jeoung 2007; Zeithaml 1988). One reason for this is that value appears in several forms, depending on the context in which it is placed. From an organizational point of view, creating and delivering superior customer value to high-value consumers, will in turn increase the value of the organization and therefore the value to the owners of the organization (Zeithaml 1988). In contrast, customer value looks at the value perceived by an organization’s customers, when buying and using the producer’s product (Slywotzky 1996). Hence, value needs to be seen from both perspectives, that is, businesses delivering experience-laden product and service offerings (value in the form of increased revenue and profits), and value for the consumer who nowadays anticipates the (experience) exchange to have a positive, emotional and memorable impact (Barlow & Maul 2000).

In Chapter 1, this research introduced Pine and Gilmore’s (1999) review of US leisure and tourism attractions - such as destination theme parks, live concerts and sporting events - where it was suggested that the tourism and leisure businesses out-performed traditional industry segments, showing higher sales and profits. This, Pine and Gilmore (1999) emphasized, is because the major attraction for consumers is unique and memorable experiences, which add additional value for both the consumer and producer. This increasing demand for unique and memorable experiences has motivated tourism producers to seek innovative products and services that can satisfy the consumer’s quest for new and enjoyable experiences; additionally, exploring new forms of competitive advantages and economic value through the development of unique experiences (Azevedo 2010; Pine & Gilmore 1998).

For this research, a meaningful definition of “value creation” was adopted from Priem’s (2007) extensive review of the literature and is summarized as; value creation ‘…involves innovation that establishes or increases the consumer’s valuation of the benefits of consumption (i.e., use value)’ (p.200). In other words, when a producer creates value for a consumer, he or she is willing to pay either for a novel benefit or for something perceived to be better. Conversely, producers are only motivated to create value for their customer if it increases the overall intake in revenues and profits. Here, Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) concluded that the traditional approach to value
creation – that of taking a business-centric perspective, was no longer adequate in today’s complex and over-supplied market economy, thereby urging producers to shift their focus toward the co-creation of value.

Echoing this transformation and shift in focus from a business-centric creation of value to one that focuses on customer perceived and received value, several studies within the marketing literature reference a service-dominant logic, where value can only be created by the user during the process of consumption – also known as value-in-use (Gulati & Wang 2003; Lusch & Vargo 2006; Mizik & Jacobson 2003; Vargo & Lusch 2009). The concept of value-in-use has important bearings in the design and delivery of memorable experiences, as the value is determined by the consumer – or more precisely by what the guest experiences (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004). Consequently, producers who aim to differentiate their offerings through the design and delivery of value generating guest experiences, will, at the same time, need to consider the guest participation during the consumption of the experience. This is further reviewed in the sections that follow, where the review of literature seeks to address aspects of experience co-creation in more detail.

Describing value as seen from a consumer perspective, Zeithaml (1988) defined value between what the customer gets (the benefit) relative to what he or she has to give up (the costs or sacrifices). This concept was further developed by other authors, who explored the sacrifice components in more detail, for example, both monetary and non-monetary, like time and effort needed to use the product or service (Dolnicar & Otter 2003b; Naumann 1995; Woodruff & Gardial 1996).

Here, futurist Alvin Toffler had foreshadowed a consumer that, in a world of interconnected users, would become a ‘prosumer’, creating products in collaboration with other users, thereby having envisaged that the distinction between producer and consumer would become blurred (Toffler 1980). As Toffler predicted, society has embraced this phenomenon, for example, the self-help movement (self-servicing fuel pumps, electronic banking, self-service supermarkets), or as witnessed by the “do-it-yourself” home improvement boom. Through the use of communications technology and social networks, this has accelerated innovation around technology and the interactions between producers and consumers (Buhalis & Law 2008). In the following
section, the human experience dimensions that are considered to be key drivers behind the experience economy are reviewed.

2.2 Experiences

2.2.1 Overview

In this section, the research reviews the human experience dimensions that, as highlighted earlier, are a critical cornerstone in the experience economy. Drawing on the literature (sociology, psychology, anthropology, economics and management), a definition and meaning of experience is presented and linked to the research context. Furthermore, the experience construct, such as the interactions and the types of consumption experiences, for example, “fantasies, feelings and fun” (Holbrook & Hirschman 1982) are examined, as are the experience cues which “…make the impressions that create the experience in the customer’s mind…” (Pine & Gilmore 1998, p.103). Significant to this research, are the creation and co-creation of experiences (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004), those that are value-generating for both producers and consumers. Lastly, the meaning of authenticity, from toured objects (Cohen 1979; MacCannell 1973) to authenticity as a function of the self (Kim & Jamal 2007; Wang 1999) are discussed and linked to the research context.

2.2.2 Human Consumption Experiences

The research’s primary focus is on the managerial perspective of designing memorable guest experiences. This implies that this review of the literature seeks to provide a deeper understanding of knowledge pertaining to human experiences as seen in the context of consumption, whilst placing further emphasis on the importance of value-creation from a consumer / customer perspective. Since Toffler’s early prediction – whereby consumers would be collecting experiences as passionately as they once collected things, and that dominant industries would emerge and centre their offerings solely on experiences (Toffler 1970), the marketing and consumer literature has greatly expanded on and around the theme of consumption experiences.

Themes introduced to the literature, for example, experiential consumption (Woods 1981), hedonic consumption (Holbrook & Hirschman 1982), authentic experiences
(Cohen 1979), emotional experiences (Westbrook & Oliver 1991), extraordinary experiences (Arnould & Price 1993), and the holistic experience (LaSalle & Britton 2003), commonly suggest experiences as a primary subjective state of consciousness with a variety of symbolic meanings. Nevertheless, some authors have suggested that more research is needed in order to better understand the experience constructs and their relationship between physical environments, human interactions and whether consumers perceive value derived from their consumption experiences (Davenport & Beck 2002; Schmitt 1999; Walls 2009).

It is certainly no easy task to correctly approach and frame the meaning of experience, as the word experience may be defined in a variety of ways depending on the context in which it is being applied. In his book “Experiences and Its Modes” Michael Oakeshott (1933) warned scholars that: ‘…experience, of all the words in the philosophic vocabulary is the most difficult to manage…’ (p.9). Some fundamentals, however, are important to consider, as they have been informing the growing field of consumer experience research.

From a philosophical viewpoint, an experience is a personal trial that transforms the individual, in accumulation, leading to knowledge (Voss 2004). The psychologist Csikszentmihalyi (1991), described the optimal experience as ‘…a sense of exhilaration, and a deep sense of enjoyment that is long cherished…’ (p.3), whereby the sense of enjoyment is felt by individuals in the same way - regardless of their cultural background, social class, age or gender. This observation has some relevance to this research, as consumer participants (Phase II) were made up of an eclectic group of individuals who, despite their different cultural backgrounds, age and gender, have a common interest in luxury stay experiences that deliver enjoyable and memorable experiences.

Still, human experience is singular in nature, involves the individual (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikzentmihaly 1991), is emotional (Pullman & Gross 2004) and can be defined in both physical and virtual spaces (Abrahams 1986). This suggests that many aspects of how consumers may experience cannot be controlled by organizations as these are entirely dependent on, for example, the customer’s state-of-mind, emotional state, his or
her personal traits (Denzin & Lincoln 2000; Holbrook & Hirschman 1982; Schmitt 2003). From a managerial perspective, experience is: the ‘…take-away impression formed by people’s encounters with products, services, and businesses – a perception produced when humans consolidate sensory information…’ (Carbone & Haeckel 1994, p.9).

According to Boswjik et al. (2005), feelings play an important role in processing experiences that have meaning, suggesting that understanding these human emotion characteristics form a central part of creating meaningful and memorable experiences. Concerning tourism and leisure, definitional research (Mannell & Iso-Ahola 1987) has been carried out to better understand experience as a vehicle to describe the meaning of various leisure and tourism activities and events. Taking an example from the adventure tourism perspective, whilst skydivers may seek high-risk leisure activities for the exhilarating experience of free-fall, they also have been characterized by ‘…feeling a sense of camaraderie that occurs when sharing a common bond of experience…’ (Celsi, Rose & Leigh 1993, p.12). Producers of memorable experiences, therefore, need to understand the needs that guests seek to satisfy, and the benefits they aim to obtain. At the same time, producers need to recognize the interplay between the experience of, and satisfaction with, the activity itself (Otto & Ritchie 1996).

Over the last three decades, there has been much managerial interest in linking customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction to the consumption of services or experiences, which Verhoef et al. (2009) argue, has prevented researchers from considering the construct of customer experiences as a separate topic of inquiry. Within the field of tourism, significant research has been conducted into the cognitive psychology of tourism experiences (del Bosque & Martín 2008; Iso-Ahola 1982; Pearce & Stringer 1991; San Martin & Rodríguez del Bosque 2008), as well as the preconceived ideas and expectations that can influence the tourist’s experience (Cutler & Carmichael 2010; Janiszewski 2009; Reisinger & Steiner 2006). Furthermore, evaluating the impact of positive tourist experiences, research has shown that high customer satisfaction leads to profitable companies (Fornell 1992; Ooi 2003; Zeithaml 2000). Here, the antecedents and consequences of consumer satisfaction and dissatisfaction (for example, weighted
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by the “American Customer Satisfaction Index”) as perceived during and post the guest consumption event, have been identified (Kotler 1991; Oliver 1980).

Based on the experiences customers have from pre- and post-consumption events, the consequences are effecting changes in price sensitivity, brand loyalty, and variances in the frequency of purchase (Anderson & Sullivan 1993; Olshavsky & Miller 1972). This suggests that producers of customer experiences have to recognize and act on the correlations between customer expectations, actual customer experiences, consequences of satisfaction, aspects of experience co-creation, and resulting value drivers that not only generate customer delight, but economic benefits such as company return-on-investment and new revenue streams.

For the purpose of this research, the notion that such experiences are value generating for both the producer and the consumer does necessitate a basic understanding of human [consumption] experience dimensions, human behavior, the experience construct, and the experience environment. As Otto and Ritchie (1996) point out, although accommodation services are made up of clear functional components, the experiential benefits and emotive aspects of the stay experience become a critical part of the guest evaluation, thereby offering producers ample opportunities for affective responses. In this way, service encounters should not be assumed from a management perspective; instead, they should assumed in the personal constructions of the individual consumer (Prentice, Witt & Hamer 1998).

It is this understanding that will lead to a more constructive approach to the design of memorable experiences as a distinct economic offering (Pine & Gilmore 1999), specifically, when placed within the context of the luxury hotel sector and it’s most valuable resource, the luxury hotel guest room. Defining consumption experiences in this research’s context, the researcher considered Tung and Ritchie’s (2011) definition [adapted for this research], which best captures the meaning in which experiences can be described:

An individual’s subjective evaluation and undergoing of events (affective, cognitive, and behavioral) related to his/her tourist activities (physical and virtual), which begins before (planning and preparation), during (at the
destination), and after the trip (recollection) [and sharing of experiences] (p.1369).

In the following section, the relevant human behavior theories are discussed, and a linkage to the research purpose is established.

2.2.3 Human Behavior

The role of human behavior needs to be determined not just by its outcome, but by other external factors which Bandura (1986, p.18) explains: ‘...human functioning is explained in terms of a model of triadic reciprocality in which behavior, cognitive and other personal factors, and environmental events all operate as interacting determinants of each other’. In other words, Bandura speaks of consumers that are both producers of behaviors and the product of their environment, further suggesting that consumers are influenced by tangible outcomes (economical) and feelings (positive and negative) that arise from past behaviors (Bandura 1986). For example, guests who stay in luxury hotel rooms consider tangible benefits (like complimentary amenities and services, VIP treatment, exclusive access to facilities), as well as the feelings (like the allure and recognition by staff and others), which are all contributing factors to subsequent behaviors.

As Holbrook (1982, p.132) described, ‘...various environmental and consumer inputs (products, resources) are processed by an intervening response system (cognition-affect-behavior) that generates output consequences which, when appraised against criteria, result in a learning feedback loop’. As stated earlier, producers therefore need to be mindful of the correlations between customer expectations, actual customer experiences, consequences of satisfaction and resulting economic value drivers, not forgetting the individual differences and type of involvement, when considering human behavior in response to designing and delivering memorable experience offerings.

In their comprehensive review on the notion of experience and human behavior, Carù and Cova (2003) cited Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben:

Modern man goes home in the evening with a myriad of entertaining and boring, strange or ordinary, pleasurable or atrocious events, none of which
has been converted into experience. It is precisely this impossibility to translate events into experience that makes everyday life more unbearable than ever before. Not for nothing does this represent a decline in quality and a claimed lack of significance of contemporary life (Agamben 1989, p.19-20).

This suggests, that producers have an opportunity to facilitate products, services and experiences that lift consumers out of mundane, non-experiential events of everyday life. Hence, the knowledge that experiences are, for example, based upon personal and emotional occurrences, the degree of participation, and the interactions with products and services – are all important considerations, as [orchestrated] occurrences may also lead to a transformation from the ordinary to the extraordinary experience (Arnould & Price 1993). Adding to this awareness is Firat (2001, p.113) who argues that, in the postmodern era, there is a ‘…growing quest on the part of the contemporary consumer for immersion into varied experiences…’: thereby, concurring with other authors on the experiential perspective of consumption (Addis & Holbrook 2001; Campbell 1995; Holbrook & Hirschman 1982).

Fueled by the advent of the information revolution and the success of the Internet, a growth in user-generated content distributed via online sharing tools, commonly defined as social media, has begun to affect human behavior, in particular among tourism communities (Miguéns, Baggio & Costa 2008; Parra-López et al. 2011). In this virtual community, travelers are discovering the benefits and value derived from using online media to pre-plan their trip, share opinions and observations of service providers and destination experiences, which nowadays are capable of including rich media content (for example, YouTube, Instagram, Flickr) that provides evidence of their findings.

Although the literature suggests that the topic of social media in tourism has been a subject of research for some time now (Miguéns, Baggio & Costa 2008; Thevenot 2007; Xiang & Gretzel 2010), the focus is shifting from the medium [tools] to the psychological and hedonic benefits as factors that can generate significant results from the use of social media (Wang & Fesenmaier 2004).

Additionally, emotions are being considered as an important factor that can influence human (consumer) behavior: the literature suggests that overlooking emotional factors
in favor of cognitive beliefs can hinder organizational insights into consumer preferences (Gardial et al. 1994; Mowen 1988). For example, emotive responses are both psychological and physiological in nature, which Schachter and Singer (1962) described as generating alternate states in both mind and body. This discovery, applied to the symbolic aspects of products, motivated further research into product symbolism, which Hirschman and Holbrook (1980) linked to the esthetic, intangible and subjective (hedonic) aspects of consumption. Hedonic consumption is primarily based on the experiences generated through products, evoking consumer behaviors ‘…that relate to multi-sensory, fantasy and emotive aspects of one’s experience with products…’ (Holbrook & Hirschman 1982, p.92). In other words, consumers not only form multi-sensory impressions (tastes, smells, sounds, images) from perceiving a product, but also with the impressions they associated with the experience of products.

This, for example, may relate to a past experience of an actual event, or the mental association of a visual image that is linked to colors, sounds, scent and touch. These are important managerial considerations for producers of experiences, as they will need to balance the consumer’s historic recollections of past events, like what he/she has actually experienced with what is complete fantasy, where he/she is unable to form a mental image based upon relevant real experience (Hirschman & Holbrook 1982).

Taking cues from Agamben’s (1989) description of ‘modern man’, another human behavior phenomenon that producers may need to take into consideration is the concept of ‘mindlessness’. Langer, Blank and Chanowits (1978) introduced this concept, which Langer (1989) later described as ‘…people [in everyday life] rely on distinctions drawn in the past, thereby overly depending on structures of situations representative of the underlying meaning without making new distinctions…’ (p.137). That is to say, people are capable of completing activities without active mental involvement, and without experiencing anything out of the ordinary, they are likely to go through frequent hotel stay experiences that leave little recollection of any significant events.

Hence, it could be argued that hotels offering guests routine processes, procedures, products and services, might find themselves catering to guests that are no longer experiencing differences between one stay and another, thereby responding in a
Chapter Two – Literature Review

routinized and mindless way. This phenomenon surrounding a consumer’s mindlessness would be unlikely to produce memorable experiences: like, considering the frequency of business travelers to same city / hotel destination. This deliberation has also evoked curiosity from Tung and Ritchie (2011, p.1367), who have since examined the ‘…cognitive processes that impede individuals from paying attention to their experiences…’. Although not considered part of the research inquiry with consumers in Phase II, this research suggests some supporting evidence gained from discussions and observations with participating consumers.

Human behavior is therefore an important consideration for producers of memorable experiences, which Bandura (1986) suggested depend on behavior, cognitive, other personal factors and environmental events that all operate as interacting determinants. To this end, hedonic and emotive consumption, behavioral effects resulting from social media, and the concept of mindlessness may form a part of future research inquiries. The following section describes the experience constructs that are deemed relevant to the context of this research.

2.2.4 Experience Constructs

With services nowadays accounting for an increasing proportion of gross domestic product (GDP), this review of the literature has established that services are becoming commoditized (Schmitt 1999; Shaw & Ivens 2002), and that consumers are seeking experiences that are ‘…engaging, robust, compelling and memorable…’ (Gilmore & Pine 2002, p.10). In the context of commercial consumption, these are derived from a set of interactions between an organization, their product and service offerings, and the customer. Furthermore, these consumption experiences are highly personal, which implies the customer’s involvement at emotional, rational, sensorial, physical, and spiritual levels (Gentile, Spiller & Noci 2007; LaSalle & Britton 2003; Schmitt 1999). Experiences may differ between ordinary and extraordinary (Arnould & Price 1993), and whether they are meaningful (Boswijk, Thijssen & Peelen 2006), authentic (Holbrook & Hirschman 1982) and with reference to this research, whether they become memorable (Pine & Gilmore 1999).
According to Verhoef et al., (2009, p.32), the customer experience encompasses the ‘…total experience, including the search, purchase, consumption, and after-sale phases of the experience…’. To this end, quality plays an important part in the consumer assessment of product and service performances (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry 1988; Zeithaml 1988); closely linked to customer satisfaction (Nam, Ekinci & Whyatt 2011) which, in the context of services, is a result of the customer’s comparison of the service quality expected from any given service encounter (Caruana, Money & Berthon 2000). This notion formed the basis of SERVQUAL that, as introduced earlier, views the consumer’s gap between his/her expectations and perceptions of the desired level of service provided (Gupta, McDaniel & Herath 2005).

Consumers may also assess their experiences against value perceptions that are not necessarily embedded in a product at the moment of exchange, but obtained through the value-in-use (Vargo & Lusch 2004). This transformation is driven by consumers who are increasingly gaining power and control (Florida 2002; Pine & Gilmore 2011), which has led to the realization that producers and consumers must engage in co-creation of experiences as a basis for value creation (Helkkula, Kelleher & Pihlström 2012; Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004; Ramaswamy 2009; See-To & Ho 2014).

Exploring the constructs of experiences in a commercial setting – like those proposed by Pine and Gilmore (1999), Poulsson and Kale (2004a) saw no differences in the way experiences were encountered on a daily basis, advocating that experiences are formed through ‘…personal relevance, novelty, surprise, learning, and engagement dimensions…’ (p.271). Concluding their examination of the extant ‘experience’ literature, Gentile et al. (2007) identified a multidimensional structure that defines the main experience constructs: namely components including 1) sensational elements affecting the five senses, 2) emotional elements such as feelings, moods and emotions, 3) cognitive elements that involve creative thinking, 4) pragmatic elements that involve the act of doing, 5) lifestyle elements symbolizing the value that derives from the consumption experience, and 6) relational elements that engage the user with other users, thereby providing a sense of belonging to a social or (like-minded) group (p.398).

From these subjective experience dimensions, which are based on the individual’s assessment of the experience itself, recent studies have called on researchers to take a
closer look at including memory as an additional consideration when developing conceptual experiences (Hull IV 1990; Kim, Ritchie & McCormick 2012). Utilizing the Kim et al. (2012) study findings produced seven experiential components: hedonism, novelty, local culture, refreshment, meaningfulness, involvement and knowledge. Derived from survey participants as to what they perceived had made their travel experiences memorable, Sthapit and Haahti (2013a) found that the most underutilized experiential components generating the most memory were experiences relating to ‘…local culture and novelty…’ (p.8). Moreover, their study concluded that these behavioral intentions were additional evidence of producers having to engage with their customers to co-design and co-create experiences; at the same time, moving away from an attribute-focused toward an experientially-focused delivery of experiences (Sthapit 2013b).

Indeed, McIntosh and Siggs (2005) found evidence in their study focused on the experiential nature of boutique accommodation consumption that supports earlier findings where travelers appeared to be concerned not ‘…with the just being there, but with participating, learning and experiencing the there they visit…’ (Pearce 1988, p.219).

Tourist and travel experiences are mostly measured on the basis of satisfaction, which Ryan (1998) suggested could be perceived as the congruence of need and performance (positive), and the gap between expectation and experience (negative). Producers are therefore motivated to reduce the risks of dissatisfaction among guests, responding by putting in place policies, standards and procedures for staff and associates to follow. This approach might well assist hotel operators to provide quality consistency, thereby anticipating that guests will not be dissatisfied, however, this may not be sufficient to produce memorable experiences. Memorable experiences, as introduced earlier, will need to be designed (holistically speaking), as an ‘…engaging act of co-creation between a provider and a consumer wherein the consumer perceives value in the encounter and in the subsequent memory of that encounter…’ (Poulsson & Kale 2004a, p.270).

This approach requires producers of memorable experiences to create a balance between what guests may expect from the experience (quality, value expectations), their
subjective state at the point of consumption (emotional, physical, spiritual, intellectual, and mindfulness), and the level of engagement (active, passive, immersive, absorbent), which guests might base on the perceived challenge and skills needed to engage in the consumption. Describing highly participative experience encounters, and achieving this through optimal level or balance is what Czikszentmihalyi (1990) proposed as ‘flow’, which brings intense satisfaction marked by ‘…a sense of exhilaration, a deep sense of enjoyment that is long cherished and that becomes a landmark in memory for what life should be like…’ (p.3).

Hence, producers should be mindful that these types of experiences become memorable and develop into narratives that guests share in the form of stories (storytelling), giving the occurrence meaning and self-identity (Desforges 2000; Woodside 2010). Moreover, such personal and memorable experiences are important sources of information for future purchase decisions on whether they will return to the place or not (Alba et al. 1997; Lehto, O’Leary & Morrison 2004; Midgley 1983; Wirtz & Lee 2003).

As introduced in the previous section, familiarity and repetition can lead to mindlessness, which Langer (1989) proposed could hinder individuals from paying attention to their experiences. Indeed, any corporate traveler regular frequenting familiar hotels based on predetermined corporate travel policies, may find him/herself going about the consumption experience in a mindless way. As a result, he or she is unlikely to take note of the surrounding situation and encounters as new sources of information (Langer 1989). Contrarily, studies have shown that when tourists are engaged with an exhibit via stimulating (emotion-eliciting) content, for example, multimedia display offering infotainment in a reaction-based setting, then the opposite is true; that is, guests are induced to a mindful experience (Frauman & Norman 2004; Langer & Moldoveanu 2000; Moscardo 1996). This mindfulness is said to be leading to greater levels of satisfaction, as consumers are becoming more knowledgeable and aware of their surroundings (Langer & Moldoveanu 2000).

Notwithstanding the notion in (social science) that experiences are encountered in the same way whether placed and consumed in a commercial setting or in daily life: in a tourism context, they are often seen as peak or pure experiences derived from attractions and a heightened participation in leisure activities (Quan & Wang 2004).
Consequently, for producers to design consumption experiences that become memorable, first, the constructs of these designed experiences will need to be considered based on a number of dimensions like those already mentioned. And then, through influencing the outcome (for example, above-expectations, unexpected “wow”, pleasant surprises), producers can begin to offer consumers physical, virtual and emotional sensations that guests are likely to cherish and remember.

In the following section, the environment (physical and virtual) in which experiences are produced and consumed is explored further. Moreover, the literature review is expanded around the atmosphere and the distinction of the ambience within the context of the experience environment.

### 2.2.5 Experience Environment

As experience products may vary in space and time (Janiszewski 2009), to the consumer, the place of the experience, the consumption environment, plays an important role in the experience production, whereby in addition, the place itself, the total atmosphere, contributes to the experience (Mossberg 2007). Nowhere are these conditions more evident than within the luxury hotel guest room, which is an opulent environment created by producers for their consumers to experience. This was a contributing factor for this research’s choice of using the luxury guest room as a lens, while at the same time, utilizing Pine and Gilmore’s four realms of experience framework, where the experience ‘sweet spot’ is said to occur when all four experience dimensions are simultaneously engaged (Lorentzen & Hansen 2009; Pine & Gilmore 1999).

The environment or the place in which an experience is produced and consumed, is an important part of the overall outcome of the consumption experience (Gilmore & Pine 2002; Hirschman 1984). As such, hotel environments need to be designed not only to comply with prevailing architectural conformities, but also to the users that occupy the environment – whether permanently by staff or temporarily by guests. For example, architectural firms are currently responding to a growing demand for energy and environmentally sound buildings, resulting in industry guidelines and standards, which, in the US, are guided by “LEED” (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design).
standards developed by the “U.S. Green Building Council”. This trend is commonly referred to under the heading “sustainability”, nowadays incentivized by Governments and Municipal Councils through accreditations and other tangible benefits. Whilst the focus is very much placed on efficiency and sustainability, other factors will need to be considered, as Austrian hotel architect Matteo Thun explained:

The term sustainability could almost be defined as the buzzword of the early 21st century. Sustainability is the talk of the town, not only in the economy or in politics, but also in the construction industry. Considering everything closely however, only one aspect of sustainability catches the industry’s attention, the ecological perspective. In this respect, the use of different resources throughout a building’s complete lifecycle is balanced. This ecological balance corresponds to the materials used from production to demolition and even the essential resource needs for building management throughout the whole usage period. The two other aspects of sustainability are often forgotten, the economic and socio-cultural points. The building should maximize its potential to reduce maintenance costs, if possible even generate profits and should lose very little in value. On the other hand, it should also cater to the user’s wellbeing in regard to health and comfort aspects as well as be aesthetically pleasing, as cited in ‘Hotel Architecture’ (Pütz-Willems 2008, p.67).

Earlier, the importance of the atmosphere was discussed. In hospitality terms, another critical element is the ambience, which has become an essential concern for hospitality providers (Campbell-Smith 1967; Jones 1983; Lawson 1994). Bitner (1992) described ambience as an imperative consideration for service providers, as services are consumed within the physical environment of the production site. To this extent, Kokko (2005) found that both guests and staff see ambience as the single most important characteristic of a place. From a service perspective, Bittner (1992) suggested, that a distinction between atmosphere and ambience needs to be made, including “servicescape” (the physical environment in which services are delivered) which needs to be taken into consideration (Arnauld, Price & Tierney 1998; Kim & Moon 2009).

Whilst the atmosphere comprises of background conditions such as scent, noise, music and lighting (Babin, Hardesty & Suter 2003; Baker, Levy & Grewal 1992; Geuens, Brengman & S’Jegers 2003), ambience is described as the interaction between people and the physical environment. In other words, ‘…the ambience is perceived and experienced…’ (Heide, Lærdal & Grønhaug 2007, p.1316).
This is an important trait for experience producers to consider since, as previously presented, guests make their future consumption decisions based on rational and emotional considerations (Barlow & Maul 2000; Morgan, Elbe & de Esteban Curiel 2009). Some hotels / brands have gone to the extreme of creating environments or themes that are specifically designed to provoke emotions, for example, Six Senses Hotels, CitizenM Hotels, Seven Hotel Paris.

This growing interest in the emotional connection between people and their environment has been the subject of recent studies into emotional design, many of which explore design methods in direct relation to emotional responses (Chapman 2005; Desmet 2002; Norman 2007). Examining the experience environment further, Heide et al. (2007) found that two additional factors need to be taken into consideration, that of ‘distinctiveness’ and ‘genuineness’; in their words:

> It is likely that even the most carefully designed and operated hotel would be regarded as lacking ambience if there were 1000 identical hotels. Thus, truly atmospheric hospitality establishments have a certain uniqueness that distinguishes them from the herd (p.1322).

Taking a forward-looking perspective, Talwar (2010, p.25) spoke of emerging guest desires centered on ‘…choice, relevant to location and content…’ of the future guest room. Aside from predetermining the room location, emerging technologies, some of which were highlighted earlier, will enable guests to personalize the future guest room environment to their specific, personal preferences. This may include intelligent furniture that remember preferred guest settings (like those already experienced in luxury automobiles), and driven by advances in nanotechnology and claytronics, which may soon allow furniture items to re-configure themselves based on programmable matter (Talwar 2012).

Through the emergence of new technologies, the physical experience environment will be expanded to virtual experience spaces – this evolution will require producers to work closely with technology partners highly specialized on the application side. At the same time, they will need to understand evolving guest desires and expectations in areas such as augmented and immersive experiences. However, such a transformational journey between the physical and virtual experience environment will necessitate a rethink of
revenue models. For example, the current value-in-use equation of selling guest rooms is based on fixed daily rates; this revenue model, in its current form, does not take into consideration the consumer’s willingness to pay a premium for memorable experiences delivered within the guest room. Some producers may have recognized this potential loss of revenue, as Talwar’s (2012) future global study of 600 industry respondents seems to confirm the following: 91% predict that ‘…they will turn their attention to generating ancillary revenues through activities such as increasing their share of the spend of each guest staying at their property…’ (p.29).

This quest for additional guest revenue may well include a search for new revenue sources created through experiences outside of the physical environment (virtual value propositions); and following Pine and Gilmore’s (1999) predictions, possible opportunities for admission charges, in some cases.

2.2.6 Experience Design

In this section, the literature review is focused on the design considerations of memorable guest experiences. Experience design can be defined as an approach to create an emotional connection with guests through careful planning of tangible and intangible events (Pullman & Gross 2004). Earlier, a preferred definition of the consumer experience was introduced to inform this research. Guided by this definition (in the context of this research), thus far, the literature review has addressed the importance of various experience aspects, an understanding of human consumption and behavioral dimensions, the constructs of experiences and the factors that make an experience memorable.

Environments in which experiences take place was also addressed. Consequently, designing of experiences allows producers of memorable experiences to evoke meaning with less of an attachment to objects; instead focusing on the relationship, meaning and feelings that objects and the encounter represent (Rochberg-Halton & Csikszentmihalyi 1981). This understanding forms the beginnings of a platform on which memorable experiences can be designed.
Toffler (1970) stressed that producers who design intangible benefits into their goods or services would learn that consumers are quite willing to pay a premium for what they would perceive as the ambience and the status associated with the consumption, use or acquisition of such items, thus proffering the emergence of an experience industry. This led to a growing interest in designing experiences for customers, in particular within the services industry (Davenport & Beck 2002; Jensen & Dahl 1996; Schmitt 2003).

The literature suggests that fundamentally, the two primary responses to any human experience are the emotional response and the rational response (Hirschman & Holbrook 1980; Lindgreen, Vanhamme & Beverland 2009a; Lindgreen, Vanhamme & Beverland 2009b; Rosselli, Skelly & Mackie 1995). The emotional response consumers have to products, services, or encounters can evoke joy; triggered by feelings, moods and emotions. The consumer can perceive this sensation as memorable. In contrast, rational responses are based on the functional usefulness of the experience, like counting the number of rides included in a theme park admission price. Here, Lindgreen et al. (2009a) conclude that when designing memorable customer experiences, they should ‘…blend both emotional and rational features in valuable combination…; with the focus being on the emotional features’ (p.124).

As stated earlier, experiences are inherently personal in that they occur within any individual who has been engaged on an emotional, physical, intellectual, or even spiritual level. Pine and Gilmore (1999) suggested that experiences can occur over several dimensions: from consumer participation (passive or active) and their interaction with the experience environment (absorption or immersion), and that they become memorable when they are designed in context of its goal, and commingled across the four realms of experience. However, merely designing entertainment into a product or service offering is not sufficient to create memorable experiences. Instead, producers must design experiences that involve components of the other realms, while engaging the customer in the activity (Pine & Gilmore 2011).

Furthermore, the literature review revealed that experiences were defined based on the context in which they were consumed: in other words, producers will need to be concerned with the situation, the environment, and the intended goal for which
experiences are being designed. Approaching this important matter, Berry et al. (2002) speak of experience clues that are derived from a deep understanding of the customer journey, which must take into consideration guest expectations prior to the experience and after the event has taken place. These resulting clues allow producers to design experiences based on the physical environment and relational service setting, in which their guests come into contact with the organization, thereby, focusing on what makes the encounter positive and which elements can be eliminated that are potentially negative (Carbone & Haeckel 1994).

For producers responsible for the design of memorable experiences, the goal would therefore be to orchestrate experiences that are functional, purposeful, engaging, compelling, and memorable (McLellan 2000), while at the same time, defining the different levels of guest participation. Within the context of services, Pullman and Cross (2004) stress a much broader perspective in which guests come to experience an organization across physical and relational context settings:

…location, facility layout, product design, scheduling, worker skills, quality control and measures, time standards, demand and capacity planning, industrialization level, standardization of service offering, customer contact level, front line personnel discretion, sales opportunity, and customer participation affect both context elements (p.554).

Specific to the luxury hotel guest room environment, the literature review has highlighted important experience design considerations which can be summarized as: the atmosphere (Mossberg 2007), the ambience (Bitner 1992), the interactions between guests and the environment (Gupta & Vajic 2000), and the understanding of clues that allow producers to design experiences within the physical and relational context in which guests came into contact with the organization and other guests (Carbone & Haeckel 1994).

Additionally, the literature suggests that producers should ask themselves, “What would make guests want to stay and enjoy the atmosphere?” (esthetics); once they are in the place, “What should guests do to immerse themselves in various activities?” (escapist); “How would guests enjoy themselves?” (entertainment); and, “…what should guests
have learned from their experiences…?” (education) (Pine & Gilmore 2011, p.60). The literature, related to this experience framework, is discussed in more detail.

2.2.7 Experience Co-creation

Earlier, the literature review examined important aspects of co-creation in the context of value. That is, value as seen from the perspectives of the producer and the consumer. Within the experience economy, it was established that the exchange of experiences were central to the creation of new sources of value. The literature review has shown that when guests partake in an activity, it is seen as an important influencer of the experience outcome, specifically, when the consumer becomes a co-creator of the experience and is thereby partially responsible for his or her own experience (Azevedo 2010; Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004; Schmitt 1999).

From a managerial point of view, this tailored approach to service a customer’s particular need results in unique and individual guest experiences (Dabholkar 2000; Etgar 2008; Pine & Gilmore 2011). Since the Year 2000, the effects of communication technologies have transformed the industry, accelerating innovation around the interactions between technology, the tourism provider and consumers (Buhalis & Law 2008), thereby extending the environments beyond the physical space in which consumers are coming into contact with hotels.

These developments, among others, are responsible for a considerable shift in power toward consumers, with resulting effects on markets. For example, Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) assert that, ‘…as value shifts to experiences, the market is becoming a forum for conversation and interactions between consumers, consumer communities, and firms…’ (p.5). This power shift is also seen as one of the major drivers behind the need to co-create experiences with consumers, as companies are said to lose control over the overall unfolding of a staged experience, because they have relied on their customers to remain passive (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004; Ramaswamy & Ozcan 2013).

In this transformation, from a top-down, company-controlled (often product-centric) approach to staging services and experiences, to one of open dialogue between equal
partners (Davenport & Beck 2002; Florida 2002; Rifkin 2000), tourism and hospitality producers will need to defend themselves against a much broader competitive field led by those that will actively involve consumers in the process of experience design (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2003).

Boswijk et al. (2005) suggest that the ‘…starting point in experience co-creation design needs to be the individual…’, considering his/her distinct personal, social and cultural values (p.43). Earlier, the literature review highlighted an emerging consumer trend driven in pursuit of self, which Yeoman (2010) describes as a ‘fluid identity’ that would stipulate entirely new consumption behaviors that are difficult to predict. For example, faced by slow growth, global competition and evolving heterogeneous guest needs, innovation within the tourism and hospitality industry was viewed as critical, which some suggest requires a departure from current thinking in terms of supply and demand, company and customer, host and guest, to connected experience environments in which everyone participates (Binkhorst 2006; Hjalager 2002; Rimmington, Williams & Morrison 2012).

Within the lodging industry, and more specifically within the context of the luxury guest room, examples of experience co-creation are scarce. Beyond those more frequently recorded in, for example, tourism and the recreation dimensions such as theme parks, tourist destinations, concert events, even shopping malls, few, if any, address the unique environment of a guest room in which both business and leisure travelers escape into the privacy of their own worlds. Pine and Gilmore (2011; 1999), stress the importance of theming, which involves guests in a unified story framed around an experience that would appear incomplete without the individual’s involvement.

In context, in-room automation may have made guests active participants in their in-room environment through selecting their own theme based on, for example, mood lighting, climate and audio/visual content controls, in some cases, combined into choreographed themes. These facilities may be supported by in-room amenities, such as video gaming or espresso-making facilities, and whilst promoted by producers as value-
added services, it is not clear whether these amenities are perceived by guests as sufficient memorable experience generators.

Whilst a leisure traveler or tourist may gather experiences from his/her vacation that are, as defined by the literature, a departure from everyday life (Cohen 1972) or some strangeness and novelty away from everyday activities (Smith 1977), the business travel experience is mostly defined by his/her service evaluation (SERVQUAL) based on expectancy-disconfirmation paradigms (Buttle 1996; Caruana 2002; Oliver, Rust & Varki 1997; Yung & Chan 2002).

More significantly, research among business travelers has shown that guest rooms do not appear to significantly influence guests’ perceptions of overall value (Kashyap & Bojanic 2000), and that the guest room is not a significant factor in determining repurchasing intentions, because its effect on overall satisfaction is low (Yung & Chan 2002). Nonetheless, luxury hotels depend greatly on a mix of market segments, of which the business segment forms a critical base (Carman & Langeard 1980; Dolnicar 2002; Marmorstein, Rossomme & Sarel 2003). Hence, producers seeking to differentiate their offerings through value-generating experiences, co-created with their most desirable guests, should focus on the human being as a source of input, whilst at the same time, recognize that the lines between varying experience environments become rather blurred (Binkhorst 2006).

Based on the literature to date, it can be argued that, for producers of luxury hotel guest rooms to be successful in experience co-creation, the basis on which such innovation needs to occur has to be the desires of the individual and a sound understanding of his/her needs, values, special interests and the environments in which they come into contact with the business; and the social communities these collective individuals live in (Kristensson, Matthing & Johansson 2008; Poulsson & Kale 2004a; Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2003). From these insights, new memorable experience offerings within the desired context of the luxury guestroom can emerge; whether they are physical or virtual in nature, or whether they involve employees, fellow guests, or a co-creation experience environment made up of entire networks.
2.2.8 Experience Authenticity

The concept of authenticity in tourism, was first introduced by MacCannell in the early 70s (1973), and has since been the subject of numerous research initiatives (Ballengee-Morris 2002; Cohen 1979; Hughes 1995; Salamone 1997; Turner & Manning 1988). Handler and Saxton (1988) describe an authentic experience as ‘… one in which individuals feel themselves to be in touch both with the real world and with their real selves…’ (p.243). Gilmore and Pine (2007) define authenticity as ‘purchasing on the basis of conforming to self-image’ (p.5). Pikkemaat and Schuckert (2004) identified authenticity as one of the key drivers behind emerging consumer behaviors, suggesting that ‘…increased individualism, heightened accumulated national and international travel and vacation experiences and cultural saturation lead…to the desire…for travel experiences which are personalized and personally perceived as authentic’ (p.2).

MacCannell (1973) warned that commoditization of tourism was leading to staged authenticity that was no longer a true reflection of local cultural products and human relations. This, according to Wang (1999), meant that tourist experiences are no longer based on objects, but on personal feelings generated through involvement in personalized activities perceived as real. In other words, tourists are no longer seeking out fake or inauthentically staged tourist attractions that are seen as out of time and out of place (Selwyn 1996). Instead they seek the ‘…existential experience derived from non-ordinary activities (like visiting Las Vegas) that are free from the constraints of the daily life…’ (Wang 1999, p.352).

 Whilst leisure travelers may seek to explore destinations and their non-touristic surroundings, business travelers are less focused on touristic discoveries (Urry & Larsen 2011). Moreover, according to Levere (2003), they spend an increasing amount of time in hotel rooms for both work and relaxation. Interestingly, both types of traveler are mindful of their destination and the perceptions they gain from being in the place (McCabe 2005). As such, authenticity, in the context of this research, is important to establish a link between the place (uniqueness of the location), the products offered, services performed by staff, and the use of local resources including artifacts and materials used in guest rooms.
2.3 The Business Perspective

2.3.1 Overview

This subsection is focused specifically on the business perspective of the experience economy, revisiting some of the key market drivers introduced earlier, and examining customer-focused and experience-driven hotel design and development trends primarily within the geographical context of the United States of America where many of the major international brand hotels are headquartered. This section also introduces emerging trends as observed within the tourism and management literature: trends that are forcing organizations to move away from merely competing for better sameness, while at the same time, examining whether producers are transforming their businesses in response to the experience economy phenomenon.

2.3.2 Market Forces

Earlier in this review of literature (Section 2.1.2), the macro forces behind the experience economy phenomenon were highlighted. These forces were described in the form of globalization, advances in technology and rising consumer affluence. Faced with global competition, goods as well as services are increasingly becoming commoditized, which has motivated consumers to seek more meaningful and life-enriching consumption experiences. These market forces have had a significant impact on whole industries including the lodging sector in which this research is placed. As established in previous sections of this chapter, the luxury hotel guest room was chosen as an appropriate setting to conduct research with both producers and their consumers, establishing that both groups are co-creators of experiences.

The global hospitality industry is often assumed to be homogeneous, affected by, and responding to, clear and worldwide trends (Jones 1999b). A great number of factors are at play when it comes to operating or indeed opening a new hotel. These include ‘…significant structural differences between the hospitality industries in different countries…’ (Jones 1999b, p.430). Despite the benefits of globalization, in some countries, strong barriers to entry still exist, resulting in high-risk ventures and longer development cycles (Ernst & Young, Global Hospitality Insights - Top thoughts for 2013).
However, as economies expand, so do the requirements for lodging, which, Slattery and Johnson (1993) suggest, is due to services overtaking manufacturing, thereby stimulating demand for hotel development. Notwithstanding these dynamic market forces and the factors that are often compounded by local circumstances, hospitality firms are under great pressure to think and act as global enterprises (Kandampully 2006), whilst at the same time, being mindful and adaptive to local customer preferences reflected in guest room design, amenities, services and facility decisions. This combination of globalization and localization is thought to have become a leading principle for international hotel brands to succeed (Ernst & Young Global Hospitality Insights - Top thoughts for 2013).

2.3.3 Hotel Design and Development

At the micro level, newly built hotels are designed and configured based on specific product and market niches. This includes whether a property is being positioned as a seaside resort, city business hotel, or luxury boutique accommodation (Rutes, Penner & Adams 2001). This involves a number of strategic operational management decisions, which Jones (1999a) describes as: ‘…location, integration, affiliation, configuration, organization, implications and adaptations…’ (p.429). The configuration of a property is determined by standards, like those dictated by brand guidelines or, as introduced earlier, through environmental and sustainability recommendations such as “LEED”. Other decisions might be based on distinct design features and product variety, technology-focused innovation, and perhaps location-specific determinants; for example, access to skilled labor playing a key role in these considerations (Morey & Dittman 1997).

Increasingly, hotels have to cater to a multitude of traveler types, from international tourists, business travelers and local residents as a result of rises in domestic travel (Frechtling 2000; Swarbrooke & Horner 2001). Regardless of their reason for travel, however, guests are all travelers that display consumer behaviors within the tourism and leisure sectors, which Pikkemaat and Schuckert (2004) described as:

The combination of the twin forces of accumulated travel experience from the past, plus aging implies that today’s traveling public has become much more quality conscientious and travel smart, wanting at the same time to have the options and/or combinations of old and new, traditional and
modern, active and passive, authentic and derived goods and services including cultural goods and/or cultural encounters (p.2).

Consequently, within the service sector, the review of literature has established that distinctive product differentiation is no longer sufficient to compete in a hyper-competitive market place, thereby forcing hospitality firms to shift their focus toward differentiated services that generate positive and memorable experiences (Berry, Parasuraman & Zeithaml 1994; Lovelock 1999; Pine & Gilmore 2011). It is well documented within the literature, that quality and differentiated services are recognized drivers of customer satisfaction and loyalty (McDougall & Levesque 2000; Mittal & Lassar 1998; Pullman & Gross 2004) This has motivated hotels and brands to develop highly customized products and services to address the needs of their customers beyond the traditional hospitality offerings of accommodation, food and beverages (Kandampully 2006).

2.3.4 Mass Customization

Futurist Alvin Toffler, again, foreshadowed an emerging trend that he described as destandardization of goods and services (Toffler 1970; Toffler & Shapiro 1985). Such customization initiatives were first introduced in the early 90s in a phenomenon known as “mass customization”. It has been suggested that innovative service providers needed the ability to provide customers with ‘…anything they want profitably, any time they want it, anywhere they want it, any way they want it…’ (Hart 1995, p.36). A trend, Cho and Fesenmaier (2001) suggest, is most noticeable among consumers that see traveling as a means of finding personal fulfilment, identity enhancement and self-expression.

From a business perspective, this meant that consumers were previously willing to trade-off less customized products and services in exchange for lower prices, which is often referred to as the “Fordism” era (Jessop 1994). In the “Post-Fordism” era, however, technology advances afforded customers access to a range of unique product and service offerings that were tailored to their individual requirements and specifications (Shaw & Williams 2004).

This mass-customization trend brought about major consequences for organizations initially within manufacturing industries, having to reconfigure their production
processes away from economies of scale to economies of scope (Peacock 1992). Thus, offering customers modular goods and services to differentiate their offerings, whilst at the same time aiming to reduce costs. Within the hospitality industry, Peacock (1992) observed the “Post-Fordism” effects resulting from changes due to technology and a changing nature of the consumer, displayed in consumer taste changes developed from international travel, discovery of other cultures, rising affluence and more sophisticated consumer marketing practices.

Some examples of mass customization in the lodging sector are listed in Table 2.2. In the modern hotel guest room, the introduction of room automation technologies has allowed hotels to offer their guests customization options through, for example, lighting controls activated via electronic tablets, switches and dimmers, and adaptable to the individual’s preference and moods (Pine 1993). Here, it is worth mentioning, that an early adopter of this mass-customization concept within the luxury lodging, is the Ritz Carlton (RC) brand. They deployed sophisticated software that captures ‘personal guest preferences’ which are accessible by all other RC properties and their staff (Mok, Stutts & Wong 2000). As a result, the RC group is able to extend tailored services consistently to individual guests without having to bother them time and again.

Table 2.2. Examples of Mass Customization in Hotels (Mok, Stutts & Wong 2000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rooms</td>
<td>Auto-Wake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front Office</td>
<td>Flexible Self check-in, Self-check Folio Review [via in-room TV], Self check-out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-room Entertainment</td>
<td>Video (PPV, On-demand), Video games/Casino Games, Internet Connectivity Lighting and Mood controls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-room Vending</td>
<td>Honor Bar, Micro-Based Dispensing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guest Information Systems</td>
<td>In-Room Information Links; iPads with personalized content</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.3.5 Customer Sacrifice

As organizations endeavor to mass-customize their offerings in seemingly unlimited configurations, often in contrast to what customers consider important, they tend to overwhelm customers with choice (Hart 1995). Pine (1994) suggested that customers do not want choice; they want what they want and thus it is important to conduct research that uncovers their current and future needs. Hart (1995) explains this as “customer customization sensitivity”, whereby two main factors need to be considered. These are “…uniqueness to [the] customer’s needs, and customer sacrifice determined by the gaps between product and service benefits desired by guests and actually offered by the provider…” (Hart 1995, p.40). A relevant example would be the provision of guest room amenities, which for a while became the primary focus for competitive differentiation also known as “amenity creep” among luxury hotel operators. Here, consumers who make their purchasing decisions based on service quality and what they ‘get’ in terms of value were targeted (Adner & Zemsky 2006; Bernstein 1999; Lee 2005).

However, this product-centric approach has considerable cost implications, as hotels tend to operationalize these into policies, which at times of economic downturn, are reversed by eliminating costly in-room amenities. For example, reducing or eliminating fresh flowers, bathroom amenity unit sizes, bathrobes, daily print newspapers, or the varieties of merchandisable items: all quickly sensed as negative experience cues by regular guests (Connolly 1998; Skinner 1974).

2.3.6 Customer-centered business model

Hamel and Valikangas (2003) suggested that in times of uncertainty, companies need to reinvent their business model proactively, having to respond to economic progress, technology advances and globalization, whilst staying attuned to ever-changing customer needs, expectations and values (Kandampully 2006). Producers responsible for the success of luxury hotels are, therefore, reliant on customer-focused and service-centric innovations, which are not only a response to guest desires (Dan Reid & Sandler 1992), but economically beneficial to the organization (Johnston & Clark 2008). By being market oriented, firms are more successful through gaining a closer understanding
of their ideal customers, thereby responding with value-generating offerings and in turn, leading to superior financial performance (Agarwal, Erramilli & Dev 2003).

As suggested earlier, empirical research into customer value creation has provided insights that link value to hotel attributes, placing the guest room amongst the 10 most important value attribute drivers (Boswijk, Thijssen & Peelen 2006; Oh, Fiore & Jeoung 2007; Ritchie & Hudson 2009). Conversely, producers must not solely focus on innovative attributes, instead, whilst carefully considering the operational implications, ‘…they must focus on the total solution that customers seek…’ (Kim 2000, p.106), and which enhance their perceptions of value (Parasuraman & Grewal 2000). This brings the focus back on the experiential perspective of the guest consumption experience which, as stated earlier, is ‘…the take-away impression formed by people’s encounters with products, services, and businesses, …a perception produced when humans consolidate sensory information…’ (Carbone & Haeckel 1994, p.9)

Consequently, producers of memorable consumption experiences have to understand experience constructs and the value created for both the consumer and the organization. Based on the experience economy phenomenon, the challenge for today’s producers, however, is to develop a reputation for providing unparalleled service, entertainment and innovation in not only product and service delivery, but unique and memorable experiences (van Egmond & van Egmond 2007). Moreover, from a commercial standpoint, Poulsson and Kale (2004a) urge producers to distinguish between the consumption of services, products, and experiences, whereby goods are retained, services are carried out on you or for you, and the essence of an experience, lies in ‘…what happens between the guest and the provider in that extended consumption phase, and this is further reinforced by the memory of the encounter…’ (Poulsson & Kale 2004a, p.271).

Taking these business perspectives into consideration, noting that some may represent strategic market repositioning, internal refocusing and human resource development as well as additional investments in guest facilities (Knutson et al. 2009), this research aimed to evaluate and contrast expert producer opinions with those of frequent hotel customers to establish what constitutes a valuable and valued memorable consumption
experience within the confines of the current and future luxury hotel guest room. In this way any gaps between producer and consumer perceptions of experiential needs can be identified.

2.3.7 The Business Perspective - Summary

This subsection was specifically focused on the business perspective of the experience economy, whereby the review of the literature has offered important considerations. These include the macro forces that are the drivers behind this experience economy; the strategic operational management decisions required when engaging in the design and development of hotels; the understanding needed around consumer behavioral changes; the mass customization phenomenon; the measure of customer satisfaction or indeed the sacrifice customers may have to make; and in order for businesses to be successful, the need to adopt a customer-focused, service-centric innovation approach considering the total solution that customers seek. All are important perspectives that producers of memorable guest experiences must consider. In the next subsection, the customer perspective behind the experience economy is examined.

2.4 The Consumer Perspective

2.4.1 Overview

As the literature suggests, consumers nowadays have become increasingly informed, socially connected, more sophisticated, affluent and demanding. This has the effect of indirectly driving competition among producers motivated to deliver products and services that provide customized experiences (Boswijk, Thijssen & Peelen 2006). Research into consumer behavior also suggests that consumers rarely have the same experience, which makes the production or staging of experiences even more complex (Sundbo & Darmer 2008). At the same time, consumers may well be searching for experiences that affect ‘who’ they are and ‘what’ they aim to accomplish (Jurowski 2009; Ritchie & Hudson 2009; Sundbo & Darmer 2008).

Consumer behavior has also become more changeable and, as a result, unpredictable, as purchasing habits are affected by value perceptions and tradeoffs, where choices made may depend on price, availability, and are influenced by friends and other trusted
situations (Bareham 2004; Solomon et al.; Williams 2002). Baudrillard (1998) suggested that consumers are more interested in the signs and signals attached to offerings, than the products or services themselves. Motivated by these changes in consumer behavior, it is prudent to explore common characteristics that inform the consumer perspective of this research.

2.4.2 Consumer Characteristics (Luxury Hotel Segment)

In previous sections, the literature review introduced a profile of a consumer whose desire for leisure and luxury consumption experiences is motivated by rising affluence and expanding possibilities. This is further influenced by an informational and networked society that transforms the individual’s view of life from a solely externally oriented view, to one that is becoming more concerned with an inner self and one’s own personal experiences.

2.4.2.1 Social types and styles of life

This consumer drive for individuality, self-expression, and self-consciousness prompted the emergence of distinctive style and status associations based on individuals’ attitude, values and worldview (Bourdieu 1984), leading to defined clusters of social types, for example yuppies - the “young urban professional” (Almog 1998; Kipnis 2004; Lynch & Strauss 2007). Social types is a concept extensively covered by sociological researchers like Weber (1969), Simmel (1950), Klapp (1949), and many others. Based on characteristics, traits and meanings associated with individuals’ who ‘…can be identified as typical example of a familiar group or social category…’, ‘…displaying similar values, behavior, style and habits…’ (Almog 1998, p.2).

Reading (1977) describes social types as ‘…an objectively derived summary description of the characteristics of a category of persons…’ (p.196). Poets and philosophers had long identified the now more commonly associated concept of ‘lifestyle’. As an analytical concept, it is closely linked to the works of Veblen’s (1899) “Theory of the Leisure Class” and Weber’s studies on “status” (Weber 1946). Ansbacher (1967) expanded this phenomenon further, recognizing ‘…similarities among individuals and their lifestyles…’ (p.192).
Keen to attract these desirable social types, organizations began to focus on specific markets and consumers by seeking to gain deeper understandings of their distinctive characteristics. This could only be achieved through market segmentation, a concept first introduced by Smith (1956), who recognized that consumers were too broad in their heterogeneous needs and wants. Instead, they needed to be separated into several comparatively homogeneous groups based on similar product and service interests.

From this initial segmentation of consumer markets, which is commonly based on demographic determinants, Demby (1974) introduced the concept of “psychographics”, which combined consumer demographics with the psychology of their personality profiles. Within the context of tourism, this concept served as a predictive measure of travel consumption preferences (Plog 2002), most effectively resulting from the predictive powers of total household income. Whilst some authors conclude that psychographic or lifestyle analyses are still the least understood form of characterizing consumer types, in part due to “…media being used to describe their audiences based on their demographics…” (Plog 2002, p.245), other scholars believe they hold potentially the most powerful approach in market and communications research (Pokrywczynski & Wolburg 2001).

From the time of mass consumption in the 1950s, to an emerging desire for greater product choice in the post-1960s, Featherstone (1987) suggests that for consumers in the postmodern era, the adoption of styles of life, choice of one’s leisure activities, consumer goods, eating and drinking preferences, which Baudrillard (1998) describes as “hyper-reality”, can no longer be associated with fixed status groups. To some extent this has signaled the end of social divisions or ‘….social status as a significant reference point...’ (p.56). Furthermore, Featherstone (1987) explained this:

…shift in attention from, lifestyles conceived as a relatively fixed set of dispositions, cultural tastes and leisure practices, […] to lifestyle as the active stylization of life [where consumers] engage in playful exploration of transitory experiences… (p.93).

Earlier, the notion of a “Creative Class” (Florida 2004) was introduced, describing an experience-seeking consumer that no longer finds status in their wealth, but instead, belongs to a society that wants to live within stimulating and dynamic environments,
not defined by typical stereotypes or lifestyle proclivities, but by a ‘… common ethos that values creativity, individuality, difference, and merit…’ (p.5, 78).

Almog (1998) suggests that some sociologists and anthropologists perceive of social types as role-playing responsibilities and obligations in the context of time and place. In other words, beyond that context, people spontaneously change their behavior and feelings the moment they leave the role and close the door behind them; figuratively speaking, this could be a traveling business executive that temporarily escapes from family and work responsibilities, and into his/her own domain of the guest room. Within the context of this research, this form of escapism is of interest, as guests may well want to experience memorable moments away from everyday life.

2.4.2.2 Emotional Feelings
Drawing on consumer characteristics informed by the review of literature in earlier sections, customers of luxury hospitality are beginning to look beyond material things. Instead, they are becoming more concerned with intangible factors like how they are made to feel, the emotions generated through the multisensory consumption experience, the interactions between the host, the environment, the independence to act freely, the personal recognition received; being remembered by name and for special preferences provided with highly customized services and the personalized attention extended by staff (Hirschman 1984; Pine & Gilmore 2011; Pizam 2010; Sherman 2007).

These are some of the characteristics of guests that, nowadays, evaluate their consumption experiences based on how they perceive the benefits gained from the offering (Johnston & Kong 2011; Poulsson & Kale 2004a). For example, how meaningfully they have been orchestrated by the experience provider (Bitran, Conn & Torkkeli 2008; Boswijk, Thijsse & Peelen 2006), and the perceived value they place on the experience itself (Bitner 1992; Zomerdijk & Voss 2010).

Havlena and Holbrook (1986, p.394) speak of ‘…congenial consumer behaviors pursued for their own sake…’. They are influenced by the subjective or emotional benefits that come along with the consumption of products, services and experiences. Furthermore, these feelings, derived from emotion-laden experiences, can become powerful consumer determinants for their purchase decision-making of products or
brand choice (Havlena & Holbrook 1986). Oliver (1997) explored the concept of “positive surprise” that other academics had attributed to high positive emotions such as customer delight, which could surpass the concept of customer satisfaction. These emotional feelings derived from the consumption of things, as Pullman and Gross (2004) emphasize, are critical consumer behavior considerations.

Within the hospitality and tourism literature, empirical evidence suggests that the “service encounter” guests experience with their hosts contain important emotional components that are linked to the overall consumption experience (Gupta & Vajic 2000). Lashley et al. (2004) specifically discovered this link when conducting research into the most memorable meal experience, where guests concur that service personnel hold the key to constructing an atmosphere conducive to a successful outcome. That is, personnel that have engaged “…customers and their emotions in a truly physiologically, psychologically and sociologically satisfying meal experience…” (Lashley, Morrison & Randall 2004, p.80).

Based on a comprehensive review of the academic marketing, retailing and service management literature, Verhoef et al. (2009) found that researchers have focused primarily on measuring customer satisfaction and service quality, instead of considering customer experiences as a separate construct. Specifically, whilst the authors advocate that the customer experience construct is “…holistic in nature and involves the customer’s cognitive, affective, emotional, social and physical responses…” (Verhoef et al. 2009, p.32), they advise researchers and marketers to consider, not only the interactions between the company and its employees, but also the importance of the interactions among customers.

Such findings are relevant to this research; although the focus is placed on designing memorable experiences within the guest room environment, the encounter with guest contact personnel remains a critical part of the overall stay experience. Moreover, as stated earlier, the interactions among guests are said to become important considerations for experience producers. To this end, certain aspects producers of memorable experiences can control, like the service interface, need to be considered especially in relations to the emotional dimensions, and the skills required by staff. For example,
amiability, flexibility and tolerance (Stein & Book 2010), in order to interact with guests to achieve a successful and memorable stay experience.

2.4.2.3 Purpose of Travel

Guests travel for different purposes; sometimes they are tourists or leisure travelers, while at other times they travel on business and increasingly, a hybrid form of business and leisure travel has been observed (Cohen 2008; Walls et al. 2011b). In the hybrid form, guests are combining their business and leisure interests whilst at a destination in an attempt to leverage the inconvenience experienced in present-day air travel, high security, overcrowded airports and flight cancelations (Waterhouse, Reilly & Edwards 2004). Alternatively, it may be a generational phenomenon; as was found in a recent consumer survey conducted by a leading hotel chain (Hilton Discovery and Connection Survey Hilton Survey Looks at Millennial Business Travel Trends 2013), where a brand executive summarizes the study’s findings as follows:

Millennials are creating a very specific kind of work-life balance that makes sense for their generation and the long hours they're putting in. The line between 'personal' and 'business' time is becoming blurred, particularly for this group, so Millennials are finding adventure through business (Christa-Cathey J, Hilton Hotels & Resorts).

Echoing this trend is the “Global Business Travel Association”, which found that US business travel is on the increase (GBTA BTI United States 2013 Q1 Report 2013); reportedly 61% of business travelers are determined to learn more about the cities, that they are visiting, adding personal days to their itinerary. Furthermore, 59% of business travelers are seeking advice and guidance from their accommodation hosts, whilst 69% are hoping to meet new people whilst staying at their hotels (GBTA BTI United States 2013 Q1 Report 2013).

2.4.2.4 Social experience exchange

Technology advances around the Internet have given consumers greater powers to research, compare, evaluate, and negotiate their travel itineraries. Consumer-accessed online booking systems have disrupted traditional business models, in that agency commission-based models for example, are nowadays replaced by merchant models whereby intermediaries (hotels.com, priceline.com, expedia.com) determine the selling price by adding a margin to discounted hotel rates (Carroll & Siguaw 2003). Hotels, in
particular those operating in premium segments, are reported to have made every effort to build and retain a direct relationship with their ideal customers, offering loyalty benefits and incentives which are further aided by Relationship Management (RM) systems that collect and synthesize information used for personalizing services and other valued offerings (Olsen & Connolly 2000). To this end, the relationships formed between the organizations and their best customers were evident in the support received by those consumer interviewees that were recruited for this research.

The Internet has also irreversibly given consumers a platform to produce consumer-generated media (CGM), transitioning from a single-directional flow of information between producer and consumer, to information and experiences shared among consumers. Popular travel review websites are evidence of consumers searching for stay experiences based on independent advice shared by fellow travelers. For example, a “TimesOnline” survey revealed that 82% of public users trust reviews posted on sites like “TripAdvisor.com” (McGrath & Keenan 2007). Exploring the impact of consumer-generated, word-of-mouth (WOM) feedback, a recent study reviewed guest comments obtained via “TripAdviser.com”, from 324 hotels in New York City (Jeong & Jeon 2008). This revealed that hotel popularity based on service levels is closely linked to the hotel class (or star rating). In other words, the higher the service level, the more popular the hotel is rated.

Of interest are the findings relating to guest value perceptions, where the assumption was that a hotel room rate or Average Daily Rate (Quadri-Felitti & Fiore 2012) was ‘…considered a potential agent influencing guests’ value perceptions about a hotel stay…’ (Jeong & Jeon 2008, p.134). Whilst the authors limited their research to New York and collected data over a limited six month period, the findings suggest that an expensive hotel with a high ADR is no assurance that guests would perceive and indeed communicate these as valued. That is, ‘…unless the hotel offers accommodation experiences that are matching its high room rates and star ratings…’ (Jeong & Jeon 2008, p.134). The study, further found that value was determined as the most powerful predictor of guests’ satisfaction, which also implies guest’s intentions to return (Jeong & Jeon 2008). This implies that, through these WOM feedback loops, guests share their stay experiences openly and publicly for the benefit of future guests, as they are
becoming active participants in an ecosystem that directly affects the economical performance of a hotel.

2.4.2.5 Guest Profiles and Attitudes
Since the beginning of the global financial crisis (GFC) in 2007, businesses and individuals have felt the impact not seen since the Great Depression of the 1930s (Melvin & Taylor 2009). Specifically, the hospitality and tourism sector was faced with a number of challenges; from shrinking capital markets, decreased spending by corporate companies, and a significant decline in average expenditure on a per guest basis (Pizam 2009). Exploring global trends in luxury travel, a study among industry leaders hosted by the “International Luxury Travel Market” (ILTM 2010) gave insights into the speed of post-recession recovery, where the U.S. luxury travel market, more typically driven by a ‘wealth effect’ based on the highs and lows of Wall Street, was starting to rebound.

The report stated that leisure travel was leading the recovery over business travel, however, that room rate integrity remained a core problem affecting overall sector profitability. This was due to discounting practices, where ‘...easy access to information from the Internet and the enormous supply of luxury boutique properties built pre-recession are modern-day challenges to the ability to maintain rate...’ (ILTM 2010, p.2). Consensus among industry experts offers renewed insights into luxury consumers and their consumption behaviors: the report states that:

> Today’s high-end consumers are more cautious where and how they spend their money. They understand a new perceived ‘value’ of luxury and are not looking to be up-sold as in previous years. It’s about the promise you make (ILTM 2010, p.4).

Consequently, the travel industry recognized the importance of understanding varying consumer types and their travel behaviors based on special interests, income class, or an entire generation phenomenon such as the baby boomers (Cleaver, Green & Muller 2000). Consumers within this “baby-boomer” market economy (those born between 1946 – 1964; the oldest baby boomer having turned 65 in 2011) should be attractive to lodging providers due to the population size, time flexibility and their purchasing power. Globally, consumers having reached the age of 60 years and over are estimated
to account for 2 billion people by 2050 (*United Nations - World Population Prospects, The 2012 Revision*). Here, the ILMT study echoes the guest profile and attitudes of older baby boomers, who are drawn to ‘…multi-generational travel experiences that are meaningful, experiential and memory-making…’ (ILTM 2010, p.4).

Of significance are travel motives, intentions and experiential desires that may differ greatly to those of the younger traveling public. Expanding on the example of baby-boomer markets, Hagan and Uysal (1991) found that this segment of society was keenly interested in opportunities for socialization, novel situations, and escape from stressful daily life. To this, Patterson and Pegg (2009) add that baby-boomers require a greater variety of choice (from soft adventure to self-organized itineraries). Noticeably, they are quite comfortable to plan and book travel on the Internet, often staying in 5-star hotels (Patterson & Pegg 2009, pp.255-6). As for luxury travelers in general, they know what they want and are no longer looking for ostensible luxury. Instead, they prefer discreet encounters with the emphasis being placed on authentic experiences (Veríssimo & Loureiro 2013).

Guests of today’s fast-paced world, are also very time conscious, preferring ‘self-help’ options in order to save time and take control (Andrews 2009). Addressing hospitality personnel, Andrews (2009) speaks of shifts in guest profiles and attitudes shaped by ‘women power, business wealth, emotional experiences, time consciousness, health consciousness, and hygiene consciousness. Furthermore, guests are also informed, techno-savvy, language savvy, and value-focused’ (Andrews 2009, pp.xx-xxii).

**2.4.2.6 The Consumer Perspective – Summary**

This subsection considered perspectives of the consumer within the experience economy, whereby the review of literature has offered additional insights for consideration of producers within the luxury hotel sector. The broader aspects of consumer behavior have been introduced; relevant to business and leisure travel consumption preferences. These have been discussed based on the concept of social types and choices relating to lifestyles, a segment that had become of particular interest to the industry in the last decade. From the era of mass consumption in the 1950s, to an emerging desire for greater product choice in the post-1960s, today’s urban traveler is defined by psychographics and personality profiles that give insights into consumers
nowadays more interested in experiencing. For example, they are looking beyond things to how they are made to feel.

Adding to the importance of the consumer characteristics relevant to this research, the review of the literature has further highlighted the need to understand consumers’ purpose of travel as an important determinant of their experiential consumption desires. These are nowadays influenced through open and trusted social networks, which have become causes of shifting powers that enable guests to exchange their consumption experiences, thereby directly affecting producers and their lodging organizations. In the following subsection, the literature will focus on the design of memorable experiences, specifically examining this research’s adopted framework of the four realms of experience.

2.5 Experience Design: The Four Realms of (Tourism) Experiences

2.5.1 Overview

In Chapter 1, the four realms experience framework that was selected to guide this study was introduced. This has been successfully applied and empirically tested for the purpose of exploring experience dimensions with some limited application in the field of tourism (Boswijk, Thijssen & Peelen 2006; Oh, Fiore & Jeoung 2007; Orsolini & Boksberger 2009; Pikkemaat et al. 2009). In this research the framework was used to develop a conceptual understanding of what memorable experience generators are, and the value producers and their guests place on memorable experience occurrences within the luxury hotel guest room both currently and in the future. This subsection of the literature review explores experience design applications within the context of the luxury guest room. Furthermore, the four realms of experience framework is discussed focusing on its design principles, experience dimensions and level of guest engagement during the consumption stages. Lastly, relevant case studies that have applied the four realms framework within tourism and the lodging sector are presented and reviewed.

2.5.2 Experience Design Applications

Pizam (2010) is quoted for his present-day description of the fundamental characteristics of tourism, suggesting that ‘creating memorable experiences is the
essence and the raison d'être of the hospitality industry' (Tung & Ritchie 2011, p.1367). The goal of experience design, according to Jones (2008), is to persuade, stimulate, inform, envision, entertain and forecast events, influencing meaning and modifying behavior. Furthermore, Pizam (2010) considers consumers’ willingness to pay for memorable experiences, not necessarily for the quality of products or services, but for rarity and thrill. Pizam cites unique virtual and medieval dining experiences, and overnight stays in Bedouin tents as examples. There, despite low product and service quality, guests are emerging from their experiences highly satisfied. This analogy is relevant for the producers of memorable experiences, as the design of valued and lasting experiences is not necessarily dependent on opulent environments, props or over-the-top gestures.

Experience design shares common characteristics with innovation, but in the context of tourism and in particular in the lodging sector, both knowledge and applications are still in their infancy (Hjalager 2010; Sørensen & Sundbo 2007; Sundbo 1998). However, innovation concepts have thus far been predominately focused on product, service and process innovations. Hjalager (2010) provided product innovation examples such as Accor’s “Formula 1” concept, and the ‘…innovation through product diversification such as design and niche hotels…’ (p.2). Earlier, the review of literature discussed innovation concepts based on ICTs, which played a major part in automating and connecting core business functions, and since then, have transformed the industry around the interactions between technology, the tourism provider and the consumer. To this end, Buhalis et al. (2008) describe the correlations between ICT innovations and consumer experiences:

ICTs place users in the middle of its functionality and product delivery. Every tourist is different, carrying a unique blend of experiences, motivations and desires. To an extent the new sophisticated traveler has emerged as a result of experiences (p.4).

Experience innovation, based on Hjalager’s (2010) comprehensive review of the Tourism innovation literature, falls within the ‘managerial’ domain, which is predominantly concerned with organizing internal stakeholders such as personnel. Within this domain, other scholars suggest that innovation considerations need to include the managed customer experience (Gupta & Vajic 2000), as evidenced through
the emergence of adventure tourism whereby the customer participates in the production of experiences (Ellis & Waterton 2005).

Another domain that is critical in experience design considerations is management innovation. This area is mainly concerned with the identification (marketing) of new customer segments, and the engagement of customers across all touch-points including social media (Hankinson 2004; Xiang, Wöber & Fesenmaier 2008). Overall, innovativeness very much depends on the size of organization and market location; in the context of North American hotels, empirical evidence has established that successful innovation delivers competitive advantages and subsequent customer preference (Victorino et al. 2005).

2.5.3 Experience Design directed at the Luxury Guest Room

The review of the literature has addressed important experience characteristics that need to be considered in the design of memorable experiences. Furthermore, experiences within the context of the experience economy are ‘…designed, intentionally produced (staged), organized, foreseen, calculated, priced, or explicitly charged for…’ (Stamboulis & Skayannis 2003, p.38). Whilst this thesis is not specifically focused on describing the technical design methods of experiences, it does assume that an appropriate design methodology would guide producers charged with the design of memorable experiences. For example, U.S. based design firms have deployed “blueprinting” methods to assist hotel clients with customer experience concepts. Such methods expand into “customer experience mapping” that breaks the journey into a story for producers to discover memorable experience generating touch points (Gunter 2006; Zomerdijk & Voss 2010).

Such initiatives help to identify important design opportunities. For example, when Marriott International noticed that the guest experience was greatly influenced by their first opening of the guestroom door (Gunter 2006). Other proven methods, such as “Moments of Truth” (Carlzon 1987), “Quality Function Deployment” (Akao 1990), “Meaningful-Experience Creation” (Boswijk, Thijssen & Peelen 2006), the “Four Realms of Experience” framework (Pine & Gilmore 1998), creating experience clues (Berry & Carbone 2007), or customer experience analysis (Johnston & Clark 2008) can
assist producers in conceptualizing, and subsequently operationalizing value-generating experiences.

Moreover, the literature acknowledged the collaborative nature of designing memorable experiences (Binkhorst 2006; Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004; Stamboulis & Skayannis 2003). For this reason participating producers in this research, comprised of design, technology, branding, marketing, managerial and operational experts (Phase I), and their customers (Phase II). Additionally, the review of literature established that a holistic approach is needed when designing memorable experiences (Negrusa & Ionescu 2005; Schmitt 1999; Williams 2006), as well as acquiring a deep understanding of targeted consumers and their perspectives and emotions for which these experience elements are being developed. As stated earlier, customer emotions are an important consideration in the design of memorable experiences. Furthermore, Pullman and Gross (2004) discovered from their studies involving VIP customer experiences, that design elements evoking positive emotional responses correspond to increased customer loyalty.

Experience design requires special attention, as producers within the hospitality industry can no longer depend on merely providing services to achieve customer satisfaction, instead having to create value through experience-oriented design (McAlpine et al. 2010; Williams 2006). To this end, Pine and Gilmore’s four realm experience framework is seen as a practical and valuable model to research experiential concepts (Hosany & Witham; Morgan, Elbe & de Esteban Curiel 2009; Oh, Fiore & Jeoung 2007; Pullman & Gross 2004; Quadri-Felitti & Fiore 2012; Stamboulis & Skayannis 2003). Yet, the actual use of the framework in empirical research is limited to a few scholarly articles, in wine tourism (Ali-Knight & Carlsen 2003; Orsolini & Boksberger 2009; Pikkemaat et al. 2009), the cruise ship sector (Hosany & Witham 2010), and specifically within lodging, only one study that was located within the bed and breakfast accommodation segment, could be found (Oh, Fiore & Jeoung 2007).

In the following subsection, the four dimensions of the experience framework are discussed in more detail, and studies that have utilized this concept are explored based on the contemporary literature.
2.5.4 Four Realms of Experiences Framework

2.5.4.1 Prelude

Pine and Gilmore (1998) argued that the service economy had transformed into the experience economy, and that businesses needed to adjust their delivery-focused service offerings to staged experience offerings with emphasis placed on creating memorable consumption experiences (Sundbo 2006). Their original article “Welcome to the Experience Economy” (Pine & Gilmore 1998) was first published in the Harvard Business Review and was released as a book by the same title (Pine & Gilmore 1999). It has since been cited by authors from a wide range of discipline areas from business management, tourism, sports, leisure and hospitality (Ferreira & Teixeira 2013).

In an extensive review of the literature, Ferreira (2013) traced the impact of Pine and Gilmore’s article based on its geographical influence, the subject fields it covered, the main topic areas in which the “experience” concept was located, and the evolution of the type and methods of research that have since been published. Their review revealed that Pine and Gilmore’s article was one of the most cited within the experience concept; from its first release in 1998 to April 2012, a total of 286 articles referencing their work have been published of which 60 per cent of the citations were recorded between 2009 and 2012, a sign of growing interest in the field of customer experiences (Ferreira & Teixeira 2013).

In their book “Welcome to the Experience Economy”, Pine and Gilmore (1999) proffered that goods and services are no longer enough to foster economic expansion. Instead, experiences need to be seen as a distinct offering on which jobs and profits increasingly depend in this so called ‘experience economy’ context. Although this fundamental principle of the experience economy has received some criticism (Holbrook 2000; Poulsson & Kale 2004a), Pine and Gilmore (2011) reiterated, that ‘…true economic progress requires new for-fee experience offerings in either the physical or virtual realm…’ (p.xiii).

Christensen (2009) produced an extensive summary of global experience industries, both in geographical and industry terms; therein suggesting that geographically speaking, ‘…the U.S. is leading with a global market share of 35% of all experience
industries and markets…’: and, in industry terms, ‘…it is the tourism industry that accounts for the largest share of world Gross Domestic Product (GDP)…’ (pp.405-6). In support of the experience economy phenomenon, Christensen (2009) also stated that ‘…experience industries within an economy are growing at a faster rate (estimated at 10% annually) compared to other industries…’ (p.407).

With consumers willing to pay a premium for quality memorable experiences, an understanding of experience dimensions and the design and development of tourism related factors is deemed critical to achieve financial success within the hospitality and services sectors in today’s global competitive environment (Kandampully 2006; Oh, Fiore & Jeoung 2007; Pine & Gilmore 2011; Pine & Gilmore 1999).

2.5.4.2 Four Realms of Experiences

Earlier in this chapter, the review of the literature revealed that experiences are not easily defined, and lack a clear approach to commercialization or indeed operationalization. Relevant to the theme of this research, the four realms of experience framework provides a practical solution by which experience concepts can be designed and developed around five experience-design principles, (1) ‘theme the experience’, (2) ‘harmonize impressions with positive cues,’ (3) ‘eliminate negative cues,’ (4) ‘mix in memorabilia,’ and (5) ‘engage all five senses.’

Underpinning the underlying principle of travel-related experiences are the four realms or dimensions of the customer’s consumption experiences (Figure 2.2). These are (1) ‘education,’ (2) ‘esthetics,’ (3) ‘escapism,’ and (4) ‘entertainment’ dimensions, which relate to two important factors, (a) the degree of the customer’s desire to engage (absorption/immersion) and (b) the level of the customer’s participation (active/passive) (Pine & Gilmore 1999).
Within this framework, each experience occurrence is classified by its realm, which is determined by the level of guest participation (passive or active) and his/her engagement (absorbing or immersive). Along the passive engagement axis, a guest experience is characterized by “entertainment” or “esthetic” dimensions, whereas “education” and “escapism” experiences occur along the same axis, which consider a guest’s active participation. In other words, memorable experiences involve varying degrees of passive-active participation and absorbed-immersed engagement specific to their distinct experience realm. For example, ‘…entertaining (passively absorbed), educational (actively absorbed), esthetic (passively immersed), and escapist (actively immersed)…” (Holbrook 2000, p.180).

Here, Pine and Gilmore (2011) insist that simply adding entertainment to an experience offering may not sufficiently engage guests for their experience to become memorable,
hence, they and other authors within the experience economy domain advised (Carù & Cova 2003; Holbrook 2000) that commercial experiences would need to comprise of all four experience dimensions.

The richest experiences encompass aspects of all four realms. The sweet-spot for any compelling experience - incorporating entertainment, educational, escapist, and esthetic elements into otherwise generic space – is similarly a mnemonic place, a tool aiding in the creation of memories, distinct from the normally uneventful world of goods and services (Pine & Gilmore 2011, pp.58, 64).

2.5.4.3 Entertainment
Experiences generated through entertainment are often associated with the performing arts, like watching a play, concert, movie or TV. However, these types of experiences do not require the observer to get actively engaged. Entertainment may also be experienced when watching a parade passing by from the balcony of the guest room, from wall-hung paintings or photographs in a guest room suite, or from a book placed at the bedside for the guest’s reading pleasure. Producers of entertainment experiences may think of what make guests ‘…smile, laugh, or otherwise enjoy themselves…’ (Pine & Gilmore 2011, p.47).

Whilst these occurrences stimulate customers in different ways, guests are only passively absorbed in the experience. Many hotel lobbies have become entertaining venues; they feature DJ-compiled music, ornate artifacts and decorations, gushing waterfalls, and in some instances, elaborate lightshows and computer-generated imagery, for example, the ‘Living Art’ installation at the Cosmopolitan Hotel in Las Vegas.

2.5.4.4 Esthetics
Guests choosing to stay in unique architecturally and interior designed hotels or indeed especially themed guests rooms, are doing so to immerse themselves in the environment. Whilst guests are immersed in the esthetic experience, they are also passively engaged by simply enjoying their surroundings. These originally designed hotels are often the key differentiator, which the online booking site “Design Hotels” refers to as run by ‘visionary hoteliers…an Original, someone with a passion for
genuine hospitality and cultural authenticity, for thought-provoking design and ground-breaking architecture’ (www.corporate.designhotels.com). In their description of what characterises these design hotels, the site states that ‘All Originals stand for the individual, esthetics and service-driven experiences that their hotels provide’ Design Hotels n.d., viewed 15 April 2013 (<http://corporate.designhotels.com/about_design_hotels>). Here, producers of esthetics experiences consider what would make guests ‘…want to come in and simply hang out, thereby creating an environment where guests feel free to be…’ (McLellan 2000, p.62).

2.5.4.5 Education
Within the education realm, guests are absorbed in the event unfolding before them – their minds are engaged and they become active participants in knowledge or skill creation. For example, guests partake in hotel-arranged activities that engage the mind (and the body). Such activities may be staged by the Executive Chef through hands-on cooking classes, by the Executive Housekeeping or through walking the gardens and learning about the vegetation from the Head Gardner. A key motivator for travel is to ‘self-educate’ (Prentice 2004). Hence, producers of education experiences should consider guests as active learners that become fully engaged and learn from the experience.

2.5.4.6 Escapism
Within the escapism aspect of an experience, guests are fully immersed and become actively involved in the activities. Frequent examples include extreme sports, theme parks, motion-based attractions like flight simulators, or themed attractions; the focus for producers should become what guests ought to do that makes them, at times, forget reality, routines and daily life. Pine and Gilmore (2011) refer to this dimension as being in ‘…polar opposite of entertainment…’ (p.49). Taking the example of the ‘Living Art’ experience at the Cosmopolitan Hotel in Las Vegas, producers could add an escapism dimension by allowing their guests to become artist, actor, and producer in the content creation and dissemination. Or, they may also, for a day, go behind the scene and partake in experiential activities together with hotel personnel. Similarly, they may choose to escape into the sanctuary of their luxury bathroom and actively create their own wellness and relaxation experience.
Escapism experiences can also be staged in computer-mediated environments (Jeong & Jeon 2008). That is, new technology advances in virtual reality (Adner et al. 2003) and "virtual environments" (VE) can be navigated and possibly interacted with. These escapist experiences can result in real-time stimulation of one or more of the user's five senses' (Guttentag 2010). Referring back to Verhoef’s et al.’s (2009) urging to consider the interactions among customers, producers may design activities for their guests. For example, like playing a multiuser online game with fellow travelers, or joining an online forum of in-house guests interested in destination-related cultural and content exchange. Allowing both physical immersion and psychological presence, ‘…VR can allow guests to be transported into another place without leaving the actual location…’ where the participant is based (Sanchez-Vives & Slater 2005, p.333). These new digital technologies will bring about innovation for the purpose of customer value creation that according to Pine (2011), have the potential to:

[...] enrich our lives by augmenting and thereby enhancing our reality; by engaging us through alternate views of reality that make us active participants in the world around us; by letting us play with time in ways not otherwise possible; by engrossing us in virtual worlds that enchant and capture our time; by allowing us to interact with those worlds through material devices and even gestures; by letting us physically realize whatever we imagine; and by enabling virtual representations that mirror our reality to enlighten us from a new vantage point (p.5).

In the following subsection, relevant case studies that have applied the four realms framework within tourism and the lodging sector are reviewed.

2.5.5 Four Realms of Experiences – empirical studies within Tourism

In this subsection, the review of literature explores tourism related studies that have applied the four realms framework empirically. Despite the popularity of Pine and Gilmore’s original concept of the experience economy, the four realms experience framework previously described has only been used by a few scholars. Some authors have attributed this to the lack of tangible measures available to capture the underlying dimensions of the four realms (Carù & Cova 2003).

In what appears to be the only study within hospitality lodging that has empirically tested the four realms concept, Oh et al. (2007) operationalized the four realms to
capture guest staying experiences in a rural bed-and-breakfast (B&B) venue in the United States. Having developed a scale to measure the underlying experience dimensions, the researchers introduced several theoretical variables in order to empirically test the predictive validity of experience economy concepts within the lodging sector.

Theoretical variables included arousal, memories, overall quality and customer satisfaction; the findings suggest that well staged experiences lead to positive memories, which have equally positive satisfaction and future intention outcomes (Oh, Fiore & Jeoung 2007). When measuring memorable experience occurrences across the four realms, Oh, et al. (2007) found that entertainment experiences were not significantly related to arousal, memories, overall quality and customer satisfaction. The opposite was found to be true for experiences related to the Esthetics realm.

With educational experiences, those that actively engage the guest in mind, and body, whilst absorbing the occurrence, were found to be mostly related to arousal, but not to memories. The study findings in relation to escapist experiences suggest that these were not significantly related to arousal, memories, overall quality or customer satisfaction. Based on their study exploring guest experiences generated within the B&B accommodation setting, Oh, et al. (2007) concluded that the four realms framework is a reliable and valid measure of experience concepts. However, the authors note that their study was limited to only one B&B, one industry (B&B accommodation), and one state in the United States.

Drawing on the Oh, Fiore and Jeoung (2007) experience measurement scale, Hosany and Witham (2010) applied the four realms framework in the cruise vacation segment to identify the underlying dimension of cruisers’ experiences; while at the same time, measuring satisfaction and intention to recommend outcomes. Summarizing their findings, the results confirm the reliability and validity of the four realms framework, whilst endorsing the Oh et al. (2007) measurement scale as applicable in different consumption situations. Furthermore, their findings foregrounded the esthetics realm as the main determinant of passenger’s experiential outcomes, thereby showing similarity to the dominant dimension that the Oh, Fiore and Jeoung (2007) study produced with
guests in a B&B setting. When considering satisfaction and intention to recommend outcomes, Hosany and Witham (2010) found that passenger experiences across the four realms had a direct effect on the intention to recommend, which was partially mediated through satisfaction outcomes. However, like Oh et al. (2007), they recommended further research citing limitations mainly based on the scale of their study (Oh et al.’s one B&B, and Hosany and Witham’s one cruise ship).

Still within the context of tourism, Quadri-Felitti and Fiore (2012) explored the pertinent constructs of the four realms experience model to investigate the experiential nature of consumption in wine tourism. In an extensive review of the literature, they discovered that only two scholarly articles had made use of the four realms experience framework within wine tourism research (Ali-Knight & Carlsen 2003; Pikkemaat et al. 2009). These studies confirmed the usefulness of the four realms model after cataloging the descriptions and motivating factors of the current wine tourism literature using the constructs of the four realms framework.

Summarizing the findings derived from their comprehensive review, the authors stressed that whilst the growing body of research validated a link to experiential consumer behaviors within the field of wine tourism, more research was needed to address the holistic nature of consumer experiences across accommodation, tourist attractions and recreational activities. Furthermore, the authors question whether all of the four realms are equally contributing factors to the total tourism experience. In other words, understanding the ‘…gap between what wine tourists want in their total wine destination experience and what tourism suppliers deliver…’ (Quadri-Felitti & Fiore 2012, p.18).

2.6 Review of Literature - Summary

The review of the literature has highlighted the increasing attention given in tourism and management research to the importance of consumer experiences. This attention acknowledges that the customer experience formed an important part of consumption, which in the main, was based on intangible and experiential qualities. Placed within the broader context of tourism and hospitality, and more particularly within the setting of this research, the review of the most pertinent literature suggested that these

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consumption experience qualities were influenced by individual consumer characteristics, lifestyle, and the facilitation of feelings, emotions, satisfaction, and value-creation that guests encountered with an organization.

Responding to economic forces (technology, innovation, globalization) and evolving societal fundamentals, organizations that offered experiences as a strategic choice to capture new economic value and competitive differentiation were understood to participate in the experience economy phenomenon. Within this economy, the demand for experiences was motivated by increasing levels of affluence, transience, information flow, and an unlimited choice of products and services, which has impacted consumption behaviors and lifestyle aspirations. No longer content with pure material things, consumers are adjusting their consumption decision making and behavior to satisfy their experiential and emotional needs.

Tourism, an industry that has been producing experiences for centuries, is said to be at the forefront of staging the type of experiences that consumers find to be unique and memorable. However, in view of this research’s prime purpose, managerial understanding of the supply of experience concepts, the design of guest experiences, and specifically, insights into what are the attributes or generators of memorable experiences, is still in its infancy.

Affluence, lifestyle, leisure and demography are considered key conditions of the experience economy, and the review of literature has established a close link to the luxury guest room environment as an important stage for the design, delivery and consumption of memorable experiences. Producers that recognize the importance of offering memorable guest experiences have the opportunity to reconsider the traditional hotel pricing model (fixed daily room rate), where carefully orchestrated and co-produced experiences have the potential to delight guests, who in return are willing to pay a premium for the experience offering and memory itself.

Furthermore, evolving technological innovations, such as virtual spaces, nanotechnology and claytronics, present producers with new opportunities to engage with their guests in pre- and post-consumption events and personalization options. As
physical experience environments are expanding to include virtual experience spaces, producers will need to innovate and adjust their future revenue models.

The review of literature has revealed that a distinction needs to be made between the consumption of products and services, and that experiences must be seen as a separate construct. Whilst recognizing the critical aspects of service delivery measured by customer satisfaction and service quality, the essence of an experience lies in customizing services to transform them into experiences. In the signs and signals attached to the experience offering, it is what happens between the guest and the provider in that extended consumption phase, and the subsequent memory of the encounter that creates additional value for the customer.

Although experiences are being recognized as important offerings, distinct from products and services, the review of literature supported the notion that experiences are difficult to measure. For the purpose of this research, the four realms concept was further examined, producing necessary evidence that upheld the framework as a practical solution for assessing memorable experiences. Yet, despite the popularity of the original concept of the experience economy, the four realms framework has so far only been used by a few scholars, and been tested only once in another hospitality lodging study.

Moreover, the review of literature highlighted that, thus far, there has been relatively little in-depth research into experiences and the tourist experience construct in general. In particular, the consumption of memorable guest experiences within the luxury hotel sector and it’s most valuable resource – the hotel guest room has not been the focus of scholarly research. As a result, the broader notion of experiences as economic offerings, comparative to the service economy, are theoretically still in their infancy.

These findings further support the importance of this research, and the contribution it makes for both academic and managerial purposes. Examining both the business and consumer perspectives, the review of literature produced valuable insights and motivations behind the supply and demand for memorable experiences. This understanding provides the critical background to answer the research questions.
directed at both the producers (Phase I) and the consumers (Phase II). The clear need for
a deeper understanding of how to access the experience economy justifies the research
and the methodology and methods chosen, which are explained in the next chapter
(Chapter 3).
Chapter Three - Research Design and Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the research design approach, methodology and methods employed to gather data, thus answering the research questions posed in Chapter 1. Specifically, the chapter comprises four major parts. The first part (Section 3.1) explains the research design rationale and justification for using qualitative research methods, and their applications in Tourism. This is followed by Section 3.2, which discusses and outlines the model development and chosen methods for Phase I involving the producers. Section 3.3 addresses the data collection method chosen for Phase II involving the consumers. The methods of data collection, types of data collected and the reasons for the overall approach are described. The chapter concludes with reference to the Ethical clearance granted by the “Human Research Ethics Committee” for this research project, and a brief summary.

The main aim of this research chapter is to explain the most appropriate research methodology to answer the research questions developed in Chapter 1. This includes the methods selected to engage with two distinct groups of participants that exemplify the experience economy. The first group is the producers who are responsible for the design and development of memorable experience generators, using “…services as a stage and goods as props to engage individual customers in a way that creates a memorable event’ (Pine & Gilmore 1999, p.98). The second is the consumers (frequent traveling guests), who are engaged in the consumption of memorable experiences while staying in luxury hotel accommodations.

As noted in Chapter 1, this research is set within the context of the luxury hospitality sector focusing on its diverse stakeholder community. As well as understanding the current situation, it was deemed important to also capture the trends that industry stakeholders, who produce, design and develop luxury hospitality products and services, envisage in the future, so that they may capitalize on the expanding needs of consumers within the experience economy. This also allows for the time lag in the development of
new hotels so that new developments might capture the findings of this research when deemed relevant.

The luxury guest room, acknowledged as the industry's highest contributor of revenue and profit (Cross, Higbie & Cross 2009; DeVeau et al. 1996), was the focus of this research. In particular, the research sought to understand the experience generator attributes that could generate memorable experiences. By exploring both the supply and demand sides within the experience economy, valuable insights were anticipated from engaging with expert producers and experienced consumers.

The review of literature informed the research methodology selection, research instrument design, and the data collection processes to most suitable engage with these two groups of participants, and to answer the research questions designed to explore the luxury hospitality guest room experience.

3.1 Research Design

The research design forms a critical component of any research project; it helps the researcher to decide which research design should be used to study a specific topic (Creswell 2006). Research may mean to examine something ‘carefully’, ‘intensively’, and ‘critically’ in order to discover a new phenomenon or confirm or reject previous assumptions (Sikes, Nixon & Carr 2003). According to Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) the nature of inquiry is based on assumptions: and the researcher may claim different assumptions about the nature of knowledge (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2013). These assumptions are, firstly, associated with different ways of constructing reality (ontology) of how things really are (Denzin & Lincoln 1998). Secondly, they are based on different forms of knowledge of that reality (epistemology), and thirdly, through different ways of knowing that reality (methodology) (Denzin & Lincoln 1998).

In other words, the ontological assumptions tend to inform the epistemological assumptions, which assist the researcher to select the most appropriate techniques and procedures (methodology) for getting the research done (Sale, Lohfeld & Brazil 2002). While research can be conducted in a variety of ways (qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods), the overall decision on the most appropriate research design depends
on what, why, and how the data is required to address the research problem (Burns & Grove 2008; Guba & Lincoln 1994).

As highlighted in Chapter 1, due to the exploratory and multidimensional nature of this research study, the nature of tourism and, more specifically, the nature of experiences, a constructivism approach was determined as most appropriate. This is because qualitative data collection and analysis methods can assist in a deeper understanding of this, as yet, under researched phenomenon. To this end, the research questions were developed to elicit from producers and consumers their understanding and meaning applied to the situation being studied (Creswell 1998). In addition, the collection of qualitative data allowed the researcher to produce a ‘pattern of meanings’ developed throughout the research process (Creswell 2003, p.9). Addressing both participant groups, the research questions were:

1. What type of memorable experience generators and dimensions (the four realms) do producers consider address current and future guest experience needs within the luxury hotel guest room?

2. Which memorable experience generators and dimensions (the four realms) do consumers perceive as valuable in the context of the current luxury hotel room?

3. What type of future memorable experience generators and dimensions (the four realms) are producers likely to design and develop within the luxury hotel guest room that will generate new forms of perceived economic value (ROI)?

4. What type of luxury hotel room related experiences will consumers desire between now and 2020?

5. What are the gaps between producer and consumer perceptions of essential experiential needs in the future luxury guest room?

Cater and Little (2007) offer a simple flow diagram (Figure 3.1) that illustrates the logical relationship between epistemology and methodology, which justifies the method that leads to data and its analysis, and the development of knowledge claims.
In line with Carter and Little’s (Carter & Little) relationship diagram, in the next sections, the research design, selected for this research is explained in the logical order of epistemology, methodology, and methods presented in Figure 3.1 above.

### 3.1.1 Epistemology

Epistemology is the study of the nature of knowledge and justification (Schwandt 2001); it questions what knowledge is and how it can be acquired (Sosa 1991), and ‘…how we know what we know…’ (Crotty 1998, p.8). Epistemology, methodology, and method are the three most important considerations of research, and should form the bases of a framework that assists the researcher in planning, implementing, and evaluating the quality of research (Carter & Little 2007). Crotty (1998) argued that the researcher intentionally adopts a position toward the nature of knowledge (be it objective or subjective), which governs the theoretical perspective (in this case, constructivism) throughout the entire research process.

With several epistemological perspectives to consider, including constructivism, objectivism, and subjectivism (Creswell 2006), Crotty (1998) explains that from a
constructivism approach:

…all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context… (p.42).

Crotty (1998) further notes, that epistemology is closely related to ontology – ‘…the study of being…’ (p.10), where realities exist outside of the mind. In other words, conventional distinctions between epistemological and ontological viewpoints disappear in constructivist research as the ‘…investigator and the object of investigation are [...] interactively linked so that the findings are literally created as the investigation proceeds’ (Guba 1989, p.111). Moreover, constructivism allows social insights to emerge, uncovering human attitudes, values and shared belief at a deeper level (Ciot 2009; Creswell 2006; Denzin & Lincoln 1998; MacCannell 1976).

Constructivism is an epistemology that offers an explanation of the nature of knowledge and how human beings learn. From the researcher’s initial stance toward the nature of knowledge, the theoretical perspectives are implicit in the research questions, which in turn dictate the choice of methodology. In the context of this research, the research participants’ understanding is constructed based on his or her expertise, past experiences and background knowledge. As a result, the implications are that the researcher has to be the primary inquirer to fully comprehend, respond and describe the complex interactions between interviewer and interviewee.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) proposed that qualitative research provides important perspectives to research scholars seeking to differentiate between ‘positivistic’ and ‘naturalistic’ research inquiries. In their book entitled “Naturalistic Inquiry”, Lincoln and Guba (1985) outline a number of important characteristics that differentiate between naturalistic and positivistic inquiries. Naturalistic inquiry is best suited for research involving, for example, a natural setting and the utilization of tacit knowledge. Here, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that the research participants should be the natural setting as their ‘…realities are wholes that cannot be understood in isolation from their contexts’ (p.39).
When employing a constructivism perspective, the emphasis is placed on the ways that people create meaning of the world through a series of individual constructs (Glasersfeld 1989). It allows both the researcher and participants to display multiple constructed realities of meanings and explanations (Ritchie & Lewis 2003), which then allows for the interview participant / researcher relationship interaction to be included in the analysis. Guba and Lincoln (1989) suggest that within a constructivist epistemology it is: ‘…impossible to separate the inquirer from the inquired into. It is precisely their interaction that creates the data that will emerge from the inquiry’ (p.88).

3.1.2 Theoretical Perspective

As has been established, there are numerous ways of conducting research aimed at achieving the research goals, because there are various theoretical perspectives that result from epistemological and ontological stances (Crotty 1998). As stated earlier, the selection of the most appropriate method or methods is closely linked to what, why and how data is required to answer the core research questions. To capture the essence of qualitative research, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) offer the following working definitions:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible. These practices...turn the world into a series of representations including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (p.3).

Qualitative research can provide valuable data and insights into experience-focused phenomena that involve human interactions. This is confirmed by Ritchie and Hudson’s (2009) study into which specific methodologies have most commonly been used in tourism experience research. They conclude that qualitative methods are most favored.

The researcher employed a constructivist perspective, capturing extracts from participant’s statements that contextualize the situation described in detail from the individual’s stance. This procedure provides credibility to the research, extending to the reader a true account of a specific situation, interaction, or experience (Creswell & Miller 2000). To elicit in-depth information from both respondent groups that is, the
views of producers and consumers, a two-stage method was applied. Firstly, a web-based Delphi-like study (explained in detail in Section 3.2.1), guided by the four realms experience framework (Section 3.2.4.3), was conducted to gain a perspective from the producers. Participating producers were recruited from leading hotel brands, luxury boutique hotels, and from relevant industry suppliers (architects, interior designers, technology solution providers). Due to the large concentration of global hotel chains with their corporate headquarters located in North America, all panel participants targeted were based in North America, either in the United States or Canada.

In the second stage, a face-to-face, semi-structured interview process (Section 3.3.1) was deployed to engage with a group of consumers. Consumer were targeted purposefully based on the frequency of their stays in luxury hotel rooms, which implied that they held a wealth of information through their own individual experiences. Building on the outcomes of the Delphi-like study, validation of the findings derived from the producers in Phase I of this research was sought from these high-end, experiential consumers’ perspectives. Thus the research was sequential in nature.

3.1.3 Methodology

Crotty (1998) describe methodology as the ‘…strategy, plan of action, process or design…’ (p.3), while Somekh and Lewin (2005) define methodology as ‘…the collection of methods or rules by which a particular piece of research is undertaken’ (p.346). For each of the two research phases mentioned above, a qualitative research methodology was applied. The purpose was to elicit in-depth information from two groups of informants; the initial research emphasis (Phase I) involved the producers or business stakeholders in the luxury hotel sector.

To this end, a Delphi-like study method was selected as the most appropriate qualitative research technique to capture the producers’ views because this structured technique allowed a group of individuals, as a whole, to consider, reflect upon and provide opinions on complex issues (Linstone & Turoff 1975). By taking a constructivist perspective, the emphasis was placed on how individual producers expressed their understanding of the issues they were presented with. To guide the inquiry, Pine and Gilmore’s (1998) four realms of experience framework (educational, esthetical,
escapism and entertainment dimensions) was employed. The objective was to develop a conceptual understanding of the dimensions of experiential consumption and the value placed on designing and developing memorable experiences in the luxury hotel guest room, now and in the future.

Following Phase One, a second phase (Phase II) involving frequent travelling consumers was conducted. These respondents were engaged in individual face-to-face interviews to elicit their personal perceptions of the experience attributes, memorable experience generator types, that were seen as the triggers of memorable stay experiences. Consumer participants were also asked to express their future experience desires by identifying emerging experience generator types. The researcher followed a purposely-designed, semi-structured interview schedule informed by the review of literature and guided by Pine and Gilmore’s (1999) experience framework. At the completion of each interview, a short questionnaire (explained further in Section 3.3.4) was issued to obtain some demographic and travel-related information from participants, and to explore findings derived from the research conducted with the producers. Specifically, interviewees were asked to rank producers’ attributes based on perceived value and importance.

3.1.4 Methods

There has been substantial discussions among scholars concerning methodological issues and, in particular, the selection of an appropriate research methodology suitable for tourism related studies (Dann, Nash & Pearce 1988; Jafari & Aaser 1988; Pearce & Butler 1993; Ritchie & Goeldner 1994). As Cohen (1988) suggests, the most significant contributions in tourism have been made by researchers that have adopted qualitative research methods most likely because it is a relatively new and emerging discipline. Within the experience-focused tourism literature, researchers acknowledge that experiences and perceptions of experiences are hard to measure.

Specific to the field of leisure and tourism, Arnold and Price (1993) recognized in their extensive study involving an adventure tourism experience, that the conventional approach to measuring tourist satisfaction through quantitative studies, would not have captured the importance participants placed on the experience itself, rather than the
product (river rafting) (Ritchie & Hudson 2009). Similarly, in an earlier study conducted by Andereck et al. (2006), where the purpose was to elicit the meaning tourists gave to their experiences; three methodological approaches were taken to engage study participants, but it was only through in-depth interviews that a connection to the experience was uncovered.

Whilst qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods studies permeate the hotel and tourism related literature, qualitative methods are most appropriate for this research because the nature of tourism and more specifically the nature of experiences involve human interactions, which Tribe (1997) asserts requires tourism researchers to distinguish between business activities, including marketing, organization and corporate planning, and social activities, including motivation, choice, satisfaction and interaction.

It is here that qualitative research comes to the fore because it is not aimed at findings derived from statistical procedures. Instead, it is aimed at gaining a deep naturalistic understanding from the perspective of the research participants and the meanings they give to their experiences (Denzin & Lincoln 2000). This inevitably involves gaining a deeper understanding of perceptions and indeed emotions, in the case of experiences, which cannot be easily measured in quantitative terms (Minichiello et al. 1995).

The use of qualitative methods also fits with Hollinshead et al.’s (2007) view that tourism involves critical and dynamic fields of seeing, being, experiencing, inventing, and knowing of and about the world, promoting travel and tourism as an:

…endlessly creative and mediating field of lived experience that, therefore, should be much more deeply explored interpretively, and thereby "qualitatively," in the light of the new insights that qualitative researchers have lately gained across human science disciplines into matters of meaning, textuality, and rhetorical power (p.85).

Based on an extensive and comprehensive review of consumer and tourist experience research, Ritchie and Hudson (2009) observed that from the theoretical origins of studies into the consumer experience e.g. Csikszentmihalyi, few studies have been conducted into the experience phenomenon from a hospitality perspective. Thus, this phenomenon is still at an exploratory stage.
In both study phases, the four realms of experience framework (Pine & Gilmore 1999) was selected for the purposes of identifying important memorable experience generator themes as described in detail for each group of participants. As the review of the literature found, despite the popularity of Pine and Gilmore’s original concept of the experience economy, only a few scholars have used the four realms experience framework, as previously described in Chapter 2. Hence, the use of exploratory methods as a means to validate the use of the four realms model was deemed to potentially provide a further contribution to knowledge.

3.2 Research Model Development (The Producers)

As explained in earlier, this research involved two distinct phases; hence, it is important to explain each phase in more detail.

3.2.1 Phase One - The Delphi Method

The Delphi method has been successfully used in science, technology and business related fields since it was first developed in 1944 by the German-American logician and futurologist Olf Helmer and colleagues at the University of Chicago (Buckley 1995). The Delphi method was developed on the notion that group judgments are more valid than individual judgments. As a qualitative research method, it predicts operational trends based on the exchange of forward-looking expert views and their subsequent consensus of opinion reached at the outset of the Delphi study (Linstone & Turoff 1975).

A Delphi-like method was selected as the most appropriate qualitative research technique involving the producers, because this structured method allows a group of individuals, as a whole, to consider, reflect upon and provide opinions on complex issues, whilst remaining anonymous (Linstone & Turoff 1975). Furthermore, the Delphi method has been used for tourism research (Donohoe & Needham 2009; Garrod & Fyall 2005), and as a valuable tool to predict operational trends based on consensus of opinions reached by a group of experts. More specifically, it has been applied successful as a consumer trend forecasting tool in the hospitality sector, examining the consumption behavior of particular market segments (Knutson et al. 2005).
Since its inception, the Delphi technique has been used thousands of times as a useful qualitative research method, proving to be a practical alternative to traditional consensus-seeking and face-to-face research mechanism such as focus groups and think-tanks (Gordon 1994). Amongst its many advantages, Delphi allows experts to remain anonymous and to be geographically dispersed (Donohoe & Needham 2009; Gordon 1994; Rowe & Wright 1999). This means that participants can interact around the subject topic without ever having to meet as a group (Garrod & Fyall 2005). Thus the method is valuable in a global hospitality context where experts can participate with minimal interruption to their busy schedules.

It is worth mentioning that the Delphi method has received some critical comments (Goodman 1987; Ludwig 1997; Martino 1993; Powell 2003; Sackman 1974; Wheeller, Hart & Whysall 1990), citing the lack of rigorous and commonly agreed guidelines; however more recently, others concur that the technique has been continuously refined and it’s characteristics accepted as a proven and valuable contributor (Landeta 2006). For the purpose of this research, a Delphi-like method was adopted, as many of its positive characteristics outweigh some of the challenges cited during the 1980s and ‘90s.

3.2.2 Delphi-like study with the “Producers”

The Delphi method has also been widely and successfully used in the tourism and hospitality field (Green, Hunter & Moore 1990; Kaynak, Bloom & Leibold 1994; O’Connor & Murphy 2004; Sherwood 2007; Weber & Ladkin 2003; Yong, Keng & Leng 1993). For the purpose of this research, the advantage of applying a Delphi-like technique lies in its ability to offer participating producers, sequential feedback during several rounds of questioning whilst remaining anonymous and therefore free to express their opinions (Donohoe & Needham 2009). It is these characteristics that make the Delphi method relevant to tourism research, where uncertainty over factors that may influence the industry can be discussed freely amongst a diverse group of industry and topical experts, without fear of retribution from their expert peer group (Weber & Ladkin 2003).
The application and implementation of a Delphi-like method was carefully managed throughout this study. Guiding the Delphi-like design, Day and Bobeva’s (2005) “Generic Delphi Toolkit” (GDT), which was developed based on a comprehensive analysis of the Delphi literature, provided a useful framework. Indeed, Day and Bobeva’s (2005) design criterion template served as a useful decision making tool; in that the reference guide presented in Table 3.1 allowed for key inquiry criteria to be established for this study at the very outset.

Table 3.1. Delphi Inquiry Design Criterion (Adapted from Day and Bobeva, 2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria (Day and Bobeva)</th>
<th>Design Choice for this Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the study</td>
<td>Exploration and evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of rounds</td>
<td>Between 2 – 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>Heterogeneous group of industry experts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode of operation</td>
<td>Remote access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymity of panel</td>
<td>Full anonymity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication media</td>
<td>Web-based (online survey site)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concurrency of rounds</td>
<td>Sequential set of rounds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The GDT offers a three-stage process, namely; “Preparation, Convergence, Consensus”. In the “Preparation” stage, the focus is placed on identifying and communicating the main research problem to be addressed; identifying and selecting expert participants, and designing and testing an online study tool and developing a series of open-ended questions. In the “Convergence” stage, the focus expands toward administering a multi-round study (communicating with participants, monitoring participation, analyzing data, and providing feedback); and finally, in the “Consensus” stage, attention is directed toward the compiling and reporting of research results and seeking consensus and additional feedback on these results. Consequently, the GDT has been recognized as a purposeful reference standard for designing, adapting and implementing a Delphi study (Donohoe 2011).
In summary, considerable investigation into the most appropriate method to engage a group of producer experts was undertaken. The Delphi method provides distinct advantages, when the purpose is to seek consensus amongst these experts on uncertain and often complex and intangible issues (Linstone & Turoff 1975). Targeting producers at the most expert level also meant that they would likely be situated in geographically dispersed locations, making it extremely difficult to engage with them in a physical space, and in a focus-group like environment. Furthermore, the competitive nature of the industry and competition between hospitality brands had the potential to severely limit an open group discussion about current and future memorable experience design considerations. Hence the anonymity offered by engaging participants in a Delhi-like study, provided additional validation to use this proven methodology.

3.2.3 Sampling

The initial research emphasis (Phase I) focused on the producers or key stakeholders in the design and development of luxury hotel accommodation. Producers targeted for participation in this study were experts in their field; they held senior positions in both private and public companies, representing either individual hotels or a multitude of properties under global brands. In order to capture a well-balanced set of responses, these experts were targeted based on their job titles, decision-making responsibilities, and far-reaching duties across global markets and internationally renowned multi-brand hotel companies. At the same time, they held direct responsibility for current and future hotel guest rooms. Their responsibilities are described in more detail in Section 3.2.4.2.

With specific knowledge and experience in the global luxury hotel sector, almost all participating experts were located in North America (one expert, with global responsibilities, was based in Hong Kong, China at the time of the study). This study phase was designed to elicit from the producers, their understanding of the experience economy and whether memorable experiences were becoming a central part of guest room design decisions.
3.2.4 Delphi Design and Implementation (A Three-stage Approach)

3.2.4.1 Stage 1- Preparation

The preparatory stages of a Delphi study, guided by a methodically structured Delphi plan, are intrinsically linked to achieving the objectives of the Delphi study (Miller 2001). Hence the preparation phase called for rigorous groundwork. For this study a three-stage Delphi implementation approach was followed, which was adapted from Day and Bobeva’s (2005) GDT. This is presented in Figure 3.2 below.

![Figure 3.2. Three-stage Delphi approach - Phase I (adapted after Day and Bobeva, 2005)](image)

The first stage, “Preparation”, involved outlining the purpose statement (the basis for seeking consensus). This was given careful consideration, as it needed to translate purposefully and meaningfully to all participating panel members. According to Andranovich (1995), the study problem (purpose) and questions posed, ought to match the study participants’ interests in order to ensure meaningful participation. Further
consideration toward the size of the expert panel was based on the review of the Delphi literature. The method’s application suggests that the Delphi technique has been successfully used with expert panels comprising of as few as four and as many as 904 participants and that the panel size should be determined based on the number of experts available (Smith 1995).

Recent Tourism studies that have used Delphi, suggest that between 9 and 12 experts is appropriate (Okoli & Pawlowski 2004). Briedenhann and Butts (2006) proposed that Delphi studies conducted with a heterogeneous group of experts, would benefit from a larger group of participants, however the constraint lies in their availability (Smith 1995). A group comprising of between 9 and 12 experts was deemed adequate for this study, given the high level of expertise identified among the targeted group of industry experts, and their far-reaching areas of responsibility across global markets and internationally renowned multi-brands. Defining the panel expert criteria, the following table (Table 3.2) identifies the roles and positions targeted for representation in the study.
Table 3.2. Eligible Industry Experts Identified for the Delphi Panel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Phase</th>
<th>Phase I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Participants targeted</td>
<td>9 - 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Delphi Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age range</td>
<td>30-65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Titles / Roles</td>
<td>Hotel Chain - Executives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>President / CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chief Development Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chief Design Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chief Marketing Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chief Brand Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chief Procurement Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vice President – Brand ‘x’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vice President – Rooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vice President – Global Partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vice President – Revenue Mgt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hotel Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General Manager (Chain Hotel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General Manager (Boutique Hotel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creative Executives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Architect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Designer (Interior)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Designer (Experiences)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Technology / Innovation Executives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vice President, Technology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2.4.2 Selection of the Delphi Panel
The quality of the Delphi study can be positively impacted by identifying and selecting a well-balanced, subject specific, expert panel made up of participants that are individually motivated by the shared knowledge and insights to be gained during and at the conclusion of the study (Garrod & Fyall 2005). For this study phase, a
A heterogeneous group of industry producers was identified by their roles and titles, and their respective responsibilities linked to the design and development of luxury hotel guest rooms. These key decision makers were drawn from leading global hotel groups, internationally recognized boutique hotels, and executives associated with companies or organizations that closely collaborate with the luxury hotel industry in the area of experience design, technology, products and services.

A list of 20 potential panel members was drawn up with members identified through inquiry with industry leaders and by means of the researcher’s personal industry network. Potential panel members were contacted via a participant enrolment notification email (Appendix 3.A) and followed up with a phone call. Out of the 20 experts contacted, 17 agreed to participate in this study. Their roles and titles are listed in the following table (Table 3.3).
### Table 3.3. Phase I - The Delphi Panel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Phase</th>
<th>Phase I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Participants who confirmed</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Delphi-like Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age range</td>
<td>30-65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Titles / Roles</td>
<td><strong>Hotel Chain - Executives</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chief Brand Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chief Technology Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Snr. Vice President – Brand Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Global Brand Officer – ‘x’ brands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Global Brand Officer – ‘y’ brands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dir. Global Guest Experience - ‘x’ brands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dir. Global Guest Experience - ‘y’ brands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dir. Global Brand - ‘z’ brands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dir. Global Brand - ‘xy’ brands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vice President - Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Hotel Management</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General Manager  (Chain Hotel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General Manager  (Boutique Hotel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Executive Housekeeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Technology / Innovation Executives</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vice President, Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creative Executives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chief Designer (Interior)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Chief Experience Designer</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent Industry Experts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marketing and Branding Expert</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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3.2.4.3 Theoretical Framework to Guide the Study Question Design

A series of study questions was designed to capture the views of the expert panel. Prior to embarking on this phase, however, a number of theoretical frameworks were reviewed and carefully considered for this study. Close attention was given to frameworks that have been successfully applied when exploring experience dimensions, and specifically used in recent empirical research in the field of tourism. In a comprehensive review of experience research frameworks, Ritchie and Hudson (2009) argued that Pine and Gilmore’s four realms of experiences model (Figure 3.3) prompted widespread interest amongst producers in utilizing experience concepts in a systematic manner.

The four realms or dimensions of customer’s consumption experiences are defined by (a) education, (b) esthetics, (c) escapism, and (d) entertainment, which relate to two important factors. These are; (1) the degree of the customer’s desire to engage (absorption/immersion) and (2) the level of the customer’s participation (active/passive) (Pine & Gilmore 1999). The four realm framework was previously applied within the bed and breakfast sector and was deemed an appropriate tool to develop a conceptual understanding of experiential consumption (Oh, Fiore & Jeoung 2007). The study questions aimed at the producers, were formulated and presented based on Pine & Gilmore’s four realms framework, allowing for a structured approach to guide the data collection and subsequent analysis of opinions among participating panel experts to occur.
3.2.4.4 Study Instrument Design

3.2.4.4.1 Web-based Delphi Studies

This study targeted industry experts associated with leading organizations, both Public and Private, operating luxury hotels in global markets. These experts held executive leadership positions that place a high demand on their valuable time. They were also working in geographically dispersed locations and often on the move - either traveling, participating in global industry forums or being actively engaged in projects that required them to be away from their home base. Under these circumstances, communicating with these experts can often be a challenge because their spare time may occur at different intervals during the day. After consulting these and other busy executives as to how they preferred to engage in research that places demand on their intellectual input, the use of an electronic medium was preferred.
By definition, a web-based study is the collection of data through a self-administered set of questions, that are entered in an online environment via the World Wide Web (Archer 2008). Generally speaking, Americans are becoming more computer literate, and with a greater number of citizens having established access to the Web, the Internet has become the communication method of choice (Granello & Wheaton 2004). According to Schleyer and Forrest (1967) an increasing number of journal publications are now featuring research content that has been collected via online data capture methods.

Despite receiving a unanimous response from Delphi panel experts as to their preferred method of capturing their individual contributions, to ensure that the study’s inquiry method received proper due diligence, the researcher consulted with an IS (Information Systems) expert with experience in designing and conducting online Delphi studies. Because electronic research methods, like online studies and online focus groups are still relatively new, extra care and consideration were recommended during the web-based study tool selection and design stages (Singh & Kasavana 2005). Expert advice was therefore obtained throughout all stages of the study instrument selection, the study question design, and the testing of all physical attributes of the online study tool.

3.2.4.2 Evaluation of Web-based Study Tools
According to Dillman et al. (1998) ‘…a respondent-friendly Web questionnaire is one that interfaces effectively with a wide variety of computers and browsers possessed by respondents’ (p.4). In other words, a computer platform- and (web) browser-independent application would ensure all targeted participants were able to access the web-based study tool. Furthermore, whilst the evaluation of web-based study tools was, to a lesser extent, focused around technical aspects, for example; programming and finding a suitable application that allowed respondents to complete study responses in a manner intended by the researcher (Dillman 1998). This was seen as beneficial toward increasing the overall quality of the outcome.

The researcher concluded that other aspects, like keeping the application design simple and the content relevant, would further address some of the web-based study design challenges that had been identified in the review of the literature. Based on the research
into commonly available web-based study tools, the following three applications were short-listed for consideration.

The first option was a subscription-based study program called “SurveyMonkey”. This web-based study tool has gained in popularity, mainly for its large set of features, ease of use and relative low price points (Marra 2006). However, the application’s lack of customization desired for the purpose of the Delphi-like inquiry with the producers, as well as a general concern about data protection within a cloud-based application environment, caused this solution to be eliminated from the list of possible tools.

The second application option reviewed was a program called “WordPress”. “WordPress” is an open-source blogging application, frequently used as a web publishing system. With some basic program features considered mandatory, for example, being able to collect user data through a web-based entry form, or the ability to extract study data via a CSV (Comma-separated values) export file format, were deemed important. Additionally, enabling both number and text data sets to be tabulated in a database program, or simply affording Delphi participants to down-load supporting files or documents, was also deemed highly desirable for this study. Whilst collecting data into respective form fields, some entry validation capabilities needed to be assured, for example, the completion of mandatory fields to capture critical data sets.

Although some of these requirements can be met within the application architecture of “WordPress”, the implementation of such features required the skills of a competent web developer, writing specific codes or scripts. Considering the timely and costly nature of addressing these otherwise important features, “WordPress” was considered suboptimal as a study tool for this study. Hence this application too was eliminated.

Resulting from the evaluation of the first two options, the third and final option became the preferred web-based study tool. This was to configure a custom-made, secure study web portal, constructed around modular website build applications. Such applications are based on highly dynamic Web 2.0 enabled software publishing platforms, which provided the user with more user-interface capabilities. For example, a user-centered design, collaboration between host/guest, and dynamic content leading to a richer user
experience, while at the same time, being able to access software and storage facilities all through the common web browser.

These characteristics closely matched the application features considered most important, enabling the collection of user data through a web-based entry form and extracting study data captured in a CSV (Comma-separated values) export file format. Hence, both number and text data sets could be tabulated in a database program, concurrently Delphi participants could also download supporting files or documents (including printable question sets for off-line use) potentially increasing the quality of their responses.

The researcher had experience with developing such sites; one of the main advantages was the freedom to customize page layouts, design style considerations, drop-in widgets, up-load / download capabilities; all-in-all creating a more project-specific application, whilst enhancing the end-user experience. An additional benefit in developing a web-enabled study site was the visitation-reporting feature. The capability extended to the site host (the researcher) was the monitoring of site usage. This included reporting capabilities by visitation frequency of panel members, response to site-initiated emails, individual page visitation, document downloads and notification of questionnaire data submissions. These additional features proved invaluable in the management and administration of the study.

Throughout the evaluation stages of selecting a suitable online study tool, the researcher consulted with the IS expert, assuring that the objectives of the research specific inquiry were balanced with the expert panel user experience.

3.2.4.4.3 Development and Testing (pilot) of the Delphi Study Instrument
With the most appropriate web-based study tool selected, the next critical evaluation stage was centered on the site build and testing, the content design, sharing of background information relevant to the research inquiry, and effectively communicating the overall flow of the Delphi sequence with participants. According to Couper, Traugott and Lamias (2001), visual design elements complement the verbal features of the study instrument, resulting in potential efficiency and data quality gains. Similarly,
Dillman et al. (1998) proposed that a web questionnaire becomes respondent-friendly, when advanced features are kept to a minimum, a welcome screen is added, and clear instructions are given for each question set.

After the initial build of the Web 2.0 enabled study site, rigorous testing followed to ensure requirements previously identified as critical were put in place. Furthermore, a pilot round was conducted with two randomly selected participants. Wyatt (2000) suggests that a pilot test should also have participants try to access the study site from different Internet browsers and connection speeds. Additionally, they should confirm that the instructions within the study site environment are clear. This was deemed to be critical as it allowed for further fine-tuning of the administrative tasks involved in conducting the study. At the same time, these process steps allowed for the testing of pre-developed questions with members of the expert group (Powell 2003).

At the completion of these tests, only minor adjustments to the presentation layers of the site were needed. Figure 3.4 provides two screen-capture examples of the final Phase I Delphi study site. The fist image capture depicts a secure login screen where Delphi panel experts were required to enter their unique access privileges (username / password) prior to entering the Delphi round environment. The second image shows a screen capture of the “Welcome to...” message presented to all experts at the commencement of Delphi Round 1. Additional sample pages of the website screens presented throughout the Delphi study can be found in Appendix 3.B.
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Figure 3.4. Web-based Study Site – Phase I (Screen Capture Example No.1-2)

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3.2.4.4 Initiating the Delphi Panel

The final step in the “Preparation” stage of the Phase I Delphi study involved the formal dispatch of study-relevant information directed at the panel of experts. An information package, comprising of a “Research Overview Document” (Appendix 3.C), an “Information Sheet” (Appendix 3.D) outlining the research requirements, participation and privacy details directed at participants, and the “Consent Form” stipulating the official enrolment to the panel (Appendix 3.E) was sent to each study participant.

Once these details were shared, the researcher reconfirmed participation with each invited participant (Figure 3.5). Upon obtaining a positive response, a unique “User Name” and “Password” required to gain access to the study site (Appendix 3.F), was issued to each participant.
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Figure 3.5. Steps of obtaining consent for Phase I – Delphi-like study
Alongside the study initiation brief directed at producers, the researcher introduced the research support team and himself as the Delphi moderator. Concurrently, the researcher took the opportunity to reiterate important messages relevant to individual participation in the study. Specifically, panel members were reminded to:

- Feel personally involved in the issue being reviewed (your views are critical).
- Be willing to share pertinent information.
- Be motivated to include the Delphi task in their schedule of competing tasks.
- Agree that the aggregation of judgments of a respondent group will include information that they value and to which they would not otherwise have access.
- Remain committed to providing periodic input for the duration of Phase I, estimated to be 2–4 months.

Keeping the panel motivated, informed and involved throughout the study duration was considered an important aspect of achieving a quality outcome (Linstone & Turoff 1975).

### 3.2.5 Stage 2 - Convergence

#### 3.2.5.1 Administration of the Delphi-like Study

The Delphi panel had officially been formed upon the receipt of signed consent forms, which allowed for the issuing of site access details and credentials. The GDT recommends that the study is timed based on the maximum availability of targeted experts, taking seasonality and commonly known industry events into consideration (Day & Bobeva 2005). This approach was relevant as the expert panel comprised of high-level executives, engaged in global market activities such as conferences and inter-company events. As Briedenhann and Butts (2006) highlight, knowing the situational context was critical to avoid distractions and attrition.
Prior to the official commencement of the study, of the 20 experts invited to participate in this phase of the study, 17 had agreed (verbally or in writing) to participate. At the launch of the first study round, five members requested to be excused from the panel due to heavy travel and work-related commitments scheduled during the study period. To ensure the panel comprised of the desired group size, a new member was recruited, which brought the total number of participating experts to 13 - well within the previously stipulated minimum panel size of 9 experts. Indeed, during the Round 2, four experts had to retire from the panel due to their heavy work commitments as they felt unable to commit to the imposed schedule of the study. Nonetheless, as a result of the detailed planning conducted prior to the study launch and the process steps adopted from the GDT, the Delphi-like study achieved its objectives. From the official launch of Round 1, the Delphi-like study took two consecutive rounds and five months to complete.

3.2.5.2 Round 1 – Notification of Respondents

Each of the 13 participating panel experts was sent an email notification (Appendix 3.F) containing clear instructions on accessing the online study site. The email included a URL link to the site log-in screen, and unique “user-name” and “password” details. To allow panel members to express their expert opinions freely, each participant was also issued with a code name (e.g. P01, P02, etc.), allowing for complete anonymity throughout the research phase. Because the participants were assumed to be busy executives who would travel often or be away from their normal place of work, the researcher had also issued an off-line version of the questions that were posed in each Round of the Delphi.

The respondents were initially given a two-week timeframe to complete and submit their responses to Round 1; however, after receiving several requests for time extensions, it took a total of four weeks to collect submissions from all 13 panel experts. Because the composition of the panel was made up of industry leading experts, and to maintain a minimum of 9 panel experts throughout the study, the researcher decided to afford members additional time to submit their responses. Furthermore, to ensure that the panel remained informed and motivated, all members were given weekly progress updates via an in-site “noticeboard” only accessible to enrolled participants (Appendix
3.G.a-e). Additionally, notifications were sent to each participant’s preferred email address after each weekly update was posted.

3.2.5.3 Round 1 - Submissions
Of the 13 panel members formally enrolled all 13 (100%) responded to the first round of the study; this was taken as evidence of the panel’s commitment to the research topic. In Round 1, the focus was on identifying important memorable experience generators, both in the current and future luxury guest room environment, thereby addressing a core purpose of the study. To help capture the panel’s individual responses in a systematic way, panel members were asked to each submit a minimum of three responses to each of the four experience realms in the current and future guest room environment, thus capturing a total of 24 nominations per expert.

This was a strategy to ensure that a reasonable level of coverage of these topics was achieved. Clarity surrounding the questions posed to the panel was established by posting some response samples on the study site. Additionally, participants could contact the research moderator at any time with questions pertaining to the research topic or any other aspects of the Delphi study itself. As highlighted earlier, at the end of each week during the study rounds, the research moderator issued e-updates via the study site notice board, keeping every panel member informed of the status of the particular study round, and to announce study submission dates. At the completion of Round 1, all participants were informed via email of the official completion of Round 1 (Appendix 3.H). In this email participants were also advised that an analysis of data would follow and that a notification would be issued to the panel prior to the commencement of Round 2.

3.2.5.4 Round 1 – Data Analysis
At the end of Round 1, the panel had responded to all study questions. Experts who wanted to expand on the questions presented or share any additional comments could do so via a separate comment field, further enticing deeper, valuable insights to be contributed. The responses received from panel members were transcribed and coded using a 10-step process, which is outlined in detail in Chapter 4 (Section 4.1.4, Page 152). A total of 283 memorable experience generator types (150 current, and 133 future
experience generators) were derived from the analysis of data; these were sorted into 18 key themes and then grouped into 4 primary categories.

Based on the coded data, a series of statements was drawn up. These statements were reflective of, and extracted from, the combined experts’ opinions. This method provided an effective means to present panel participants with powerful accounts of what the combined panel view was in terms of important memorable experience generators in the current and future guest room environment. By way of example, the following statement reflects the expert panel’s combined opinion on what future technology experience generators they deemed to be valuable to their consumers:

Memorable Experiences in the future, will be generated through a high degree of guest self-personalization, whether through simplified personal device connectivity to in-room systems (audio, video, wireless broadband, aux. battery charging, wall displays), accessing and sharing of personal content (iTunes, Facebook, Windows Live, Gaming, Holographs), or by adjusting in-room comfort features (sleeping-comfort, air/lights/AV), with the ability to control any customizable room settings via intuitive human interface technologies (touch, voice, gesture), that have guests create their own moods in a playful, engaging and interactive way.

During the analysis of Round 1 data, a total of thirty-two statements like this were constructed by the researcher and these formed the basis of the second Delphi-round.

3.2.5.5 Round 2
The aim of Round 2 was to present the panel with the set of statements synthesized from their combined responses in Round 1. An email notification outlining the objectives of the second round, including a URL link to the site log-in screen and unique “user-name” and “password” details were again issued to each member of the panel. Within the secure environment of the web study site, two statement sets were listed (Sample pages - Appendix 3.I). Each set expanded into a combined total of 32 statements consisting of 16 current and 16 future experience generator statements. Under the heading “Statement set 1”, panel participants had the option to reflect upon their own submissions in the previous round, and comment on the combined and synthesized opinions derived from the expert panel. They were also invited to add any additional comments relating to the current experience generator types.
Chapter Three – Research Design and Methodology

Under the heading “Statement set 2”, which were the results from the panels’ responses to future memorable experience generators in Round 1, the panel was asked to rank each of the future experience generator statements for their memorable experience generating value (value as seen from the guest’s perspective). Additionally, three separate text segments describing specific experience generator types contained within each statement, were listed. From this list, each panel expert was asked to nominate at least one memorable experience generator statement that they thought would offer producers a likely return on investment (ROI). This was intended to elicit insights from the producers as to the memorable experience generators they would invest time and financial resources to in the future.

3.2.6 Stage 3 – Consensus

3.2.6.1 Data Analysis – Phase I
The analysis of the data collected in Phase I was systematically organized using the four realms framework noted earlier. This allowed for the coding of text according to memorable experience generating themes and their corresponding categories. These findings were later used to develop an interview schedule for consumers in Phase II, which allowed the researcher to incorporate producers’ responses in relation to the key themes and forward-looking statements that emerged during the research process. The data collection and analysis process applied in Phase I is described in detail in Chapter 4, Section 4.1.3, Page 151.

3.2.6.2 The Phase I Report – for Producers
The research findings extracted from the rich data sets obtained from the Delphi panel experts were compiled as a “Delphi Study Report” (Sample pages - Appendix 3.J). This was designed to share the findings with the Delphi participants. The report comprised key highlights of the findings collected and analyzed over the two rounds of the Delphi-like study. Data visualization techniques were specifically developed in consideration of the experts and their valuable time. As shown in Figure 3.6 (a) and (b), by means of visualizing the core findings, the reader (Phase I participants) could compare the importance placed on current and future experience generators in respect to realm and category, while at the same time, emphasizing the importance reflective of the themes underpinning each of the main category groups.
Figure 3.6.a. Current Experience Generators (by Realm, Category, Theme)

Figure 3.6.b. Future Experience Generators (by Realm, Category, Theme)
Additionally, tag-clouds (or word clouds - a visual representation for text data) further accentuated the importance placed on memorable experience themes within the same graphical display.

These visualization maps were constructed from the coded data sets and compiled in sequential stages. The first stage represents the producers’ responses by box size ratio between each experience realm indicative of their respective weighting in the response. In the second stage the coded data is visualized by ratio of category responses (Technology, Services, Atmosphere, Culture) each represented by four color-blocks. In the third stage, the coded data is visualized within each category block by its ratio of responses with respect to the theme. In the final stage the coded data is visualized by the scale of the tag-cloud font size.

Each data visualization map (current and future) can then be compared across the time dimension - today (current) and by the year 2020 (future). For each map, the categories and their themes are in proper ratio across the entire map (and to each other), representing an accurate aggregate for the overall consensus among the Delphi panel of experts, as to what the main drivers behind current and future memorable experience generators were. The precise method used to produce the visualization maps was described for the producers in detail in the “Delphi Study Report” (Appendix 3.J, Report pages 11-13).

### 3.2.7 Phase I - Summary (The Producers)

This study’s purpose was to engage two distinct groups of participants that exemplify the experience economy within the context of this research. In this section, the producers responsible for the design and development of memorable experience generators were introduced as the participants of the first study phase (Phase I). Addressing the aims of this research phase, a Delphi-like study method was selected as the most appropriate qualitative research technique to elicit in-depth information from industry experts (producers) to answer the producer-directed research questions.

A constructivism perspective was applied, thereby placing the emphasis on the meaning that producers apply to the interactions between guests, employees, owners, suppliers,
and the environment that bears influence around them. A conceptual framework provided the theoretical groundwork; utilizing Pine and Gilmore’s (1999) four realms of experience concept (entertainment, esthetics, education, escapism), guided the question design and the analysis of data received from the Delphi-like method and the questionnaire.

3.3 Phase Two – Research Model Development (The Consumers)

3.3.1 The Interviewing Method

In Phase Two of this research, the objective was to engage a second study group; that is, the consumers. As with the producers, this study phase sought to gain a deep understanding from frequent travelling consumers of their memorable experience preferences and forward-looking experience desires. Consumers were targeted purposefully, as they stayed frequently in luxury hotel rooms, and therefore held a wealth of information through their own individual experiences. According to Patton (1987), by purposefully sampling a target group that held information central to the research objectives, the researcher can learn a great deal more about issues of central importance.

Qualitative research may comprise of varying data collection techniques, such as in-depth interviews, questionnaires, personal diaries, or direct observation (Patton 2002). For the purpose of this research, a two-pronged approach was deployed. Firstly data were collected via individual semi-structured face-to-face interviews involving hotel guests, and secondly, by collecting data from the same research subjects via a short questionnaire, which was issued for completion at the end of each interview.

The core focus, however, was placed on in-depth interviewing. Here, the benefit of synchronous communication between research subject and researcher lies in the interviewee responding spontaneously to the questions. This further stimulated the conversation surrounding consumption experiences that each individual consumer recalled as being memorable. The literature addressing qualitative research inquiry techniques, conversely, cautions that the interviewer has to give greater attention to the questions asked and the answers given, when engaging in semi-structured interviews.
(Wengraf 2001). As a result, a carefully developed interview schedule was put in place, not only assuring that all primary questions were posed, but also to make certain that the interview objectives were achieved within an acceptable timeframe and through probing with additional questions.

### 3.3.2 Face-to-face, semi-structured Interviews

A face-to-face, semi-structured interview technique was seen as the most insight-producing method, as it allows for deep and detailed descriptions of the consumer experience. Kahn and Cannell (1957) described interviewing as ‘…a conversation with a purpose…’ (p. 149); which specifically relating to this research phase, meant exploring and capturing the views of the consumers, ‘…their individual perception of self, life and experiences expressed in the interviewees own words…’ (Minichiello et al. 1995, p.61). Further benefitting from the face-to-face interview technique, in particular when research subjects are seen as informants, are the observations the researcher can draw from the attitude, meaning and intonations exhibited by the interviewee (Opdenakker 2006). For example, whilst each interviewee responded to the same set of predefined topics and themes, they did so in their own personal way, sharing experiences that they considered memorable.

Some interviewees were able to respond without hesitation and delay, describing, in great detail, specific moments that had left a profound impression. Others required a few moments to think and recall events that they could associate with a positive and memorable occasion. However, once interviewees had picked an example that would best describe their personal experiences, each and every one recalled the circumstance, interactions, and feelings in considerable detail. This provided the researcher with opportunities to investigate experience triggers further, instead of adhering rigidly to set questions (Minichiello et al. 1995). At the completion of each interview, important discoveries were considered for inclusion into the interview schedule. These probing questions were then presented to other interviewees for the purpose of obtaining additional responses during subsequent interviews.
3.3.3 Development of the Study Instrument

In Phase Two, preparing for interviews with the consumers was given the same importance as preparing for the previous data collection phase involving the producers. Rigorous preparation included defining the objectives, constructing effective interview questions in a corresponding interview schedule, while seeking consent to participate from each research participant (Creswell 2006).

The interview questions and their purpose are explained in this section; a detailed list of core questions is outlined in Table 3.4. To a large extent, these questions were synthesized following the findings in Phase I. Specifically, questions were, once analyzed, aimed to compare and contrast the findings obtained from the producers with those of the consumers. While some of the primary research questions related to the four realms of experience, other questions aimed to probe further into specific experience aspects that interviewees considered had contributed to their experiences becoming memorable.

To achieve the underlying objectives of this research phase, interview questions were again balanced across the experience realms in the current and future experience timeframe. This approach was deemed important, as it allowed for consistency in the same way that the question flow had been designed for the producers. Furthermore, this approach was anticipated to produce a more systematic way of comparing and contrasting responses received from interviewees against those received from the producers.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Current</td>
<td>When you travel (for business, and leisure), which hotel brands do you typically choose?</td>
<td>Validating luxury hotel categories determined by brand choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Current</td>
<td>Can you tell me about a recent stay in a luxury hotel room that left you with a positive and memorable experience?</td>
<td>Stimulate memories of past stay experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Current</td>
<td>What aspects (staying in the luxury guest room) would you consider have contributed toward your memorable experience?</td>
<td>Understanding consumer perspectives of memorable experience generators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Current</td>
<td>Thinking back to your recent memorable experience, what were the ‘interactions’ that led to your stay being a memorable one?</td>
<td>Compare and contrast with findings obtained from the producers (Phase I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 b</td>
<td>Current</td>
<td>How important was ‘being entertained’? (ENT)</td>
<td>Compare and contrast with findings obtained from the producers (Phase I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 c</td>
<td>Current</td>
<td>Was the experience an indulgent one? (EST)</td>
<td>Compare and contrast with findings obtained from the producers (Phase I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 d</td>
<td>Current</td>
<td>Did you learn something new? (EDU)</td>
<td>Compare and contrast with findings obtained from the producers (Phase I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 e</td>
<td>Current</td>
<td>In other words, did you feel like you were able to escape? (ESC)</td>
<td>Compare and contrast with findings obtained from the producers (Phase I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Current</td>
<td>What do you value most when experiencing a luxury hotel guest room stay?</td>
<td>Understanding perceived value drivers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Current</td>
<td>The ‘atmosphere’ (physical dimensions) made available to guests whilst staying in a luxury guest room, is considered to significantly contribute toward a memorable stay experience. What do you consider a luxury guest room atmosphere to comprise of?</td>
<td>Compare and contrast with findings obtained from the producers (Phase I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Future</td>
<td>What would you consider would add value to your stay experience in a future luxury guest room?</td>
<td>Compare and contrast with findings obtained from the producers (Phase I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Future</td>
<td>Feel free to describe both physical and human interactions that you feel could contribute to positive guest room stay experiences?</td>
<td>Compare and contrast with findings obtained from the producers (Phase I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Future</td>
<td>It is possible to create new services and experiences in a ‘virtual’ environment that can be accessed, customized, and controlled from home or your luxury hotel guest room. How would you feel about this?</td>
<td>Compare and contrast with findings obtained from the producers (Phase I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Virtuality</td>
<td>How could a hotel provide a rich, engaging experience unlike any other place? (Reality)</td>
<td>Compare and contrast with findings obtained from the producers (Phase I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Virtuality</td>
<td>How could a hotel use digital technology to enhance your in-room experience? (Augmented Reality)</td>
<td>Compare and contrast with findings obtained from the producers (Phase I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Virtuality</td>
<td>In what ways could a hotel provide you with a respite from the world “out there”, slowing down your sense of time and perhaps even your heartbeat? (Warped Reality)</td>
<td>Compare and contrast with findings obtained from the producers (Phase I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Virtuality</td>
<td>Outside of any physical environment, how could a hotel create a virtual place that creates value for you? (Virtuality)</td>
<td>Compare and contrast with findings obtained from the producers (Phase I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Future</td>
<td>You have an opportunity for your experience preferences of a future luxury guest room to be shared. What future in-room stay experiences would you most desire?</td>
<td>Compare and contrast with findings obtained from the producers (Phase I)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3.3.1 Current experience timeframe

Within the current experience timeframe, the aim was to allow interviewees to reflect on past events that they recalled as being positive and memorable experience encounters within the guest room environment. Initial questions were designed to open up the conversation and to allow the interviewee, without restriction, to recall a fond memory whilst staying in a luxury hotel guest room. From this opening into the topic around a specific event, the questions that followed were directed more specifically at extracting the contributing factors or generators that led to the event being memorable.

Interview questions began by asking interviewees to name the hotel brands they most frequently stay with when traveling for business and leisure (Question ID 1). This was followed by questions aimed at recalling positive memorable events (Question ID 2), and by identifying specific aspects each interviewee considered had contributed toward their experience in a luxury guest room making it a memorable one (Question ID 3). Guided by the experience four realms framework explained in Section 3.2.4.3 (Page 119), questions were designed for interviewees to reflect on what the interactions were that had led to a memorable stay experience. Interviewees were probed to gain insights into two important factors. These were (1) the degree to which guests had been engaged (absorption/immersion) and (2) the level of participation (active/passive) that was involved (Pine & Gilmore 1999). Additionally, questions were specifically directed at each of the four realms (Question ID 4 a-e), allowing responses from interviewees to be compared to those received from the producers.

For example, as described in the findings derived from the survey with the producers, the Entertainment realm was considered the most important experience dimension, both in the current and future timeframes. As a result, interviewees were asked to consider the importance they place on being entertained. The aim was to allow interviewees to recall the experience generators they thought had been the main contributors to the event being a memorable one. The remaining questions within this experience theme were directed at what guests valued most when staying in a luxury guest room (Question ID 5), and what they considered a luxury guest room atmosphere to comprise of (Question ID 6).
3.3.3.2 Future experience timeframe

Within the future timeframe, interview questions posed to each interviewee began to focus on future stay experience desires. As with the producers, interviewees were asked to think ahead as far as the year 2020, considering what would add value to their stay experience in the future luxury guest room (Question ID 7). Question ID 8 was designed to have guests provide their opinions as to how important both physical and human interactions are when considering future guest room stay experiences.

The forward-looking nature of this research provided an opportunity to engage with consumers around specific questions relating to virtuality. Embedded within the future experience theme, questions (ID 10-13) were questions designed to elicit responses from consumers as to how they considered technology-generated experiences might be of interest in the future. The purposes of these virtuality-focused questions are further explained in the following section. The final question directed at consumers gave interviewees the opportunity to express their experience preferences for a future luxury guest room (Question ID 14).

The interview questions were structured in a way that encouraged participants to speak freely and openly about their most memorable experiences and to express their forward-looking experience needs and desires. The researcher was informed by Kahn and Cannell’s (1957), objective to engage guests in ‘…conversations with a purpose…’ (p.149), which this study phase aimed to achieve by structuring the flow of questions in a meaningful way. For example, by allowing guests to go back in time and to recall their most memorable stay experiences, these memorable experience events not only opened up the conversation across emotional and experiential perspectives, but also set the foundation upon which interviewees could focus their attention to the future. In fact, at the completion of the formal interview, the majority of interviewees expressed a feeling of pleasure and delight. As guests had been solely focused on positive and memorable events, they enjoyed revisiting past locations and those moments and encounters that had left them with memorable experiences.
3.3.3.3 Virtual experiences

Opportunities to engage interviewees in questions relating to “virtuality” experience dimensions, produced and enabled through the use of digital technology were considered valuable and, as such, were incorporated into the interview schedule. Gathering insights relating to virtual experience desires was in part motivated by the rapid progression of integrated technologies in everyday life, and how these developments would have an impact on guests and their desires for experiences in the future. Assisting in the design of virtual experience themed questions (Question ID 10-13), the researcher sought input from Joseph Pine, the co-author of the four realms experience framework. The researcher was fortunate in that Pine had been introduced to the research at the beginning of the researcher’s Ph.D. candidacy, agreeing to assist in the development of appropriate interview questions to guide this aspect of the study.

The virtual environment was an additional realm in the Pine and Gilmore framework; however, the concept was developed in depth in a more recent publication (Pine & Korn 2011). In this publication, Pine further advanced the concept of the experience realms, introducing various aspects of reality and virtuality.

These virtual experience related questions were designed to link findings from the initial phase involving the producers to those of the consumers. Additional question design considerations were focused on the relative importance of the use of digital technology, vis-à-vis the physical and material attributes of the room. Here, the aim was to allow guests to respond to both physical and virtual concepts, whether experienced from within the guest room, or entirely from within a virtual environment. Other considerations, for example, were promoted by existing guest room concepts that were intended to make guests feel as if they were stepping back in time. Similarly, guest room designs that focused on making the guest feel relaxed could potentially alter guest’s perceptions of time. Specifically, questions probed interviewees around reality and virtuality dimensions. Within the reality dimension, interviewees were asked to consider how hotels could provide rich, engaging experiences unlike any other place (Question ID 10).
Probing further into digital technology and how guests responded to technology as a potential experience generator, interviewees were asked to describe how luxury hotels could use digital technology to enhance the in-room experience (Question ID 11). This question related to “augmented reality”, a term describing digital technology that enhances one’s experience of the physical world (Pine & Korn 2011). Another question was designed to elicit a response from interviewees by asking them to imagine in what ways luxury hotels could provide them with a respite from the world out there, slowing down one’s sense of time and perhaps even the heartbeat (Question ID 12). This question portrays the “warped reality” dimension, where participants may experience an altered sense of time; like visiting a living history museum where visitors and actors dress in period costumes and engage in heritage presentations (Kim & Jamal 2007). Probing interviewees specifically around virtuality, participants were asked to describe how outside of any physical environment, a luxury hotel could create a virtual place, thereby adding value to the guest experience (Question ID 13).

Based on the interview schedule and the set of pre-defined questions, additional memorable experience themes were anticipated to emerge from engaging with consumers. To elicit experience-based responses from each interviewee, the research literature recommends the use of “laddering” (Reynolds & Gutman 1988); a technique that is useful when probing participants on a more emotional level. This technique helped the researcher to expand upon and probe deeper into the personal experiences described in the respondents’ own words, by asking “Can you give me some specific examples?”. This approach can also assist in the analysis of the data collected (Mcintosh & Siggs 2005).

Whilst the interview schedule allowed the interactions with guests to remain focused, the flexibility afforded in conducting semi-structured interviews meant that individual perspectives and experiences could surface. To help properly capture and analyze the data accurately, all interviews were recorded and later transcribed (Patton 1990).

3.3.3.4 Questionnaire
At the end of each interview, interviewees were presented with a brief questionnaire. The aim was, firstly, to obtain some demographic and travel-related information, and secondly, to rate the “statements” previously nominated by the producers. To achieve
the second goal, the questionnaire asked interviewees to respond by giving their value perceptions based on 5 levels of rating labelled with “High Value”, “Medium Value”, “No Value”. This related to the memorable experience generators that producers agreed will not only become desirable for consumers, but will also generate a return-on-investment for their brand.

3.3.4 Initiation and Implementation of Consumer Interviews

Prior to conducting interviews in Phase II, the interview design comprised of four main components; the “Interview Schedule” mentioned earlier, an “Information Sheet”, a “Consent Form”, and a short “Questionnaire”. The interview schedule was made up of four parts (Appendix K); this provided the researcher a guide, or checklist, covering off each area of inquiry, while at the same time, affording interviewees the flexibility to express their own thoughts and experiences openly and freely (Minichiello et al. 1995, pp.81-83). The “Information Sheet” (Appendix 3.L) was presented to each interviewee prior to the interview. This document was prepared to introduce the research topic and the interview process.

The “Consent Form” (Appendix 3.M) was prepared and issued to each participant on the day of the interview. This was in accordance with the Ethics requirements of this research project. Finally, at the completion of each interview, interviewees were issued a short “Questionnaire”. This (Appendix 3.N) comprised of three parts, with the main purpose centered on a set of statements, while the other two parts of the questionnaire were intended to capture some demographic and travel-related information.

3.3.5 Sampling of Participants

Interviewees were selected based on their frequency of stays in luxury hotels (minimum of 8 nights within the last 12 months). This group was identified and accessed with the assistance of luxury hotels and their frequent stay programs. With the assistance of two global hotel brands, guests matching the primary selection criteria (frequent stays in luxury hotel guest rooms) were identified and introduced to the research project via senior staff members. Regional Vice Presidents or General Managers of properties within their luxury brand portfolios were assigned to introduce this research to their most frequent-staying guests. A profile overview of participating consumers is provided.
in Chapter 5 (Page 191). To obtain consent from each of the identified guests, the researcher followed a set of predefined steps, which are outlined in Figure 3.7.

Figure 3.7. Steps for obtaining consent to participate (Phase II)
Each consumer was individually addressed via correspondence comprising of a personal note from the Hotel Executive explaining the brands’ support for independent and non-commercial studies conducted by an Institution of Higher Learning (for example, Swinburne University of Technology). At the same time, the researcher was introduced. Attached to each letter or email (Appendix 3.O) was the research “Information Sheet” mentioned earlier. This gave prospective participants sufficient background information pertaining to the research topic and what was requested of them. From these initial inquiries, a list of participants who had expressed their interest to partake was established.

An extended group of interviewees was desired, collecting data sets until such time that the researcher felt a saturation point was reached (Crouch & McKenzie 2006). If the researcher remains faithful to the principles of qualitative research, Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggest that the samples size in the majority of qualitative studies should follow the concept of saturation. According to Green and Thorogood (2004), ‘…the experience of most qualitative researchers (emphasis added) is that in interview studies little that is new comes out of transcripts after you have interviewed 20 or so people’ (p.111).

In this study, saturation point was achieved after the 24th interview had taken place. This was determined by checking the 24th interview transcript with all other transcripts after which it was clear no new information had been provided. In order to make sure this was the case, however, the researcher conducted one additional interview to ensure the concept of saturation was indeed satisfied (Ritchie & Lewis 2003). This brought the total number of participants to 25.

Throughout the data collection phase, the interviewer afforded interviewees maximum flexibility with dates, times, and the individual preference for the location where interviews took place. This was done in recognition of participants generously giving up their own personal time – either during their travels, or at their home base. Interviews took place at a number of location types, for example at the hotel the guest was staying, at their office, or at their private residence. The researcher’s primary focus was on affording interviewees maximum flexibility and a venue / surrounding they felt most comfortable to be interviewed in.
All interviews were conducted in quiet surroundings, well suited settings (comfortable chairs, good lighting, beverages such as coffee, tea or mineral water) and in a manner, which placed each interviewee at ease. With the permission of participants, each interview was digitally recorded, producing quality voice recordings that enabled accurate transcribing of conversations. Furthermore, throughout the data collection phase the approach taken was to constantly review and reflect, after each interview was conducted and recorded. This approach allowed the researcher to learn from each guests’ response to questions asked and the meaning they gave to themes selected, thus providing an opportunity to refine probing questions as well as test examples with the interviewees that followed.

The researcher also made hand-written notes immediately following the interview to capture biographical information, characteristics and demeanors – this was seen as potentially helpful when analyzing the data at a later stage. After each interview, electronic voice files were transcribed verbatim, allowing for accurate data analysis.

3.3.6 Data Analysis Process

The data analysis process applied to the content of the in-depth, face-to-face interviews followed the same process stages as applied to the analysis of data obtained from the producers in Phase I. This is explained in detail in Chapter 5 (Section 5.1.2, Page 194).

3.3.7 Summary – Consumers

The aim of this research phase was to identify memorable experience occurrences and the specific generators that participating consumers described as leading to memorable experiences. Additionally, this phase aimed to elicit what consumers considered as desirable and memorable stay experiences in the future. Based on these findings, this research was able to identify any gaps between producers and consumers perceptions of what aspects of the luxury guest room experience form valuable and memorable experiences, then and in the future. In this way the research could also identify any gaps between what producers perceive their guests’ experience desires were, and what guests expected to receive within the current and future luxury hotel room environment.
3.4 Ethical Clearance

The research project was designed to meet the requirements of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) outlined in the ‘National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)’, by the University Human Research Ethics Committee. The study was approved under the following registration number HRETH 11/174 (Appendix 3.P). The research closely followed the guidelines at all times, assuring the proper handling of personal data collected from interviewees. Throughout the study stages, the researcher was extremely cautious about preserving the confidentiality of respondents using code names whenever data were presented. Interview records, both in paper form and in digital recording, are kept in a secure place, following the conditions and guidelines imposed by the Human Research Ethics Committee.

3.5 Summary of Research Design and Methodology

In summary, this chapter has provided an overview of the research design and its justification of qualitative research methods and their application to Tourism studies. Specifically, it described the research process, providing an explanation of the epistemology, methodology and methods that underpinned the design, selection of respondents, and the instruments or techniques used within this research process. To address the aims of this study, a conceptual framework (Figure 3.8) illustrates how the theoretical groundwork of the research topic formed the basis of both the producer and consumer research phases.

This chapter introduced the methods that were chosen to elicit in-depth information from both respondent groups that is, the views of producers and consumers. Applied over two interconnected study stages, Phase I involved the use of a conceptual framework by which a group of industry experts was asked to reach consensus; the findings obtained from the producers was then applied in Phase II directed at the consumers, who were engaged in in-depth semi-structured interviews.
In the next chapter, the findings of Phase I (the Producers) are presented.
Chapter Four – Analysis of Data (The Producers)

4.0 Introduction

The study’s specific focus was on the luxury hotel room experience and how producers designed hotel rooms to respond to consumers’ desires for memorable experiences. In Chapter 3, the methodology and methods selected to address each of the two participant groups (Phase I and Phase II), was outlined. This chapter presents the data analysis process applied to Phase I and the findings derived from the analysis of data collected from the producers.

4.1 Qualitative Data Analysis - Phase One (The Producers)

4.1.1 Overview

Phase One of this research comprised of a Delphi-like study with the producers (architects, designers, hotel brands, hotels and service providers) within the luxury hospitality industry. Data collected from participating producers included some demographic information, as well as the individual’s geographical responsibility and the number of years of experience in designing luxury hotel guest rooms. Then, using a Delphi-like technique described in Chapter 3, knowledge and opinions of the participating producer experts were collected over two consecutive rounds, reaching consensus on the topic presented among the panel.

The Delphi-like study produced a total of 283 memorable experience generators, which were systematically transcribed and coded. This resulted in the emergence of 18 key themes that were then divided into 4 primary categories. From these themes and categories, summary statements were presented, which allowed study participants to rank each statement for its value-generating properties; furthermore, producers gave their opinions as to which specific memorable experience generators they considered likely to generate a return on investment in the future. This completed the findings obtained in Phase I.
4.1.2 Producer Profiles

A total of 20 producers were formally invited to participate in this study. Out of the 20 potential participants approached, 17 accepted the invitation. At the time of publishing the study schedule and content details relating to Round 1, five out of the 17 producers that had previously confirmed their interest in participating could no longer commit to the study due to work-related activities falling within the study period. With 12 participants remaining, one additional panel member was recruited to bring the total number of participating experts to 13. The Delphi study was officially launched with a group of 13 experts entering and completing Round 1 (Table 4.1). At the completion of Round 1, 4 experts informed the researcher that work and travel related commitments would make their continued participation difficult to commit to; they were unable to assure that their responses to Round 2 would be received in time. As stated in Chapter 3 (Section 3.2.4, Page 112), a group comprising of a minimum of 9 experts was deemed as adequate for this study.

Given the high level of expertise among the panel of experts remaining, their far-reaching areas of responsibility across global markets, and the rich data that was collected from the entire group of 13 in Round 1, the researcher accepted the retirement of four panel participants from the Delphi-like study, acknowledging their invaluable contributions. The study continued and concluded with the remaining 9 participants.
Table 4.1. Phase I - Delphi Study Participants (producers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Phase</th>
<th>Phase I – Study Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Participants</strong></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type</strong></td>
<td>Study site with online questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age range</strong></td>
<td>30-65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Global Hotel Chain - Executives**
1. Chief Brand Officer  
2. Snr. VP Brand Design  
3. Vice President Development  
4. Vice President Global Brands (A)  
5. Vice President Global Brands (B)  
6. Snr Director Global Guest Initiatives  
7. Manager Global Guest Initiatives

**Hotel Management**
8. General Manager (Global Chain Hotel)  
9. General Manager (Luxury Boutique Hotel)  
10. Executive Housekeeper (Luxury Boutique Hotel)

**Technology / Innovation Executives**
11. Chief Technology Officer (Luxury Global Chain)  
12. Snr. Vice President – (Global TECH Co.)

**Independent Industry Executive**
13. Executive Director (Hospitality Marketing)

**Producer Experts** *(dropped-out before study commencement)*
Architect  
Designer (Interior)  
Designer (Experiences)  
Chief Designer (Aviation/Space)  
Snr. Director Global Brand (C)  
Snr. Director Global Brand (D)  
Snr. Director Global Brand (E)
The gender and age groups represented among the panel of experts participating in the Delphi-like study are shown in Table 4.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30 - 49</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50 – 64</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of panel members have had responsibilities for 5 years or more linked to the design and development of luxury hotel guest rooms (Table 4.3). Five members of the panel had more than 10 years of design and development related guest room experience.

Participating experts were also asked to describe their primary responsibilities; from a list of functional responsibility areas, panel experts could select which best described their field of responsibility in their current role. The majority of the participants were responsible for brand management, whilst over half of the panel held responsibility for guest experience design and innovation. It is worth noting that experts participating in this study held responsibilities within more than a dozen global luxury hotel brands.
Table 4.3. Area of functional and geographical responsibility, and years of experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility Area - Functional</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Design and Development (Planning)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture (Guest room layout &amp; configuration)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interior Design (Creative)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procurement (CAPEX &amp; FF&amp;E)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Management (Value, Innovation)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales &amp; Marketing (Awareness, Distribution)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel Operations (Management)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guest Experiences (Design, Innovation)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology (Specifications, Innovation)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility Area - Geographical</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1.3 Data Analysis Process - Delphi study Round 1

As described in Chapter 3, in this first round, panel members were initially asked to respond to open-ended questions (Appendix 3.G), which were structured around each of the four realms of experience. A description of what each realm stands for, the level of engagement (passive/active, and absorption/immersion), as well as a meaningful example for each of the four experience dimensions was provided. Immediately following the introduction of the four realms experience concept, the questions pertaining to the first round of the study were presented. An example is provided below:
Under the heading “Entertainment”, please list and discuss important experience generators that you consider currently address guest experience needs in the luxury guest room?

Specifically within Round 1, panel experts were asked to respond to a total of eight research questions across the four realms within current and future timeframes. Within these questions respondents were asked to nominate experience generators that address current and forward-looking guest desires to 2020. Participants were asked to list at least three experience generators for each of the four realms of experience, potentially capturing a total of 24 nominations per producer expert. In addition to nominating current and future memorable experience generators, panel participants were asked to discuss and provide their rationale for each of the generators they chose to nominate. This allowed for deeper insights into the reasons for and meaning attached to nominated generators.

Questions developed around the four realms of experience were each contained on a single page that ended with an open comment box. This was designed to allow participants to add any additional generator types, or to provide further comments about or explanations of their chosen response.

4.1.4 Analysis of Data - Round 1

At the end of Round 1, thirteen panel experts had submitted their responses, which was a 100% response rate. The researcher had developed a 10-step process, which was to assist in the analysis of the data; these steps are described further and outlined in the following table (Table 4.4.). Throughout the Delphi study phase, a general inductive approach to analyzing raw data was applied. The main focus was placed on findings to emerge through frequent, dominant, or significant themes. This process allowed the data obtained from the producers to be coded and sorted across each of the four experience dimensions, by their experience generator themes and their respective categories, and within the current and future timeframe. This inductive approach also allowed the importance placed on specific topics by the producers to be compared later with those provided by the consumers.
Table 4.4. Data Analysis – the 10 Process Steps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Coding Method – Phase I: Round 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.  Data capture – Round 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.  Data analyzed for generator types (themes), current and emerging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.  Generator types definitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.  Emerging data categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.  Total data sorted by categories and themes, across all realms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.  Total data sorted by categories/themes, respective of realm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.  Data visualization map (combining treemaps and cloud tags methods)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.  Data sorted by experience realm, and core categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.  Data synthesized, by realm (statements)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Statements by realm and category</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First (step 1), all data collected from each of the expert participants were compiled in a single spreadsheet. This is consistent with the description of how qualitative data should be sorted, coded and analyzed, for example, through data reduction and display techniques (Miles & Huberman 1994). Indeed, Miles and Huberman (1994) described the three elements of qualitative data analysis as, ‘Data reduction refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in written up field notes or transcriptions’ (p.10). They also highlighted the benefits of using a matrix approach to analyzing large amounts of data, thereby organizing information coherently; while at the same time, focusing on the relevant portions of data needed to answer the research questions.

From the responses received - 283 memorable experience generator types in total, were collated and systematically coded, producing 18 key “themes”, which were sorted into 4 primary “categories” (Table 4.5).
Table 4.5. Data Analysis – Key Generator Themes and Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generator Themes</th>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Generator Categories</th>
<th>ID</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>TECH</td>
<td>Technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content (QUAL)</td>
<td>CONT</td>
<td>Technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connectivity</td>
<td>CONX</td>
<td>Connectivity</td>
<td>TECH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customization</td>
<td>CUST</td>
<td>Audio/TV</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amenities</td>
<td>AMNT</td>
<td>Wireless</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artifacts</td>
<td>ARTF</td>
<td>Services</td>
<td>SERV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>PART</td>
<td>Service</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collateral</td>
<td>COLL</td>
<td>Content</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio/TV</td>
<td>AVEQ</td>
<td>Customization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>CULT</td>
<td>Amenities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home-away-home</td>
<td>HOME</td>
<td>Collateral</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wireless (Speed)</td>
<td>WIRE</td>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
<td>ATMO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
<td>ATMO</td>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seating/Comfort</td>
<td>COMF</td>
<td>Artifacts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>SERV</td>
<td>Seating/Comfort</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>DESG</td>
<td>Design</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>STAF</td>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>CULT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>LOCA</td>
<td>Culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Home-away-home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Participation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Location</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the completion of the second step, each theme was given a definition (Table 4.6); this was deemed important, as it would guide the analysis of future data (consecutive rounds in Phase I, and data collected in Phase II), thereby ensuring consistency across the entire data coding process.
In step 4, the experience generator themes grouped into “categories”, were also given definitions (Table 4.7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amenities</td>
<td>AMNT</td>
<td>Any tangible or intangible benefits (e.g. props, merchandizing, bedding, bathroom products that increase the attractiveness or value, or that contribute toward overall comfort or convenience.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artifacts</td>
<td>ARTF</td>
<td>Artworks, e.g. paintings, sculptures, collectables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
<td>ATMO</td>
<td>Mood-enhancing Lighting, design, services or solutions, sensory environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio/TV</td>
<td>AVEQ</td>
<td>Audio Visual System components, made available for the purpose of one’s own viewing / listening pleasures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collateral</td>
<td>COLL</td>
<td>Purposefully selected materials, e.g. Books, Magazines, Compendiums, Directories, (whether in hardcopy or digital form)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connectivity</td>
<td>CONX</td>
<td>Physical or digital connection between mobile and/or imbedded devices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content (QUAL)</td>
<td>CONT</td>
<td>Making available (quality) content specifically designed or sourced for the purpose of the guests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>CULT</td>
<td>The set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution, organization, or group and its staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customization</td>
<td>CUST</td>
<td>Learning from users to deliver customized guest experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>DESG</td>
<td>Structural, interior, outdoor, room-layout / configuration, custom-designed product solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home-away-from-home</td>
<td>HOME</td>
<td>Simulating home-away-from-home feeling / content / benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>LOCA</td>
<td>With specific reference to the physical location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>PART</td>
<td>Active guest involvement in the offering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalization</td>
<td>PERS</td>
<td>Users are free to personalize their experiences, via access to their own content, or content they can freely choose from.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seating/Comfort</td>
<td>COMF</td>
<td>Comfort-focusing product selection, e.g. bedding, seating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>SERV</td>
<td>Composing and orchestrating the appropriate level of resources, skill, ingenuity, and experience for effecting specific benefits extended to guests (either on a monetary or non-monetary basis)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>STAF</td>
<td>Staff-delivered services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>TECH</td>
<td>Systems, hardware, software or applications and/or the use of which delivers an outcome, including connectivity (wired/wireless).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wireless (Speed)</td>
<td>WIRE</td>
<td>Making available the transfer of information between two or more points that physically (wire) or not physically (wireless) connected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.7. Round 1 Data Sets – Category Definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>TECH</td>
<td>Systems, hardware, software or applications, the use of which delivers an outcome including connectivity (wired/wireless). The category Technology include themes such as connectivity, Audio/TV, and wireless.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>SERV</td>
<td>Composing and orchestrating the appropriate level of resources, skill, ingenuity, and experience for effecting specific benefits extended to guests (either on a monetary or non-monetary basis). The category Services include themes such as, content, customization, amenities, and collateral.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
<td>ATMO</td>
<td>Mood-enhancing lighting, design, services or solutions, and sensory environments. The category Atmosphere includes themes such as artifacts, seating/comfort, and design.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>CULT</td>
<td>The category Culture includes themes such as, culture, staff, home-away-from-home, guest participation, and location.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since the data collection was guided by the four realms of experience, this provided a structured method to help extract the core themes under each experience realm and assign each data set to one of the four categories identified. From this analysis, the strength of the experts’ arguments and opinions began to emerge. This is shown by the number of recurring themes and their respective categories (step 5), highlighting where producers placed current emphasis on memorable experience generator occurrences, and more related to the future (Table 4.8).
In step 6, the data sorted by themes and their categories was then grouped in their respective realms. To help present participating producers with the findings of round one in a more visual manner, in step 7 a data visualization map, a combination of “tree-map” and “cloud tag” method, was used. This approach allowed several key findings to be presented in a visual way by presenting dominant findings by color and size dimensions where one can easily see patterns that would otherwise be difficult to spot. This method was explained in more detailed in Chapter 3 (Section 3.2.6.2, Page 130).

The following diagram (Figure 4.1) is a visual representation of the initial stage of the data analysis and the 7 steps described in this section that guided the analysis of the data obtained in Round 1.
Figure 4.1. Round 1 Data Analysis – Process Flow (Stage 1, example: current timeframe)

1. Data Capture – Round 1
   - Online Web-Tool

2. Data Analyzed for Generator type (theme)
   - Technology Themes: TECH, CONT, CUST, AMNT, ARTP, PART, COLL, AVEQ, CULT, HOME, WIRE, ATMOS, COMP, SERV, DESG, STAF, LOCA

3. Generator Theme 'Definitions'
   - Technology...

4. Emerging Data Categories
   - Technology
     - Connectivity
     - Audio/TV
     - Wireless
   - Services
     - Service
     - Content
     - Customization
     - Amenities
     - Collaboral

5. Total Data Sorted By Categories / Themes, across all four realms
   - Technology
     - Connectivity
     - Audio/TV
     - Wireless
     - Total: 21
   - Services
     - Service
     - Content
     - Customization
     - Amenities
     - Collaboral
     - Total: 57

6. Total Data Sorted By Category, respective of Experience Realm
   - Entertainment
     - Technology: 14 (37)
     - Service: 15 (30)
     - Atmosphere: 10 (25)
     - Culture: 2 (5)
   - Esthetics
     - Technology: 4 (10)
     - Service: 8 (20)
     - Atmosphere: 9 (25)
     - Culture: 5 (12)
   - Education
     - Technology: 1 (3)
     - Service: 14 (40)
     - Atmosphere: 5 (12)
     - Culture: 1 (3)
   - Escapism
     - Technology: 6 (16)
     - Service: 4 (10)
     - Atmosphere: 6 (16)
     - Culture: 2 (5)

7. Data Visualization
Following stage one of the analysis, in stage two, the findings obtained in Round 1 were then further analyzed to reveal “key words” identified from each nominated experience generator theme. This process was repeated to extract key “attributes” pertaining to the rationale panel participants provided for each of their nominated generator types. Further analysis was conducted to refine the data into a series of statements that captured the combined opinions obtained from the expert panel. These statements were developed as a synthesis; a method of qualitative content analysis designed to explore issues at a deeper level (Minichiello et al. 1990), thereby presenting panel participants with an expression of an idea derived from their combined responses.

This comprehensive approach to analysing the data, led to a set of synthesized statements (Figure 4.2), thus structuring powerful accounts that were reflective of, and extracted from, the combined experts’ opinions. This method also had a practical dimension in that these busy experts were unlikely to devote too much further time to the research. As a result, panel participants could easily access information from statements to confirm the essence of their previous opinions on the memorable experience generators that were considered important, now and in the future. In this way consensus would be achieved on whether the statements presented truly captured their opinions. The following statement provides an example derived from the opinions of the experts, emphasizing their combined responses under the Esthetics realm, and within the current guest room environment:

Memorable experiences are generated by introducing guests to the esthetics theme and concept of the environment, connecting with local culture in a purposefully designed hotel, supported by appropriate interactions with impeccably groomed, knowledgeable staff delivering the highest standards of service in a home like atmosphere.
**Figure 4.2. Round 1 Data Analysis – Process Flow (Stage 2, Current timeframe - Entertainment realm)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience Realms</th>
<th>CAT</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>ID</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<table>
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<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
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**Entertainment Realm**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Words</th>
<th>Key Attributes</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Connectivity</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Audio/Visual Equipment</td>
<td>Wireless Remote/Client Control Equipment</td>
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**Technology**

<table>
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<th>Key Attributes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Digital Content</td>
<td>Original/Unique Functionally Relevant Exclusivity Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio/Visual Equipment</td>
<td>Partnership Service</td>
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**Services**

<table>
<thead>
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**Atmosphere**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Key Attributes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wireless</td>
<td>Natural</td>
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<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
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<td>Culturally Diverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally Diverse</td>
<td>Guest Experience</td>
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**Statements 1-4**

**Technology**

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**Services**

<table>
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**Atmosphere**

<table>
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**Culture**

<table>
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<th>Technology</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Value</td>
<td>No Value</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of the panels’ response to Round 1 was then shared with the expert panel in Round 2.

4.1.5 Key Findings – Round 1 (Current memorable experience generators)

The visualization maps included in this section of the thesis provide a visual representation of the qualitative findings collected in Round 1. These maps communicate the thrust of themes derived from the panel’s combined responses of important generators of memorable experiences that engaged guests in the current luxury guest room environment (Figure 4.3), and those that would emerging in the future by the year 2020 (Figure 4.4). This method was developed (and previously described in Chapter 3, Section 3.2.6.2, Page 130) to help present time-constrained panel participants with the findings in a more visualized manner.

Figure 4.3. Visualization Map: Memorable experience generator themes, current timeframe
4.1.5.1 The Four Realms (Entertainment, Esthetics, Escapism, Education)

Guided by the four realms of the experience framework noted earlier, the expert panel indicated that, currently, the majority of memorable experiences were generated within the Entertainment and Esthetics realms. Within the Entertainment realm, guests were being entertained passively, predominantly absorbing experiences through their senses.

The panel’s combined opinions are reflected in this statement:

Memorable experiences are generated by providing carefully selected and relevant, customized content (digital/non-digital), either displayed in-room, made accessible through personal devices or through in-room AV systems. Quality and content must engage guests in personal ways that stimulate interests, (e.g. lifestyle, culinary, local events), preferably providing unique opportunities via exclusive hotel partnerships.

In the Esthetics realm, guests immerse themselves without affecting the environment, except their “sense” of being there. The panel’s synthesized view was captured in the following statement:
Memorable experiences are generated by introducing guest to the esthetics, theme and concept of the environment, connecting with local culture in a purposefully designed hotel room, supported by appropriate interactions with impeccably groomed, knowledgeable staff delivering the highest standards of service in a home like atmosphere.

Following the importance placed on memorable experiences generated within the Entertainment and Esthetics realms, the panel proposed that memorable experiences generated within the Escapism realm were slightly more dominant drivers than those associated with the Education realm. The characteristics of the Escapism realm are present when guests immerse themselves in the experience through active participation, being involved in a much more engaged way, and where they have the opportunity to affect the actual outcome. Representative of the Escapism realm, the analysis of the Delphi-like study produced this statement:

Memorable experiences are generated through the promotion of personal well-being, stimulated through personal service offerings sourced by knowledgeable staff, that leave guests feeling pampered and with a sense of escape from daily life, or into something new.

The panel’s responses to memorable experiences in the Education realm suggest that this is the area where least memorable experiences are currently being generated. Here, guests would need to become active participants through either events or activities that are stimulating new knowledge and learning. Their opinions are captured in this statement:

Memorable experiences are generated through the use of art and artifacts that are local and meaningful guided by explanation or interpreted by guests at their own pace.

4.1.5.2 The Four Categories (Technology, Services, Atmosphere, Culture)
As previously described in Section 4.1.4, the data collected in Round 1 was sorted into themes, categories, and across current and future memorable experience themes. The Service category stood out as being the most important area where memorable experience generators were currently being delivered. This is followed by the Atmosphere, then Culture and Technology categories.
After the data was analyzed for its most dominant experience-generating category with respect to the experience realm, the Atmosphere category and its themes emerged within the Esthetics realm. This category group is representative of memorable experiences generated through atmosphere, artifacts, seating/comfort, and design themes. Specifically, the panel proposed that the primary themes that generate memorable experiences within the Atmosphere category are the atmosphere and design themes. The following statement describes the consensus among producers:

Memorable experiences are generated by the holistic impact of quality and luxury designed space that emphasizes a home like setting, complemented by the alignment and shape of furniture, fixtures and fittings that provide comfort and sense of space supported by the anticipation of mood enhancing elements (music, air, textures) that make guests feel special.

The second most significant experience-driving category emerging from the data was the Services category within the Escapism realm. This category comprises of services, content, customization, amenities, and collateral, of which the panel emphasized the services and customization themes:

Memorable experiences are generated through creating customizable themes (wellness, spa, comfortable robing, scented linen, espresso-making facilities) or uniquely staged events that are discreetly delivered within the guest room, the hotel, or through services focused on personalization and comfort.

Thirdly, the data produced the Services category within the Education realm, and the Technology category within the Entertainment realm as noticeable spheres, where memorable experiences were being generated. The following statement provides a sample response with respect to the Services category within the Education realm:

Memorable experiences are generated by customizing learning of guests travel objectives to stimulate new experiences, provide existing information (economic, financial and international) and promoting activities related to local culture or place often through information sharing and collaboration with outside partners.

The Technology category, located within the Entertainment realm, comprises technology, connectivity, Audio/TV, and wireless themes, of which the panels’
responses highlight the technology theme as the most important area of current memorable experience generation. The following statement was produced:

Memorable experiences are generated, through providing effortless connectivity (wired/wireless) of guests personal devices to quality in-room systems (AV & Control Equipment), providing access to their own and in-house content (e.g. movie, music, presentations), whilst allowing for physicality and functionality of in-room technology to be controlled via auxiliary devices, e.g. iPad.

Equally noticeable from the data visualization and analysis of dominant categories, was the Culture category placed within the Education realm. This category comprises culture, staff, home-away-from-home, participation and location themes. As the current most relevant theme, the analysis unearthed culture as a primary driver of memorable experiences. This is captured in the following statement:

Memorable experiences are generated through the provision of opportunities to experience or learn about the history and heritage of the property (brand, building, architecture and environment) or the local area conveyed via collateral, partners or well trained, articulate hotel staff.

4.1.6 Key Findings Round 1 (Future memorable experience generators)

4.1.6.1 The Four Realms (Entertainment, Esthetics, Escapism, Education)
As stated in the introduction to this research, this study sought to develop a deeper understanding of what producers consider were the memorable experience generators that guests desired, and what value-producing experiential needs and wants of consumers were being delivered today and deemed important by the year 2020. The previous section described the Entertainment and Esthetics realms as the most dominant fields where current memorable experiences were being generated.

This section presents the research findings of memorable experience generators in the future (to 2020) guest room environment, as envisaged by the expert panel (as shown earlier in Figure 4.4). In this forward-looking scenario, the most dominant experience realm is that of Entertainment. This realm requires producers to capture and occupy the
guests’ attention, whilst guests passively observe activities or performances. The following statement captures the panel’s response:

Memorable experiences in the future, will be generated through customized content tailored to guests’ special interests (real-time sports, news, travel, surprising localized experiences), including lifestyle content identified and presented based on guest-liked brands, accessed from anywhere within the hotel and supported by service offerings (pre-arrival room visualization, curated in-room fashion line-up, guest-to-guest collaboration), in-advanced room configurations, selected by guests to reflect their individual desires and preferences.

Following the Entertainment realm, the Esthetics and Escapism realms were both presented as equally important, when designing and delivering memorable experience in the future. These experience realms require guests to become physically (or virtually) involved; in other words, guests become part of the experience itself. While esthetics experiences engage guests in a passive way, at the opposite end of the spectrum lies active participation, which is characteristic of the Escapism realm. The producers offered the following statement as one of their synthesized opinions on future esthetics experiences:

Memorable experiences in the future, will be generated through non-conventional room configuration (space, layout, overt use of non-renewable resources, wider use of timber flooring, design that inspires, remains fresh and surprising), embracing the individuality of guests and emerging needs of generations travelling for ‘Bleisure’ (Gen-Y combining business & leisure), while creating an atmosphere that feels personal and innovative, focusing on individual well-being and enhanced comfort.

As for memorable experiences generated in the Escapism realm, the synthesized data obtained from the producers resulted in one of the following statements:

Memorable experiences in the future, will be generated by a greater need for social connectivity that transforms guest rooms into entertainment and mingling spaces for family and friends, while travelers to urban destinations seek to actively participate in sustainable practices; supported by service staff (guest-facing staff, butlers, travelling PA’s) offering personal assistance services and expert advice to guests through the ‘human’ interface of a hospitality specialist, triggering memories of the past.

From the combined data collected in Round 1 of the Delphi-like study, the experience realm that received the least consideration as a future memorable experience dimension
was Education. From the producers that provided insight into this realm, the following statement emerged:

Memorable experiences in the future, will be generated through guests becoming explorative in both virtual and physical activities (virtual city scavenger hunts, virtual classrooms, ‘spend a day with..?’, hands-on practical skill learning), supported by both hotel and external experts that offer destination-specific experiences, in a fun, playful and perhaps exclusive way.

4.1.6.2 The Five Categories (Technology, Services, Atmosphere, Culture)

The previous section focused on the current memorable experience design and delivery environment and the order in which each category of memorable experiences are being staged. The data analysis produced the Services category as the most important memorable experience area. In this section, the emerging categories are listed in order of their importance, as nominated by the expert panel. Table 4.9 presents the coded data of memorable experience generators divided in respect of category groups in the future guest room environment.
Table 4.9. Data Analysis: Number of generator types obtained by category (future)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category Groups</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>Services</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>28</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artifacts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seating/Comfort</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Design</td>
<td>18</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td>133</td>
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As in the current design and delivery of memorable experience environment, the Services category stood out as the overall most important area where the expert panel envisaged memorable experience generators will need to be designed in the future. Following this, however, unlike in the current memorable experience environment, in the future, the Technology category will become a stronger focus than the current Atmosphere category where experience concepts will be produced. Following the Services and Technology categories, the panels’ responses suggested that the memorable experience design and delivery focus will be placed on the Atmosphere and then the Culture categories, in their order of importance.

Applying the data analysis method described earlier, and to again allow the Delphi panel’s proposed experience concepts to be interpreted in the same systematic manner,
the coded data sets grouped with respect to the four categories, were visualized and displayed by their experience realm (as shown earlier in Figure 4.3-4). This visual presentation introduced Entertainment as the most important realm where guests were expected to be engaged to generate future memorable experiences. In this same realm, further analysis of the data collected and accentuated by the visualization map, placed the Services category as its most dominant experience generator. The Services category comprised of services, content, customization, amenities, and collateral themes, of which the panel emphasized the content and customization themes:

Memorable experiences in the future, will be generated through customized content tailored to guests’ special interests (real-time sports, news, travel, surprising localized experiences), including lifestyle content identified and presented based on guest-liked brands, accessed from anywhere within the hotel and supported by service offerings (pre-arrival room visualization, curated in-room fashion line-up, guest-to-guest collaboration), in-advanced room configurations, selected by guests to reflect their individual desires and preferences.

4.1.7 Data Collection - Round 2

The objective in Round 2 of the Delphi phase was to present the panel with an overview of their individual responses, now synthesized into statements combined from the panels’ responses in Round 1 (shown in Figure 4.2, Page 160). Each of the 32 statements presented, were listed under their respective experience realm and memorable experience generator category, both in the current and future guest room environment. The panel’s focus was directed toward statements of future memorable experiences, asking them to rate each of the statements for their value generating properties, when considering designing and delivering memorable guest experiences. By way of example, the following statement was derived from the combined opinions of experts who provided their response under the Esthetics realm, and directed toward the future guest room environment:

Memorable experiences in the future, will become more customized by understanding guest-generated personal preferences, that includes authentic design and reflection of the local destination, while making guest stays more home-like (personalized room configurations, purposeful mood lighting, AV); including hotel brand related partnerships (Dior, Tiffany, local artists, exclusive products by Food/Candy brands) through clever use of in-room displays and unique co-branding initiatives.
Whilst the expert panel was given the opportunity to comment on each of the 32 statements presented, a primary focus of this study round was directed toward consensus building about the forward-looking composition of memorable experience generators. Specifically, the panel was asked to select from the future memorable experience statements one of the following ranking options: “essential, high, medium, low, or no value”. A separate field allowed participants to provide comments relating specifically to the statement listed.

In Round 2 of the Delphi, an additional question was introduced, which was intended to ascertain how each of the core elements of statements reflecting future memorable experience generators were likely to offer producers a return on investment (ROI). In each case the broader statement was unpacked into major features and panel participants were asked to rate each future experience statement for its experience generating value as seen from the guests’ perspective. In other words, the researcher disaggregated the previously synthesized experience generator statements into the core elements to test with the respondents the importance of each element in terms of their understanding of which of these elements would provide a return on investment. By way of example, the following (check-box) question was asked: “Which of the following statements are likely to offer producers a return on investment (ROI)?” Producers could select one or more of the following statement extracts:

1. Understanding guest-generated personal preferences.
2. Making guest stays more home-like (personalized room configurations, mood lights).
3. Hotel brand related partnerships (Dior, Tiffany, local artists, etc.), or:
4. None of the above.

This process was applied to all 16 future memorable experience generator statements; responses to these are listed in the following Round 2 data analysis section. This process was seen as an additional step in disseminating between producers’ espoused views and their more pragmatic understanding of where their company was likely to invest resources.
4.1.8 Data Analysis Round 2 (Current memorable experience generators)

In Round 2, the panel’s focus was primarily directed toward the future memorable experience statements; even though, experts were given the opportunity to comment on each of the current memorable experience statements presented. Only a few experts provided comments on the current memorable experience statements; they were either in support of the statements listed, or to reiterate important points for consideration as they related to their individual brand / property environment.

4.1.9 Data Analysis Round 2 (Future memorable experience generators)

With focus placed on the future memorable experience statements, the panel was asked to rank each statement under its respective realm and theme category for its level of importance (Essential vs. Not essential). On the one hand, the findings would highlight the producers’ consensus about the content value of each statement (for example “high value” vs. “low value”), and, on the other, the particular element (memorable experience generator) of the statement itself, that the group of experts felt could generate a return on investment (ROI) in the future.

At the completion of the analysis of Round 2, the final round of the Delphi-like study in which participants had reached consensus on the issues presented to them, producers were sent a report that summarized the key findings obtained from the combined panel of experts. To effectively communicate the research findings of this Delphi-like study round, at the completion of Round 2, again a data visualization method was applied to allow the reader to compare opinions provided by the expert panel. Listed in the next section are the research findings with respect to realm, theme and category.

4.1.10 Key Findings Round 2 (Future memorable experience generators)

The key findings of the data analyzed in Round 2 are presented in order of the rating obtained from the panel for each future memorable experience generator “statement”. These are displayed in text from (statements with respect to experience realm and the experience category). A pie chart then illustrates the ranking obtained from the expert
panel as to the value they placed on the memorable experience generators contained within the statement itself. Additionally, the findings that reflected the experts’ consensus toward statement elements containing memorable experience generators are listed, in descending order, as indicators where producers are likely expect to gain a return on investment (ROI). The rating given by the Delphi panel is displayed in a graphical (doughnut chart) format (Figure 4.5.a-4.8.h).
4.1.10.1 Entertainment Realm – Future memorable experience generators

Category: **Technology**

Memorable experiences in the future, will be generated through a high degree of guest self-personalization, whether through simplified personal device connectivity to in-room systems (audio, video, wireless broadband, aux. battery charging, wall displays), accessing and sharing of personal content (iTunes, Facebook, Windows Live, Gaming, Holographs), or by adjusting in-room comfort features (sleeping-comfort, air/lights/AV), with the ability to control any customizable room settings via intuitive human interface technologies (touch, voice, gesture), that have guests create their own moods in a playful, engaging and interactive way.

Which of the following statement elements are likely to offer producers a return on investment (ROI)?

1. Simplified personal device connectivity to in-room systems (audio, video, etc.)
2. Controlling any customizable room settings via intuitive human interface technologies
3. Adjustable in-room comfort features (sleeping-comfort)
4.1.10.2 Entertainment Realm – Future memorable experience generators

Category: Services

Memorable Experiences in the future, will be generated through customized content tailored to guests’ special interests (real-time sports, news, travel, surprising localized experiences), including lifestyle content identified and presented based on guest-liked brands, accessed from anywhere within the hotel and supported by service offerings (pre-arrival room visualization, curated in-room fashion line-up, guest-to-guest collaboration), in-advanced room configurations, selected by guests to reflect their individual desires and preferences.

Which of the following statement elements are likely to offer producers a return on investment (ROI)?

1. Customized content that is tailored to the guests' special interests
2. Lifestyle content identified and presented based on guest-liked ‘brands’
3. Specialized service offerings (pre-arrival room visualization, etc.)
4.1.10.3 Entertainment Realm – Future memorable experience generators

Category: Atmosphere

Memorable experiences in the future will be generated through scientific advancements that enhance sleeping experiences, and sensory stimulation (aromatics coffee brewing and croissant baking paraphernalia), promoting the well-being of frequent travelling guests (local and international), who value a stress-free, simple-to-use, and centralized in-room technology environment.

Which of the following statement elements are likely to offer producers a return on investment (ROI)?

1. Stress-free, simple-to-use, and centralized in-room technology
2. Scientific advancements in enhanced sleeping experiences
3. Sensory stimulation (e.g. aromatics coffee brewing)
4.1.10.4 Entertainment Realm – Future memorable experience generators
Category: **Culture**

Memorable Experiences in the future, will be generated through experienced and culturally diverse hotel staff, that engage with guests in a natural, educational and entertaining way, providing unique in-room butler services (customized amenities, educational content), that guests value and are willing to pay a premium for based on their ability to allow them to momentarily escape from their daily lives.

Which of the following statement elements are likely to offer producers a return on investment (ROI)?

1. Experienced and culturally diverse (guest-facing) hotel staff
2. In-room services (custom amenities, educational content)
3. Helping guests momentarily escape from their daily lives
4.1.10.5 Esthetics Realm – Future memorable experience generators
Category: Technology

Memorable experiences in the future, will be generated by fully integrating guests into hotel systems (room controls, AV, service portals, virtual staff assistance), using their preferred portable devices as their systems gateway, thus creating a transparent guest-host environment, that allows for customization toward the individual guests’ needs via advanced technologies (e.g. digital window / surface displays that offer guests a perfect view from each room), as well as programmable light and sound themes, to enhance the overall guest comfort.

Which of the following statement elements are likely to offer producers a return on investment (ROI)?

1. Fully integrating guests into hotel systems (room control, AV, service portals, etc.)
2. Customization toward individual guests' needs via advanced technologies
3. Programmable light and sound themes
4. None of the above
4.1.10.6 Esthetics Realm – Future memorable experience generators

Category: Services

Memorable experiences in the future, will become more customized by understanding guest-generated personal preferences, that includes authentic design and reflection of the local destination, while making guest stays more home-like (personalized room configurations, purposeful mood lighting, AV); including hotel brand related partnerships (Dior, Tiffany, local artists, exclusive products by Food/Candy brands) through clever use of in-room displays and unique co-branding initiatives.

Which of the following statement elements are likely to offer producers a return on investment (ROI)?

1. Understanding guest-generated personal preferences
2. Hotel brand related partnerships (Dior, Tiffany, local artists, etc.)
3. Making guest stays more home-like (personalized room configurations, mood lights)
4.1.10.7 Esthetics Realm – Future memorable experience generators

Category: Atmosphere

Memorable experiences in the future, will be generated through non-conventional room configuration (space, layout, overt use of non-renewable resources, wider use of timber flooring, design that inspires, remains fresh and surprising), embracing the individuality of guests and emerging needs of generations travelling for ‘Bleisure’ (Gen-Y combining business & leisure), while creating an atmosphere that feels personal and innovative, focusing on individual well-being and enhanced comfort.

Which of the following statement elements are likely to offer producers a return on investment (ROI)?

1. Creating an atmosphere that feels 'personal' and innovative
2. Embracing the individuality of guests and emerging needs Gen-Y traveler
3. Non-conventional room configuration (space, layout, etc.)
4.1.10.8 Esthetics Realm – Future memorable experience generators

Category: Culture

Expert panel (producers) value rating

![Figure 4.6.g. Esthetics realm, Culture category (value)](image)

Which of the following statement elements are likely to offer producers a return on investment (ROI)?

![Figure 4.6.h. Esthetics realm, Culture category (ROI)](image)

1. Staff engaging with guests in a more knowledgeable way (enhanced serv. standards)
2. Replacing traditional service counter engagements with a friendship-like atmosphere
3. Nature-oriented experiences that reflect guests' eventual consumption behaviors
4.1.10.9 Education Realm – Future memorable experience generators
Category: Technology

Memorable experiences in the future, will be generated through seamless connectivity between host-systems and users, engaging guests via their choice of device, and type of commands such as voice-recognition (wake-up call, lights, media control, room temperature, open and closing of drapes), and using advanced technologies to further enhance their comfort with an emphasis on wellbeing, e.g. traditional bathroom weighing scales, will give way to floor-embedded health monitors.

Which of the following statement elements are likely to offer producers a return on investment (ROI)?

1. Commands such as voice-recognition (wake-up-call, lights, media control, etc.)
2. Seamless connectivity between host-systems and user devices
3. Advanced technologies (e.g. floor-embedded health monitors)
4. None of the above
4.1.10.10 Education Realm – Future memorable experience generators

Category: Services

Memorable experiences in the future, will be generated through pre-arrival content sharing that is tailored to the guests’ interests and purpose of travel (business / leisure / hotel and local market information), customized through collaboration with hotel partnerships offering expert advice (in-room virtual museum visits or time-based activities for time-sensitive business travelers, experience-rich activities engaging local content, matching interests with local expertise), and the curation (brand specific) of in-room accessible content, as well as idiosyncratic content that both engages and enhances the guest experience.

Which of the following statement elements are likely to offer producers a return on investment (ROI)?

1. Pre-arrival content sharing that is tailored to the guests' interests and purpose of travel
2. Collaboration with hotel partnerships offering expert advice
3. Curation of (brand specific) in-room content
4.1.10.11 Education Realm – Future memorable experience generators
Category: Atmosphere

Memorable experiences in the future, will be generated through in-room design that is both educational and stimulates the senses, enhanced by inspiring artifacts, that move beyond purely ‘decorative’ to become more ‘narrative’.

Which of the following statement elements are likely to offer producers a return on investment (ROI)?

1. In-room design that is both educational and stimulates the senses
2. Artifacts that move beyond purely 'decorative' to become more 'narrative'
3. None of the above
4.1.10.12 Education Realm – Future memorable experience generators

Category: Culture

Memorable experiences in the future, will be generated through guests becoming explorative in both virtual and physical activities (virtual city scavenger hunts, virtual classrooms, ‘spend a day with..?’; hands-on practical skill learning), supported by both hotel- and external experts that offer destination-specific experiences, in a fun, playful and perhaps exclusive way.

Which of the following statement elements are likely to offer producers a return on investment (ROI)?

1. Hotel- and external experts offering destination-specific experience
2. Guests becoming explorative in both virtual and physical activities (experience offerings)
4.1.10.13 Escapism Realm – Future memorable experience generators
Category: Technology

Memorable experiences in the future, will be generated through content and feature rich, virtual reality computing that allows guests to plan their virtual and physical experiences via their own devices or hotel-embedded systems (large wall / surface displays), to access personalized in-room experiences (virtual 3D yoga classes, cyber world adventures, family wall pictures), creating mood-enhancing and sharable content; further enhanced by virtual in-room assistance, that responds to questions or issues effectively and efficiently 24/7.

Which of the following statement elements are likely to offer producers a return on investment (ROI)?

1. Virtual in-room assistance
2. Access to hotel-embedded systems (e.g. large wall / surface displays)
3. None of the above
4. Virtual reality computing, allowing guests to plan their virtual and physical experiences
4.1.10.14 Escapism Realm – Future memorable experience generators
Category: Services

Memorable experiences in the future will be generated through unique, exotic, themed, generation-specific (GenX, GenY) experience offerings, customizable pre-arrival as well as personalized in-room activities including golf simulation, wellness programs, music and cinematic experiences, that can be further enhanced via virtual expert advice (in native language), leading to bespoke, deeply immersed experiences enriched with local content.

Which of the following statement elements are likely to offer producers a return on investment (ROI)?

1. Virtual expert advice (in native language)
2. Bespoke and deeply immersed experiences
3. Customizable pre-arrival and in-room activities (e.g. golf simulation, wellness, etc.)
4. None of the above
4.1.10.15 Escapism Realm – Future memorable experience generators

Category: **Atmosphere**

![Figure 4.8.e. Escapism realm, Atmosphere category (value)](image)

Memorable experiences in the future, will be generated through themed guest rooms, designed around books/movies or meaningful art, supported by sustainable and environmentally sound features (solar energy), that provide the option to ‘unplug’ from the hectic nature of life (e.g. wireless-free zones), that afford guests the choice to go off-line, temporarily isolate and escape into their own personal ‘downtime’.

Which of the following statement elements are likely to offer producers a return on investment (ROI)?

![Figure 4.8.f. Escapism realm, Atmosphere category (ROI)](image)

1. Sustainable and environmentally sound features (solar energy)
2. Themed guest rooms
3. Option to ‘unplug’ from the hectic nature of life
4.1.10.16 Escapism Realm – Future memorable experience generators
Category: Culture

Memorable experiences in the future, will be generated by a greater need for social connectivity that transforms guest rooms into entertainment and mingling spaces for family and friends, while travelers to urban destinations seek to actively participate in sustainable practices; supported by service staff (guest-facing staff, butlers, travelling PA’s) offering personal assistance services and expert advice to guests through the ‘human’ interface of a hospitality specialist, triggering memories of the past.

Which of the following statement elements are likely to offer producers a return on investment (ROI)?

1. Service staff offering personal assistance services and expert advice
2. Guests wishing to actively participate in sustainable practices
3. None of the above
4.1.11 Conclusion – Phase I (The Producers)

The purpose of this study was to solicit memorable experience generators, both in the current and future luxury guest room environment by employing a Delphi-like study involving industry experts (producers). Additionally, the study focused on the value-generating elements of these memorable experiences identified by the experts, and the likely return on investment (ROI) they offer producers designing luxury guest rooms in the future. At the completion of the Delphi-like study, the researcher provided each participating producer with a Delphi Study Report (Appendix 3.J). This was previously offered to the sponsors that had helped facilitate access to key executives, thereby extending a benefit to each individual by gaining collective insights from the group of anonymous panel members as a whole.

In Round 1 of this study phase, the expert panel was asked to nominate important current and future memorable experience generator types relevant to the four experience realms. Experts concurred, that these were the Entertainment and Esthetics realms, where currently most of the memorable experiences were being produced. The data visualization method (Visualization Maps) applied in the analysis, clearly illustrates that Services emerged as the most dominant experience-generating category.

In Round 2, the Delphi experts were asked to rate memorable experiences statements reflective of future experience needs; these were synthesized from the combined list of important memorable experience generators collected in the previous round. The producer panel agreed that, in the future, memorable experiences would be designed and delivered predominantly within the Entertainment realm and overall, the experts still envisaging the Services category and its underlying themes will provide opportunities to produce memorable experiences for their guests. Noticeably, and in contrast to the current time horizon, the Technology category will receive more focus than that of Atmosphere and its underlying themes.

This study also produced valuable insights into the producers’ opinions about where they saw memorable experience design and delivery to generate new forms of economic value. They concurred, that those responsible for designing luxury guest rooms would be able to generate returns on investments (ROI), when including memorable
experiences generators across Services, Technology, Atmosphere and Culture themes. In order of importance, the study shows that memorable experience design and delivery ROIs could occur in the Services, Technology, then Atmosphere and Culture categories and their respective themes.

Based on the overall findings of this Delphi-like study, an acknowledgment of the need for an additional research phase directed toward consumers or hotel guests was confirmed. The aim of this subsequent research phase (Phase II) was to identify - at a deeper level, gaps between producers and consumers’ perceptions of what aspects of the luxury guest room experience formed valuable and memorable guest experiences, now and in the future. The findings of research Phase II are presented in Chapter 5. This is followed in Chapter 6 by an interpretation of the research findings of both research phases with an emphasis on the discovery of any perceived gaps in the identification and value of generators of memorable experiences.
Chapter Five – Analysis of Data (The Consumers)

5.0 Introduction
In Chapter 4, the focus was placed on hotel operators responsible for the design of luxury hotel rooms that ought to be reflective of hotel guests’ desires for memorable experiences. The purpose of the study conducted in Phase I was to draw on the knowledge and experience of carefully selected industry experts about the type of memorable experience generators they identified, specifically in response to guests’ desires for memorable experiences gained in the luxury hotel guest room today and in the future. Their perceptions and opinions were presented in the findings, which revealed that the Entertainment and Esthetics realms were the key dimensions in which most of the memorable experiences were currently being produced. Looking to the future, producers agreed that it was the more dominant Entertainment realm and themes within the Services category that would continue to provide fertile ground for future experience innovation.

Findings obtained from the producers were then presented in Phase II, and this phase involved engaging consumers in in-depth, semi-structured face-to-face interviews. This chapter presents the data analysis process applied to Phase II and the analysis of the data collected from the consumers.

5.1 Qualitative Data Analysis - Phase Two (The Consumers)
5.1.1 Interviewee Profiles
Chapter 3 (Section 3.3.5, Page 141) introduced the sampling method applied to selected consumers for this phase of the research. Two leading hotel brands assisted in identifying guests matching the primary selection criteria. These guests were introduced to the research project via senior staff members (Regional Vice Presidents or General Managers). Guests were derived from databases and personal contacts from properties within the five star luxury brand segments. In addition, the researcher approached individuals through his professional network, applying the same profile criterion of
ideal informants. Table 5.1 describes the demographics and travel-related information of Phase II participants. Out of the 25 participants, the majority of participants (19) were male consumers ranging in age between 41 and 60 years.

In terms of the interviewee’s occupations, the majority identified themselves as Professionals, working in Legal, Financial, Consulting or Government Services sectors. One interviewee was a high-net-worth-individual (HNWI), listed on Forbes “World’s Billionaire List”. The majority held Post Graduate qualifications, including three participants with doctoral-level degrees.
Chapter Five – Analysis of Data (The Consumers)

Table 5.1. Phase II – Participant Demographics & Travel Pattern

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part A: Demographic &amp; Travel Pattern - Analysis</th>
<th>No. of interviewees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Gender</td>
<td>Female 6, Male 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Age group</td>
<td>31-40 5, 41-50 8, 51-60 9, above 60 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Country of residence</td>
<td>Germany 8, Singapore 1, Australia 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Highest education attained</td>
<td>Secondary school 2, Diploma or Bachelor Degree 8, Post Graduate Degree 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Occupation</td>
<td>Business Manager 5, Professional 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Most frequent purpose of travel</td>
<td>Holiday 8, Business 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Frequency (luxury hotel nights)</td>
<td>more than 20 nights 22, less than 20 nights 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Typical room type preference</td>
<td>Standard 3, Deluxe 16, Suite 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Travel party</td>
<td>alone 16, couple 9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A common link between all interviewees was the frequency of travel and stays in luxury hotel accommodation. The majority of them travel extensively to regional and international destinations. From the total group of interviewees, the majority reported that they stay in excess of 20 nights per annum in luxury hotel rooms. In fact, among these 22 interviewees the average length-of-stay was 100 nights per year. In other words, 22 out of the 25 participants interviewed in this study, stay approximately a
combined 2,200 nights a year in luxury hotel guest rooms. This high use of luxury hotel accommodation further strengthens the value of their input and perspectives, assuring that the data derived from this research phase is appropriate to answer the research questions.

5.1.2 Data Analysis Process – Face-to-face Interviews

In this section, the process of analyzing the content of in-depth, face-to-face interviews is explained. A general inductive approach to analyzing raw data was applied. Thomas (2006) describes inductive analysis of data as an approach that ‘…primarily uses detailed reading of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or a model…’ through which interpretations are being made of the raw data (p.238). The main focus applied to the inductive process of analyzing raw data, was to allow the findings to emerge through frequent, dominant, or significant themes. For this study phase, themes previously identified from the data obtained from the producers, allowed interview segments on a particular topic to be reduced and coded by existing and emerging experience themes. This allowed the importance placed by the producers on specific topics to be compared with those provided by the consumers.

These existing and emerging memorable experience generator themes could then be grouped into existing or emerging categories. Thomas (2006) describes the category coding process as follows:

a. Category label: a word or short phrase used to refer to the category.

b. Category description: a brief description of the meaning of the category, including key characteristics, scope and limitations.

c. Text or data associated with the category that illustrates the meaning, associations and perspectives related to the category.

d. Links or relations with other categories.

e. The type of framework in which the category is incorporated (p.240).

Patton (1987) suggested that researchers need to differentiate between data analysis and data interpretation as two separate processes. The data analysis is the process of ‘…bringing order to and organizing data into patterns, categories and basic descriptive
units…’ (Patton 1987, p.144). While the interpretation of data, according to Patton, ‘…involves attaching meaning and significance to the analysis…’ (1987, p.144). Miles and Huberman (1994) highlight the benefits of using a matrix approach to analyzing large amounts of data, thereby organizing information coherently; at the same time, focusing on the relevant portions of data needed to answer the research questions.

When using themes as the coding unit, the researcher is primarily looking for the expressions of an idea (Minichiello et al. 1990); and by beginning the data analysis process during the data collection phase, these ideas can then be tested among those interviewees that followed. In this way, emerging memorable experience themes could be explored and further validated as the research progressed.

The definitions extended to each memorable experience generator theme and its respective category (as described in Chapter 4, Section 4.1.4, Page 152) served as a guide, so that the comments or specific text segments received from each interviewee could be associated with a corresponding theme previously identified in Phase I. This process was also used to yield a more refined view between the responses received in Phase I, to those obtained from the consumers in this second study phase. By adhering to this inductive approach of analyzing large amounts of raw textual data, the researcher was able to read and re-read each response, focusing on a thematic approach of uncovering the memorable experience generator themes that best depict both the individual and group inputs received (Boyatzis 1998). In addition, the researcher gained valuable experience in analyzing different types of qualitative data across the two phases of the study.

5.1.3 Data obtained from face-to-face interviews

As previously explained, qualitative analysis involves a number of processes. Each interview was transcribed (see examples Appendix 5.A) and the responses from interviewees were then compiled, collated and grouped in a single data spreadsheet that included the 14 core questions outlined in the interview schedule (Chapter 3, Table 3.4, Page 136). This process allowed data sets from each of the 25 interviews to be analyzed within its current and future experience timeframe and virtuality question set. The inductive coding process allowed each individual response to survey questions to be
analyzed and coded based on frequent and dominant themes (that is, based on existing or newly emerging units of meaning), which are inherent in the raw data (De Wever et al. 2006). The process extended to this study phase is best illustrated in the form of a diagram (Figure 5.1), which is further explained in the following paragraph.
Figure 5.1. Phase II – Data Analysis Flow

1. Data Capture – Semi-structured Interviews
   Method: face-to-face

2. Transcripts Analyzed by the four realms (current and future themes)

3. Data Analyzed for ME Generator Themes

4. Emerging Generator Themes and Categories - Definitions

New Definitions: Specialties...
At the completion of each interview (Step 1), responses received to the questions were coded based on the most appropriate experience realm classification - entertainment, esthetics, education, and escapism (Step 2). This was determined based on the descriptive nature of the environment or activity, the level of participation (passive or active) and the level of engagement (absorbing or immersive), thereby analyzing the text data for its realm or realms in which the experience occurred. From this initial coding of data, each response (Step 3) was then further coded based on specific text segments matched against previously identified themes (Phase I).

Any emerging themes, determined by strength or consistency among all responses received, were identified and defined (Step 4), and then added to the list of emerging memorable experience generator themes as well as the coding frame. If a memorable experience generator theme could not be associated with an existing category, a new category label was created (Step 5). For example, in this study phase a new category was added reflecting memorable experience themes, namely views, spaciousness, color scheme, lighting and touch. These emerging memorable experience themes were grouped into a new category called “Sensory”.

From the coded data, in Steps 6 and 7, the analysis of the total data identified were derived from specific text segments, memorable experience generator themes and categories within the current and future experience timeframe. The most salient statements quoted from interviewees that best reflected the responses received from the collective group of consumers are presented in Section 5.2. The final step was the analysis of data obtained from interviewees (Step 8); this process is further described in the following section.

### 5.1.4 Data obtained from the questionnaire

As described in Chapter 3 (Section 3.3.3.4, Page 140), at the completion of each interview a short questionnaire was issued to obtain some demographic and travel-related information from the interviewees. Additionally, the questionnaire asked interviewees to rate statements containing experience-producing concepts, based on the strength of the perceived value each statement represented. These statements were those that producers had reached consensus on in Phase I, and that they had identified as the
most important future experience value drivers that they perceived guests would value and where producers expected to gain a return-on-investment (ROI) in the future. The findings are presented in Section 5.2.8.

5.2 Key findings - Phase Two (The Consumers)

5.2.1 Overview

This section reports the findings from the research conducted in Phase II with the consumers. From the analysis of the data, the findings will highlight important experience realms, memorable experiences generator themes and their categories that best describe the consumers’ current and future experience needs and desires. These findings are then discussed in Chapter 6, where a core research aim of this study addressed: namely to compare and contrast the findings obtained from the producers with those of the consumers. To this end, any contradictions of perceptions of what aspects (memorable experience generators) of the luxury guest room form valuable and memorable experiences were highlighted.

Firstly, the key findings of the questions asked within the current and future experience timeframe are presented based on the four experience realms. Extracts from interviewee statements are listed to convey the nuances of key memorable experience generator themes that were reflective of past and forward-looking memorable guest experiences. Included in this section, are the findings for those questions within future experience timeframes that were related to virtuality; these were described in detail in Chapter 3 (Section 3.3.3.3, Page 139).

The findings are in descending order from the most dominant realms, categories and their themes, and the generators that consumers considered were important drivers of memorable experience.

5.2.2 Brand Profiles

At the beginning of each interview, the first question required the interviewee to identify the brand(s) that he/she would typically stay with. This was asked in the context of both business and leisure as the researcher assumed that, in most instances, a
corporate policy might determine the hotel brand(s) in which an employee was entitled to stay. To extract an accurate meaning from the answers provided, the researcher further probed interviewees as to whether they had any say in the selection of the specific brands. They were also asked whether their decision to stay with a particular brand when travelling for leisure purposes was motivated by a loyalty program used for corporate travel, which is typically held in the name of the user.

Whilst the question of brand preference was not an important aspect of this research, the link between brands represented relative to the producers during Phase I - and those frequented by the consumers, could offer additional value to the practical contribution of this thesis. Brands that interviewees nominated as most frequently used were, in no particular order: Four Seasons, Starwood (W, St. Regis, Westin, Sheraton), Fairmont, Raffles, InterContinental, Mandarin Oriental, Hilton, Hyatt (Park Hyatt, Grand Hyatt), Marriott (Ritz Carlton), Shangri-La, Peninsula, and Aman Resorts. A significant number of interviewees stated that they also stayed in non-branded properties (boutique hotels). Reasons for this varied depending on personal decision making, location, reputation, or purpose of travel. The following statement from a male interviewee reflected a view shared by several others on this issue:

I personally have a preference for boutique brands, small hotels with a solid reputation of the owner/management behind them. I am not interested in mass chain hotels, they lack appeal and are replicated across so many cities and countries they hold no interest for myself (Interviewee IDP16, male).

Another finding worth highlighting is the individual’s use of the Internet, Social Media channels and referrals from colleagues and friends, when deciding which brand to choose, and at which particular property to stay within a given destination. This “word-of-mouth” (WOM), exchange and the sharing of stay experiences, came up frequently throughout the interviews. The following statements reflected the view shared among many interviewees:

There’s no typical brand I’m staying with. It’s more a reference from colleagues wherever I travel to. So I try to inform myself: Okay, where did you stay? What’s your experience? I’m trying to put my orientation to this direction (Interviewee IDP05, male).
Another used technology to get others views:

I would look at a number of different websites first. And then I’d choose the hotel based on the comments and the reviews they have on those websites (Interviewee IDP21, male).

5.2.3 The Four Realms of Experience - current experience timeframe

The key findings of the questions asked within the current experience timeframe are presented based on the four experience realms. From the analysis of data relating to questions within the current experience timeframe, the Entertainment realm stood out as the most significant dimension in which consumers experienced memorable events. This was followed closely by the Esthetics realm and, to a lesser extent, by the Education and then the Escapism realm.

5.2.3.1 The Entertainment realm

The analysis of data revealed that the majority of memorable experiences were generated within the Entertainment realm. The entertainment realm is said to be one of the oldest forms of generating experiences and one of the most pervasive in today’s business environment (Pine & Gilmore 1999). It was within this environment or activity where the consumer’s attention was captured. Here, guests may have listened to music, read a magazine, or watched an in-house movie. They were being entertained passively and absorbing experiences through their senses. Key quotes from interviewees that were most reflective of the findings in relation to current experience occurrences and the meaning that was closely linked to the entertainment realm included:

…all the little nice things I discovered when I was first looking around this room were really very touchy, so to say almost because I saw this small iPod speaker system, I saw a coffee machine, I saw the fruits on the table. So these nice little things I experienced (Interviewee ID05, male).

In addition to these tangible elements, space and brightness were considered important by most interviewees:

First of all it was a large room. It was a bright room. Now understand this is the middle of winter in Ireland which is always pretty gloomy. But it had a very large, latest TV set. So many hotels have still got the old box sets, but this was a lovely large screen. It also had a very good sound system. It had Internet connections. It had all that you’ve come to expect in a top hotel (Interviewee ID18, male).
The bathroom was also important and, in some cases, was seen as a component of the entertainment realm. For example:

…the bathroom was very entertaining to me. If you are talking about a nice room view, it was that of the bathroom (Interviewee ID05, male).

And:

For me, it is very important being entertained in a way that I see little details that I did not expect. For example, I see special [bath] salt next to the bathtub… (Interviewee ID09, female).

The view from guest room windows was a major factor adding to the experience. For example:

I do make a point of having a glass of wine when looking out at the view and taking some pictures with Instagram and Facebook and then sharing those with friends to make them jealous (Interviewee ID12, male).

And:

I always like a view. I don’t think there’s any question about that. Now in certain cities you can’t get that, right? But it depends on what the view is. If it’s a view: I like the view from this hotel. I like looking down over the courtyard or out over the church. Some of them are better than others. But there’s no question that this is highly relevant (Interviewee ID14, male).

Indeed, the quality of the view was considered to enhance the experience even when rooms were lacking in space or furnishings. For example:

The room […] was sort of minimalist in a way but everything there was of high quality. They would give a gift each night of some nature. And not an expensive gift - but just something that was thoughtful and yes, memorable (Interviewee ID15, male).

While it would seem that the view was important in setting the scene for a memorable experience, in many cases it was the little things that made the experience memorable. This included important “touchy” things and useful features such as iPod speakers and little inexpensive gifts. Once these issues were addressed, the view then provided an opportunity to capture the experience by taking photographs to share later when discussing the experience with friends.
5.2.3.2 The Esthetics realm

Within the Esthetics realm, the analysis showed that the consumer was also a passive participant and did not directly affect or influence the performance, instead being stimulated and immersed in his / her surroundings (Pine & Gilmore 1999). Guests simply enjoyed the environment, recognizing design, space and esthetic cues; being stimulated through their senses.

Key quotes from interviewees that were most reflective of the findings and the meaning linked to the Esthetics realm experience were:

What I enjoy when traveling from a business perspective is that I like to have a bath (big and deep), in a luxurious bathroom. I pay extra for that. I enjoy space in the room so there’s almost a separate area to work from. It’s not just a little desk tucked in the corner that you can’t put a laptop, reading material and other items on. I prefer to have a working-sized desk instead of a nook (Interviewee ID19, female).

The notion of work space as an add-on was a consistent theme, for example:

Definitely the feeling of room in a sense of space. I do a lot of work in my hotel room at night. …I don’t like sitting with my back to the door. And in some rooms the desk is kind of shoved in a corner and the chair is kind of positioned so that my back is to the door and that sort of…In that case I actually end up working on the bed, which is not the best solution (Interviewee ID12, male).

These interviewees indicated that spacious and well thought out room layouts (purposeful design) were important, while others highlighted the feel and touch of quality materials as important generators of memorable experiences. For example:

…the touch of the furnishing; at the [name] the floor boards were a mid-brown wood color but were so smooth - not polished, that you could walk in stocking feet and not catch or snag your stockings or socks. The feel of the natural material felt so good as opposed to standard carpet (Interviewee ID16, female).

These touch points and textures were important indicators of quality noted by both female and male interviewees. For example:

I remember the environment; it’s very nicely combined between wood, glass, the views and white walls so it’s got that kind of fresh, clean, modern lines but classic colors and textures (Interviewee ID15, male).
Further stimulating the senses through esthetic cues, were adjustable and pre-set lighting controls. One interviewee described it as follows:

Lighting is very important to me. […] three different lighting settings: for daytime, evening and for business use (Interviewee ID09, female).

While interviewees frequently referred to the size of the room, which in itself was an important generator of memorable experiences, in many cases it was the special attention given to the room configuration and layout, addressing specific work, reading and relaxation purposes that was valued. In addition to purposeful room arrangements, it appeared that the combination of materials and their individual texture were important generators of memorable experience, as were senses-stimulating features, such as mood-adjustable lighting. In the Esthetics realm, these were the things that were seen to produce memorable experiences.

5.2.3.3 The Education and Escapism realms

Following the Entertainment and Esthetics realms, interviewees considered the Education and then the Escapism realms as experience generating spheres when recalling memorable events. Compared to the Entertainment and Esthetics realms, however, the Education and Escapism realms were seen to be less significant contributors to current memorable experiences. In other words, frequent travelling guests had not necessarily associated past memorable experiences to have been generated through noteworthy educational or escapism content. Some guest gave examples where they felt that they had learned something new, or where the occurrence had given them a sense of escape from everyday life.

Key quotes from interviewee’s comments that were most reflective of the findings of experience occurrences closely linked to education and escapism realm were:

For example, …hotel in Paris, they have a package which includes the stay in the hotel, breakfast, dinner […], a city tour, as well as your personal iPad - the tour guide and the sightseeing trip automatically [installed] on it (Interviewee ID01, male).

Interviewees commented on getting to know the destination and its surroundings, but also learning about special events, activities or the culture that are seen as memorable experience generators. For example:
But what I really like, are these small notes that make mention of special events, or activities in the city, or around the hotel. Attractions, I mostly know them by now. But it’s a good idea. That’s a nice idea if you’re new to the city, or the hotel (Interviewee ID03, male).

Some interviewees needed to be prompted to recall educational aspects of their hotel stays but when they did, they saw it as important. For example:

I remember staying at the Sandy Lane Resort [Barbados]. They have art in each guest room, the local art, and then 2 days later there was a little book for us on the desk which we took home to learn about the local artists. Another time, …we got some jewellery. Not expensive jewellery, it was homemade kind of jewellery that you’ll probably get in the market for 10 bucks. That’s not the point. [Name] gave it to us and said, “That’s what our people do”. It’s beautiful. If you ask me now did I learn something new? Yeah I think they should be more proud at what they are doing (Interviewee ID23, female).

Many others spoke of the feelings derived from a place while learning about the surroundings and explained how this may generate memorable experience. For example:

You know that if you needed anything it was there. And it just gave me that escape from what was – it was quite serene actually in terms of the feeling of the place compared to what this city felt like. […] the booking that my partner made for me…because she wanted me to experience this little boutique hotel. But in the end, it felt like, …once you hit the 41st floor, which is where the foyer was, it just felt like you’ve escaped the hectic city environment… (Interviewee ID22, male).

Experiencing a sense of escape was described by some interviewees through the smooth running of their stays without incidents and unexpected interruptions. For example:

…it this happens when everything is comfortable or things are running smooth and efficient and I’m not bothered and everything is good (Interviewee ID06, male).

Others referred to multi-sensory experiences derived from the external surroundings of their guest rooms:

And all I have to do is step out into the balcony, shut the door behind me and there’s this view, and it’s not just the view because it’s a multi-sensory experience for me. There is the sound of the ocean. There is the sound of people walking on the promenade, the traffic in the far distance and that sort of peace and quiet and that sense of solitude if I need it but also connectivity if I want it - is nice (Interviewee ID12, male).
Although experiences associated with the Education and Escapism realms were less
dominant within the current experience timeframe, learning about the place and its
surroundings appeared to be contributing factors toward memorable experiences. It
would seem that, for these guests, experiences associated with the Escapism realm could
simply be experiencing an incident-free stay, which in turn can produce memorable
experiences. However, when supported by external views and the immediate
surroundings, these multi-sensory stimuli could lead to memorable escapism
experiences that had lasting impact.

5.2.4 The Four Realms – future experience timeframe

Based on the analysis of data within the future experience timeframe to 2020, again, the
Entertainment realm dominated overall as the most significant dimension in which
consumers will seek to experience memorable events. Comparing the Entertainment
realm between current and future timeframes, guest desires for memorable experiences
within this realm are most likely to become much more significant.

As was noted in the current experience timeframe, generally, the Esthetics realm
continued to be the second most anticipated dimension in which guests predicted their
experiences to be generated in the future. A noticeable increase in the number of coded
units of meaning was recorded that supported this contention. The realm closely
following the Esthetics realm (in terms of importance) is the Escapism realm, which
compared to the current experience timeframe, witnessed the largest increase in
recorded text segments and their units of coding within the data. This finding suggested
that guests were seeking increased levels of participation and immersion when
envisaging their stay in future luxury hotel accommodation.

5.2.4.1 The Entertainment realm

Analyzing the coded data from questions that asked interviewees to express their future
experience desires, the memorable experience generators that guests spoke about as
being most desirable, were those generated overwhelmingly within the Entertainment
realm.

Key quotes from interviewee’s comments that were most reflective of the findings in
relation to future experience occurrences and the meaning that was closely linked to the
Entertainment realm were:

Remember the experience in the A380 First class Qantas cabin, where the display allowed me to play with the whole cabin...I can imagine that it might be very interesting to really explore the hotel room itself. And I don’t go there to explore. This is not my intention. My intention is to sleep there because I’m visiting some place. But what would certainly be nice, if it were possible to make me want to explore not only the place I visit but even the room. I can imagine this being very interesting and there’s certainly possibilities, just the reason that I say I don’t feel the need to do so now, I just want to sleep there, doesn’t mean that there are – there is no way to make it very interesting...[for example] “I can blind the windows by adding some electricity”. Like I know it’s possible in our A380’s – we have this in Toulouse. You can switch on an electronic shade (frosting) on the windscreen, and it makes it go ‘blind’. You switch it off – or vice versa. I don’t remember, but it’s like playing. So most likely for me, it would be a small playground for adults (Interviewee ID08, male).

In addition to engaging guests in playful ways and allowing them to discover controllable in-room elements that were entertaining, this quote shows that guests expected technology-enabled features to be used in future room designs and that these were becoming important generators of memorable experience. As one respondent put it:

I think technology’s going to be critical and I think using technology for maximum ability to give you both space, size, and entertainment is going to be absolutely critical (Interviewee ID14, male).

Besides technology-enabled memorable experience generators, developing unique and unexpected service experiences was also seen as important. For example:

Exciting and stimulating in-room dining, a different menu daily of the Chefs choice, make this like a chefs table experience, so I can enjoy my dining... (Interviewee ID16, female).

And:

I think the number ‘1’ untapped opportunity is creating serendipitous encounters (pleasant surprise) (Interviewee ID25, male).

While many see technology as important when generating future experiences in the entertainment realm, the emphasis was placed more noticeably on technology as an enabler of, for example, space and entertainment-producing experiences. Additionally, discovering new and pleasantly surprising elements was seen by many as important future generators of experiences. Thus, it would appear that it was not the size of the
room but the clever, technology enhanced use of space that would be valued in the future.

5.2.4.2 The Esthetics and Escapism realms

Following the Entertainment realm, were experience desires that interviewees generally placed within the Esthetics and Escapism realms. Within the Esthetics realm guests were immersed in an activity or the environment without having an effect on it. Similarly, within the escapism realm, guests were also immersed in the activity: like acting in a play, or participating in a ‘virtual game’ environment, however, here they were involved in active participation and immersion in the experience (Pine & Gilmore).

Key quotes from interviewee’s comments that were most reflective of the findings in relation to emerging experience occurrences capturing future Esthetics and Escapism realm experiences were:

It [guest room] should have its own style. A hotel should have its own style that is unique and which is comfortable because what I do not like is a hotel chain. You do not know which city you are is, because all are the same (Interviewee ID02, male).

And:

It would be the identification of the ‘place’ itself, what it is made of. Like being a landmark, the surroundings and the personal treatment, all combined. This altogether is some kind of complete piece of art. It’s not only one piece of it. It’s the complete set of pieces (Interviewee ID06, male).

In addition to the importance placed on style and authenticity of the place, an understanding of the purpose of travel and a flexible design capable of accommodating varying needs was seen as becoming more critical in the future. Examples of interviewees’ comments that captured this trend were:

Make it – a massive focus on usability, leveraging what I’m used to. Not creating things that I’m not used to. Putting everything into an environment where I’m familiar…really thinking about the scenarios and maybe having different rooms. It’s like if you’re a leisure guest. This is different to when you are on business trips. Now if you’re a leisure guest maybe you don’t want to have 5 power points with your iPhone, iPad, and computer plugged in. That would require you to think of differential or modular designs and what the activity is that you want to cater for, … and how can I actually
structure the furnishing and stuff. De-complexify, creating social connections. Let me start the experience from where I am with what I’ve got, when it suits me (Interviewee ID25, male).

In addition to knowing guest’s purpose of travel, getting to know their personal preferences and then presenting new and stimulating options was also seen as important. For example:

For me, the engagement and richness would come from not just knowing my name, not just knowing that I’m there for one night, which is generally speaking what they know of me. But actually knowing me much much better, and again I’m using the example of the candy for my kids. But to take that, and to build upon it. So again for example, …they should have the data available knowing what I like to order because I generally order the same things again and again and not to presume what I’m going to order but to kind of have that, so that when I pick up the phone to order, they can say something like: “Will you be having the pasta again tonight, or would you like to try something different?” That would make me go, “oh, they’ve remembered something that’s nice.” To know me better. I think I create enough of a data path or data weight in my interactions and in my behavior in the hotel to give them that knowledge [to experience new things] (Interviewee ID12, male).

Building on a deeper understanding of guests’ personal interests, travel purposes and in-room stay preferences, were experience-elements that helped people to relax and unwind. One interviewee explained; ‘…having a long bath or just being engrossed in the one movie or something like that (Interviewee ID13, male)’. Another explained that:

It is all about the overall experience. You calm down when there’s nothing you get angry about or you dislike. So, if a hotel works quietly but extremely efficient, and if they try to put themselves into your own shoes, I think that it works well. I have a bit of a problem to go too much into the hardware because ultimately I think we will get there. I think a good hotel is all about software (Interviewee ID04, male).

The authenticity of the interior design in relation to its geographical and cultural location appeared to be becoming more important. Equally, it seemed that the knowledge about guests, like their personal interests and their purpose of travel, would also become important generators of memorable experiences in the future. Additionally, building upon personal guest preferences and delivering unique and pleasantly surprising product, service and experience offerings, was predicted to become more significant in the future.
5.2.4.3 The Education realm
The analysis of data from guests and their future experience desires, placed the Education realm overall as the least imagined generator of memorable experiences. Within this realm, guests would be active participants, like, for example, attending a cooking class hosted by the Executive Chef of the Hotel. However, it is noteworthy that compared to the current experience timeframe, in the future experience timeframe, the education realm or dimension produced specific text segments (responses) that suggested guests would become more interested in active participation and learning. For example:

Sometimes you get a running map from them. But they don’t actually do much that seemed personalized or unique around their location. Because realistically, why are you going to a luxury hotel? You’re going there for business. Which means you got to go to work but you still probably want to do something. Or you’re going there for pleasure and if you don’t go to the concierge you don’t really know what to do around it (Interviewee ID 22, male).

It would seem, therefore, that regardless of whether a luxury stay is for business or pleasure, guest needs are similar.

5.2.5 The Four Realms – virtuality experiences
In Chapter 3 (Section 3.3.3, Page 137) the flow of questions that determined the interview schedule was described. Comprising two core question sets (current and future timeframes), questions relating to virtuality experiences, produced and enabled through the use of digital technologies, explored future guest needs. Overall, interviewees foresaw that memorable experiences derived from virtuality would predominantly be generated within the Entertainment realm. Their views are reflected below.

5.2.5.1 The Entertainment realm (virtuality)
The analysis of data from questions relating to virtuality dimensions within future experience occurrences revealed that, like those in current and future themes, guests envisaged memorable experience would take place extensively within the Entertainment realm. Key quotes from interviewee’s comments that were most reflective of the findings were:
When we are looking for a stay in a hotel, I always feel good when I have the possibility to look on the Internet site and to get as much of a feeling I can achieve from this site. So the better the photos are and the explanation and the gallery and video films, I say, “Oh, this is a good service. They don’t have to hide anything”. It makes me feel good. This is mostly the main reason for a decision if the Internet site presents a very good view of what I can expect there. And I think the hotels that do this best have an advantage compared to the others. For instance, booking a round of golf or a massage or a stay in a restaurant, if I can book this from home in advance. [...] Do I have a garden view, or do I have a beach view? To me a beach front view is very important and I always want to make sure that when I book this room, I’ll be sure to get it. For me it would be very important when I do my booking and I can say I want to have a room like this (Interviewee ID05, male).

In addition to quality online content in the form of photos and videos aiding the initial hotel selection process and booking options of facilities, was the potential for the pre-selection of specific room configurations and views:

…we’re all so time-poor, but also digital devices are giving us back more time. So you could be sitting in an airport lounge about to fly to Singapore and you could think, “Oh I haven’t done such and such yet”, and they could tell you, “Here are the 12 rooms that are available in your configuration; which view do you like” (Interviewee ID15, male).

And:

I would value a link from my home technology to manage my guest room requirements, so that I can customize my pre-arrival, whether it’s from in room dining to making sure I have wakeup calls prearranged (Interviewee ID16, female).

Remembering guest preferences and the ability to recall specific content were also considered important future entertainment options:

…in terms of creating proper guest profiles and really sticking to them; but implementation here is, I think, the key issue. I think we will see new things and everything that works around the Internet and your individual music preferences and so on, which could actually work… For instance, if you take the Singapore Airlines example of a play-list when you fly on SQ, which is delete after the flight. Instead, you could create, for instance, a music profile that you can store. It’s not expensive anymore. And it’s just there when you arrive back. That makes you feeling very much at home’ (Interviewee ID04, male).

And, being able to control content and room feature selection from the convenience of one’s own mobile device:
So again if there was an app that would allow me to control the lights, the temperature, and the TV from bed, that would be nice. The beds are great. But what’s great about a big bed is also a downfall because it means that light controls if I sleep in the middle are very far away, which has been annoying in the past. [...] I’m holding my phone right now; it is always within reach of my hand. And again being in the digital space, I know that in a couple of years, there will be: in fact I think now there are more smartphones than people in the world. That’s only going to increase (Interviewee ID12, male).

While the quality and accuracy of the online representation of the property were deemed critical, it appeared that the pre-selection of room features such as amenities and window views were becoming important memorable experience generators. Additionally, having one’s personal preferences, for example, a music playlist and light settings, remembered and conveniently accessed via controls, for example, via guest’s mobile device from anywhere within the guest room were also predicted to increase in significance.

5.2.5.2 The Escapism realm (virtuality)
Following the Entertainment realm is the Escapism realm. The Escapism realm requires guests to be immersed in the activity, like participating in a virtual game environment. This would involve both active participation and immersion in the experience, ‘…to the point where [guests] actually have an effect on the performance or phenomenon…’ (Jurowski 2009, p.2).

As the findings under the future experience timeframe revealed, the escapism realm recorded by far the highest proportional gain compared to any other realm; these included forward-looking virtual experience desires. Within the escapism realm, the consumer is an actor or active participant who shapes the event. Key quotes from interviewee’s comments that were most reflective of the findings in relation to virtuality experiences closely linked to the escapism realm were:

[Selecting features / amenities before arriving] For example, single bed, double beds - might even end up with the colors of the covers on the bed. Yeah, it could work. Going through the music you want, whatever, – yes, there are a lot of things I can imagine [being able to pre-select] (Interviewee ID09, female).
From being able to pre-select specific room configurations and color schemes, being able to pre-determine and self-select activities based on special interest and time considerations were becoming important generators of memorable experiences:

Well we’re going to San Francisco coming up and one of my friends [recommended] what things to do in San Francisco…so you actually get a feel of the real city, not of just being a tourist itself. That is invaluable information. What ‘goes on in’ Milan - I found this [app] in Delicious magazine. You could select 2 days in Milan, or 24 hours in Milan. So I just followed it and did it all. I stumbled across all sorts of different things by doing that so even though you are only 24 hours in the city, you know what’s new… (Interviewee ID11, female).

And:

I’m a very big fan of the digitization of experiences and how that can not only extend but also empower and accelerate and accentuate a non-digital experience. I was walking to Park Hyatt in Sydney a couple of weeks ago - through the rain thinking, I would love: I wish they had an app. And this app would obviously know that I’m checking in today: but I will use the app to tell them what time I’d be checking in. I don’t want to call anyone. I just want to use the app because I’m on my phone anyway. One time I’m checking in and I’m kind of hungry so I would love for a nice big bowl of pasta to be waiting for me in my room. So I could just sit down and start eating because I am starving. But no, I have to walk through the rain, get there. Yeah they’ll be warm and welcoming but then I’ll get to my room. I have to sign the card. And then pick up the phone […]. Order room service and it’s fast but I’m still waiting 35, 40 minutes. But I would love to be able to pre-order my stuff before I get there. That would be nice (Interviewee ID12, male).

In addition to being able to digitally pre-order services ahead of arrival, in-room personalization and guest rooms capable of memorizing these settings were also found to be important:

Light is the first thing coming to my mind. Light gives a lot of opportunities in the future, actually. I mean digital technology as soon as you are a regular guest in the room, or in a hotel, you could go as far as saying your room remembers you. You go into the room either it’s by the intervals of your steps or your voice or whatever it is, you enter the room, and it’s like in a car. You’ve got this default program and keys that remember your seat, like ‘press’ button number 1. You can do the same for the light or the windows, whatever. And curtains – close or open. You open the room, sit down and that’s it (Interviewee ID08, male).
In addition to customizable content and memory-based system settings recognizing individual users, the use of digital display technology featuring purposeful content was also important:

You’d have to have a bloody big screen to make it worthwhile but I suppose you could customize your preferences for art or a view...I do think that there’s flat screen technology as yet, but as long as it’s tastefully done – like built into the wall, I think there’s phenomenal opportunity to use it for not just TV entertainment but to give you the example, video art. There’s great video art and it could be actually really quite interesting. …or the camera on Bondi Beach or the camera on the Opera House house. I’ll be just happy to look at people skiing in Aspen right from my hotel room. But if those are the choices -- if you had, imagine this, that in your hotel room you had a hundred choices of -- because these places exist, right? There are plenty of these cameras around the world that play on great places, right? I don’t look at them at home because I don’t have time to think about it. But I suppose if you had 2 or 3 screens around the room and one of them happen to be on Trafalgar Square just for laughs or you saw people at Times Square… (Interviewee ID14, male).

While it would seem that virtuality had an increasing potential to add escapism experience dimensions, it appeared that digital applications designed for self-help pre-arrival configuration of activities, room layout and personalized content were the most favored applications where future generators of memorable experiences could take place. This might include in-room customization of virtual art displays and external views, even if these were to project live images from a thousand miles way.

5.2.5.3 The Education realm (virtuality)

Following the Escapism realm was the Education realm. As with the escapism realm, guests are active participants, like attending a cooking class or participating in a virtual in-room yoga session. Whilst these activities tend to involve guests in active participation, unlike the escapism realm, they were still more outside the event than immersed in the action. In other words, the consumer increases skills and knowledge through absorbing information presented in an interactive way (Pine & Gilmore 1999). Findings under the future theme highlighted, that the Education realm within virtuality produced experiences recorded a considerable increase between the current and future opinions. This suggested that guests could envisage engaging in virtuality initiated learning or educational experience occurrences.
Key quotes from interviewee’s comments that were most reflective of the findings in relation to virtuality experiences closely linked to the educational realm were:

Let’s say you’re looking at a house online. And what happens is they will give you all of the best angles of the house. They’re going to make you go through that. You get there and you go, “Oh, so I’m seeing all the good bits that I expected to see and now I’m actually staying to see the bad bits as well”. But what I love is what other people have said. I love reading through TripAdvisor (Interviewee ID20, male).

While being able to preview images of guest rooms that are reflective of the quality attributes as observed by other travelers, accessing activity options in and around the place were also seen as important:

[Interactive Apps teaching you what’s on] Or, hey I’ve got nothing to do tonight. Are there any shows on in town? What’s happening in the immediate local area that I might be interested in? “Oh you know there’s this […]”. Or there are these movies on. […] Or here’s a local restaurant (Interviewee ID25, male).

Interviewees felt memorable experiences could be generated by being informed prior to arrival of the type of room layout, furnishings and views specific guest room types would have to offer through virtual guest room images. One interviewee suggested how that might be done as follows:

I’m thinking you tweak it down to the way in which some of the big sporting arenas are allowing you to actually see what you are seeing when you select your seat. I think to be able to see your room [and views] would be lovely (Interviewee ID22, male).

Additionally, in-room technology was seen to have the potential to promote ‘learning by doing’, for example:

Voice activation, from my point of view, would be really helpful. Because you’re in your own environment [to learn]. Sometimes people are saying I’m in my place and then I’m not shy to talk. If I do this voice activation outside where other people walk around, I think it’s embarrassing to talk to your mobile phone. But at home, I’m talking anywhere to my friends to whatever. So that would be very good for me if all these things were easily accessible (Interviewee ID05, male).

While online forums inform about the actual stay experience expressed by fellow travelers, using digital applications could also educate users of specific amenity options,
events and special activities. Even preselecting guest room configurations and window views appeared to arouse forward-looking interests, as did the benefits of ‘learning by doing’ envisaged to take place within the privacy of the guest room. Interviewees were quite animated and excited about future opportunities within this realm.

5.2.5.4 The Esthetics realm (virtuality)
Least imagined as a likely generator of future experiences within the virtuality theme, are those that would take place in the Esthetics realm. Key quotes from interviewee’s comments closely linked to the Esthetics realm experiences were:

To personalize my room with LED technology, like you can do it in meeting rooms. And I think I would appreciate this (Interviewee ID06, male).

And:

You could have art displayed in electronic form. Maybe even have your view altered to display a part of the city that you can virtually display as you get a sense of where you are. Yeah I could see that. I could see that obviously. It doesn’t exist today. I have not seen it at least. But I could see that happening (Interviewee ID24, male).

I could select [room] colors that bring your mood up or Zen you out, I guess if you could select color schemes…and maybe a virtual view. Maybe a virtual view or whatever you feel like looking at that day… (Interviewee ID11, female).

While virtuality applied within the Esthetics realm appeared to come up less frequently, some foresee the potential to use technology to overlay digital explanations of distant landmarks observed from the guest room window, or to adapt in-room lighting effects which may also include the personalization of wallpaper images and color settings.

5.2.6 Memorable Experience Categories and their Themes
In this section, the five categories and the memorable experience generator themes that most reflect current, future and virtual experiences are presented in descending order. The most salient statements are quoted, describing the feelings, emotions, and the nuances by which interviewees explain, in their own language, the importance of specific memorable experiences generators. The responses received from interviewees were coded based on specific text segments, which contained units of meaning relating to memorable experience generator themes that had previously been identified in the
research with the producers. Specifically, these memorable experience generator themes were generated from the data obtained from the Delphi-like study in Phase I; each recurring theme was given a code and definition that subsequently guided the analysis of data in this study phase with the consumers.

In Phase I, these memorable experience generator themes were grouped into four main categories. These were Technology, Services, Atmosphere and Culture. This Phase II analysis of data supports the initial findings with the producers in that the majority of memorable experiences are generated from themes that can be grouped into the same distinct categories. However, in this study phase, responses from consumers produced a fifth category; namely the Sensory category. This category captured the emotional dimensions of experiences, and the meanings interviewees placed on their past memorable experiences and those that they foreshadowed could lead to future memorable experiences. In the following section, the memorable experience categories and themes within the current experience timeframe are presented.

5.2.6.1 Current experience timeframe

The category within the current experience timeframe, and the most dominant generators behind interviewees’ memorable experiences was the Services category. This category, was described in Phase I (Chapter 4, Table 4.7, Page 156), as:

Services: composing and orchestrating the appropriate level of resources, skills, ingenuity, and experiences for effecting specific benefits extended to guests (either on a monetary or non-monetary basis). The services category includes themes such as: services, content, customization, amenities, and collateral.

In this study phase, additional service themes were discovered. These are:

Personalization, preferences (personal), surprises (memorable), complimentary services (Internet access, bottled/drinking water, amenities), learning new things, experiencing new things, and in-room dining themes.

5.2.6.1.1 The Service Category

Within this category, themes that were dominant among interviewees were services, amenities, and content related memorable experience generator themes. In Phase I, (Chapter 4, Table 4.7, Page 156) services were defined as ‘Composing and orchestrating the appropriate level of resources, skill, ingenuity, and experience for
effecting specific benefits extended to guests (either on a monetary or non-monetary basis)’. The analysis of data with consumer interviewees confirmed the meaning given to services, and how these were perceived as valuable experience generators in both physical and intangible forms.

Key quotes from interviewee’s comments that were reflective of the findings in relation to services, amenities, and content themes, were:

You can have all the comfort, all the luxury whatever you want to have. You just tell them what you want. You can have a butler. You can have whatever it is. It’s up to you what you feel, what’s comfortable for you (Interviewee ID23, female).

In addition to services being provided at a moment’s request, feeling the quality of the service experience was deemed to be important:

When I hop into bed and it feels fresh. And the pillows are great…the bed was beautiful and comfortable (Interviewee ID11, female).

The quality and consistency of consumable amenities were also important:

I leave the champagne, I leave the wine; I like good quality fruit that is replenished each day. Little chocolates or cakes replenished daily, or nuts (Interviewee ID17, male).

The acknowledgment of the individual and his/her preferences were important; for example:

And why it is good, when you arrive at the lobby, they usually remember your name. They will open the door for you. They don’t presume you want your bag taken. They get to know what you’d like because usually when you travel you’re quite used to balancing your bags as you go through (Interviewee ID20, male).

The combination of services, amenities and carefully selected content was highlighted as experience generating. For example:

A library of books built into the wall near the writing area. Chaise lounge near the writing area, so that lying on the bed in the day was not necessary to enjoy the morning paper. High bed gave a comfortable appearance and allowed you to sit up high while reading in bed, with rustic lamps that were pulled into place. Art was different in every room. Mini bar was complimentary and refilled 3 times a day, a variety of water, small wine, and piccolo of Champagne (Interviewee ID16, female).
While it would seem that on-demand services delivered at a moments notice were important generators of experiences, it was also the quality of materials and the consistency and daily amenities provided that were equally significant. Knowing the individual guest’s preferences appeared to be essential for producing memorable experiences, as was the overall content experienced in the form of services, amenities and in-room comfort.

5.2.6.1.2 The Atmosphere Category
Following memorable experience generator themes in the Services category were those associated with the Atmosphere category. This category was described in Phase I (Chapter 4, Table 4.7, Page 156), as:

Atmosphere: mood-enhancing lighting, design, services or solutions, and sensory environments. The category atmosphere includes memorable experience themes such as artifacts, seating/comfort, and design.

In this study phase, additional memorable experience generator themes were discovered and added to the Atmosphere category. These were:

Bathroom (space, fit out, lighting, separate bathtub and shower, water pressure), purposeful design (design that has meaning and is purposeful to space, function, and the atmosphere).

The themes that emerged as the dominant generators of memorable experiences were the design, atmosphere, and seating / comfort themes. Interviewees, for example, described the bathroom environment as an important generator of memorable experiences. They placed important value on the spaciousness, the design and fit out: in particular the lighting and adjusting for various mood-enhancing settings, and the thoughtfulness that was given to amenities.

Key quotes from interviewee’s that were representative of memorable experience generator design, atmosphere, and comfort themes, were:

I think variable lighting. I suppose the one I really like is the Henry hotels. They’re really good. I don’t know if you’ve stayed in the Henry Jones in Hobart. They’re spectacular. I like it to feel not sort of a box in a concrete tower. I like ambient lighting. I like the artwork, some visual-stimulating stuff. Nobody ever provides books. They provide magazines - again sometimes I’d be interested in coffee table books. …each room feels unique as opposed to generic. I like to be able to spread out a bit. I’d like to have a view. I’d like to be able to open the window (Interviewee ID25, male).
In addition to atmosphere-producing design considerations, effective lighting solutions in bathrooms were important:

You know the problem when you go to the bathroom and you don’t have good lighting? The lighting in the room; it’s not necessary that there’s a picture but the light, …the lighting is very important. At day and night time I guess, particularly getting up at night (Interviewee ID1, male).

The overall atmosphere generated through purposeful design, layout and content considerations were also remarked on. For example:

The size of the room is an important factor. So, let me just do a virtual walk into this room [Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten]. The door, as I’ve told you I have a double door [in my guest room] … I could put my coat somewhere which is not somewhere in the room, like just dropping it on the sofa or somewhere else; here, all is hidden away because my coat and everything is outside. I could even leave my shoes outside, between the entrance door and my room door. And then the space opens. There’s a nice bed. Normally, I don’t realize certain specific things. First it’s the whole atmosphere. The whole atmosphere makes it; it comprises of the bed space, how the bed is there and then the window, the [natural] light into the room (Interviewee ID05, male).

The comfort of beds and individual furniture pieces, as well as balanced color schemes were seen as important:

It is of course, comfortable beds and couches and sofas, so that you don’t spoil your back when you’re sitting anywhere. And of course space as I told you. And also smooth colors, which give me the opportunity to calm down. This is very important. And when I have this, I’m quite content (Interviewee ID06, male).

While design played an important part in generating memorable experiences, it appeared that the layout and configuration of the guest room, and the comfort of individual furniture pieces influenced the overall atmosphere. Specifically, the bathroom lighting quality and effectiveness constituted important considerations for producing memorable experiences.

### 5.2.6.1.3 The Culture Category

The themes that followed those associated with the more dominant Services and Atmosphere categories, were those memorable experience generator themes associated with Culture. This category was described in Phase I (Chapter 4, Table 4.7, Page 156), as:

Culture: The set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution, organization, people or group and its staff. The
‘culture’ category includes memorable experience themes such as, culture, staff, home-away-from-home, guest participation and location themes.

In this study phase, additional memorable experience generator themes were discovered and added to the Culture category. These were:

Recognition (being recognized, acknowledged, and identified by name), and familiarity of surroundings.

Within the Culture category, the most significant themes identified from interviews with the consumers were memorable experiences generated through staff, recognition, and location themes. A great number of interviewees described memorable experience occurrences that had been initiated through staff engagement, making them feel recognized and acknowledged. Additionally, interviewees spoke of location specific experiences that they attributed to being memorable.

Key quotes from interviewee’s comments that were reflective of the findings in relation to current experience occurrences and the meaning that was closely linked to staff, recognition, and location memorable experience themes were:

...for me it’s the: it’s that social side of feeling welcome, feeling; it’s sort of creating some sort of connection not just with the hotel but also with the people there (Interviewee ID25, male).

In addition to feeling a connection to staff, it was the guest services extended by them and the local knowledge they had that generate memorable experiences. For example:

Honestly the rooms don’t drive my choice. The reason why I like the high-end hotels is because I have a concierge who can get me into restaurants. Or better yet - have the facilities within the hotel that I like. The rooms are rooms; to be bland. Yes they’re nice. ... the reason why I like – and W is a classic example in the US. W has decent restaurants there. That Whiskey Blue is quite nice. Or the concierge can get you into good places. Probably the best one is the Park Hotel in New York (Interviewee ID22, male).

And:

And the thing that made it so good and it came as a realization for me, which is the most important, is the customer service. When people recognize your name and they know who you are even if you only stayed for 2 or 3 days and anticipating needs as well (Interviewee ID21, male).
The location of the property and its surroundings were also important:

And all I have to do is step out onto the balcony, shut the door behind me and there’s this view, and it’s not just the view because it’s a multi-sensory experience for me (Interviewee ID12, male).

Interviewees spoke of experiences that were generated through the engagement with staff and that were reflective of their culture and the knowledge they had of the location that surrounds them. Being recognized by staff and having one’s personal preferences remembered was important, as was the feeling of the location reflected in the identity of the hotel.

5.2.6.1.4 The Technology Category

The Technology category is predominantly reflecting technology, connectivity and audio-visual memorable experience themes. This category was described in Phase I (Chapter 4, Table 4.7, Page 156), as:

Technology: Systems, hardware, software or applications, the use of which delivers an outcome including connectivity (wired/wireless). The category technology includes memorable experience generator themes such as, technology, connectivity, Audio/TV, and wireless.

In this study phase, additional memorable experience themes were discovered from the analysis of data with the consumers. These were:

Pre-arrival personalization (via online portal); location-based services (apps), and social networks (apps).

Key quotes from interviewee’s comments that were reflective of the findings in relation to current experience occurrences and the meaning that was closely linked to technology, connectivity, and audio-visual themes were:

For me it’s a big surprise when I come to a room and I have the docking station for my iPod. I love it. It’s so simple and you pay only-- I don’t know what’s the price for a docking station? Nothing, its peanuts. But it’s comfortable for you because you can take your home music, put it in, plug it in and that’s it (Interviewee ID01, male).

Being able to play one’s own music amplified through universal docking stations was considered important, as was the quality of the equipment. For example:

Particularly when you’re traveling around Asia and you see the high-quality large size rooms, everything is new because their building has just been
freshly built. […] And it has got modern equipment. It’s got quality brands and they’re like a Sony Television instead of HTC or something like that (Interviewee ID20, male).

In addition to these tangible elements, it was the ease of in-room connectivity that was considered important:

And functions or techniques that you don’t have to - I don’t know, look behind your desk and search for a plug for your computer, that everything is wireless. And that you have not to take too many actions to get a decent Internet line. Or to make calls [simply] where I don’t have to read a book to know how to use the phone because it has so many functions. So everything is easy and simple to use (Interviewee ID09, female).

And:

Other things like having power points easily accessible near the bed. Because people often sort of – you’ve got your computer there and you just prefer to relax on the bed with your computer and watch TV or something, as opposed to sit by a desk. I think basic amenities like make power points really accessible (Interviewee ID25, male).

While technology and equipment embedded into the guest room plays an important part in the delivery of memorable experiences, it was the ease of use and the quality that was deemed essential. Additionally, the connectivity of one’s own mobile devices, to both conveniently located electrical power sources and external networks (via wireless access to the internet) were critical generators of positive experiences.

5.2.6.1.5 The Sensory Category

Themes that emerged from interviews with individual guests and that could not be associated with existing categories were memorable experience generator themes belonging to the Sensory category. This new category was described as follows:

Sensory: The emotional dimensions of experiences relating to views, spaciousness, color scheme, lighting, olfaction (smell), and touch (fabrics, materials).

The most dominant themes that emerged were memorable experience themes reflecting spaciousness, views and touch. Indeed, quite a number of interviewees commented on the feel and touch of materials, such as linen, fabrics, and amenities. This suggested that guests took note of, and appreciated, the quality and detail that was presented in a luxury hotel guest room. Key quotes from interviewees that were reflective of the findings in relation to space, views, and touch themes within the Sensory category were:
Well, the room type, the location of the room, and as well, again, the size of the room (Interviewee ID01, male).

While the overall size of the room was deemed important, it was the upkeep and in particular the size and quality of the bathroom that generated memorable experiences. For example:

It’s the bathroom. It’s the space. It’s the tidiness. If it is light or dark. I prefer it being light. And then it’s really the cleanliness – little spots on the walls are an absolute no-go. If I’m in a high-class hotel, the smallest things are an absolute no-go. I think this is the justification for the high price that it’s flawless. I would even say it’s more the bathroom than the bed maybe. I don’t know why. They’re both very important but the bathroom I think comes even before that (Interviewee ID08, female).

Aside from the size of the room and the overall quality upkeep, the window views were considered by many as important generators of memorable experiences. For example:

The views were spectacular. It was toward the mountains and there is all forest. In New York you want to have a high floor and upgrade in order to look down (Interviewee ID09, female).

And:

Well, what I do love is the view. Views are always an important criterion for choosing a guest room. That’s obviously the case like the Mandarin in Hong Kong (Interviewee ID04, male).

Within the luxury guest room environment, interviewees made mention of the quality of materials and the sensation of touch that they considered as having generated memorable experiences:

It’s the materials. It’s very much the materials. I like modern techniques - that’s fine, but I’m one of the skeptic guys. In the restaurant, I love the menu in a real folder, best in leather with the logo being pressed into it, for example. Everything being of high quality and I can feel it. That makes it very memorable for me because it’s the ‘real’ you want. So when you can see and you can feel what you’ve got in front of you - that I like very much. So, if I go somewhere and it feels being solid and well handcrafted, this is something that I remember for ages (Interviewee ID08, male).

And:

It is never the space. It is everything that you feel and you touch. So it’s the furniture – not the furniture and style. It’s the fabric. It’s a fabric or the material of the things, of the sofas, of the linen. It’s a comfort of materials (Interviewee ID16, female).
While the size of the guest room appeared to be closely linked to guest’s expectation of luxury, the same belief appeared to be placed on experiences generated through external views from the room. Within the guest room itself, however, it was the quality of materials and the sense of touch felt from fabrics and other surfaces that were deemed to be important generators of memorable experiences.

5.2.6.2 Future experience timeframe
The analysis of data revealed that memorable experiences in the future guest room environment continued to evolve around the five distinct categories.

5.2.6.2.1 The Service Category
The Service category, based on the future experience timeframe, recorded a strong increase and remained the most dominant category. Within the Service category, memorable experience themes evident among interviewee responses were services, content and customization themes. Key quotes from interviewee’s comments that were most reflective of the findings in relation to services, content, and customization themes, were:

Of course services, like the shirt service or like free Wi-Fi access, and Internet access. Also, room service for in-room dining. I guess those are the three most important services for me (Interviewee ID02, male).

In addition to services performed by hotel staff or through the provision of utilities, interviewees considered new value-producing service offerings. For example:

The connection to home. Let’s put it this way. Right now you can call, which is nice. But I also experienced with a friend, how easy a visual connection to home would be. […] This is really appealing to me. If I could do the same when I stay in the hotel room instead of just opening a small connecting window on the phone, I could really experience more. That’s the first thing that comes to my mind - that would really be a great benefit (Interviewee ID05, male).

While it appeared that guests valued services designed to better connect them to their place of origin (like home), interviewees also considered the value placed on services that would assist them to relax. For example:

I would desire an environment that truly relaxes me because this is my retreat. The hotel room is a retreat for me. No matter if it’s on a business trip
or on a tourism trip, this is most times at the beginning of the day or at the end of the day. Other times I’m away from the room, anyway. So this is the time to relax, calm down (Interviewee ID09, female).

While the future guest room may become an important reprieve from a hectic lifestyle, the option to customize and personalize services designed to help relax and unwind were considered to be likely to become even more important. For example:

I love to just walk into a room, put my bag away...; your bags are not in your face. I put my bag away so I’m neat around me. And then to have a lovely bath. If you could have a lovely bath, select your music, which you probably can in a lot of places. I don’t know. Select your music or select your lighting. Select your - if you wanted rain water or if you wanted whatever else, you know, …I mean, then just to be out to have that chill-out and total privacy experience...: that is what I would like (Interviewee ID12, male).

While services would continue to be a source of memorable experiences in the future luxury guest room, it appeared that services would need to be designed to address specific needs and desires of guests. Services that take into consideration a particular lifestyle of the guest and the role these service offerings would be likely to play, for example, in managing the side effects by helping guests to relax and unwind from daily life.

5.2.6.2.2 The Atmosphere Category

Following service generated memorable experience themes were those envisaged by interviewees that were reflective of the Atmosphere category. Within this category, interviewees most frequently referred to design, atmosphere, and seating / comfort themes, when describing their future in-room experiences desires. This category, as described in Phase I (Chapter 4, Table 4.7, Page 156), as:

Atmosphere: Mood-enhancing lighting, design, services or solutions, creating sensory environments. The category ‘Atmosphere’ includes themes such as, ‘atmosphere, artifacts, seating/comfort, and design’.

In this study phase, additional themes were discovered and added to the atmosphere category. These were:

Bathroom (space, fit out, lighting, separate bathtub and shower, water pressure), purposeful design (design that has meaning and is purposeful to space, function, and the atmosphere).
Key quotes from interviewee’s comments that were reflective of the findings describing forward-looking desires of guests representing design, atmosphere, and seating / comfort themes were:

It’s a question of quietness. I think this is what comes into mind first. Then it’s a question of light again, of materials, the condition of the room itself. It’s one thing if the materials generally are fine. Second question is how are they maintained. The order even of the items in the room. Do I have the desk squeezed somewhere in the corner just because you need to have it - so it’s squeezed somewhere there or is there – or is there a well-thought out concept behind it? …where can I leave my luggage”? Do I have to look at it all the time because there is just this little folding chair where you put your suitcase or can you properly lock it away and you don’t see it anymore? Because this is a good part of the feeling you have at home as well. At home, I don’t watch my clothes all day long. I don’t stand in front of the cupboards. So, these are the most important things (Interviewee ID09, female).

While the design of space, materials, lighting and the soundproofing from external elements was considered important, the atmosphere may also be influenced by favorable first impressions upon entering the guest room. For example:

When you enter a room the fresh sense in the air: like you are the first into that particular room; a worn out look, feel or sense is not for me. I recall those hotels, like the Dorchester that can make up the room while I am out, so that regardless of the time of day that I return to the room, it has been made up (Interviewee ID16, female).

And:

…when you walk in: it’s peaceful. And that I think, I don’t know for other people who feel like I do, but when I walk into a hotel and if I feel peaceful and like I’m going to relax, it’s very important that I’m going to sleep well. So if I walk in and I can hear a buzz or I can hear noisy outside or…then that’s like, “Oh no I’m not going to sleep tonight. And that’s important to me (Interviewee ID11, female).

The individual’s perceptions formed upon entry into the guest room appeared to be influenced by a number of elements like the furniture, artwork, lights, color scheme and the sensory inputs such as scents. Interviewees considered these as contributing factors in their perception of the overall atmosphere experienced within the guest room, and as important generators of memorable experiences.
5.2.6.2.3 The Culture Category

Following the Services and Atmosphere categories, which guests identified as important generators of future guest room stay experiences, were themes that belong to the Culture category. Themes that most reflected the future desires of guests and their forward-looking experiences within this category were those associated with staff, participation, and recognition themes. Key quotes from interviewee’s comments that best described the forward-looking desires representing staff, participation, and recognition themes, were:

I think it is the relationship between the staff and the guests. It needs to be a more personalized engagement, responding to you as an individual. Often, hotels treat these relationships in a merchandizing or what I call a ‘synthetic’ aspect of networking, a commodity that you buy. A good manager builds up a genuine relationship – he/she would not write a welcome letter that is just thrown in the basket: people can’t remember the individual’s name (Interviewee ID17, male).

In addition to staff recognizing guests individually, getting to know the location was also important. For example:

Well look if you had Google maps on the TV that you could just easily find out where the nearest…what is on…sometimes you don’t get a sense of your location and proximity to the city. So where you’re located is basically where the taxi has dropped you off. You know where you’re going. You come back and you go to the airport so you sometimes, you haven’t got to know the city (Interviewee ID13, male).

Besides knowing more about the hotel location and the city destination itself, having a sense that the individual self was being recognized appeared to become even more important:

The biggest one for me is [them] knowing my name. It’s, you feel again welcomed and valued and recognized. You’re not just a number, a room number. You’re a name. And they certainly make an effort to remember my name. That’s probably the biggest contributor for me from a human point of view. They’re always asking, offering if they can do anything. Again in the Park Hyatt in Sydney, every hotel says, “Can I get you anything?” But at the Park Hyatt in Sydney it actually feels like they mean it and they will go the extra mile to do whatever for you, which is nice (Interviewee ID12, male).

While staff and their engagement with guests continued to play an important part in generating memorable experiences, in many cases it appeared that it was the individual
recognition of guests that could become even more important in the future. Besides being recognized, guests also wished to learn more about the surrounding environment and embrace the culture that was reflective of the destination.

5.2.6.2.4 The Technology Category

Following the Cultural category: which came in importance after the Services and Atmosphere was the Technology category. Compared to the current experience timeframe within this category, in the future timeframe guests expected more experiences to be generated through the use of Technology as an enabler of memorable experiences. In this category, themes that most strongly emerged were the technology, connectivity and pre-arrival personalization themes. Key quotes from interviewee’s comments that described the forward-looking desires representing technology, connectivity and pre-arrival personalization themes, were:

> It would be very interesting if I could pick or select in advance, where I could say I want to have distilled water and I’d rather have grapes instead of bananas. So, whatever, if you can select that, and it would be important that you just want to do it once. So, whenever you’re returning to this hotel you want to know that they keep it in your profile. That would be a great benefit (Interviewee ID9, female).

Free and easy access to the Internet was widely considered as critical. Nearly all interviewees made comments that were best reflected in the following example:

> Free Internet, easy Internet and a good connection … and a simple check-in and checkout (Interviewee ID01, male).

In addition to making use of technology that allowed for pre-selecting specific in-room service and amenity options, technology was seen as the enabler of future in-room experiences, for example:

> Well we clearly have all the technology that people would take for granted. To me, you’d have not only flat screen TV. See, what I put on the flat screen TV is art, video art. If I walk into the room and there was a piece of great video art playing-- there’s an interesting thing. There are great places around where you could create great video art. You can play them through the hotel if you bought the rights to them. And play them in different sequences in different parts of the hotel. You need the technology of the airplanes - they’re using that, right (Interviewee ID14, male)?
5.2.6.2.5 The Sensory Category

The category that emerged as a new group of themes where guests had experienced memorable events, and where they were envisaging experiencing memorable occurrences in the future, was the Sensory category. Recording a strong increase over the current experience timeframe, in this category, the memorable experience generator themes that emerged as most desired by guests were “spaciousness, views and lighting” themes. Key quotes from interviewee’s comments that best described the forward-looking experience desire representing spaciousness, views and lighting themes were:

I think the space of the rooms at the Wynn [Las Vegas], then the layout …you have room enough to invite some people in, have mini meetings, or entertain. Or even the room is nice enough to have your family come along, so it covers both ends (business and leisure) (Interviewee ID24, male).

In addition to the size of the room, the view continued to be an important generator of memorable experiences:

But a nice view I enjoy; at this hotel, sitting on the balcony and overlooking the Alster [lake], is very nice. I remember thinking, how unfortunate, that when I typically come back to my room, it is about 6 o’clock and I have to eat and it’s 8 o’clock then watching T.V. News. So often there is little time to enjoy the view (Interviewee ID03, male).

Creating a sensory experience through mood-enhancing light setting was also deemed important:

…to personalize my room with LED technology, like you can do with meeting rooms (Interview ID06, male).

While interviewees expressed specific forward-looking experience desires, their expectations for the sensory features of what a luxury hotel experience should provide appeared to become stronger.

5.2.6.3 Virtuality experiences – future timeframe

Within the virtuality experience theme, questions directed to interviewees were described in detail in Chapter 3 (Section 3.3.3.3, Page 139). Questions were intended to probe interviewees around reality and virtuality dimensions, thereby allowing guests to respond to both physical and virtual experience-producing concepts.
The themes that most dominated consumers’ responses and the memorable experience generators they considered may satisfy their desires surrounding virtuality within the future experience timeframe, were again themes belonging to the Services category. Following experience themes generated around services was the Technology category. Here guests considered virtual experiences being generated through technology, connectivity and pre-arrival personalization themes. The Technology category was followed by the Culture category; interviewees described experience themes that comprise of staff, participation, location and recognition themes.

Following memorable experience themes generated within the Services, Technology and Culture categories, were those that belonged to the Atmosphere category. Within this category, interviewees most frequently referred to experience desires that were reflective of atmosphere, design and purposeful design themes. For example, purposeful design required producers to carefully consider the interactions between the ‘real’ and the ‘virtual’ environment, between hardware and software, and between user-initiated activities or those controlled by the virtual environment. The Sensory category recorded the least amount of responses, mostly comprising of themes associated with color, lighting and space.

Key quotes from interviewee’s comments that best described the forward-looking experience desires representing virtuality experience themes were, for example:

Virtuality Service selections (services, content, and customization) prior to arrival.

Yes, yes absolutely but again if I think about the concept of a community, for me that is a space like Facebook for example, not Second Life. It was a bit of a failure now so let’s not go there. But a community for me has more from a place that people go to experience. But now into a series of interconnected experiences, so take push notifications on my phone from Twitter or Instagram or Path. You know Path? Path is great right? In a sense, I’m not -- I don’t go into Path and stay in the Path community. Path pings me little signs so I feel kind of connected to community that way. If the hotel was to do that, that will definitely be interesting. Hey you know what’s on in Sydney? Sydney is happening this week. And if you look out your balcony, Mr. [name], you’ll see a beautiful moving image on the opera house and hey I can take a picture of that and send it to my friends (Interviewee ID12, male).

While some interviewees envisaged the facilitation of online content tailored to one’s own interests and relative to the purpose of travel, others considered the benefits of
virtuality through live content that could be streamed into the guest room; for example:

I’ll be just happy to look at people skiing in Aspen right from my hotel room. But if those are the choices if you had, imagine this, that in your hotel room you had a hundred choices of sceneries, because these places exist, right? There are plenty of these cameras around the world that play on great places, right? I don’t look at them at home because I don’t have time to think about it. But I suppose if you had 2 or 3 screens around the room and one of them happen to be on Trafalgar Square just for laugh and you walk in the room in Trafalgar Square so you saw people or Times Square or whatever (Interviewee ID15, male).

Besides offering services and tailored content, interviewees considered the benefits of accessing digital applications that allowed them to customize their own experiences; for example:

To me I really like to choose my own music. So I have to load and get my iPod, stick it on and it’s got certain types of music on it. I would have thought it would be very, very easy and I’m sure again you get aircraft technology that already does it to flip through the menus of different types of music or artists and have them all there. So I don’t have to carry the stuff around and have to think about it. I just go, “Yup I’d like to listen to Lily Allen or somebody” (Interviewee ID14, male).

Virtuality Technology (technology, connectivity and pre-arrival personalization) themes:

It would be very interesting if I could pick or select in advance that I could say I want to have distilled water and I’d rather have grapes instead of bananas. So, whatever, if you can select that, and important is you just want to do it once. So, whenever you’re returning to this hotel you would want that they keep it in your profile (Interviewee ID09, female).

While self-configuring services, amenities and other personal preferences in advance was seen as beneficial, interviewees also considered the value of having the option to pre-select room configurations and color schemes:

For example, [pre-arrival personalization] of single bed, double beds - might even end up with the colors of the covers of the bed. Yeah, it could work. Going through the music you want, whatever, – yes, there are a lot of things I can imagine in this [pre-arrival personalization] selection (Interviewee ID08, male).
Virtuality Culture (staff, participation, location and recognition) themes:

A virtual place could be in form of an assistant to plan and organize my schedule for the next day; when you are travelling on your own you have work issues to handle and home issues. I am not speaking of a calendar to write things in but a virtual assistant that can organize, check and order things that I know I will have to do the next day. I will feel more rested mentally to enjoy the evening if I know that I have assistance with personal items already in the works for the next day. These could be real tangible opportunities for a hotel to engage with their high-end guests (Interviewee ID16, female).

While making use of digital technology and virtual applications that could assist in organizing activities, events and prompt reminders, thereby putting guests at ease, interviewees also considered the value of learning more about the location:

Yeah, I would appreciate it if for instance, we could go inside a room and, say I was planning a trip or leisure and I wouldn’t have to ask any concierge to show me what you have when you have a screen and you can say: “Ok, let’s go and see the Pyramids, and see what you can expect”. And you sit for five minutes or so, and through the virtual experience, you get an understanding what you can do and experience. What will I see, how long will it take and the description with a short video film or some photos or any kind of gallery so that you got a feeling of what you expect when you book it. And you don’t need to go to concierge, maybe he does not have the time to tell you what to do, or he is not able to explain it to you. If you can do this during a few minutes where you have the space and the time - this is what I would appreciate. And this could also be integrated in an Internet site. So, the more information I get from a hotel before I book it, the more I am willing to book because I feel confident and say, “Ah, it’s not a risk.” I’ll get what I’ll expect and this is very, very important for the decision I make, where to go (Interviewee ID06, male).

Digital technology could also assist in enhancing the engagement between guest and host. For example:

For me, the engagement and richness would come from not just knowing my name, not just knowing that I’m there for one night, which is generally speaking what they know of me (Interviewee ID12, male).

Virtuality Atmosphere (atmosphere, design, and purposeful design) themes:

Take again, the example of the Aman Resort. They don’t have TVs. And there you really slow down. I don’t know any other actual example but that works so well. But I would also say about the overall experience. You calm down when there’s nothing you get angry about or you dislike. So, if a hotel
works quietly but extremely efficiently and if they try to put themselves into your own shoes, I think that it works well. I have a bit of a problem to go too much into the hardware because ultimately I think we will get there. I think a good hotel is all about software. Hardware is a must criterion but once that’s fulfilled, the rest is really how it works and how it’s run (Interviewee ID04, male).

Putting the mind at ease by knowing that all was running smoothly were regarded as important benefits that could come from the use of digital technologies: as were the experiences that could be extended through facilitating atmosphere-enriching content. For example:

Very few hotels have the spa issue down pat, so I find them boring, and an in room spa I am not interested in. As a female what I like to do is to relax, pamper myself, so have that luxury box of goodies ready for me each evening and retail therapy is excellent, so have a direct connection to shopping online set up when I come back, find out my likes and have them up on the screen. Bring my personal interests into the room so I can be by myself, but feel that it is not just ESPN or CNN that I have to look at (Interviewee ID16, female).

Virtual Sensory (color scheme, lighting, and spaciousness) themes:

…why not change the wallpaper”? Like what I said, when we come to the virtual creation of the room, why not choose the color of the blankets (Interviewee ID08, male)?

Just give me an atmosphere of relaxation…and then the room itself in terms of its space, the atmosphere and the colors they use (Interviewee ID24, male).

While interviewees were interested to explore and imagine the value that virtuality and digital applications could provide, and how they could add to their travel and stay experiences, it was noteworthy that some interviewees voiced the notion that too much emphasis on technology could have a counterproductive effect on future stay experiences. The following key quotes best described this notion associated with luxury hotels and them embracing technology-generated experiences without having obtained a deeper understanding of the real needs of their guests:

Because I’m turning fifty in a few weeks and how should I say this? Sometimes I think it’s too much virtuality, digital, and all the influences from outside. It’s encouraging. It’s a nice experience. If I can choose it, it’s nice. But normally for me it’s more an escape from all these multi-media influences I’m confronted with during work. When I walk from here to
there, all the information and all these experiences it’s like a wave, that somehow you need to relax and you have to step away from. And this is what I would like in my hotel room...I’m in the room because I would like to escape as we said before and I would like to relax (Interviewee ID05, male).

Others pointed out their perceptions of luxury relating to the hotel environment, suggesting that the primary focus ought to be around the human delivery of services. The following statements best described how guests viewed emerging technologies as no substitute for human engagement:

I guess I would not use it [virtual environments] because if it’s a luxury hotel, then they [staff] should do this, so I won’t waste the time to look into [virtually configuring my room] before I arrive (Interviewee ID02, male).

It’s mostly important the way the personnel addresses you and the way people treat you. This is to me, more of a deciding factor or a factor to come back than any other -- than any physical or virtual surroundings honestly. And to me the hotels in the world who have the best personal service they are the most successful hotels in the world (Interviewee ID06, male).

5.2.6.4 Negative guest experiences

This research focused on memorable experiences that leave the consumer with a positive and lasting impression of an occurrence or an encounter with the host organization and its staff. However, some comments made by interviewees are worth highlighting as these further demonstrate the importance of designing and delivering memorable experiences of a pleasant kind (Pine & Gilmore 1998). To draw on just one scenario – the guest bathroom, where consumers shared some of their negative experiences that should provide producers with ample opportunities to re-design experiences, or indeed to innovate entirely new experiences encounters. As some interviewees described the experience of the bathroom, which in modern configurations are often open-plan and designed in ways intended to create a sense of spaciousness:

They’ve got clear windows to make the room look bigger that goes against the bathroom and so if you have someone else staying with you and they’re in the bedroom, they can see you all the way into the bathroom. So I don’t like them [these types of bathrooms] (Interviewee ID21, male).

And,

…the glass window between the bathroom and the living room. I hate it. I really hate it and my wife hates it as well. We know each other since long but there are some things you still don’t want to share all the time on
vacations; irrespective of whether they are blinds that you can let down or
not (Interviewee ID08, male).

5.2.7 Summary Findings

The following section provides a summary of the key findings relating to experience
realms, categories and memorable experience generator themes. The findings are
presented in the same order following the flow of questions previously outlined in the
interview schedule (Chapter 3, Table 3.4, Page 136), namely by current and future
experience timeframes and virtuality experiences. To assist the reader with a
visualization of the findings derived from the coded data, a graphical depiction of
dominant realms, categories and their memorable experience themes has been added.
Graphics (Figures 5.2-7) displayed are illustrative of the coded data by weight within
the current and future experience timeframes. Additionally, memorable experience
generator themes are displayed by their category (Tables 5.6-7), further highlighting
those memorable experience themes that occurred frequently in the responses obtained
from the interviewees.

5.2.7.1 Four Realms (current/future timeframes, and virtuality)

Summarizing memorable experience generator realms in relation to the current
experience timeframe (Figure 5.2), placed the Entertainment realm as the most
significant dimension in which consumers had experienced memorable events.
Following the Entertainment realm, the analysis produced memorable experience
occurrences placed within the Esthetics and to a lesser extent, the Education and the
Escapism realms.
Figure 5.2. Data Analysis – memorable experiences (MEs) by realms, current experience timeframe

Summarizing the key findings of memorable experience generator realms within the future experience timeframe again placed the Entertainment realm as the most significant dimension in which consumers will want, or can envisage memorable experience events in the future (Figure 5.3).
Comparing the Entertainment realm between current and future experience timeframes, suggests that guest desires for memorable experiences within this realm were expected to become much greater in the future. As was noted around the current experience timeframe, the Esthetics realm continued to be an anticipated dimension in which guests infer their experiences to be generated in the future. A noticeable increase in the number of coded memorable experience occurrences was recorded. The realm closely following the Esthetics was the Escapism realm. This realm recorded by far the highest proportional gain over any other realm. Within the Escapism realm, guests are immersed in the activity: like acting in a play, which involves both active participation and immersion in the experience (Pine & Gilmore 1999).

Although the Education realm again recorded the least occurrences in the future experience timeframe, it recorded a considerable increase over responses received...
within the current theme. This suggested growing interest among guests to engage in learning or educational experiences. A comparative view of both current and future experience timeframes, with respect to dominant realms, is illustrated in Figure 5.4.

**Figure 5.4. Data Analysis – Memorable experiences (MEs) by realms in the current vs. future experience timeframe**

In the following figure (Figure 5.5), a visual representation of the qualitative findings involving virtuality experience desires placed within future experience timeframe is presented.
5.2.7.2 Memorable Experience Categories (current/future timeframes, and virtuality)

The five categories representing memorable experience themes derived from interviews with consumers are displayed graphically by their dominance with regard to current, and future experience timeframes and virtuality experiences (Figure 5.6.a-b).
Figure 5.6.a-b. Data Analysis – by memorable experience (MEs) generator categories in the current and future experience timeframes

Current MEs Generators sorted by Category

Future MEs Generators sorted by Category
Figure 5.7. Data Analysis – by memorable experience (MEs) generator categories in virtuality experiences

In the current experience timeframe, the most dominant categories in which experiences were occurring were the Services and Atmosphere category. These were followed closely by the Culture and Technology categories, and to a lesser extent, the Sensory category.

The analysis of data revealed that memorable experiences in the future guest room environment continued to evolve around five distinct categories. Moreover, the category that continued to be the most dominant was the Services category. Still within the future experience timeframe, the memorable experiences themes that followed the Services category were those generated within the Atmosphere category. And, similar to the current experience timeframe, guests identified experiences in the future timeframe that belonged to the Culture category as important generators of future guest room stay experiences. The category that had previously emerged as a new group representative of memorable experiences generating themes was the Sensory category.

The themes most strongly representing the consumers’ responses and the generators behind their memorable experience desires surrounding virtuality within the future
experience timeframe, were also themes belonging to the Services category. This was
followed by the Technology category, and then the Culture category. Based on the
responses obtained from the consumers surrounding virtuality experiences, the
Atmosphere category was less dominant, as was the Sensory category when compared
to the overall future experience timeframes.

5.2.7.3 Memorable Experience Themes (current/future timeframes, and virtuality)
Memorable experience (ME) generating themes derived from interviews with the
consumers are summarized in Table 5.2. Those that were the most dominant themes in
the current and future experience timeframes, including virtuality experiences, are
highlighted in color.
Table 5.2. Data Analysis – by ME themes - current and future timeframes, and virtuality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Experiences</th>
<th>Future Experiences</th>
<th>Virtuality Experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SERVICES CATEGORY</strong></td>
<td><strong>Abbreviation</strong></td>
<td><strong>SERVICES CATEGORY</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>SERV</td>
<td>Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>CONT</td>
<td>Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customization</td>
<td>CUST</td>
<td>Customization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amenities</td>
<td>AMT</td>
<td>Amenities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collateral</td>
<td>COLL</td>
<td>Collateral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalization</td>
<td>PERS</td>
<td>Personalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferences (personal)</td>
<td>PREF</td>
<td>Preferences (personal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surprises (memorable)</td>
<td>SURP</td>
<td>Surprises (memorable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complimentary Services</td>
<td>COMP</td>
<td>Complimentary Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning new things</td>
<td>LEAR</td>
<td>Learning new things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiencing new things</td>
<td>EXPE</td>
<td>Experiencing new things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dining (in-room)</td>
<td>DING</td>
<td>Dining (in-room)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ATMOSPHERE CATEGORY</strong></td>
<td><strong>Abbreviation</strong></td>
<td><strong>ATMOSPHERE CATEGORY</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
<td>ATMO</td>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artifacts</td>
<td>ARTF</td>
<td>Artifacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seating / Comfort</td>
<td>CONF</td>
<td>Seating / Comfort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>DESG</td>
<td>Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathroom</td>
<td>BATH</td>
<td>Bathroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purposeful Design</td>
<td>PURP</td>
<td>Purposeful Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CULTURE CATEGORY</strong></td>
<td><strong>Abbreviation</strong></td>
<td><strong>CULTURE CATEGORY</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>CULT</td>
<td>Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>STAF</td>
<td>Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home-away-home</td>
<td>HOME</td>
<td>Home-away-home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>PART</td>
<td>Participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>LOCA</td>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition</td>
<td>RECO</td>
<td>Recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiarity</td>
<td>FAMY</td>
<td>Familiarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TECHNOLOGY CATEGORY</strong></td>
<td><strong>Abbreviation</strong></td>
<td><strong>TECHNOLOGY CATEGORY</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>TECH</td>
<td>Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connectivity</td>
<td>CONX</td>
<td>Connectivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio/TV</td>
<td>AVEQ</td>
<td>Audio/TV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wireless</td>
<td>WIRE</td>
<td>Wireless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-arrival Personalization</td>
<td>PREA</td>
<td>Pre-arrival Personalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location-based Services (Apps)</td>
<td>LBSC</td>
<td>Location-based Services (Apps)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Network (Apps)</td>
<td>SOCA</td>
<td>Social Network (Apps)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SENSORY CATEGORY</strong></td>
<td><strong>Abbreviation</strong></td>
<td><strong>SENSORY CATEGORY</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views</td>
<td>VIEW</td>
<td>Views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spaciousness</td>
<td>SPAC</td>
<td>Spaciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color Scheme</td>
<td>COLO</td>
<td>Color Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lighting</td>
<td>LIGH</td>
<td>Lighting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olfaction (smell)</td>
<td>SMEL</td>
<td>Olfaction (smell)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touch (fabrics/materials)</td>
<td>TUCH</td>
<td>Touch (fabrics/materials)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2.8 Analysis of Questionnaire (Experience Preferences by Perceived Value)

As described in Chapter 3 (Section 3.3.3.4, Page 140), at the completion of each interview, a short questionnaire (Appendix 3.Q) was issued to obtain some demographic and travel-related information from each interviewee. All 25 participating consumers completed the questionnaire; the demographic and travel-related profiles of the interviewees were presented in Section 5.1.1. Additionally, the questionnaire asked interviewees to rank a set of ‘statements’ for perceived value. Statements were those that producers had reached consensus on in Phase I (Table 5.3) and that they considered (listed by experience realm and category) contained the most important generators of future guest room experiences.
Table 5.3. Data Analysis (Chapter 4, Phase I) - Producer consensus of important future value drivers (by Realms and Categories)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Future ME statements</th>
<th>Producer consensus of important future value drivers (ROI), sorted by realm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ID</td>
<td>Realm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Simplified personal device connectivity to in-room systems (audio, video, etc.)</td>
<td>ENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Customized content that is tailored to the guests’ special interests,</td>
<td>ENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Stress-free, simple-to-use, and centralized in-room technology</td>
<td>ENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Experienced and culturally diverse hotel staff</td>
<td>ENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Mobile device (laptop, Smartphone, etc.) integration into hotel systems (room control, AV, service portals, etc.)</td>
<td>EST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Understanding guest-generated personal preferences</td>
<td>EST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Creating an atmosphere that feels ‘personal’ and innovative</td>
<td>EST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Hotel staff engaging with guests in a more knowledgeable way (enhanced serv. standards)</td>
<td>EST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 In-room control activation such as voice-recognition (wake-up-call, lights, media control, etc.)</td>
<td>EDU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Pre-arrival configuration of experiences tailored to the guests’ interests and purpose of travel</td>
<td>EDU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 In-room design that is both educational and stimulates the senses</td>
<td>EDU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Hotel and external experts offering destination-specific experiences</td>
<td>EDU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Use of virtual in-room assistance (services, location specific information, etc.)</td>
<td>ESC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 In-room virtual expert advice (in native language)</td>
<td>ESC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Sustainable and environmentally sound features (solar energy)</td>
<td>ESC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Hotel staff offering personal assistance services and expert advice</td>
<td>ESC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The questionnaire presented interviewees with the findings that producers had deemed most important (e.g. high value, high ROI), thereby allowing interviewees to rate these future experience-generating offerings for their perceived value by utilizing rating scale of “1 – 5”; “5” being “high value”, “3” being “medium value”, and “1” being “no value”. As a result of these findings, presented in Table 5.4 and further discussed in Chapter 6 (Section 6.3, Page 277), the opinions of the producers were compared and contrasted with the perceptions of the consumers. This allowed the importance placed on specific memorable experience generator types in the future luxury guest room to be
compared between the two groups of informants. Table 5.4 represents the consumers’ perceived value for each memorable experience generator statement; those that the producers had reached consensus on with regard to their realms (ENT, EST, EDU, ESC) and their categories (TECH, SERV, ATMO, CULT).

Table 5.4. Data Analysis – Producer consensus (Phase I) of important future value drivers (ROI), versus perceived value rating by consumers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q ID</th>
<th>Producer consensus of important future value drivers (by ROI) vs. perceived value as rated by guests</th>
<th>Interviewees: 25</th>
<th>High Value</th>
<th>Med Value</th>
<th>No Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Simplified personal device connectivity to in-room systems (audio, video, etc.)</td>
<td>ENT TECH</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mobile device (Laptop, Smartphone, etc.) integration into hotel guest room systems (in-room controls, Audio Visual, service portals, etc.)</td>
<td>EST TECH</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>In-room control activation commands such as voice-recognition (wake-up-call, lights, media control, etc.)</td>
<td>EDU TECH</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Use of ‘virtual’ in-room assistance (services, location-specific information, etc.)</td>
<td>ESC TECH</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Customized in-room content, tailored to your special interests</td>
<td>ENT SERV</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Experiences tailored to your personal preferences</td>
<td>EST SERV</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Pre-arrival configuration of experiences tailored to your special interests and purpose of travel</td>
<td>EDU SERV</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>In-room ‘virtual’ expert advice (in your native language)</td>
<td>ESC SERV</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Stress-free, simple-to-use, and centralized in-room technology</td>
<td>ENT ATMO</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Creating an atmosphere that feels ‘personal’ and innovative</td>
<td>EST ATMO</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>In-room design that is both educational and stimulates the senses</td>
<td>EDU ATMO</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Sustainable and environmentally sound features (materials, energy, etc.)</td>
<td>ESC ATMO</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Experienced and culturally diverse hotel staff</td>
<td>ENT CULT</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Hotel staff engaging with you in a more knowledgeable way (enhanced service standards)</td>
<td>EST CULT</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Hotel- and external experts offering destination-specific experience</td>
<td>EDU CULT</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Hotel staff offering personal assistance services and expert advice</td>
<td>ESC CULT</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2.9 Conclusion – Phase II

This chapter presented the findings of the second research phase involving the consumers. Twenty-five interviewees were engaged in face-to-face interviews, and via a self-administered questionnaire following each conversation. The most dominant realms within the current and future experience timeframes were Entertainment and Esthetics realms. In the future experience timeframe, interviewees foresaw their memorable experience desires to be further addressed through experiences with escapism and education characteristics. Emerging from this study phase was the Sensory category representing themes in which interviewees see memorable experiences being delivered. Across all experience themes, it was the Services category in which interviewees’ most frequently expected memorable experiences to occur.

The questionnaire issued to participating consumers at the end of their interviews, gave an indication of the importance they placed on specific future experience generator types. These were presented in the form of statements previously nominated as “highly valued” by the producers. The majority of consumer responses indicated that future value generating experiences would occur in the Entertainment realm. This, to a large extent, also applied to future experiences generated within the Esthetics realm. However, specific experience concepts deemed desirable by the producers, like those belonging to the Technology and Services categories, were less valued by consumers. The key findings presented in this chapter are discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

At the completion of Phase II, the data collected across two core experience timeframes, as well as the additional information gathered via the short questionnaire, provided the necessary insights to address the two primary research questions involving the consumers, namely:

1. What type of memorable experience generators and dimensions do producers consider address current and future guest experience needs within the luxury hotel guest room?

2. Which memorable experience generators and dimensions (the four realms) do consumers perceive as valuable in the context of the current luxury hotel room?
6.0 Introduction

In Chapter Four, the results of the analysis of data obtained from the producers was presented. These producers gave their opinions about what was considered, and subsequently agreed among the group of industry experts, were current and future memorable guest experience generators. In the previous chapter, the analysis of the interview data collected from the consumers was presented. This included key quotes from some of the 25 interviewees, which provided further richness and depth to the research. With the completion of the analysis of Phase I producers and Phase II consumers, this chapter aims to identify and discuss any contradictions between producers and consumers perceptions about which aspects of the luxury guest room experience form valuable and memorable experiences, now and in the future.

Using this process, the research was able to address a key research question, specifically, by identified the gaps between what producers perceive their guests’ needs are versus what guests expect to experience within a luxury hotel room. As the review of the literature has highlighted, this potential misalignment (gap) between the experience expectations consumers had prior to their stay and the outcome they base their value perception on after their stay experience, can be a prime determinant of how guests evaluate their satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the overall stay, experience (Oliver, Rust & Varki 1997).

The four realms experience framework was used to develop a conceptual understanding of what memorable generators were, and the value producers and their guests placed on memorable experience occurrences within the current and future luxury hotel guest room. A critical evaluation as to how effective Pine and Gilmore's (1998) four realms of experience also presented. From the collective findings derived from both research participant groups, the level of importance placed on memorable experience generators in relation to the four experience dimensions are also reported in this chapter.
Additionally, themes and their categories that emerged during the interviews with consumers will be highlighted and discussed. Further contributions of the research are made by linking the findings of this study with significant empirical works found within the literature. This approach is aimed at validating and contextualizing the results and describing how this research enhances the current body of literature. Following this, in Chapter 7, the research questions of this research, as previously presented in Chapter 1 and answered in detail in their respective chapters (Chapter 4 – the producers, and Chapter 5 – the consumers) are re-addressed. Additional contributions of this research are then highlighted and explained. Finally, a series of recommendations emanating from this thesis is provided.

6.1 The four realms of experience framework

In Chapter 1, one of the key aims of this research directed at the producers, was to provide a critical evaluation as to how effective Pine and Gilmore's (1998) four realms of experience framework is when designing and delivering memorable experiences within the luxury hotel guest room. The salient management and tourism literature was reviewed for existing experience frameworks, and the justification for employing the four realms of experience framework was provided in Chapter 2 (Section 2.5, Page 84). In Chapter 3 (Section 3.2.4.3, Page 117) this theoretical experience framework was further discussed, and examples of where the four realms had been successfully applied when exploring experience concepts in empirical research in the field of tourism, were provided.

To this end, scholars in the field of consumer experience research acknowledge that whilst the understanding of the experience itself is well advanced, the systematic utilization of experience concept remains, to a large extent, in an unmanaged state (Ritchie & Hudson 2009). Based on a comprehensive review of the literature, the researcher identified the four realms of experience framework as a practical tool to conceptualize experience research; however, the use of this framework within the lodging sector has been limited.

Guided by the four realms of experience framework, the Delphi-like study (Phase I) produced a total of 283 memorable experience generator types resulting in 18 key
themes divided over 4 primary categories (Chapter 4, Table 4.8, Page 157). Informed by the findings obtained from the producers, in the research phase with the consumers (Phase II), open-ended interview questions were balanced between current and future experience themes and across each of the four experience dimensions. Furthermore, containing reality and virtuality experience topics, these results were presented in the previous chapter (Chapter 5) and the findings are now discussed in this chapter.

6.1.1 Making use of the four realms framework in Phases I and II

In both study phases, questions were designed to probe producer participants and face-to-face interviewees around each of the four realms, thus capturing a response from every contributor related to the experience occurrence and the meaning they gave to each of the experience realms. Research questions were formulated specifically addressing each experience realm. This was achieved by asking producer participants to think of the experience realm before naming relevant memorable experience generator types. At the beginning of each study round, participants were presented with a description and an example response to each question (Appendix 3.1). This was designed to ensure that each of the four experience realms was described in its intended form and meaning as originally conceived by the authors.

A similar approach was taken in the second research phase involving the consumers where questions were formulated based on specific experience realm characteristics. By probing interviewees (guests) to speak freely about their recollection of memorable events, the level of engagement they had in the event itself, and the meaning they gave to the occurrences relating to the underpinning experience realm, was identified. For example, by asking interviewees to recall memorable experiences describing the interactions that had led to their stay being a memorable one, the researcher intended to establish the level of guest engagement that had generated the experience, while at the same time, validating the two dimensions (passive/active, absorb/immerse) contained in the experience framework. To this, the majority of consumer participants responded that experiences they remembered as being memorable were derived from passive levels of engagement.
Based on the framework, this suggests, that most memorable experiences had occurred in the Entertainment and Esthetics realms (along the horizontal axis of the experience framework, engaging guests in a passive way). Indeed, within the current experience timeframe, interviewees placed the majority of their memorable experiences within the Entertainment and Esthetics realms, and to a lesser extent, the Educational and Escapism realms. This is consistent with Pine and Gilmore’s (1999) described characteristics of the Entertainment and Esthetics realms, in which the individual passively participates and does not directly affect or influence the experience offering.

At the beginning of each interview with consumers, some of the participants remarked that they indeed would welcome a more active level of participation. This forward-looking desire was later shared by others, suggesting that interviewees were seeking experiences that are, in their purest form, characteristic of educational and escapist experiences. As stated earlier, along this axis, guests become active participants directly affecting the offering that yields the experience by ‘…absorbing the experience into their mind…’, or ‘…by becoming part of the experience itself…’ (Pine & Gilmore 1999, p.31).

In both research phases, the researcher found that the four realms experience framework offered a systematic approach to probing participants for memorable experience generators placed within the context of each experience realm. Having investigated each realm separately, both study groups were able to focus their attention on events that they could describe, in their own words, as generators of current memorable experiences and those that they could identify as experience needs and desires in the future luxury guest room. As a result, this research found that the concepts underpinning the Entertainment, Esthetics and Education realms were understood by both groups of informants without additional clarification being required. Conversely, the Escapism realm, in particular when involving the consumers, required further elaboration as to definition and meaning. These findings are further discussed under the respective experience realm in this chapter.

As stated earlier, despite the popularity of Pine and Gilmore’s original concept of the experience economy, surprisingly few scholars have utilized the four realms experience
framework in empirical research. Some authors have attributed this to the lack of tangible measures to capture the underlying dimensions (Carù & Cova 2003), and others have cited the overlapping nature of experiences, for example “edutainment” ‘...in managing science museums where educational and entertainment experiences merge’ (Oh, Fiore & Jeoung 2007, p.121). For the purpose of this research, the four realms of experience framework provided a structured method of engaging both producers and consumers, thus developing a conceptual understanding of each realm as a unique and standalone contributor to a memorable experience. At the same time, by identifying the value each group of informants placed on memorable experience generators and the experience realms in which they had or would occur, the experience framework provided a practical guide to cross examine current and future experience desires in luxury hotel guest rooms. To this end, specific findings in respect of each experience realm are further elaborated in the following section.

6.2 Collective interpretation and discussion of Phase I and Phase II findings

In this section, each experience realm is discussed in the order in which producers and consumers responded to how they generated memorable experiences, both in the current and future guest room environment. A comparative table (Table 6.1) shows the results obtained from the producers (in the column on the left) and those attained from the consumers (on the right). These are listed in descending order of importance, that each group of participants determined memorable experiences to occur.
### Table 6.1. Four realms of experience – producer versus consumers - current theme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Producers</th>
<th>The Consumers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Realm listed in descending order of importance</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment / Esthetics</td>
<td>Entertainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escapism</td>
<td>Esthetics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Escapism</td>
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### 6.2.1 Phase I and Phase II - Current Findings – Producers versus Consumers

#### 6.2.1.1 Entertainment realm – current experience themes

From the results obtained from the producers in Phase I, the Entertainment and the Esthetics realms emerged as the most dominant dimensions in which producers considered memorable guest experiences were produced. In respect of the Entertainment realm, this correlates with the findings obtained from the interviewees who recalled that the majority of their memorable experiences, had been derived from being passively engaged in the experience. The review of the literature revealed, that entertainment is one of the oldest forms of experience (Oh, Fiore & Jeoung 2007; Pine & Gilmore 1999). In modern times, this is further accentuated by an entertainment industry that produces products, services and experiences intended to amuse and generate fun and laughter.

The producers described current memorable experiences as:

…being generated by providing carefully selected and relevant, customized content (digital/non-digital), either displayed in-room, made accessible through personal devices or through in-room AV systems. Quality and content must engage guests in personal ways that stimulate interests, (e.g. lifestyle, culinary, local events), preferably providing unique opportunities via exclusive hotel partnerships.
The consumer interviewees, however, described their memorable experiences as having been generated by external views from their guest room windows, the quality of products, materials and content used within the guest room, and through little surprises awaiting them upon their return to the guest room.

Comparing these two perspectives, in the main, the findings suggest that producers are intentionally producing and delivering entertainment experiences into the guest room environment, which, on the surface, appear to have caught the consumers’ attention. However, on closer examination of the consumer data and the meaning interviewees gave to their past memorable experiences, in-room entertainment experiences appear less important to them. The following statement best describes what interviewees felt:

The hotel room has to be very nice to stay there when I want to be left alone, when I want to have some quiet time, and I want to sleep, but that’s it. Because if I go into a hotel, that’s when I travel. And when I travel, I want to have some - not necessarily adventures, but I want to experience new things. But I don’t travel so far to stay in a hotel room (Interviewee ID08, male).

And,

No because at the end of the day, it doesn’t matter whether you are on pleasure or business, you’re not spending a huge amount of time in the hotel room (Interviewee ID24, male).

The findings from the research presented here have provided some evidence that guests staying in luxury hotel guest rooms consider entertainment experiences to be more relevant and important when they take place outside of the guest room. It could be argued that the reason for this is that, as outlined in Chapter 2, the average time guests have available to engage in activities is only approximately 4 hours during a day spent at any particular hotel. Similarly, the wish to be entertained outside of the guest room may also be linked to guest motivations and their purpose of travel, which is also noted in the review of literature and includes the needs they seek to satisfy while staying away from their normal place of residence (Tung & Ritchie 2011).

6.2.1.2 Esthetics realm – current experience themes

Aside from memorable experiences generated within the Entertainment realm, producers considered the Esthetics realm as the experience dimension where memorable
Memorable experiences are generated by introducing guest to the esthetics, theme and concept of the environment, connecting with local culture in a purposefully designed hotel room, supported by appropriate interactions with impeccably groomed, knowledgeable staff delivering the highest standards of service in a home like atmosphere.

From the data obtained from the interviewees, key words that best describe their memorable experiences generated within the Esthetics dimension are: “personal recognition, services, quality amenities and materials”. As was noted by other interviewees, the esthetics environment is often associated with a sense of indulgence. The following statement describes a guest’s perfect guest room experience:

Aman Resorts are always absolutely indulging. I mean, there you’ll probably have the best example of a guest room experience. That’s simply the architecture and the materials and the uniqueness of all these hotels.

And,

I do stay in an array of places and when you walk into the room and you feel it’s clean and has a nice ambiance, this is lovely and it’s got a ‘nice sweet night’ feeling to it.

As the review of the literature revealed, there is a close link between the environment and surroundings where the experience is generated, and the atmosphere emanated from the place. As Pine and Gilmore (1999) described, the place where the experience is consumed plays an important role in the production of the experience, because the total atmosphere contributes to the experience. Bitner (1992) described ambience as an imperative consideration for service providers, as services are consumed within the physical environment of the production site. Kokko (2005) confirmed the primacy of the environment from a hospitality perspective asserting that both guests and staff see ambience as the single most important characteristic of a place. This would explain why both producers and consumers perceived that the Esthetic experience should include engagement with local culture and staff as an important generator of memorable experiences.
6.2.1.3 Escapist realm – current experience themes

Following the importance placed on memorable experiences generated within the Entertainment and Esthetics realms, the producers concluded that memorable experiences are also generated within the Escapism realm. Within the Escapism realm, guests become active participants where they personally affect or influence the event that evokes the experience. This involves the person becoming physically immersed in the experience, like swimming in a horizon edged lap-pool in the privacy of a villa or presidential suite. The producers described current escapism experiences that generate memorable moments as:

Memorable experiences are generated through the promotion of personal well-being, stimulated through personal service offerings sourced by knowledgeable staff, that leave guests feeling pampered and with a sense of escape from daily life, or into something new.

While producers had determined that the level of importance consumers place on memorable experiences within the Escapism realm followed that of entertainment and esthetics, interviewees placed experiences generated within the Educational realm ahead of those that they recalled were generated within the Escapism realm. Whilst both realms registered as the least significant generators of memorable experiences, words that best describe their escapism experience and the memories they recalled were generated through “purposeful design and a break from daily life”.

For example, some interviewees associated escapism in the form of deeply immersed spa experiences, where the mind and body were temporarily relieved of daily woes or ‘noise’. Another common memorable experience trigger was described in terms of the escape into the privacy of the guest room. In both of these types of activities, however, the guest appears to have been engaged passively. This stands in contrast to the definition that Pine and Gilmore (1999) offered in their original introduction of the escapist experience, namely that guests are involved in an active way, when in fact, they were passively engaged. The producers concurred that an escapist experience is becoming memorable when “…guests feel pampered and [experience] a sense of escape from daily life…” While quite similar, interviewees described their escapist experiences as “…a break from daily life.”
Interpreting the response received from the producers, an argument could be made that the full meaning of an escapism experience has yet to be recognized, where it requires guests to become deeply immersed and actively involved. This is consistent with the conclusions Oh, Fiore and Jeoung (2007) described in their study, having observed that despite escapism being a key tourist motivation, it is both ‘…the tourist’s passive getaway component of an escape travel and the tourist’s active partaking of a different identity while participating in destination activities…’ (p.130), that requires a deeper understanding of meaning from both researchers and producers.

In the example of an immersive guest room spa experience, producers would need to consider guests as co-creators of the experience through actively engaging them in the design or personalization of the experience itself. Here, Pine and Gilmore (2011; 1999) propose that producers consider what would encourage guests to become more active participants in the experience, potentially going from one sense of reality to another.

### 6.2.1.4 Education realm – current experience themes

Producers agreed that the Education realm is the least important area where guests were currently experiencing memorable events. Within this dimension, guests absorbed events unfolding before them and they took an active part, in body and mind, while being engaged in the experience itself. Like joining a live yoga class, broadcast into the privacy of their guest room. Within the Education realm, producers described their combined judgment on where guests were experiencing memorable moments as:

Memorable experiences are generated through the use of art and artifacts that are local and meaningful guided by explanation or interpreted by guests at their own pace.

Like producers, interviewees also placed the Education realm before the Escapism realm when describing past events that had generated memorable experiences and they too considered educational experiences to be generated through in-room “content and art” that stimulated learning new things. In fact, upon prompting during the interviews, most interviewees indicated that they wished they had experienced more learning opportunities. To address this potential desire for learning new things, as previously stated in the review of the literature, Pine and Gilmore (2011) urge producers to ask themselves what guests should have learned from their experiences. Considering this
perspective, one can argue that both producer and consumer participants did not fully explore the educational value extracted from the memorable experience itself.

### 6.2.2 Phase I and Phase II Findings – Future Findings - Producers versus Consumers

From the results obtained from the producers and the consumers this section discusses the findings related to the future luxury guest room and what will become important realms in which memorable experiences are anticipated to be generated by 2020. A comparative illustration (Table 6.2) shows the results obtained from the producers (in the column on the left) and those attained from the consumers (on the right). These are listed, in descending order of the importance each group of participants determined memorable experiences to occur. The arrow next to the experience realm indicated the direction in which the level of importance increases or decreases over that of the current experience theme. That is, when the arrow points up it means this realm was seen to be more important in the future and vice versa.

**Table 6.2. Four realms of experience – producers vs. consumers, future theme**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Producers</th>
<th>The Consumers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Realm listed in descending order of importance</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The arrow [↑] indicates the direction of importance over the current theme</td>
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<tr>
<td>Entertainment ↑</td>
<td>Entertainment ↑</td>
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<tr>
<td>↓ Esthetics / Escapism ↑</td>
<td>Esthetics ↑</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education ↓</td>
<td>Escapism ↑</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education ↑</td>
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### 6.2.2.1 Entertainment realm – future experience themes

According to the producers, the Entertainment realm remains most important for future memorable experience needs and desires of their guests to be addressed. The expert panel described their forward-looking opinions as:

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**Jörn H. Bühring**  
*Designing and Delivering Memorable Experiences in the Luxury Hotel Sector*
Memorable experiences in the future, will be generated through customized content tailored to guests’ special interests (real-time sports, news, travel, surprising localized experiences), including lifestyle content identified and presented based on guest-liked brands, accessed from anywhere within the hotel and supported by service offerings (pre-arrival room visualization, curated in-room fashion line-up, guest-to-guest collaboration), in-advanced room configurations, selected by guests to reflect their individual desires and preferences.

As previously presented in Chapter 5, the consumer interviewees described their forward-looking memorable experiences desires, predominately, to continue being generated within the Entertainment dimension. In fact, the results reflect a substantial increase in the level of activities envisaged by this group of informants, comparing past experience events and where they saw future experiences being produced. While the analysis of data attained from interviewees gave some evidence that guests currently considered entertainment to be more important outside of the guest room, key words used by consumers’ describing their future entertainment experience desires, were “design, lighting, bathroom, spaciousness, customization, and purpose of travel”. This suggests, that guests are discovering new opportunities for entertainment experienced from within the guest room.

As stated earlier, although the Entertainment realm assumes a person to be passively engaged, this group of consumers had indicated that they would want to experience new things, and that they would like to become more actively engaged. It is therefore plausible that consumers are already experiencing the boundaries between experience realms blurring; as stated by a number of interviewees already influenced by modern-day entertainment content that has become more interactive and co-produced. Frequently mentioned by interviewees, for example, were their experiences gained from in-flight entertainment offerings, that to a large extent, are nowadays designed to be interactive and on demand. The producers may already envisage this trend, given that their forward projection of memorable experience generators, assumes aspects of co-creation and customization between host and guest.

**6.2.2.2 Esthetics and Escapism realms – future experiences**

From the analyzed data obtained from the producers and the consumers, the realm that continues to remain an important generator of future memorable experiences, are the
Esthetics and Escapism realms. Compared to the current scenario, the producers agreed that in the future, memorable guest experiences generated in the Esthetics and the Escapism realms will be of equal importance. Responding to experiences derived from within the Esthetics realm, their synthesized opinions state:

Memorable experiences in the future, will be generated through non-conventional room configuration (space, layout, overt use of non-renewable resources, wider use of timber flooring, design that inspires, remains fresh and surprising), embracing the individuality of guests and emerging needs of generations travelling for ‘Bleisure’ (Gen-Y combining business & leisure), while creating an atmosphere that feels personal and innovative, focusing on individual well-being and enhanced comfort.

Their vision into the future clearly suggested a more user (guest) centric interplay with his / her surroundings (environment), becoming more meaningful, innovative, and adaptable to one’s purpose of travel and special interests. Addressing the future Escapism experience realm, producers made the following statement:

Memorable experiences in the future, will be generated by a greater need for social connectivity that transforms guest rooms into entertainment and mingling spaces for family and friends, while travelers to urban destinations seek to actively participate in sustainable practices; supported by service staff (guest-facing staff, butlers, travelling PA’s) offering personal assistance services and expert advice to guests through the ‘human’ interface of a hospitality specialist, triggering memories of the past.

From the results of the analysis of the data involving interviewees, the Esthetics realm will gain in importance as a future memorable experience dimension, suggesting that guests were seeking increased levels of immersion in future guest room experiences. Closely following this experience dimension is the Escapism realm. Interviewees described their future experience desires across these dimensions with key words such as: “being stimulated, inspired, feeling the place, simple to use technology, personalization, peaceful surroundings and relaxation, and discovering new things”.

Most notable was the holistic nature of their experience desires, including Esthetics and Escapism experience realm that immersed and engaged them with the surroundings and in the activities made available for them. Of particular significance resulting from this research, was the evidence of guests describing an increasing desire for human interactions, experienced on a far more personal level. The following statement captured
this:

For me, the engagement and richness would come from not just knowing my name, not just knowing that I’m there for one night, […] but actually knowing me much much better (Interviewee ID12, male).

Consumers, furthermore, stressed the importance of experiencing the place, which they considered, needed to reflect the geographical location, culture and authenticity of materials, content, and local native staff. This, in contrast to the producers, appeared to play an increasing role in connecting guests to the destination and the meaning that they would take away from their encounters.

6.2.2.3 Education realm – future experience theme
Experiences envisaged to be generated within the Education realm, for both producers and consumers, generated the least responses. From the producers that provided insight into this realm, the following statement emerged:

Memorable experiences in the future, will be generated through guests becoming explorative in both virtual and physical activities (virtual city scavenger hunts, virtual classrooms, ‘spend a day with..?’; hands-on practical skill learning), supported by both hotel and external experts that offer destination-specific experiences, in a fun, playful and perhaps exclusive way.

When consumers discussed issues relating to the education realm experience desires in the future, they quite consistently used key words that implied learning. For example, they used words such as: “being stimulated, little surprises, experiencing new things”, strongly suggesting that guests were becoming more interested in active participation and learning anew. Here, this research identified an area that requires further consideration by producers. Namely, that learning and discovering ‘new’ is a fundamental motivation of Tourism (Richards 2001). Furthermore, producers must recognize that consumers now have access to a vast amount of information that can produce location-relevant content. Hence, they need to ask themselves how they can further improve the educational in-room experience (Pine & Gilmore 2011).
6.2.3 Phase I and Phase II Findings - Producers versus Consumers Memorable Experience Generator Categories and their Themes - current

In this section of the chapter, the memorable experience generator categories and their respective themes are discussed. These are presented in the order in which producers had determined they are currently generating memorable guest experiences. The results obtained from the interviewees (consumers) are listed in comparative order (Table 6.3) to the results obtained from the producers. The findings are discussed under the respective category.

Table 6.3. Memorable Experience Generator Categories – current theme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category listed in descending order of importance</th>
<th>The Producers</th>
<th>The Consumers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>Services</td>
<td>Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
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<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Sensory</td>
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6.2.3.1 The Services Category

For the purposes of this research, the Services category was previously described as: “Composing and orchestrating the appropriate level of resources, skill, ingenuity, and experience for effecting specific benefits extended to guests (either on a monetary or non-monetary basis)”. The analysis of the data obtained from the producers shows that current memorable experiences were predominately designed and delivered around generator themes that belonged to the Services category. These themes were identified as “content, customization, amenities, and collateral”; all of these themes the producers’ determined were responsible for generating memorable experiences.
Specifically, the panel of expert producers referred to content (digital and non-digital) and service themes as the most frequent generators of memorable experiences. Furthermore, the panel agreed that themes belonging to the Services category were, in order of their importance, linked to experiences generated within the Escapism, Education, Entertainment, and Esthetics realms. Based on the synthesized responses received, the following statement represents the producers’ opinions:

Memorable experiences are generated by providing carefully selected and relevant, customized content (digital/non-digital), either displayed in-room, made accessible through personal devices or through in-room AV systems. Quality and content must engage guests in personal ways that stimulate interests, (e.g. lifestyle, culinary, local events), preferably providing unique opportunities via exclusive hotel partnerships.

From the analysis of the data that emerged after the total data of themes was sorted by category and experience realm, the results showed that the Services category and its underlying memorable experience themes was most dominant within the Escapism realm. This seems to indicate that producers, intentionally or unintentionally, perceive that they were indeed delivering memorable experiences that immersed guests actively in the experience itself. These findings, to a large extent, could be attributed to the changing nature of services becoming more co-created or entirely automated, compelling guests to become actors in the fulfilment of the service delivery. The following statement captured the producers’ opinions:

Memorable experiences are generated through creating customizable themes (wellness, spa, comfortable robing, scented linen, espresso-making facilities) or uniquely staged events that are discreetly delivered within the guest room, the hotel, or through services focused on personalization and comfort.

Comparing the findings obtained from the consumers, the interviewees also perceived that their current memorable experiences had been produced predominantly within the Services category. Within this category, they identified “services, amenities and content” themes as being responsible generators of their memorable experiences. Key words that described the meaning interviewees gave to services were “at a moment’s notice” and “the quality” of the service experience. This, they stated, related to “touch”, “feel”, and “consistency” which they remembered as memorable sensations surrounding the service offering.
The most significant discovery derived from the interviews with consumers, was those moments in the service encounter that the interviewees linked to being acknowledged and personally recognized. This finding stood out in terms of a potential gap between what producers consider as ‘personalized’ (relevant to likes, taste, interest) and what consumers desire as ‘being recognized and remembered as unique individuals’.

6.2.3.2 The Atmosphere Category

From the results obtained from the producers, the Atmosphere category follows that of the Services category. This category comprised of “atmosphere, artifacts, seating/comfort, and design” themes. The following statement described the Atmosphere category from the perspective of the producers:

Memorable experiences are generated by the holistic impact of quality and luxury designed space that emphasizes a home like setting, complemented by the alignment and shape of furniture, fixtures and fittings that provide comfort and sense of space supported by the anticipation of mood enhancing elements (music, air, textures) that make guests feel special.

The results showed that the Atmosphere category and its underlying memorable experience themes appeared most dominantly within the Esthetics realm followed by the Entertainment realm. This suggested that producers designed and delivered memorable experiences that assume that guests participate passively in the experience. As introduced earlier in the review of the literature (Chapter 2, Section 2.2.5, Page 59), the place and the total atmosphere plays an important part in the experience production and consumption (Gilmore & Pine 2002; Hirschman 1984; Mossberg 2007). It was found, that the environment should be designed not only to comply with architectural conformities, but also for the users that occupy the space (Pütz-Willems 2008). Moreover, when designing a luxury hotel room, a distinction should be made between atmosphere and ambience; the former comprising of background conditions such as scent, music, and lighting, while the latter assumes an interaction between people and the physical environment.

Based on the results obtained from interviewees, these consumers also placed the Atmosphere as the second most important category in which memorable experience themes were generated. Additional experience generator themes also emerged, for
example, “bathroom, and purposeful design” themes. The “bathroom” in particular, appeared as a widely and consistently referenced focus area in which guests’ recalled memorable experiences were generated. Most often, consumers described their experiences using key words, such as: “design, lighting, bathroom and customization”. In fact, a number of interviewees used descriptive words to further emphasize the importance they placed on these key themes. These words included “purposeful”, “adjustable” and “thoughtful”, thereby offering additional insights to the meaning they gave to the generator type, and the level of interaction they had with these occurrences.

Comparing the findings obtained from the producers with those derived from the consumers, it appears that while producers considered the Atmosphere category to be closely linked to the Esthetics realm, interviewees described their memorable experiences related to Atmosphere themes as immersive and participative – in other words, more closely linked to the Escapism realm.

6.2.3.3 The Culture Category

The producers identified the Culture category as the next most important memorable experience generator theme (after Services and Atmosphere). The themes that were most dominantly represented were those of “culture” and “staff”. When sorting the experience theme categories into the realm in which the Culture category was most dominant, the Education realm stood out. This suggested, that producers acknowledge a strong link between culture experiences being generated within educational experience dimensions. Specifically, producers agreed that the following statement represented their views in this category:

Memorable experiences are generated through the provision of opportunities to experience or learn about the history and heritage of the property (brand, building, architecture and environment) or the local area conveyed via collateral, partners or well trained, articulate hotel staff.

Comparing these findings with those obtained from the consumers, interviewees described their memorable experiences as being generated through additional experience themes. These were “recognition” and “familiarity”. Most dominantly, consumers recalled their memorable experiences were generated through “staff, recognition and location-specific” themes. These comparative findings offer further evidence of the importance that both producers and guests placed on experiences that
were generated through cultural exchange themes, learning dimensions and staff engagement. Moreover, it is noteworthy that interviewees who spoke of their cultural engagement experiences, most often linked these to a special environment in which these engagements most profoundly produced memorable experiences, namely within small luxury boutique hotels.

6.2.3.4 The Technology Category
The Technology category, as determined by the producers, comprised of “technology, connectivity, Audio/TV, and wireless” themes. The following statement describes the synthesized results obtained from the data:

Memorable experiences are generated, through providing effortless connectivity (wired/wireless) of guests personal devices to quality in-room systems (AV & Control Equipment), providing access to their own and in-house content (e.g. movie, music, presentations), whilst allowing for physicality and functionality of in-room technology to be controlled via auxiliary devices, e.g. iPad.

The realm that producers agreed as the most important dimension in which technology themes are responsible for generating memorable experiences, was the Entertainment realm. Strong emphasis was placed on the technology applied in the form of quality AV/TV hardware and in-room control automation. Wireless access to devices and connectivity to the Internet were also recognized by the producers as important current memorable experience generator themes. Specifically, producers recognized the challenges that they have been facing within this experience generator theme. Faced with advanced technology integration and affordable entertainment options introduced into the consumers’ private residence (Correa, Hinsley & De Zuniga 2010), managing expectations and attempting to exceed expectations in relation to the luxury guest room technology experience, has become increasingly difficult.

Moreover, the challenges are no longer confined to hardware; instead, the focus has shifted towards video and audio streaming, and wireless bandwidth as guests gravitate toward procuring their own in-room entertainment content. One producer expert described the situation as follows:

Most hotel “High Speed Internet Access” (Chen, Wigand & Nilan) services fail to deliver sufficient sustained bandwidth necessary to watch Internet delivered video content without stuttering and buffering leading to guest
dissatisfaction and complaint. As consumed in-room Internet bandwidth is doubling every 9-12 months mostly driven by the video consumption, smart hotels will seek to deliver per-device bandwidth sufficient to deliver a memorable video experience (currently >5Mbps per concurrently connected device at ~30% HSIA usage per occupied room / at ~75% hotel occupancy) (Interview ID 16).

From the results obtained from interviewees, overall, technology-generated experiences followed, in their importance, behind the Services, Atmosphere, and Sensory categories. Belonging to the Technology category, the experience themes that stood out as most frequent generators of memorable experiences were linked to “technology, connectivity and audio-visual themes”. Whilst the results confirm that guests expect a high level of quality in the choice of entertainment equipment installed into the current luxury guest room, interviewees most frequently placed the emphasis on the way technology was applied purposefully and in consideration of ease of access (simple to use) and to one’s own content (docking, wireless connectivity, bandwidth). Interviewees, regardless of their individual preferences or interest in in-room technology, collectively, expressed strong feelings of dissatisfaction at being charged for Internet access. Some guests expressed their emotions toward fee-based Internet services with the word ‘hate’. The following statement best articulates the emotions that the majority of interviewees strongly expressed about Internet fees:

Wi-Fi should just be a universal free thing. To me it’s no different to electricity... For me it’s almost like we’ve got that at home and if you stay in a luxury room, it would be like saying you’ve got to pay for electricity and you’ve got to pay for heating (Interview ID25, male).

The review of the literature revealed that the experiences customers have with pre- and post-consumption events has an impact on price sensitivity, brand loyalty, and variances in the frequency of purchase (Anderson & Sullivan 1993; Olshavsky & Miller 1972). Projecting these findings to the interviewee’s response toward the practice of offering Internet services for a fee, Otto and Ritchie (1996) pointed out that although accommodation services are made up of clear functional components, the experiential benefits and emotive aspects of the stay experience become a critical part of the guest evaluation. In this way, service encounters should not be assumed from a management
perspective; instead, they should be assumed in the personal constructions of the individual consumer (Prentice, Witt & Hamer 1998).

### 6.2.3.5 The Sensory Category

The Sensory category emerged as a new category in which interviewees identified memorable experiences to occur. From the analysis of the data obtained from the interviewees, this category was defined as:

The emotional dimensions of experiences relating to views, spaciousness, color scheme, lighting, olfaction (smell), and touch (fabrics, materials).

Interviewees spoke of multi-sensory experiences that they described using words such as “views, spaciousness and the touch of materials”. In fact, these sensory themes not only described the triggers of memorable experiences, but the behavior and feelings that surrounded the experience. With the producers in Phase I not specifically having recognized sensory experience themes as a distinct category, these findings are important. That is, because interviewees described both behavioral and emotional occurrences, their level of participation and the interaction with products and services; if properly recognized and responded to by producers of memorable experiences, this can lead to a transformation from the ordinary into the extraordinary experience (Arnould & Price 1993).

### 6.2.4 Phase I and Phase II Findings - Producers versus Consumers

**Memorable Experience Generator Categories and their Themes – future**

In the previous section, current memorable experience generator categories were presented based on the results obtained from the producers and the consumers. Both participant groups in this research named experience themes that belong to the Services category as the most important area where memorable experiences were generated. In this section, the future generator themes are discussed based on the results obtained from the producers and the consumers.

These, as in the previous section, are presented in the order in which producers had determined they would generate future memorable guest experiences. Against the
results obtained from the producers are the results provided by the consumers. These are listed comparatively to the responses obtained from the producers (Table 6.4). The findings are discussed under the respective categories. In Chapter 5, the data obtained from the consumers (Phase II) was analyzed based on current, future and virtual experience themes. In this section, both the future and virtual experience themes are discussed collectively. Again, the arrow next to the experience realm indicated the direction in which the level of importance, according to both groups of participants, increases or decreases between the current experience theme and that of the future.

Table 6.4. Memorable Experience Generator Categories – future theme

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Producers</th>
<th>The Consumers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category listed in descending order of importance</td>
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<td>The arrow [↑] indicates the direction of focus compared to the current theme</td>
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<tr>
<td>Services ↓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technology ↑</td>
<td>Atmosphere ↑</td>
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<td>Atmosphere ↓</td>
<td>Culture ↑</td>
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<td>Culture ↓</td>
<td>Technology ↑</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sensory ↑</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

6.2.4.1 The Services Category
Designing and delivering memorable guest experiences in the future, the expert panel of producers agreed that consumers would continue experiencing memorable events derived from experience themes belonging to the Services category. Most predominantly, these future experience desires would relate to “content” and “customization” specific themes that will be designed around the Entertainment, Education and Escapism experience realms. Here, producers envisaged that in the future:

Memorable experiences will be generated through customized content tailored to guests’ special interests (real-time sports, news, travel, surprising
localized experiences), including lifestyle content identified and presented based on guest-liked brands, accessed from anywhere within the hotel and supported by service offerings (pre-arrival room visualization, curated in-room fashion line-up, guest-to-guest collaboration), in-advanced room configurations, selected by guests to reflect their individual desires and preferences.

The results obtained from the interviewees seemed to confirm this, as they expressed their future experience desires to be generated from experience themes belonging to the Services category. In fact, looking ahead (from now until 2020), a much stronger interest in enjoying service-initiated experiences was reported. However, when compared with services previously experienced by these interviewees, the results indicated that in the future, services must take into consideration the individual, their specific circumstances (purpose of travel) and a particular lifestyle. In other words, producers would need to determine the significance these service offerings have to the individual guest, and the likely role that these services would need to play before, during and after the luxury guest room stay experience.

Comparing future experience themes between the real and the virtual environment, within the Services category, interviewees envisaged virtuality experiences, those that are delivered in digital form relevant to “content” and “customization” themes. This, most notably, was seen in the “pre-arrival customization” context where guests could select amenities, room configuration and views, place special orders and personalize content made available during their stay.

6.2.4.2 The Technology Category

Envisaging future experience themes that follow those after the Services category, the producers placed Technology ahead of experiences generated within the Atmosphere category, highlighting where consumers will desire more memorable experiences in the future. Within the Technology category, the panel of producers concluded that the majority of future experiences would be generated through “connectivity” and “technology” themes. Strong emphasis was placed on the rapid progression of technology advancements as a whole where, for example, guests would want to access their own content via in-room entertainment systems. Other examples described by the producers were anywhere access to virtual entertainment and gaming options, activated
via human interface technologies (for example, simple-to-use voice or gesture-based activation systems). These forward-looking predictions derived from this research corroborate the findings described in Talwar’s (2012) study, namely that emerging technologies will expand the physical experience environment to virtual experience spaces.

The interviewees, however, placed less importance on technology-initiated experiences when compared to the producers’ forward-looking predictions. Instead, consumers appeared to envisage more memorable experiences emerging from themes belonging to the Atmosphere and Culture categories. Although, comparing the level of importance consumers identified between the current and future experience themes, memorable experience generator themes linked to the Technology category were indeed predicted to be more significant in the future. This, as the literature suggested, is due to advances in technology that have altered the dynamics between organizations and consumers. That is, through the rapid expansion of the Internet consumers themselves are beginning to change their consumption behavior (Buhalis & Law 2008).

Specifically, a growing curiosity among interviewees was noted around virtual experience dimensions. Here, consumers appeared to envisage pre-arrival customization options, for example, selecting their luxury guest room on the basis of actual window views, or even taking control of furniture layouts and amenity configurations.

Overall, however, producers of future luxury guest rooms will need to be mindful that consumers (as reiterated by nearly all interviewees), will want technology to be used in moderation, more meaningful, complimentary, value-adding and above all, simple-to-use. Philosophically speaking, nearly all interviewees kept reminding the researcher of their concerns that technology should not get in the way of replacing the human touch and contact, which they concurred, was a critical element of a luxury stay experience.

6.2.4.3 The Atmosphere Category
Producers in this research named memorable experience generator themes that belonged to the Atmosphere category as important. Within this category, the experience theme that most often described generators of memorable experiences was the “design” theme.
Across the four experience realms, producers agreed that memorable experiences in the “design” theme are closely linked to the Esthetics experience.

From the data obtained from the producers, key words like “beyond conventional” and “personalization” best described their opinions of what defined the future experience generators within the “design” theme. Producers spoke of new bed orientations, bathroom layouts, non-carpeted floor surfaces, larger room sizes, natural light, self-cleaning bath and shower surfaces, new air-cooling/heating systems and innovative wardrobes or cleaning closets where guests can place clothing, to be refreshed without using harsh chemicals to remove creases, deodorize, and press an item if required.

One producer spoke of guests belonging to the Y-generation, who in the future would be:

…freelance - their skills will be the ultimate resource for the head-count light business of the future, so from a design perspective, ‘corporate safe’ is no longer an option. How will we blend design to suit intense collaborative work with intense collaborative play (Producer ID04)?

When compared to the interviewees, as stated earlier, producer participants placed the importance of memorable experience generator themes within the Atmosphere category just behind those belonging to the Services category. This suggests that in the future luxury guest room, this category will become more important. Specifically, interviewees considered “design, atmosphere and seating/comfort” themes as future generators of memorable experiences. Interviewees described, and at times in great detail, the surroundings in which they saw this atmosphere being created by balancing design and services performed in the background as tangible and intangible contributors towards a relaxing and peaceful environment. A worry-free stay experience was seen as just as important, as were the design elements that created comfort across working, relaxing, sleeping, and playing zones.

The following interviewee statement best described the importance participants placed on the atmosphere:

I need to have the feeling to enter into another world and this is again I think combined to what to do with a hotel. It has to be a complete different world.
Not something which is more or less like home anyway. So if it is the common furniture, the common whatever, amenities. But if it’s a stringent concept, if it’s a seamless concept I get – so it starts with the lobby, I get into the [elevator], into the hall[way] and then this new world starts. And the more I come to the guest room, the more I get into my own tiny, little world on my own (Interviewee ID8, male).

The results obtained from interviewees and the analysis of data that contained virtuality themes, gave further evidence of important benefits that could also be derived from the use of digital technologies. Interviewees spoke of future guest rooms as experience zones, featuring exclusive and innovative product concepts that could be experienced and tried out physically, further evaluated or obtained virtually (online purchase). Thus, whilst affording guests entirely new experience generators purposely staged within the privacy of the guest room, these types of encounters may offer producers much-desired new sources of revenue.

Quite often, interviewees referred to the guest room as a place that they considered as unique. Not for its content, but for its meaning as a place of refuge from daily life back home, and as a place of total privacy for themselves – the individual. This may explain why guests see value in exploring and experimenting with new things without being observed or critiqued. One interview used the example of new technologies that could be tried out, like voice and gesture control features. The emphasis, however, was placed on ‘trying out’, not on being ‘confronted with’.

Again drawing on the insights gained from the review of the literature; while it would seem that producers had an opportunity to create value by enabling guests to explore and experience new things, they had to be mindful of the way they introduced guests to the content in relation to varying consumer characteristics and their purpose of travel, while consciously moving away from superficial luxury and toward authentic experiences (Andrews 2009; Patterson & Pegg 2009; Veríssimo & Loureiro 2013).

6.2.4.4 The Culture Category

For the producers, the final category in which they agreed that new memorable experiences would occur in the future was identified by memorable experience generator themes belonging to the Culture category. As they had identified previously
in relation to current experience themes, they perceived that in the future, memorable experiences belonging to the Culture category would primarily be generated through engagement with hotel staff. They also agreed, that memorable experiences through guest participation would become more important in the future. They asserted that this would become most noticeable in the Education and to a lesser extent in the Escapism realms. Producers also shared their opinions with each other. For example, they considered wired butlers, associate specialists, and on-call wellness experts, as some of the ways staff would become key collaborators with guests in the future. One producer offered the following example:

Staff members who specialize in insider knowledge on destination...this is more than the concierge who can get you into good restaurants or concert tickets. It is the person who can get you backstage (Producer ID05).

Another described guest participation in the future as:

Guests can go mushroom hunting or vegetable picking with our chef and prepare the picked items later in the kitchen, followed by a dinner. Small pictures are taken with the chef during the offsite event and guests will receive at the end of their stay a framed picture with them hunting and foraging (Producer ID12).

Producers also considered virtual experiences in which guest participation can occur. For example:

For guests on vacation who want to learn while they are away from home, the hotel links into the local culinary, wine appreciation, art, craft, or DIY classes. The guest can select their choice of learning and the time they prefer. For food classes they can link the learning into the in-room dining experience, for art subjects they can decide to use the hotel guest services to book a tour. All classes link into an actual location that the guest can go to if they choose, but the learning value of the location is the first choice...the room becomes their classroom (Producer ID17).

Comparing these findings with those obtained from the consumers, they appear to support those derived from producers and their understanding of what consumers may want to experience in the future. Interviewees placed their importance on experiences generated through “staff”, “participation” and “recognition” themes. The latter, which emerged as a distinct theme from the analysis of the data with the interviewees, made an important point in that it related to the guest and his/her yearning for personalized
attention. This was also acknowledged in the review of the literature where it was found that customers of luxury hospitality services were increasingly looking beyond the material things. Instead, they were becoming more concerned with the way they were made to feel and the personal recognition they received (Pine & Gilmore 2011; Pizam 2009; Sherman 2007).

Another important finding that emerged from the analysis of the interviewee data was the sensitivity guests expressed towards service delivery and staff engagement that they considered have become too operationalized. For example, a common remark was made about the ‘welcome letter’ often placed into the guest room upon arrival. This, they felt, was one of many signs that highlighted the lack of personal recognition, which could have been much better demonstrated through a personal welcome call or greeting by the host upon arrival, than by a standard machine produced or handwritten note.

6.2.4.5 The Sensory Category
This category had previously emerged as a new category describing memorable experience generator themes obtained from the interviewees. Key generator themes were identified as “spaciousness, views and touch”. Recording a strong increase over the current experience theme, in the future, the memorable experience generator themes that emerged as an addition to those already identified, was the “lighting” theme. In fact, interviewees were quite articulate on the use of natural and artificial lighting most frequently discussed in the context of the bathroom environment.

There, many agreed, much improvement was needed to better understand the purpose for which lighting was required. This can vary greatly between genders, however, both men and women participating in this study, had strong opinions to share. Noteworthy was the dual perspectives both genders described; on the one hand as lighting relates to the purpose of use (shaving or applying make-up), and on the other hand, as it affects the emotions (for example, lighting from above appears to cause unwanted shadows on facial features). These emotional feelings derived from the consumption of, or exposure to, things, as the literature revealed, would need to be better understood by producers of memorable experiences, as they were critical considerations for resulting consumer behavior (Metters et al. 2002).
6.3 Phase I and Phase II Findings - Producers versus Consumers

In the previous sections, the key results obtained from the study involving the producers and the consumers were presented and discussed. These were listed in both current and future timeframes, and across each of the four realms of experience. Moreover, both current and future experience generator categories and their themes were presented and discussed.

6.3.1 Future Memorable Experience Generator Categories and their Themes – return on investment (ROI)

In this section, the producers’ consensus of important future value drivers (Chapter 4, Section 4.1.10, Page 171) are compared and discussed against the results of the questions completed by interviewees previously presented in Chapter 5. The producer statements (summarizing memorable experience generators) that they determined were important for the design and delivery of memorable experiences in the future luxury guest room (by 2020). Additionally, the producers agreed that not only would these future memorable experience generators be highly valued by consumers, but that they would also generate a return-on-investment (ROI) for them. In this way the researcher was able to ascertain where these hotel executives were likely to make investment decisions and thus which experience generators would form part of the customer experience in the future. These findings are directly linked to answering a key research question, namely:

What type of future memorable experience generators and dimensions (the four realms) are producers likely to design and develop within the luxury hotel guest room that will generate new forms of perceived economic value (ROI)?

The following table (Table 6.5) presents the results obtained from both producers and consumers so that each group’s views can be compared. Each of the 16 memorable experience generator statements (in the future timeframe) was sorted by the corresponding experience realm and memorable experience category. On the left hand side, the table depicts the producers’ level of value they perceived consumers would place on each of the memorable experience generators listed. The value indicator shown was reflective of how the majority of the producers determined each memorable
experience generator to be of “essential, high, medium, or low” value to guests in the future. On the right hand side, the table lists the value as perceived by the consumers; the value indicator states how the majority of interviewees had chosen between “high, medium, or no value”. This method allowed a comparison between the views of producers and the consumers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6.5. Memorable experience generators - value perceived by producers versus consumers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ID</strong></td>
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Reviewing these results, the researcher was mindful of the many variables upon which both groups of participants could have determined their responses. For example, producers may have considered specific brands, geography, or the type of property in their response. Whilst the interviewees may have thought of their purpose of travel, level of interests, and the meaning they applied to each statement. Based on this comparative view, in general, it can be argued that the majority of both producers and
consumers appear to place similar value on each of the proposed experience generator concepts.

On closer examination, it appears that while producers considered memorable experience generators associated with, for example, the Technology category, and specifically, “voice-activated in-room control activation” commands to become of important value to guests in the future, more than half of the interviewees did not share the same level of interest in such future in-room control activation commands.

Similarly, while the producers considered the value consumers would place on “stress-free, simple-to-use, and centralized in-room technology” to be of medium value, the overwhelming majority of consumers placed high value on these future experience generators. These contrasting results were also evident around future memorable experience generators that would come, for example, from “hotel staff engaging with guests in a more knowledgeable way”. While the producers considered this to be of medium value, the overwhelming majority of consumers in fact considered this to be of “high” value to their future experience consumption.

The producers also shared their opinions on the level of importance (1 = most important) they placed on the same memorable experience generator components (as listed in Table 6.5) and the likely return on investment (ROI) they expected these to generate. These findings were introduced in detail in Chapter 4 (Section 4.1.10, Page 171). Derived from these results, Table 6.6 represents a summary of the key words describing memorable experience generating components with regard to their experience category that the producers have determined would generate new sources of revenue. As stated earlier, this process was seen as an additional step in discerning between producers’ espoused views and their more pragmatic understanding of where their company was likely to invest resources.
Table 6.6. Memorable experience generators (by category) – ROI predictions by the producers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Producers</th>
<th>Memorable Experience Category - ROI commonality - key words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of importance</td>
<td>Category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>SERV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>TECH</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>ATMO</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>CULT</td>
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Remarkably, the order of importance (1 = most important) in which the producers expressed their expectations on gaining a return on investment (SERV, TECH, ATMO, CULT), was the same in which they had agreed future memorable experiences themes would occur. Furthermore, this finding also holds true when sorting the producers’ ROI expectations by level of importance and with regard to its experience realm (Table 6.7).

Table 6.7. Memorable experience generators (by realm) – ROI predictions by the producers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Producers</th>
<th>Experience Realm - ROI commonality - key words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of importance</td>
<td>Realm</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>ENT</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>EST</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>ESC</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>EDU</td>
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6.4 Summarizing Significant Results (Producers versus Consumers)

In this chapter, the aim was to discuss the results of the data analysis and to highlight contradictions between producers’ and consumers’ perceptions about which aspects of the luxury guest room experience formed valuable and memorable experiences, now and in the future. As a result, a key research question was addressed, namely: ‘What are the gaps between producer and consumer perceptions of essential experiential needs in the future luxury guest room?’ The justification for utilizing experience research frameworks had led to the adoption of Pine and Gilmore's (1998) four realms of
experience framework. This was presented in summary at the beginning of this chapter. Specifically directed at the luxury lodging sector, as far as the researcher was able to ascertain, this research is among the first to empirically test the four realms of experience framework in this context.

Indeed, for the purpose of this research, the four realms of experience framework proved to be an effective and structured method of engaging both producers and consumers around the four experience realms, confirming each dimension as a unique and standalone contributor to describe, assess, measure, and conceptualize memorable experience occurrences and concepts. Moreover, by identifying the value each group of informants placed on memorable experience generators and the experience dimension, now and in the future, the experience framework provided a practical guide to cross-examine current and future experience desires in the context of the luxury hotel guest room. In Chapter 7, the implications of the use of this experience framework for future research are presented.

6.4.1 The Four Realms

From the analysis of both study phases, the findings relating to the level of importance placed on each of the four realms within the current luxury guest room environment revealed that both producers and consumers attributed similar importance to experiences generated in the order of Entertainment, Esthetics and Escapism realms. In contrast to the findings obtained from the producers, however, was the level of importance consumers placed on memorable events that had been generated through Education realm experiences, namely by recalling events that had engaged them in some form of learning.

While both groups of participants described current entertainment experiences as most important, comparing the findings between producers and consumers more closely provided some evidence that consumers consider their entertainment experiences to have taken place more frequently outside of the guest room.

Similarly, both groups of participants placed the Esthetics realm as an important generator of current experiences. Here, both groups of participants agreed that it was not
so much the physical (or artistic) attributes of the environment itself that triggered memorable events, but the context surrounding local culture and the engagement with staff. Hence, it is argued, that the findings of this research concur with the salient literature where the ambience and total atmosphere are the main causes of esthetic experiences becoming memorable (Bitner 1992; Kokko 2005).

While producers agreed that the Escapism realm was more important than the Education realm where current memorable guest experiences were generated; consumer participants described their memorable experiences more frequently as being generated in the Education realm than the Escapism realm. As this chapter discussed, in contrast to Pine and Gilmore’s (1999) definition of the escapism experience, namely involving active customer participation, both groups of participants described escapist experiences as being generated through passive forms of engagement. Hence, the findings presented in this chapter suggested that, in the context of the luxury guest room environment, the true meaning and the potential of escapism experiences was yet to be fully recognized by both producers and consumers.

Finally, as stated earlier, the Education realm appeared as somewhat more important to the consumers than previously perceived among the producers. Although neither group of participants gave sufficient evidence in support of the Educational realm being an important generator of memorable experiences currently, this chapter discussed the importance producers needed to give to educational experiences as consumers indeed wished that they had more learning opportunities within the current guest room environment.

Contrasting the findings from both groups of participants and their views on the future luxury guest room, this chapter discussed the level of importance both producers and consumers placed on the Entertainment realm as the most important future experience dimension. Specifically, consumers expressed their desires to experience new things and to become more actively involved. By comparing and contrasting the findings between both groups of participants, this chapter presented an argument that, influenced by modern-day entertainment content that has become more interactive and co-produced, consumers were beginning to encounter the boundaries between the
experience realms. In context, these findings supported Pine and Gilmore’s (1999) ‘sweet-spot’ theory whereby experience realms were straddling and, to a degree, morphing into other realms (for example, Entertainment plus Education becomes Edutainment).

The Esthetics and Escapism realms, as identified by both groups of participants, remained important dimensions in which memorable experiences were seen to occur in the future. While producers agreed that the future luxury guest room would become more guest-centric and adaptable to their purpose of travel and special interests, consumers expressed their desires for a much more immersive and engaging experience with their surroundings. In fact, consumers described the holistic nature of their experience desires closely linking Esthetics and Escapism experiences. This was most strongly expressed in their desire for human interaction, experiencing the place and the meaning they would take away from their encounters.

Although both producers and consumers considered the Education realm least as an experience dimension of the future luxury guest room, this chapter presented a comparative analysis of both groups of participants revealing important experience drivers resulting from technology and ‘anywhere’ access to information. Hence, the chapter produced findings that suggested that the Education realm indeed warrants closer examination by producers of future luxury guest room experiences.

### 6.4.2 Current and Future Memorable Experience Categories and their Themes

Also in this chapter, the memorable experience generator categories and their respective themes, now and in the future, were discussed and compared between both groups of participants. In the current luxury guest room environment, both producers and consumers identified memorable experience generator categories in the same order of importance. These were, in descending order of importance, the Services, Atmosphere, Culture and Technology categories. Unlike the producers, consumer participants also identified memorable experience generator themes that belonged to the Sensory category.
Collectively, both groups of participants identified the Services category comprising of experience generator themes as the most important of categories where memorable experiences were designed and experienced, and will continue so in the future. A significant discovery highlighted in this chapter was that consumers expressed their most memorable service encounters when being individually acknowledged and recognized, and looking head, that services must consider the individual and their purpose of travel (for example, for business, leisure, special occasion) in the future luxury guest room.

Between both groups of participants, the Atmosphere category emerged as the second most important category comprising of memorable experience generator themes. And, although the Atmosphere category was again identified as important in the future, the producers agreed that due to rapid advances in technology, the Technology category would move ahead in importance to consumers over the Atmosphere category.

While the producers agreed that future experience generators within the Atmosphere category would be more emphasized through design-centered themes, consumer participants placed greater significance on the Atmosphere category. As discussed in this chapter, they identified both tangible (Designhotels.com) themes and intangible (service) experience generator themes that would likely address their future luxury guest room experience needs and desires. Derived from the comparative analysis between producers and consumers, consumers closely associated memorable experience generator themes to forms of escapism, describing future experiences to be generated through in-room relaxation and a worry-free stay experience.

This chapter also compared the findings producers and consumers placed on the Technology category; although consumers too envisaged they would experience more technology-generated experiences through accessing, for example, virtual services. At the same time, many openly expressed their concerns that technology should not get in the way of replacing the human touch and personal contact, most particularly when experiencing luxury hotel room stays.
6.4.3 Return on Investment (ROI) - future memorable experience generator themes

Comparing and contrasting specific future experience value drivers agreed between the producers with responses received to each of these from the consumer participants, this chapter provided a comparative analysis as to whether these memorable experience generators were indeed considered desirable in the future luxury guest room. Producer participants agreed that these future experience generators would not only be desirable but also revenue generating. In the order of their importance, these future experience generators would be designed within Entertainment, Esthetics, Escapism and Education experience realms and across Services, Technology, Atmosphere and Cultural experience generator themes.

Comparing the perceived value of each of the memorable experience generator categories, it was found that on balance, producers and consumers placed similar value on future memorable experience generator themes associated with the Services, Atmosphere, Education and Culture categories. However, when considering each individual memorable experience generator type more carefully, the level of value the consumers considered as being generated, may vary to a degree that would warrant a more careful consideration for the producers of future luxury guest rooms.

In Chapter 7, the final chapter of this Thesis, the research problem is restated and the most prevalent findings in response to each research question are presented. Furthermore, the implications of the overall research, theoretical and managerial recommendations, the limitations and directions for future research are identified.
7.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the concluding remarks of the research and discusses the implications. Divided into four sections, the introduction establishes a connection to the research aims outlined in Chapter 1. The first section then continues by discussing the most prominent findings synthesized in response to each of the five research questions presented in the Chapter 1 (Page 10). The second section addresses the implications of this research. They are connected back to the review of the literature and key aspects derived from the qualitative findings. The last two sections present recommendations emanating from the research as well as limitations and directions for future research.

Restating the primary research aims, this research set out to explore current and future needs and desires for memorable guest experiences specifically designed and delivered within the luxury hotel sector and its most valuable asset, the luxury hotel guest room. By applying the four realms of experience framework (Entertainment, Educational, Esthetic and Escapist), the research established how effective Pine and Gilmore’s (1998) framework was for producers as a conceptual design tool to engage guests across the four experience realms.

Guided by the four realms experience framework, the inquiry with producers considered the important current and future memorable experience generators that create value for both them and the consumers within the setting of the current luxury hotel guest room. Specifically, this research sought to define which experience offerings producers expected would generate future return-on-investment (by the year 2020), and how consumers would perceive these memorable experience generators to be of value to their future luxury guest room stay experience. To this end, the research sought to reveal whether the views of producers were aligned with those of consumers in terms of what experience generators would deliver memorable experiences in the future.

For industry producers to take full advantage of the experience economy they need to understand which types of generators contribute to memorable experiences, in which
distinct areas these may occur, and the personal interpretation, interaction and involvement of their consumers. Only then may products and services be designed and delivered to generate memorable consumer experiences (Johnston & Kong 2011).

The literature on this subject - specifically in the context of the luxury hotel sector within the experience economy, was inconclusive on several vital questions relating to the systematic utilization of experience concepts and the consumer experience discourse (Mcintosh & Siggs 2005; Pullman & Gross 2004; Walls et al. 2011b). Consequently, by engaging both producers of luxury hotel guest rooms and their frequent-staying consumers in two interconnected study phases, this research sought to make a contribution to the theoretical and managerial literature by addressing the broader aims outlined in this research, and more specifically, by answering the following 5 research questions:

7.1 The Research Questions

1. What type of memorable experience generators and dimensions do producers consider address current and future guest experience needs within the luxury hotel guest room?

2. Which memorable experience generators and dimensions do consumers perceive as valuable in the context of the current luxury hotel room?

3. What type of future memorable experience generators and dimensions are producers likely to design and develop within the luxury hotel guest room that will generate new forms of perceived economic value (ROI)?

4. What type of luxury hotel room related experiences will consumers desire between now and 2020?

5. What are the gaps between producer and consumer perceptions of essential experiential needs in the future luxury guest room?

The main empirical findings of four of the research questions were summarized within Chapter Four (pertaining to research questions 1 and 3) and Chapter Five (pertaining to research questions 2 and 4). In Chapter 6, addressing research question 5, the findings
relating to producers and consumers were compared and discussed in detail. The following section will synthesize the most prominent empirical findings according to each of the study’s research questions. The theoretical and managerial implications of these findings are presented in Section 7.2.

7.1.1 Research Question 1

In order to answer this research question: ‘What type of memorable experience generators and dimensions do producers consider address current and future guest experience needs…’, this research engaged with a group of industry experts. Collectively, these participants oversee more than a dozen global hotel brands on five continents, and were directly responsible for the design of current and future luxury hotel guest rooms. In complete anonymity to each other (via a web-based Delphi-like study), they produced a total of 283 current and future memorable experience generators across the four realms of experience dimensions. Out of the total memorable experience generators obtained, 18 experience generator themes emerged which were divided into four main experience generator categories (Chapter 4, Table 4.5, Page 154). These were then listed by their level of perceived importance within each of the four experience realms.

In Chapter Four, the data analysis process and findings obtained from the producers were presented. These results successfully addressed and answered research questions one and three. In response to question 1, this research found that producers considered that the majority of current memorable experience generator themes belong to the Services category, followed by themes designed and delivered in the Atmosphere, Culture, and Technology category.

With respect to this Services category, it emerged from this research that producers overall placed a greater focus on in-room content, that is specifically designed or sourced for the purpose of the guest, and the delivery of services composed and orchestrated for effecting specific benefits to each guest. Additionally, the research revealed that producers focused their current experience design predominantly on memorable experience themes within the Entertainment and Esthetic realms, followed by themes within Escapism and Education realms.
In the future luxury guest room, the expert panel of producers predicted that consumers would want to experience memorable occurrences predominantly through services. Specifically, producers agreed that they would expand their experience design emphasis on content, and more noticeably in the future, on customization (learning from guests to deliver customized experiences) initiated memorable experience generators. The order in which producers agreed that they would prioritize their future design and delivery of memorable experience generator themes, were those belonging to the Services, Technology, Atmosphere and Culture category.

Compared to the current guest room environment, the research revealed that producers in the future would place much greater emphasis on memorable experiences designed and delivered through “technology” themes. Considering the realms and the order of their importance, the research revealed that producers in the future would design consumer-directed experiences that, overall, will be generated within the Entertainment realm.

Summarizing the findings that answered research question 1, this research revealed that producers are currently designing and delivering memorable experiences around generator themes in the Services, Atmosphere, Culture, and the Technology category and across the Entertainment and Esthetic realms, followed by the Escapism and Education realms. Looking toward the year 2020, this research revealed that producers were likely to design and deliver memorable experience generator themes in the order of Services, Technology, Atmosphere and the Culture category, and across the Entertainment, Esthetics, Escapism and the Education realm.

7.1.2 Research Question 2

To answer the second research question: ‘Which memorable experience generators and dimensions do consumers perceive as valuable in the current luxury guest room?’, the research engaged with a group of individual frequent travelers of whom the overwhelming majority stayed on average more than 100 days a year in luxury hotels. These frequent travelers (consumer participants) responded, in face-to-face semi-structured interviews, by openly describing their memorable experiences and what they considered had triggered (generator types) these memorable experiences. At the same
time, they shared their forward-looking experience desires in the context of the future luxury hotel guest room.

In Chapter Five the analysis of the data obtained from the consumers successfully addressed and answered research questions two and four. In response to question two, this research found that in the current luxury guest room, the majority of memorable experiences were generated through entertainment. The results from this research revealed that the order in which consumers described their most memorable experiences were Entertainment, Esthetics, Education, and Escapism.

This research also found that the majority of memorable guest experiences in the current luxury guest room were generated through services. In Chapter Five, the data analysis described in detail, current, future and virtual generator types: these were listed in Table 5.2 (Page 244). Within the current guest room environment, and specifically relating to the dominant Services category, consumers frequently recalled memorable experiences that were generated through services, amenities and content-initiated experience generator themes. Adding to the experience category themes derived from the producer data, consumers voiced memorable experience generator themes that belong to the Sensory category.

Summarizing the results that answered research question 2, this research revealed that the order in which consumers described their most memorable experience generator themes in the current luxury guest room were those generated within the Services, Atmosphere, Culture, Technology, and Sensory category, and across Entertainment, Esthetics, Education, and the Escapism realm.

7.1.3 Research Question 3

This research question directed at the producers aimed to answer: ‘What type of future memorable experience generators and dimensions are producers likely to design and develop […] that will generate new forms of perceived economic value (ROI)?’. In Chapter Four (Section 4.1.10, Page 171), the findings obtained from the producers answered this question in detail. With the focus placed on the future to 2020, the order in which the producers expect memorable experience generator categories to earn them a future return-on-investment, were Services, Technology, Atmosphere and Culture.
Within the dominant Services category, this research found that producers expect to earn new revenues derived from memorable experience generators that comprise of customized and tailored content based on a deeper understanding of guest preferences, offering pre-arrival configuration of experiences tailored to the guest’s interest and purpose of travel, as well as offering virtual in-room assistance.

Additionally, the research revealed that producers considered the Entertainment realm as the most important experience dimension, where they would invest resources in designing and delivering future memorable guest experiences. Memorable experience generator themes designed within the Entertainment realm and the experience generator themes that would become the main drivers of future investment returns, were described as in the form of simplified personal device connectivity, customized content that is tailored to guest’s special interests, stress-free and simple-to-use in-room technology, and through experienced and culturally diverse hotel staff.

Summarizing the results that answered research question 3 this research revealed that producers, based on perceived ROI, are likely to invest in memorable experience generators in the order of Services, Technology, Atmosphere and the Culture category, and across Entertainment, Esthetics and Escapism, and Education experience realms.

### 7.1.4 Research Question 4

This research question considered: ‘What type of luxury hotel room related experiences will consumers desire between now and 2020?’ In Chapter Five, the experience realms that emerged as most dominant were visualized in Figures 5.2-5 (Pages 237-40). Additionally, emerging from this research, was the order of importance placed on future experiences to occur, namely in the Entertainment, Esthetics, Escapism and Education realms. This research found that memorable experiences generated within the Entertainment realm would become even more important to consumers in the future. Specifically, this research revealed that consumers expressed a desire to experience new things and to become more actively involved in the experience itself. The research also sought to examine consumers’ virtual experience desires within the future luxury guest room. The results showed (Chapter 5, Figure 5.5, Page 240) that within these virtual dimensions, consumers predominantly desired entertainment-generated experience
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themes. The order in which consumer participants described their forward-looking virtual experience desires, by experience realm, were Entertainment, Escapism, Education and Esthetics.

Moreover, this research found that consumers most frequently asserted that their future experience desires should be addressed through memorable experience generator themes within the Services category. The order of importance placed on each of the categories, were Services, Atmosphere, Culture, Technology and Sensory.

Specifically, consumer envisaged future experiences to be generated through services, content and customization-initiated memorable experience generator themes. Furthermore, the research revealed that experiences would need to be considered on the basis of guest’s individual circumstances or purpose of travel, and their lifestyles. Moreover, the findings suggested that service encounters would take on much greater relevance not only during, but also before and after the actual guest room stay experience. This includes the delivery of virtual service experiences, most notably those that facilitate pre-arrival customization of amenities, room configuration, the selection of window views, special orders and personalized content themes.

7.1.5 Research Question 5

With four of the research questions answered in Chapters Four and Five, in Chapter Six, this research addressed the final research question (5), namely to identify the gaps between producer and consumer perceptions of essential experiential needs and desires in the future luxury hotel guest room. As outlined in Chapter 6, the findings revealed that within the current guest room environment both producers and consumers placed similar levels of importance on each of the four experience dimensions. The comparative analysis also revealed that while both groups of participants described current entertainment experiences as most important, guests considered their current entertainment experiences to have mainly taken place outside of the guest room. These are important findings for producers, because guests, seeking to be entertained, need to access entertaining content elsewhere within the property or externally. That is, outside of the hotel, which potentially represents a significant financial loss to the property. Hence, producers need to better understand the types of entertainment consumers seek within the luxury guest room so that they can design and deliver offerings that are
value-producing, and, ideally, that guests might be willing to pay a premium for.

Noteworthy were the findings derived from both groups of participants where, in contrast to Pine and Gilmore’s (1999) definition of an escapism experience (generated through active user participation), neither group described current guest room initiated escapism experiences as passively engaging events.

In the future luxury guest room, both groups of participants shared similar views of the order of importance they attributed to experiences being generated from each of the four experience realms. Specifically, this research found that the Entertainment realm would become the most important future experiences where producers design and consumers experience memorable events and occurrences.

This research also compared the importance both groups of participants placed on future memorable experience generator themes and their respective experience categories. In Chapter 6, Table 6.4 (Page 270), the comparative findings between producers and consumers and how each group foresees the majority of future experiences to be generated from services were presented. Contrasting the memorable experiences categories between producers and consumers, the order of importance expressed by each group differed. While the producers agreed that consumers would want to experience future memorable experiences generated within the Technology, Atmosphere and Culture categories, this research found that consumers expressed their future experience desires in the form of themes that belonged, in order of importance, to the Atmosphere, Culture, Technology and Sensory experience categories.

### 7.2 Implications of the overall research study

In this section the implications of the overall research study are presented. Firstly, the effectiveness of the four realms of experience framework is discussed, and secondly, both the managerial and theoretical implications are presented in detail.

#### 7.2.1 The Four Realms of Experience Framework

As stated earlier, this research sought to uncover how effective for producers Pine and Gilmore’s (1998) four realms of experience model was as a framework to conduct research into the luxury hotel accommodation sector. In Chapter Six, a critical
evaluation of the experience framework was presented. Previous research found that the four realms contributed in a variable way to the analysis of consumer perceptions of bed and breakfast experiences (Oh, Fiore & Jeoung 2007), to cruise line experiences (Hosany & Witham 2010), to hotel visits and to hotel website reviews (Laitamaki 2011), and to winery tour experiences (Quadri-Felitti & Fiore 2012). Despite the general acknowledgement of the experience economy and its effect within Tourism, it was noted that few hotels have utilized Pine and Gilmore’s experience framework to design and deliver unique experience offerings to their guests (Ferreira & Teixeira 2013). Negrusa and Ionescu (2005) see an inherent weakness, proposing that hotels need to be designed on the basis of how guests are interacting within them, instead of following a design-oriented cookie cutter approach.

Within the context of the luxury accommodation sector, an important contribution of this research was the empirical testing of the four realms of experience framework with both producers and consumers. By using the four realms experience framework, important memorable experience generator themes and their respective experience categories emerged. Informed by Ferreira and Teixeira’s (2013) bibliometric analysis of Pine and Gilmore’s (1998) experience economy theory, as far as the researcher was able to ascertain, this research is one of the first that made use of the four realms framework to examine memorable experience concepts within the luxury hotel sector. Consequently, the research reported here has extended prior research to advance the understanding of current and future memorable experience concepts that are specifically designed and delivered in the current and future luxury hotel guest room environment. To this end, this research may serve as further validation of Pine and Gilmore’s (1998) four realms of experience approach, showing it to be an effective design framework to be applied to hospitality stay experiences.

Overall, this research found that producers and consumers considered the Entertainment realm as the strongest dimension where future memorable guest room experiences were produced and consumed. These findings compare to similar previous tourism related studies examining the realms of experience; for example, within the cruise line setting (Hosany & Witham 2010) where the entertainment dimension was the second strongest experience determinant. Conversely, entertainment experiences within a B&B
accommodation setting (Oh, Fiore & Jeoung 2007) did not produce significant results. A plausible explanation could be the interpretation of entertainment in varying contexts. Within the context of the modern-day cruise ship seen as a floating mega city, passengers would expect to be kept engaged and entertained around a host of staged activities.

On the other hand, B&B accommodation guests may not generally associate their stay with an entertainment-producing destination. Within the future luxury hotel room setting, however, consumer participants described entertainment-generated experiences as being linked to design, lighting, bathroom, spaciousness and customization options, which they gave even deeper meaning when considering their purpose of travel. With the importance placed on entertainment, the findings further suggest that, in the eyes of consumers, entertainment is derived from a plethora of platforms and contexts, all emanating experience cues that are stimulated through the senses, feelings, emotions, and the circumstances that surround the individual.

Moreover, this research found that while both study groups considered entertainment and service-generated experiences as important, consumers valued memorable experiences that are personally relevant, meaningful, contain humanistic cues (those that are experienced through behavior and appearance of staff) and pleasant surprises. Consumers also expressed a desire for experiencing new things and to become more actively involved in the co-production of future stay experiences. These findings provide important insights for producers in ways that would suggest that consumers are feeling encouraged being more curious.

The review of the literature described the entertainment experience dimension as a passive form of participation. However, considering advancements in technology and an increasing consumer desire for self-actualization, this research revealed that consumers expressed a growing interest in greater levels of active participation. The implication for producers of memorable experiences might, therefore, be related to how the experience framework and its realms along the passive dimension axes (Entertainment and Esthetics) would need to be considered in combination with other realms when designing future memorable experiences. To this end, the research’s findings support
Pine and Gilmore’s (2002; 2011; 1999) proposition that an optimal experience should comprise of all four realms, which they determined as the experience sweet-spot.

A possible design approach emerged through the data analysis process deployed in this research. Here, the researcher proposes that value-generating experiences could be designed by first determining the experience generator category (Services, Atmosphere, Culture, Technology, Sensory) in which an experience is staged. Secondly, by considering the consumer’s desired level of participation in the experience itself (active versus passive), and thirdly, by understanding which level of engagement (absorption versus immersion) would generate the most compelling experience. As a result, this approach could guide producers in defining the appropriate balance of active / passive engagement and the level of absorption / immersion across the four experience dimensions.

A further implication for producers was the premise on which the four realms of experience framework was conceived. In contrast to designing services that are developed to achieve economies of scale and where producers focus on efficiency and improvements of the overall delivery within the experience economy, producers compete beyond products and services by designing and delivering meaningful and memorable customer experiences that guests are willing to pay a premium for (Frow & Payne 2007; Oh, Fiore & Jeoung 2007; Pullman & Gross 2004; Sundbo 2009).

Expanding on specific examples given by interviewees in this research, and considering the meaning they applied to certain in-room experiences, the bathroom environment emerged as an important place of relaxation and escape. Here, this research produced insights that support the current tourist experience phenomenon (Veríssimo & Loureiro 2013, p. 298), where ‘…the attention is shifted from the displayed objects provided by the industry, to the tourist subjective negotiation of meanings as a determinant of the experience.’ Taking the example of the bathroom, consumer participants of both genders spoke of rituals and the deeper meaning of the environment that should motivate producers to innovate, design, stage, and co-create, for example, “Escatainment” (Escapist + Entertainment) experiences. To this end, some consumers suggested that they would be quite willing to pay a premium for self-applied multi-sensory bathing rituals that are stress reducing, cleansing and detoxifying.
Interpreting other findings derived from the conversations with consumers was the sensitivity expressed toward standard services traditionally designed to recognize the individual. For example, the “welcome letter” that is intended to greet guests personally upon entry into their luxury guest room. The purpose of this communication is to acknowledge the individual, welcoming them as first-time guests or recognizing their return visit. As this research exposed, consumers nowadays sense when such experiences are standardized, as a result, these offerings quickly become much less meaningful and can even have a negative impact. In this example, producers should redesign a new “welcome” experience that applies the process discussed, namely determining the experience generator category, the desired level of guest participation and the level of guest engagement, and, not least in relations to the guests’ purpose of travel. This would turn the offering into, for example, an “Edusthetic” (Education + Esthetic) experience; making it more compelling, meaningful and distinctively memorable for the guest.

7.2.2 Managerial Implications

Competition among luxury hotel accommodation providers is intense and major disruptions, as this research highlighted in the review of the literature, are caused through advances in technology, globalization and rising consumer affluence. This requires producers to create new value propositions for themselves and their customers (Brodie et al. 2013; Walls et al. 2011b). Specifically, as consumers continue to become co-creators of experiences, producers need to identify important memorable experience generators, increase the level of guest participation and influence the environmental relationship that connects guests to the experience. Failing this, producers risk designing and developing luxury guest rooms that guests do not value and also fail to generate new forms of revenue for industry stakeholders. Thus, the managerial contributions of this research are presented by considering business and consumer perspectives relevant to the future luxury guest room and the experience environment (physical and virtual) and, expanding on the managerial literature, relating to the design of future customer experiences (Johnston & Kong 2011; Schmitt 2010; Verhoef et al. 2009).
Several important managerial implications have emerged from this research, which relate to the designing of luxury hotel rooms, physical and virtual experience environments, designing and delivering future entertainment and service-generated experiences. These are discussed in the next section.

7.2.2.1 Designing Luxury Hotel Rooms

This research has highlighted that hotel operators must determine at the planning stages, the room layout, design themes, in-room configurations (fit-out), and the mix between standard rooms, deluxe rooms and suites. This was deemed particularly important in the design and development of luxury hotel rooms due to the cost and time lag between the beginning of a hotel building project and the opening of a hotel. The review of the literature placed the guest room among the five most important customer value creation drivers (Kapiki 2012), where the exchange of experiences has become central to the formation of new value (Kaplan & Norton 2000). Resulting from a comprehensive analysis of empirical studies into hotel attributes that consumers appreciated, Dolnicar and Otter (2003a) suggested that further research was needed. To this end, by engaging with consumers of luxury hotel guest rooms, this research has produced valuable insights into specific hotel room attributes as experience generator types, which guests considered important to their current and future stay experiences.

This research also found that while producers acknowledged room size, configuration, and the furniture layout as important experience generators, most consumer participants expressed their experience desires by applying much deeper meaning to these guest room design features. Specifically, consumers described their forward-looking experience desires in form of purposefully designed zones (work, play, relax), and multisensory experiences through touch and feel of quality materials. Most noticeably, as stated earlier, the bathroom environment stood out as an important experience dimension in which guests desired to actively participate in the co-creation, for example, around spa rejuvenation and relaxation experiences.

As a practical contribution to stakeholders of future luxury hotel guest rooms, producers should take note that many of the participating consumers expressed their dislike of standardized furniture layouts, overcomplicated room controls, insufficient electrical power points and lighting options particularly in areas that should afford the flexibility
for work and play-related activities. Additionally, the lack of comfortable seating, mostly desired to help them relax, was also mentioned. Even the storage of clothing and suitcases, often left exposed in the guest room, provoked a negative response toward ill-designed and understood guest room environments. These responses suggested that producers still do not consider the importance that guests attribute to the ambience and the total atmosphere emanating from the place (Dubé & Renaghan 2000; Lockyer 2005; Talwar 2010). Hence, when designing future luxury guest rooms, producers must consider the experiential value equations that ultimately determine the ambience and total atmosphere of the place.

Consequently, producers, informed by consumer psychographics (personality, values, attitudes, interests, and lifestyles) and their reasons for travel, would benefit greatly by extending their design considerations to include the formulation of experience dimensions (Knutson & Beck 2003). As this research found, producers should also take into consideration the purpose and meaning consumers attribute to guest room spaciousness and window views, flexible room layout and configuration options, and the use of materials stimulating multisensory experiences. Reiterating the importance of seeking opportunities for innovation, producers will need to consider the bathroom environment as a space for highly valued esthetics and co-created entertainment and escapism experiences.

Highlighting the contrasting perceptions between producers and consumers, this research found, for example, that producers assumed “Technology” played an increasing role in the future hotel guest room. Collectively they agreed that this would become an area that they plan to invest in applications that will be designed to extend the ability to guests to control their environment and personal content in the future. While consumers accepted that technology would play a more important role in the future, this research found that guests did not desire technology itself to produce future memorable experiences. Instead, the majority of consumer participants saw technology-enabled services (for example: free and simple access to the internet and pre-arrival personalization of guest room amenities and layout) to provide more meaningful and memorable experience concepts in the future. Thus, this research has advanced the knowledge of consumer-desired guest room attributes that are experience generating; at
the same time, offering further insights into consumer’s future desires for leisure experiences (Stamboulis & Skayannis 2003).

7.2.2.2 Physical and Virtual experience environment
Examining both the physical and virtual experience environment, this research produced valuable insights into what types of memorable experience generators and dimensions (realms) producers considered important to consumers. By engaging with a group of individual consumers, this research offered comparative perceptions of physical and virtual experience environments, which guests might desired when staying in future luxury guest rooms. While producers agreed that virtual reality computing options (for example, guests’ configuration of virtual and physical experiences accessed through their own devices or hotel-embedded systems) would add value to the future guest stay experience, they also expected that offering virtual in-room assistance would generate future returns on their investments.

Conversely, consumers responded less enthusiastically about services being virtualized during their stay, suggesting instead that staff delivered services were a key hallmark of luxury stay experiences. Uncovering important pre-stay experience generators, this research found that some consumer participants agreed with the producers that virtual experiences might come from accessing content in advance of their future hotel visits. These findings were supportive of earlier studies (Gretzel & Jamal 2009; Huang, Backman & Backman 2010; Mossberg 2007), where guests’ should be able to select and personalize special amenities and service preferences prior to their arrival. Thus, based on the findings of this research and the review of the literature, producers would benefit from taking a holistic approach to designing and delivering physical or virtual guest experiences (Gentile, Spiller & Noci 2007; Lo 2007; Negrusa & Ionescu 2005; Verhoef et al. 2009).

Specifically, this research corroborates the findings of other scholars, where, in the context of luxury hospitality, producers should take into consideration pre-arrival information relevant to the individual, as well as their special interests and purpose of travel (Hosany & Witham 2010; Oh, Fiore & Jeoung 2007; Quadri-Felitti & Fiore 2012).
7.2.2.3 Designing and Delivering Future Experiences

When designing and delivering future experiences, producers would need to take into consideration a number of important factors that ultimately determine the consumer experience quality and the memories that are generated through the experience occurrence itself. As the review of literature revealed, other factors would necessitate producers to design flexibility into the experience offering. For example, producers should be mindful of the concept of fluid identities where, due to wealth fluctuations among lifestyle-seeking consumers, their consumption behaviors have become more difficult to predict.

Equally important in the design and delivery of future memorable experiences is the role that consumers themselves, increasingly living within connected societies, will want to play (See-To & Ho 2014). As the findings from this research imply, it is this transformation from passive to active and from company-centric to consumer-centric, which will demand of producers that they allow their guests to actively co-create their own consumption experiences through personalized interactions (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2003; Ramaswamy & Ozcan 2013).

Also of note to producers is the need to differentiate between staged, co-produced or self-service experience generator themes within the Services, Atmosphere, Technology, Culture and Sensory experience categories. This, to a large extent, should depend on the value and the meaning that consumers attribute to human versus machine delivered experiences and their perceptions of what luxury hospitality should be all about (Jones & Samaliones 2008). Consequently, the findings of this research were supportive of previous experience design-focused studies. That is, that value-generating experiences ought to consider the individual and his or her experience needs and desires (Ellis & Waterton 2005; Ferreira & Teixeira 2013; Hjalager 2010; Stamboulis & Skayannis 2003; Sundbo 2009; Victorino et al. 2005). This suggests that producers will need to take an innovative approach to engage with their customers on an individual level, thus strategically and systematically developing memorable experiences designed in context and the surrounding environment in which the interactions take place.
7.2.2.3.1 Future Entertainment Experiences

Derived from the study with producers of future luxury guest rooms, the findings revealed that they considered future entertainment experiences to be the most important memorable experience drivers. By definition, this suggests that these would engage guests in a passive way. To this end, the review of the literature found that entertainment experiences, while stimulating the observer in different ways, remain passively absorbed in the experience (Holbrook 2000; Pine & Gilmore 1999). Pine and Gilmore (2011) stated that designing entertainment alone into the service or experience offering is not sufficient to create memorable experiences. Within a maturing experience economy, consumers were said to embark on an autonomous personal journey (Boswijk, Thijssen & Peelen 2006) leading them to become co-producers. This transitioning from passive consumption to proactively being engaged, would shape what organizations will have to offer their customers in the future luxury guest room (Gretzel et al. 2006; Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004).

Thus, evidence obtained in this research supports the notion that consumers are increasingly influenced by modern-day infotainment content that has become more interactive and co-produced through, for example, digital and virtual manipulation of content and individual customization. Accordingly, this research argues that experiences characteristic of the Entertainment realm, are beginning to shift along the participation axis from passive to active, suggesting that the boundaries between experience realms are beginning to blur.

As presented in Chapter 6 (Section 6.2.2.1, Page 259) future entertainment experiences will arguably take on more compelling forms of media-rich content and technology-enabled consumer interaction and manipulation. This research has highlighted the evolving nature of entertainment experiences as described by consumers. No longer a passive form of enjoyment and amusement, entertainment is now tied to a plethora of platforms in physical and virtual contexts, where the consumer has become very active and individualistic. To this end, the findings from this research supported the arguments presented by other authors that tourism experiences are not only co-created, but also increasingly technology-mediated (Jeong & Jeon 2008; Neuhofer, Buhali & Ladkin 2012; Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier 2009). Henceforth, if producers expect to gain a return
on investment from future memorable entertainment experiences, they will need to incorporate active elements of guest participation typically found within the Education or Escapism realms.

7.2.2.3.2 Future Service-generated Experiences

Whilst services can be delivered in human-, machine- or self-service forms, a significant finding was the impact human-delivered services had on the overall experience becoming memorable. This, according to a large number of the consumer respondents, was most profound when they felt personally acknowledged and recognized.

When comparing the study results between the views of the producers and those of the consumers, it appears that memorable experiences in the future luxury guest room would need to be designed and delivered through uniquely addressing the individual and their needs and wants. For producers, this would imply that they understand their guest’s lifestyle-specific needs and desires (with regard to the purpose of travel), and the desired level of engagement differentiated by self-service, co-created and human-delivered service encounters. As one consumer interviewee explained, it is no longer meaningful enough to offer butler services where the butler generically inquires: “How may I help you?” (Interviewee ID16). Instead, this research supports the need outlined by other authors, whereby producers would have to make a distinction between services as an activity or treatment of a customer, and experiences that are subject to personal guest interpretation and involvement (Johnston & Kong 2011).

Specifically, this research found that future service experiences would need to be designed on the basis of personal relevance to the guest and, fundamentally, by emphasizing humanic clues that deliver pleasant surprises (Berry, Wall & Carbone 2006). In doing so, these future service-generated experiences would exceed customer expectations to the point where the service experience becomes memorable.

7.2.3 Theoretical Implications

The literature has further raised the profile of the experience economy; however, empirical research is still scant in the hotel sector (Hemmington 2007; Ritchie &
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Hudson 2009). To this end, a greater understanding of current industry best practices, design and development of memorable experience concepts and consumer value perceptions is needed. Through applying the four realms of memorable experiences framework, this research was able to contribute insights that uncovered and validated how producers define memorable experiences, and how their forward-looking memorable experience generator themes are likely to be applied to the future luxury hotel guest room.

This research has also offered important theoretical insights into experience constructs, thus further contributing toward the formulation of experience dimensions (Knutson & Beck 2003). Answering the call for empirical research with a focus on measuring customer experiences (Boswijk, Thijssen & Peelen 2006; Ferreira & Teixeira 2013), this research has reinforced the relevance and effectiveness of Pine and Gilmore’s four realms framework in the luxury hotel sector and the guest room context. Furthermore, this research examined memorable experiences produced in both physical and virtual experience environments. Within the physical environment, producers and consumers named specific experiential stimuli (for example, design, lighting, layout, views, materials) as memorable experience generating themes. Within the luxury hotel environment, these insights are important findings that, according to Walls et al. (2011b), have not been sufficiently addressed in the current literature.

Adding to theoretical knowledge, this research also examined virtual experience environments, which were identified by producers and consumers in the context of their level of importance to the future luxury guest room experience. As this research has highlighted, it has become increasingly evident that technological innovation and advances will continue to be a critical component of customer-business interactions (Buhalis & Law 2008; Guttentag 2010).

7.3 Recommendations

The overall research findings suggest that producers of future luxury hotel guest rooms need to take a holistic approach to designing memorable experiences that engage guests before, during and after their stay. Within the physical guest room environment,
producers should consider the individual and his or her purpose of travel as important indicators of how guests might perceive the environment for ambient and atmospheric cues. Considering each of the memorable experience generator categories and their identified themes, producers should also take a perspective directed at specific experience zones: this approach would help identify optimal levels of guest engagement (absorption versus immersion), desired levels of participation (active versus passive) and connection to the experience itself. Informed by these findings, producers could experiment with new value-generating in-room offerings that guests would feel not only tempted to experience, but also willing to pay an additional premium for.

Furthermore, producers need to consider the long-term benefits of taking an innovative approach to designing and delivering memorable customer experiences. This implies that, for producers to be successful, they need to involve other stakeholders and include the consumer in the process of learning about opportunities to design, stage and co-create memorable experiences. As this research has revealed, consumers ascribe considerable meaning to experience generator themes; whether this relates to ill-conceived bathroom lighting, over-standardized room configuration, internet usage fees, or most noticeably, for example, the lack of authenticity experienced through standardized “welcome” letters. Hence, producers should develop an experience innovation and interdisciplinary design language that takes into consideration brand, property, location, staff (including multidisciplinary teams), culture and evolving consumer-business networks (social, technological) and the full spectrum of host-guest relationship touch points. To this end, based on the insights gained from the application of the four realms of experience model, the five memorable experience generator categories and their themes identified by the producers and the consumers, this research offers a valuable foundation on which an experience measurement instrument could be developed.

7.4 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Although this research achieved the objectives and aims outlined in Chapter 1, some limitations exist. Specifically, although the selection of qualitative methods and its appropriateness for this research study were justified in detail (Chapter 3, Section 3.1, Pages 100-8), there are some perceived weakness of interviews as a data collection
method (Shenton 2004). As a result, the quality of the thematic analysis of this research was an important goal. To this end, the researcher employed a rigorous coding process as previously explained in Chapter 5 (Section 5.1.2, Page 194). This way, the themes identified and coded were given definitions, which helped identify the claims made by consumers and compare these in a consistent manner during the write-up stages; at the same time, disregarding unreliable or inaccurate information (Thomas 2006).

A further limitation could be the composition of consumer participants who were accessed through global hotel brands that nominated participants by the required minimum frequency of stays and were predominately male (see Chapter 5, Section 5.1.1, Page 191). Furthermore, although the primary research was focused on luxury hotel accommodation, the researcher had no control over the interpretation that the consumers exercised when they recalled and described memorable experiences generated within luxury ‘five star’ hotels. In other words, guests may have recalled a specific memorable event irrespective of whether this was generated while staying, for the purpose of this research, in a bonafide ‘five star’ luxury hotel.

Similarly, in respect of the definition and meaning attributed to luxury accommodation, this research did not further segment the findings into resort, boutique or city hotel experience concepts. However, it would be safe to assume that the findings have confirmed that, regardless of property type, hotels can enhance guest experiences through products and services that include physical, virtual and human interaction experience dimensions.

Consequently, further research may expand into other lodging segments. Beyond accommodation, the research focus could also be expanded by following producers and travelers into other areas of Tourism and Travel. Additionally, the four realms of experience framework, in combination with the five memorable experience generator categories identified in this research, should be tested in the design stages of memorable experiences.

The findings of this research confirmed significant memorable experience generator themes and the importance both producers and consumers placed on each of the four experience realms. These findings imply that future memorable experiences would need to be designed by addressing a number of contextual issues; including the meaning and
relevance that they have for the individual consumer. Of importance to future studies, therefore, are the findings that imply that future memorable experiences need to be designed based on the individual and his or her purpose of travel. This could be further extended to include specific sensory experience generator types, which emerged as an important category of memorable experiences generator themes for consumers.

7.5 Overall Conclusion

In conclusion, this research uncovered important findings from the qualitative analysis of producer and consumer generated data. Firstly, based on a Delphi-like survey of 13 luxury hotel industry experts representing twelve global hotel brands with properties in five continents, the research successfully produced insights into important memorable experience design practices of current and future luxury hotel guest rooms. The findings showed that, currently, the most important memorable experience generators were those designed and delivered within the Entertainment and Esthetic realms. In the future luxury hotel experience design environment, however, the experts predicted that the focus would shift toward designing and delivering memorable experiences within the Entertainment realm.

Derived from these predictions, the research identified important memorable experience generator themes that producers considered of future value to consumers, and that would offer them financial returns through the design of memorable experiences delivered before, during and after their customers’ luxury guest room stays. At the completion of the first study phase, questions number one and three were successfully answered.

Phase Two of this research involved a group of 25 individual consumers; from this group of frequent staying guests, 22 stayed on average 100 days a year in luxury hotel guest rooms. This group of individual frequent travelers shared details in face-to-face interviews about their memorable guest room stay experiences. Looking into the future, these consumers also expressed their memorable experience desires, which they considered would predominantly arise from entertainment and service-generated experiences. In the context of the future luxury guest room, while both study groups considered entertainment and service-generated experiences as important, the research
found that consumers valued memorable experiences that were personally relevant, meaningful, contain humanic clues (for example, as experienced through behavior and appearance of staff) and pleasant surprises. Moreover, consumers expressed a desire to experience new things while becoming more actively engaged in co-producing memorable stay experiences. At the completion of this second study phase, questions number two and four were successfully answered.

At the conclusion of these two study phases, this research successfully addressed the overall research objectives, aims and each of the five research questions. With consumers willing to pay a premium for quality memorable experiences (Kandampully 2006; Oh, Fiore & Jeoung 2007; Pine & Gilmore 2011; Pine & Gilmore 1999), this research, through the application of the four realms of experience framework, identified important experience design practices which hoteliers (producers) can use for designing luxury hotel experiences as memorable events. As the literature has highlighted, further empirical research was suggested to understand the memorable experience themes and the role of the customer as co-producer (Same & Larimo 2012; Walls et al. 2011b). Hence, this research has made important managerial and theoretical contributions to the consumer behavior, managerial, marketing and innovation literature.

The importance of these issues have been confirmed by industry and academia in their positive response to the presentations and publications that have emanated from this thesis (Appendix 7.A).
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APPENDIX: 3.A

INFORMATION GIVEN TO PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH – PHASE I

Dear [Name],

We like to welcome you to this invaluable research initiative: “Designing and Delivering Memorable Experiences in the Luxury Hotel Sector”.

Your participation and contribution is very much appreciated and we are confident that the collective input from this group of highly qualified industry experts, such as yourself, will provide new and compelling insights. The research objective is to gain a deeper understanding of how producers are designing and delivering memorable experiences and what experiential needs and wants of consumers are being delivered, using the luxury hotel guest room as a research lens.

This research project is being conducted in support of my studies at Victoria University, Melbourne Australia. As part of the University’s process of Human Research Ethics, it is the requirement of the researchers to obtain written consent from each participant in this study phase.

This research involves no risks for you or your organization; personal information will be kept confidential and safe at all times. To this extent, two documents have been attached; the “Information Sheet” document will provide you with background into the research objectives, approach and question types. The “Consent Form” document will require your ‘name’ and ‘signature’, which will need to be scanned and returned to this email address: [REDACTED]. Please do so at your earliest convenience. If you have any questions relating to these documents, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Once you have returned your signed ‘consent form’, you are considered formally enrolled in this research project.

In the coming days, we will issue all enrolled participants, details on how to access the online survey tool. You will be issued a unique username, password and expert ID, which will give you access to a secure online site. This site contains comprehensive background information on the research topic, as well as the first ‘question set’.

A collective email will be send to announce the official commencement of Round 1 of this research phase.

On behalf of the research team, we like to thank you for your interest to partake and look forward to our collective engagement over the coming weeks.

Sincerely,

Jorn

Jorn Buhring, PhD Candidate
Victoria University
University
eMail: jorn.buhring@live.vu.edu.au
APPENDIX: 3.B

PHASE I: WEB-BASED DELPHI STUDY SITE (SCREENCAPTURE NO.3)
PHASE I: WEB-BASED DELPHI STUDY SITE (SCREENCAPTURE NO.4)
Designing and Delivering Memorable Experiences In The Luxury Hotel Sector.

Research Participation
Introduction: The Producers

Jörn Bühring
Ph.D. Candidate,
Victoria University

Associate Professor
Barry O’Mahony
Victoria University

Clinical Professor
Jukka M. Laitamaki
New York University

Jörn H. Bühring
Designing and Delivering Memorable Experiences in the Luxury Hotel Sector
INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

You are invited to participate

You are recognized as an industry ‘producer’ expert and accordingly, are invited to participate in Phase I of a research project entitled ‘Designing and Delivering Memorable Experiences in the Luxury Hotel Sector’.

This project is being conducted by a student researcher Jörn Bühring as part of a PhD study at Victoria University, Australia under the supervision of Associate Professor Dr. G. Barry O’Mahony from the Faculty of Business and Law, School of International Business at Victoria University (VU), and Associate Professor Dr. Jukka M. Laitamaki (Co-supervisor) at Preston Robert Tisch Center for Hospitality, Tourism, and Sports Management, New York University (NYU). If you wish to participate in this study, a Victoria University consent form will be issued for you to sign.

Project explanation

The specific focus of this study is on the luxury hotel guest room experience and how various stakeholders (producers) adjust both ROI (Return-on-Investment) and profitability requirements in response to customer (guests) desires for ‘memorable experiences’. This study aims to develop a deeper understanding of how you and other expert ‘producers’ are designing and delivering memorable experiences, and what experiential needs and wants of consumers are being delivered in the luxury hotel guest room of today, and your predictions of how these will evolve by the year 2020. You and other industry experts have been selected to become part of an expert panel and to participate in an interactive (Delphi) survey. Each panel member will complete an online questionnaire, then feedback will be provided on the responses. Each panel participant will then be given the opportunity to review their own response and further explain any views they hold. This process will be repeated over three to four rounds, allowing for consensus amongst the expert group to emerge. To help facilitate the process, the researcher will provide an experience framework. This will help panel members to structure their individual responses. To allow panel members to express their expert opinions freely, each participant will be issued with a code name, allowing for complete anonymity throughout this research phase.

What will I be asked to do?

Participants are asked to respond to a set of questions, that will be posted on a secure, online web survey tool. Each participant will be able to sign in anonymously to respond to questions so that they can openly express their expert views and opinions. Participants will have the opportunity to explain the differences between their views and others’, providing their reasoning and any influential information to which the others may not be privy. The research team will provide a detailed summary of each round. Participants will then have the opportunity to adjust previously offered responses to each question. Additional information regarding the survey process and useful background content related to the survey topic, will be offered via the online web tool. An estimated time commitment of 1 hour per round over approximately three survey rounds will be required.

What will I gain from participating?

Survey participants will gain valuable insights relating to the research topic, as the aggregation of judgments of a respondent group will include information which they too value and to which they would not otherwise have access to.
PHASE I: INFORMATION SHEET (THE PRODUCERS)

Each participant completing this survey, will be issued a complimentary report on the overall findings of this research phase.

How will the information I give be used?

The information being collected and analysed will contribute toward a Doctoral thesis. Data collected from this survey, will be stored in a secure place, only accessible by the researcher and research supervisors. The information you provide will be kept confidential at all times; the raw data collected will remain confidential at all times. Analysis of the survey may be used in academic publications; however, no participants will be named in these publications.

What are the potential risks of participating in this project?

There are no expected risks from participating in this survey. Your participation in this survey is on a voluntary basis and you may opt to discontinue your participation during the survey at any time, without effecting you directly or indirectly whatsoever.

How will this project be conducted?

This project will be conducted in an online, web-based environment. Once access to the survey site has been issued, questions may be answered within the stipulated timeframe. As this survey method involves the collaboration of a group of experts, the research team will provide time guidelines for each iteration, in order to complete survey rounds in a timely manner. This is to ensure that the anticipated three rounds can be conducted over a reasonable timeframe, without too great an interruption to everyone’s busy schedules.

Who is conducting the study?

This project is being conducted by Victoria University, School of International Business, under the supervision of Associate Professor G. Barry O’Mahony from the Faculty of Business and Law, International School of Business at Victoria University (VU), and Associate Professor Jukka M. Laitamaki (Co-supervisor) at Preston Robert Tisch Center for Hospitality, Tourism, and Sports Management, New York University (NYU).

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the Principle Researcher listed above on +61-399191091 or Email: Barry.OMahony@vu.edu.au, or the Co-Investigator Dr. Jukka Laitamaki on or Email: .

The student researcher, Jörn Bühring can be reached on (USA) or via Email: , or jorn.buhring@live.vu.edu.au.

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics and Biosafety Coordinator, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001 phone +61-9919 4148.
APPENDIX: 3.E

PHASE I: CONSENT FORM (THE PRODUCERS)

CONSENT FORM
FOR PARTICIPANTS
INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS:
We would like to invite you to be part of a study entitled, “Designing and Delivering Memorable Experiences in the Luxury Hotel Sector”.

CERTIFICATION BY SUBJECT
I, _____________________________________________________, (please write your full name)
certify that I am at least 18 years old* and that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the study: “Designing and Delivering Memorable Experiences in the Luxury Hotel Sector”, being conducted at Victoria University by: Jörn Bühring.

I certify that the objectives of the study, together with any risks and safeguards associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me by:
Jörn Bühring,
and that I freely consent to participation involving the below mentioned procedures:
• Web-based survey (Delphi)

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way.

I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

Signed: _________________________________________

Date: _______________________________

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher:
Jörn Bühring, Tel: 1-201-200 1940, email: [hidden], or jorn.buhring@live.vu.edu.au.

Or the research supervisors:
Associate Professor G. Barry O’Mahony, Tel: +61-399191091 or Email: Barry.OMahony@vu.edu.au
Associate Professor Dr. Jukka Laitamaki or [hidden] or Email: [hidden]

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics & Biosafety Coordinator, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001 phone (03) 9919 4148.
APPENDIX: 3.F

PHASE I: PARTICIPANT NOTIFICATION (SECURE SITE ACCESS)

Dear ,

Thank you for your participation in this important study.

The online study site is now available to access and respond to Round 1 survey questions. Please follow the link http://experientialhospitality.squarespace.com/ and enter your assigned 'username' and 'password'.

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During the entire Delphi study, your unique UserID will be the only reference point to your contributions; your actual name will remain confidential throughout.

Please lock in and take a few minutes to read the instructions before answering the questions. For your convenience, we have included Round 1 Questions in a downloadable 'word document' file; this is to allow you to respond to questions whilst 'offline' first. When you are ready to submit your response, you can 'copy-and-paste' your answers into the official 'Question' forms on the study site.

If you require clarification regarding the study site or the question set, please use the 'Contact' link page provided on the site.

To give you sufficient time to contemplate your response, we are allowing three weeks to respond to Round 1 of the Delphi study. An update and reminder note will be sent at the end of each week.

We look forward to your valuable input.

Regards,

Jorn

--

Jorn Buhring, PhD Candidate
Victoria University
eMail: jorn.buhring@live.vu.edu.au
APPENDIX: 3.G.a-b

PHASE I: WEB-BASED DELPHI STUDY SITE NOTICE BOARD

Notice Board
Wednesday, August 31, 2011 at 04:28PM
Moderator

Dear Member of the Panel,

we will be posting updates, additional information and submission dates via this 'notice board'. If you need to get in contact with us, or have specific questions, please use the 'Contact' page link to forward us a message.

Regards,
Jörn

RESEARCH TIME TABLE

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Article originally appeared on Memorable Experiences in the Luxury Hotel Sector
(http://experientialhospitality.squarespace.com/).
See website for complete article licensing information.

Round 1 - week 1 (ending Sept. 18)
Friday, September 16, 2011 at 02:52PM
Moderator

Dear Member of the Panel,

We trust you had an opportunity to familiarize yourself with the survey web site; if you have any questions pertaining the site content or the Round 1 question set, please reach out to me at any time. I'm also available for a one-on-one phone conversation, should you prefer to discuss any specific issues.

The current time frame for Round 1, suggests a submission target date for the week ending October 2nd.

Regards,
Jörn

Article originally appeared on Memorable Experiences in the Luxury Hotel Sector
(http://experientialhospitality.squarespace.com/).
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APPENDIX: 3.G.c-d

PHASE I: WEB-BASED DELPHI STUDY SITE NOTICE BOARD

Round 1 - Research Questions in off-line format
Friday, September 23, 2011 at 08:31AM
Administrator

Dear Member of the Delphi Panel,

You may have not had the time to visit the research site; we appreciate everyone’s busy schedule. To make it a little easier, we have sent you Round 1 question set in ‘word document’ format. This may allow you to ‘print & familiarize’ yourself with the objectives of this first round. For instructions on how to complete this question set and for additional information that may help you in formulating your response, please visit the survey site via the web-link and your individual access information previosuly sent to you.

If you have any questions pertaining Round 1 question set or the site content, please reach out to me at any time. I’m also available for a one-on-one phone conversation, should you prefer to discuss any specific issues.

The current time frame for Round 1, suggests a submission target date for the week ending October 2nd.

Regards,
Jorn

Article originally appeared on Memorable Experiences in the Luxury Hotel Sector (http://experientialhospitality.squarespace.com/).
See website for complete article licensing information.

Round 1 - week 2 (ending Sept. 24)
Saturday, September 24, 2011 at 09:01AM
Administrator

Dear Member of the Panel,

Thanks to those who have already submitted their response to Round 1. We are still aiming for a submission target date by Oct. 2nd. If you need any input or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. I’m also available for a one-on-one phone conversation, should you prefer to discuss any specific issues.

Regards,
Jorn

Article originally appeared on Memorable Experiences in the Luxury Hotel Sector (http://experientialhospitality.squarespace.com/).
See website for complete article licensing information.
APPENDIX: 3.G.e

PHASE I: WEB-BASED DELPHI STUDY SITE NOTICE BOARD

Round 1 Submission Date
Saturday, October 1, 2011 at 11:02AM
Moderator:

Dear Member of the Delphi Panel,

To the members that have already submitted their Round 1 survey response, the input received is of great quality - many thanks. We appreciate everyone’s busy schedule, and in speaking with some of you, understand that the past two weeks have been exceptionally busy. As such, we will extend the Round 1 submission date to Thursday, October 6. Furthermore, to assist anyone who has already complete the questions, however, having difficulty to find online access to post the response into the designated questionnaire forms, you may forward your completed 'word document' to me directly, and we will enter the data on your behalf. Please do so, no later than October 6.

If you still have any questions pertaining to the Round 1 question set, please reach out to me at any time. I’m also available for a one-on-one phone conversation, should you prefer to discuss any specific issues.

The time frame for Round 1 submission is now October 6. Please contact me directly after that date, as the Round 1 survey forms may have been taken down. We will communicate further details at the completion of Round 1.

Research Time Table

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Regards,

Jörn

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Note: Article originally appeared on Memorable Experiences in the Luxury Hotel Sector (http://experiencesinluxury.squarespace.com/). See website for complete article licensing information.
APPENDIX: 3.H

PHASE I: PARTICIPANT NOTIFICATION (COMPLETION OF ROUND 1)

Dear Member of the Panel,

we would like to thank you for your valuable contributions in Round 1 of this study. This initial round was focused on identifying important 'memorable experience' generators (both current and by the year 2020), using the Four Realms framework as a guide to structure your response.

The data received will now be analysed and we will keep you posted on a regular basis regarding the next round of the study. In Round 2, we will share input received from Round 1, which will offer you new and insightful perspectives. Prior to commencement of Round 2, we will briefly outline the objectives, which will also be listed on the online study site. (Your site access credentials will remain the same.)

Once again, thank you for your participation in this important study and for your on-going commitment throughout Phase I.

Regards,

Jorn

Jorn Buhring, PhD Candidate
Victoria University
eMail: jorn.buhring@live.vu.edu.au
### APPENDIX: 3.1

**PHASE I: DELPHI STUDY QUESTIONS (OFF-LINE DOCUMENT)**

| PROJECT TITLE                     | Accessing the Experience Economy  
Designing and Delivering Memorable Experiences in the Luxury Hotel Sector |
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<td>FACULTY</td>
<td>Business and Enterprise</td>
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Designing and Delivering Memorable Experiences in the Luxury Hotel Sector
PHASE I: DELPHI STUDY QUESTIONS (OFF-LINE DOCUMENT)

Question Set II (R.2.St.17. - R.2.St.32.) - (Important Experience Generators, future)

Delphi Survey – Round 2

In this second round, you will be presented with the findings of 'Round 1', which addressed both 'current' and 'future' experience generators, using the four realms of experience framework as a guide. The results of Round 1 are being presented as 'statements', which have been synthesized from our responses from the expert panel. Sorted according to common themes and grouped into four 'core categories', a total of 32 'statements' are being presented.

Four Realms
1. Entertainment
2. Esthetics
3. Education
4. Escapism

Core Categories
1. Technology
2. Services
3. Atmosphere
4. Culture

Statement Sets
1. current ExGen’s = 16
2. future ExGen’s = 16

In this round, we ask you to:

1. Under the 'heading' Statement Set 1 - (Current), are the issues that arose summarized from the information that you provided; you have the option to add any additional comments, if you wish.
2. Under the 'heading' Statement Set 2 - (Future), are the issues that arose summarized from the information that you provided. Please rank each 'statement' for its 'memorable experience' generating 'value'; ('value' as seen from the guests' perspective), by selecting 1 of the 5 ranking options provided.
3. You have the option to add any additional comments to each statement (see example provided).
4. From a list of 'statements', select 1 or more that are likely to offer 'producers' a return on investment (ROI).
PHASE I: DELPHI STUDY QUESTIONS (OFF-LINE DOCUMENT)

Question Set II (R.2.St.17. - R.2.St.32.) - (Important Experience Generators, future)

R.2.St.17: Entertainment Experience Generators, (Technology) Future

Memorable Experiences (MEs) in the future, will be generated through a high degree of guest self-personalization, whether through simplified personal device connectivity to in-room systems (audio, video, wireless broadband, aux, battery charging, wall displays), accessing and sharing of personal content (iTunes, Facebook, WindowsLive, Gaming, Holographs), or by adjusting in-room comfort features (sleeping-comfort, air/lights/AV), with the ability to control any customizable room settings via intuitive human interface technologies (touch, voice, gesture), that have guests create their own moods in a playful, engaging and interactive way.

The ENT (TECH/Emerging) statement is considered to be of: *

- Essential value
- High value
- Medium value
- Low value
- No value

Please rank the above 'statement' for its 'value-generating' properties, when considering designing and delivering 'memorable guest experiences' (select 1 of 5 choices).

Please comment on any specific experience generator (see example)

Self-personalization is critical but creating own mood is of medium value.

Which of the following 'statements' are likely to offer 'producers' a return on investment (ROI)? *

- Simplified personal device connectivity to in-room systems (audio, video, etc.)
- Adjustable in-room comfort features (sleeping-comfort)
- Controlling any customizable room settings via intuitive human interface technologies

You may select more than one choice.
Memorable Experiences (MEs) in the future, will be generated through customized content tailored to guests’ special interests (real-time sports, news, travel, surprising localized experiences), including lifestyle content identified and presented based on guest-liked brands, accessed from anywhere within the hotel and supported by service offerings (pre-arrival room visualization, curated in-room fashion line-up, guest-to-guest collaboration), in-advanced room configurations, selected by guests to reflect their individual desires and preferences.

The ENT (SERV/Emerging) statement is considered to be of: *

- Essential value
- High value
- Medium value
- Low value
- No value

Please rank the above 'statement' for its 'value-generating' properties, when considering designing and delivering 'memorable guest experiences' (select 1 of 5 choices).

Please comment on any specific experience generator (see example)

Highly customized content is critical, but in-advanced room configuration will be of low value.

Which of the following 'statements' are likely to offer 'producers' a return on investment (ROI)? *

- Customized content that is tailored to the guests’ special interests
- Adjustable in-room comfort features (sleeping-comfort)
- Controlling any customizable room settings via intuitive human interface technologies

You may select more than one choice.
APPENDIX: 3.J

PHASE I: DELPHI SURVEY (STUDY) REPORT FOR THE PRODUCERS

Accessing the Experience Economy
Designing and Delivering Memorable Experiences in the Luxury Hotel Sector.

DELPHI SURVEY REPORT
Research Phase 1, January 2012

Presented by Jörn Bühring, Ph.D. Candidate
Faculty of Business and Enterprise, Swinburne University of Technology

Swinburne University of Technology, 2012 “Designing and Delivering Memorable Experiences in the Luxury Hotel Sector”
PHASE I: DELPHI SURVEY (STUDY) REPORT FOR THE PRODUCERS

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Jörn H. Bühring
Designing and Delivering Memorable Experiences in the Luxury Hotel Sector

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2.1 Data Visualization, Round 1

To effectively communicate the research findings extracted from the rich data sets and obtained from the collective group of Delphi panel experts, a data visualization method was deemed as important. This survey-specific data visualization technique (Figure 22, Figure 23, p. 23), allows the reader to compare the importance placed on ‘current’ and ‘emerging’ experience generators, respective of ‘realm’ and ‘category’, while at the same time, emphasizing the importance reflective of the ‘themes’ underpinning each of the main category groups. This was further accentuated through the use of ‘tag-clouds’ (or word clouds - a visual representation for text data), identifiable within the same graphical display.

*Experience Generators (by Realm, Category, Theme)*

This multi-dimensional visualization method, allows collected and synthesized data sets (‘current’ and ‘emerging’ ME generators), to be interpreted for their importance. Figure 22 highlights the analyzed data from the collective group of Delphi panel experts received in Round 1 of the Delphi. These visualization maps were constructed from the coded data sets (described in the Data Analysis section) and compiled in sequential stages, further explained in this section (see Figure 22). The first stage represents the producers responses 1) by box size ratio between each ‘experience realm’ indicative of their respective weighing in the response, 2) by ratio of ‘category’ responses (Technology, Services, Atmosphere, Culture), represented by four color-blocks, 3) within each ‘category block’ by its ratio of responses respective of the ‘theme’ and, 4) by the scale (font-size) of the tag-cloud style text. Each data visualization map (‘current’ and ‘emerging’) can then be compared across the time dimension - today (current) and by the year 2020 (emerging). For each map, the ‘categories’ and their ‘themes’ are in proper ratio across the entire map (and to each other), representing a correct aggregate for the overall consensus among the Delphi panel of experts, as to what the main drivers behind ‘current’ and ‘emerging’ ME generators are.
PHASE I: DELPHI SURVEY (STUDY) REPORT FOR THE PRODUCERS

Figure 3: Data Visualization Hierarchy

The box size ratio between each realm = the weighting of the producers' response respective of importance of realm.

The color-block ratio between each category is the weighting of the producers' response respective of importance of category within its realm.

The color-block ratio by category and realm = the comparative weighting of the producers' response respective of importance of categories by each realm.

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PHASE I: DELPHI SURVEY (STUDY) REPORT FOR THE PRODUCERS

Figure 3: Data Visualization - Heirarchy, cont’d

The scale of the leg-closed style text (font size) – the weighting of the producers’ response respective of importance of ‘themes’ within each category, by its radius.

Research Findings – the producers’ combined response to Round 1 of the Delphi. ‘Emerging’ ME Experience Generator Categories and Themed
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – PHASE II (INTERVIEW LOCATION: HAMBURG)

INTRODUCTION OF INTERVIEW PROCESS AND INTERVIEWER

1. Brief introduction of researcher: (Jörn Bühring, PhD Candidate, Tourism and Travel background, …)
2. Purpose: Research Information document was issued upon receiving interviewee’s interest to participate. (Questions?)
3. Confidentiality: Consent Form - to be read and signed
4. Interview Format: Type and nature of interview, process and timeline: 30 – 45mins
5. Disclosure Script: Thank you for kind participation in this survey. Can I first of all assure you, that this interview will remain completely anonymous and no records of the interview will be kept with your name on them. To ensure that this interview will capture your responses and opinions accurately, I would like to ask you for permission to audio record this interview. This will also help us facilitate the analysis of the data during the course of the project.
6. Questions: If you don’t have any further questions, I would like briefly to introduce you to the topics of this interview.
7. Interview Topics: This interview focuses specifically on the luxury hotel guest room, examining aspects that have contributed toward experiences you consider valuable and memorable. Also, this interview provides an opportunity state your experience preferences of a future luxury guest room; the overall results (without naming respondents) can be used for improving luxury hotel experiences. During the interview, I would like to discuss the following topics: Defining a luxury hotel experience; Memorable Experience occurrences within the hotel room; the perception of value derived from a memorable room experience, and the forward-looking guest room experience preferences and desires.
8. Begin Recording: Speak out interview ID, Date, Time, Location (e.g. NYC, Hamburg)
9. At the end of the interview: With this interview now concluded, can you be contacted by the research team in case further clarification is needed? (Contact details)
10. Questionnaire: Issue ‘Demographic and Travel Pattern Profile’ (Part A), end survey questionnaire (Part B), incld. Post-interview participation (Part C)

TOPIC – FOUR REALMS OF EXPERIENCES (GUEST ROOM STAYS THAT HAVE BECOME MEMORABLE)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main questions</th>
<th>Additional questions</th>
<th>Clarifying questions (Laddering)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• When you travel (for business, and leisure), which hotel brands do you typically choose?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Main questions

- Can you tell me about a recent stay in a luxury hotel room that left you with a positive and memorable experience? *(when, where, room type)*

- Thinking back to your recent memorable experience, what were the 'interactions' that led to your stay being a memorable one?
  - Were you passively or actively engaged *(in the experience)*?
  - How important was 'being entertained'? *Follow-up questions: In what ways were you entertained? (ENT)*
  - Was the experience an indulgent one? *(EST)*
  - Did you learn something new? *(EDU)*
  - In other words, did you feel like you were able to escape? *(ESC)*

### Additional questions

- What aspects (staying in the luxury guest room) would you consider have contributed toward your memorable experience? *(think physical environment, e.g. space, functions, artifacts, personal interaction, active / passive participation)*

- What do you value most when experiencing a luxury guest room stay?

- The 'atmosphere' (physical dimensions) made available to guests whilst staying in a luxury guest room, is considered to significantly contribute toward a memorable stay experience: What do you consider a luxury guest room atmosphere to comprise of?

### Clarifying questions (Laddering)

- Can you expand a little on this?
- Can you tell me anything else?
- Can you give me some examples?
### Perceived Value of Memorable Experience Occurrences (A Future Perspective of Experiences Desires)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main questions</th>
<th>Additional questions</th>
<th>Clarifying questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What would you consider would add value to your stay experience in a future luxury guest room?</td>
<td>• Feel free to describe both physical and human interactions that you feel could contribute to a positive guest room stay experiences?</td>
<td>Can you expand a little on this? Can you tell me anything else? Can you give me some examples?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Relativism of Reality vs. Virtuality (The Multiverse)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main questions</th>
<th>Additional questions</th>
<th>Clarifying questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• It is possible to create new services and experiences in a 'virtual' environment that can be accessed, customized, and controlled from home or your luxury hotel guest room. How would you feel about this?</td>
<td>• How could a hotel provide a rich, engaging experience unlike any other place? (a) • How could a hotel use digital technology to enhance your in-room experience? (b) • In what ways could a hotel provide you with a respite from the world &quot;out there&quot;, slowing down your sense of time and perhaps even your heartbeat? (c) • Outside of any physical environment, how could a hotel create a virtual place that creates value for you? (d)</td>
<td>a. (Reality) b. (Augmented Reality) c. (Warped Reality) d. (Virtuality)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Customer Perspectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main questions</th>
<th>Additional questions</th>
<th>Clarifying questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• You have an opportunity for your experience preferences of a future luxury guest room to be shared. What future in-room stay experiences would you most desire? (make notes; leading into next questions)</td>
<td>• Which of these, would you consider most valuable? • Describe your ideal luxury guest room of the future.</td>
<td>• Can you expand a little on this? • Can you tell me anything else? • Can you give me some examples?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONCLUSION OF INTERVIEW

- Comments / Additional ‘experiences’ to share?

- Issue Questionnaire for completion
APPENDIX: 3.L
PHSE II: INFORMATION SHEET (THE CONSUMERS)

INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

You are invited to participate

Thank you for your consideration to participate in this survey. You are recognized as a frequent traveller, having stayed and experienced luxury hotel properties. Your views are important to us, and we would like to invite you to participate in a research project entitled “Designing and Delivering Memorable Experiences in the Luxury Hotel Sector”.

This project is being conducted by a student researcher Jörn Bühring as part of a Ph.D. study at Swinburne University of Technology, Australia under the supervision of Professor G. Barry O’Mahony from the Faculty of Business and Enterprise, Swinburne University of Technology, and Professor Dr. Jukka M. Laitamaki (Associate-Supervisor) at Preston Robert Tisch Centre for Hospitality, Tourism, and Sports Management, New York University (NYU). If you agree to participate in this study, at the time of the research commencement, a Swinburne University consent form will be issued for you to sign.

Project explanation

The tourism and lodging industry recognizes, that ‘guest experiences’ are the result of people’s encounter with products, services and businesses, and that today’s travellers are seeking enjoyable, exciting and memorable experiences. This research study focuses specifically on the luxury hotel guest room, examining value-generating aspects that have contributed toward experiences you consider valuable and memorable. Furthermore, this study provides an opportunity for your experience preferences of a future luxury guest room to be shared; your views are invaluable to this study.

What will I be asked to do?

You will be asked to answer and discuss some open-ended questions in a face-to-face interview and to rank the importance of some statements that will be presented to you. The interview should take no more then 30 – 45 minutes.

What will I gain from participating?

As a frequent traveller, your views are extremely valuable to this study. The findings will be used to provide recommendations to luxury accommodation providers, responsible for designing and developing hotel guest rooms, so that they can address the experience needs of frequent travellers such as yourself. Your cooperation and precious time is very much appreciated. If at any point, you would like to withdraw or not answer certain questions, you may do so and it will not affect you directly or in-directly whatsoever.

How will the information I give be used?

The information being collected and analysed will contribute toward a Doctoral thesis. Data collected from this survey, will be stored in a secure place, only accessible by the researcher and research supervisors. The information you provide will
be kept confidential at all times; the raw data collected will also remain confidential at all times. Analysis of the survey may be used in academic publications; however, no participants will be named in these publications.

What are the potential risks of participating in this project?

There are no expected risks from participating in this survey. Your participation in this survey is on a voluntary basis and you may opt to discontinue your participation during the survey at any time, without affecting you directly or indirectly whatsoever.

How will this project be conducted?

After we receive your confirmation to participate in this study (please forward your confirmation to the address listed below), a face-to-face interview with a member of the research team will be scheduled with you. The interview will be conducted a suitable date, time and venue to be discussed with you in advance. The interview should take no more then 30 – 45 minutes. Your cooperation and precious time is very much appreciated.

Who is conducting the study?

This project is being conducted by Swinburne University of Technology, Australia, under the supervision of Professor G. Barry O’Mahony from the Faculty of Business and Enterprise, Swinburne University of Technology, and Professor Jukka M. Laitamaki (Associate-Supervisor) at Preston Robert Tisch Center for Hospitality, Tourism, and Sports Management, New York University (NYU).

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the Principle Researcher listed above on +61 3 or Email: , or the Co-Investigator Dr. Jukka Laitamaki on 1-212- or Email: .

The student researcher, Jörn Bühring can be reached via Email: .
APPENDIX: 3.M

PHASE II: QUESTIONNAIRE (THE CONSUMERS)

## PHASE II – SUBLIMINARY QUESTIONNAIRE

**Part A: Demographics & Travel Pattern Profiling**

| 1. Gender | □ female | □ male |
| 2. Age group | □ 18-30 | □ 31-40 | □ 41-50 | □ 51-60 | □ above 60 |
| 3. Country of residence |  |
| 4. Highest education attained | □ secondary school | □ diploma or bachelor degree | □ postgraduate degree |
| 5. Occupation | □ student | □ business manager | □ professional | □ employee | □ retiree | □ others |
| 6. Most frequent purpose of travel | □ holiday | □ business | □ visiting friends & relatives | □ edu/cultural | □ others |
| 7. Frequency (luxury hotel nights) | □ less than 10 nights a year | □ between 10 - 20 nights | □ more than 20 nights |
| 8. Typical room type preference | □ Standard Room | □ Suite | □ Specialty Suite |
| 9. Travel party | □ alone | □ couple | □ family | □ group of people/tourists |

**Part B: Experience Preferences by Level of Perceived Value**

| 1. Simplified personal device connectivity to in-room systems (audio, video, etc.) | 5 High Value | 4 Medium Value | 3 | 2 | 1 No Value |
| 2. Mobile-devices (Laptop, Smartphone, etc.) integration into hotel guest room systems (in-room controls, Audio Visual, service portals, etc.) |  |
| 3. In-room control activation commands such as voice recognition (Wake-up call, lights, media control), etc. |  |
| 4. Use of "virtual" in-room assistance (services, location-specific information, etc.) |  |
| 5. Customized in-room content, tailored to your special interests |  |
| 6. Experiences tailored to your personal preferences |  |
| 7. Pre-armchair configuration of experiences tailored to your special interests and purpose of travel |  |
| 8. In-room "virtual" expert advice (in your native language) |  |
| 9. Stress-free, simple-to-use, and controlled in-room technology |  |
| 10. Creating an atmosphere that feels "personal" and innovative |  |
| 11. In-room design that is both educational and stimulates the senses |  |
| 12. Sustainable and environmentally sound features (materials, energy, etc.) |  |
| 13. Experienced and culturally diverse hotel staff |  |
| 14. Hotel staff engaging with you in a more knowledgeable way (enhanced service standards) |  |
| 15. Hotel- and external experts offering destination-specific experience |  |
| 16. Hotel staff offering personal assistance services and expert advice |  |

**Part C: Participation / post interview**

After the interview has been concluded, I can be contacted by the research team in case further clarification is needed.

- [ ] No further

- [ ] Yes (please provide your contact details below):

  - Name
  - Contact number
  - E-mail

---

Page 1 of 2
APPENDIX: 3.N

PHASE II: CONSENT FORM (THE CONSUMERS)

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS:
We would like to invite you to be part of a study entitled, “Designing and Delivering Memorable Experiences in the Luxury Hotel Sector”.

CERTIFICATION BY SUBJECT

I, ___________________________ (please write your full name)

certify that I am at least 18 years old and that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the study;

“Designing and Delivering Memorable Experiences in the Luxury Hotel Sector”, being conducted at Swinburne University of Technology by: Jörn Bühring.

I certify that the objectives of the study, together with any risks and safeguards associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me by:

Jörn Bühring, Ph.D. Candidate

and that I freely consent to participation involving the below mentioned procedures:

• Face-to-face Interview
  You will be asked to answer and discuss some open-ended questions in a face-to-face interview and to rank the importance of some statements that will be presented to you. The interview should take no more than 30 – 45mins.

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way.

I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

Signed: ___________________________

Date: ___________________________

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher:

Jörn Bühring, Tel: 1-201-200 1940, email: [redacted]

Or the research supervisor:

Professor G. Barry O’Mahony, Tel. +61 3 9905 5950, or Email: [redacted]

Professor Dr. Julika Latamaki on 1-21233 213, or Email: [redacted]

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Swinburne’s Human Research Ethics Committee, Swinburne University of Technology, Email: [redacted]  PO Box 218, Hawthorn Victoria 3122, Australia
APPENDIX: 3.0

PHASE II: INFORMATION GIVEN TO PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

Dear ,

Many thanks for your kind interest in supporting this invaluable research initiative, in partnership with [ ]. I look forward to meeting you in the coming days, and to facilitate a few questions that will give you the opportunity to share your past experiences and forward-looking desires, respective of current and future luxury guest room stay experiences.

The interview itself should take approximately 60 mins, with an additional 10-15 mins required at the end of the interview; hence a 1 hour meeting would be greatly appreciated. To offer maximum flexibility, I would be happy to meet with you at your office, or at the [ ]. Interviews in [ ] will commence 23rd July - 3rd August. Please feel free to nominate a suitable date / venue - I will remain flexible around your available time; your input is certainly greatly appreciated.

Once again, many thanks for your kind interest to participate in this study. I look forward to meeting you soon.

Sincerely,

Jorn

Jorn Bühring, PhD Candidate
Swinburne University of Technology
m 0000 0000
eMail: jbuhring@xxxxxx.xxx.xx
APPENDIX: 3.P

“DESIGNING AND DELIVERING MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES…”
(ETHICS APPROVAL)

MEMO

TO 
Dr Barry O’Mahony
Associate Professor
International Business
Victoria University
Footscray Park

DATE 24/10/2011

FROM A/Professor Bill Eckersley
Acting Chair
Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee

SUBJECT Ethics Application – HRETH 11/174

Dear Barry,

Thank you for submitting this application for ethical approval of the project entitled:

HRETH 11/174 Designing and delivering memorable experiences in the Luxury Hotel Sector (HREC 11/106)

The proposed research project has been accepted and deemed to meet the requirements of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) ‘National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)’ by the Deputy Chair of the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee. Approval has been granted from 24th October 2011 to 24th October 2012.

Continued approval of this research project by the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee (VUHREC) is conditional upon the provision of a report within 12 months of the above approval date (by 24th October 2012) or upon the completion of the project (if earlier). A report proforma may be downloaded from the VUHREC web site at: http://research.vu.edu.au/hrec.php.

Please note that the Human Research Ethics Committee must be informed of the following: any changes to the approved research protocol, project timelines, any serious events or adverse and/or unforeseen events that may affect continued ethical acceptability of the project. In these unlikely events, researchers must immediately cease all data collection until the Committee has approved the changes. Researchers are also reminded of the need to notify the approving HREC of changes to personnel in research projects via a request for a minor amendment.

On behalf of the Committee, I wish you all the best for the conduct of the project.

Kind regards,

A/Professor Bill Eckersley
Acting Chair
Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee
APPENDIX: 5.A

PHASE II: CONSUMER INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT (EXAMPLE NO. 1)

Interview ID9 (Northern Hemisphere, female guest)

Interviewer: Once again, many thanks for participating in this interview. I would like to begin by asking you when you travel for business or leisure, which hotel brands do you typically choose?

Interviewee: For leisure I would always try to choose individual hotels with a special atmosphere. So, not only focused on a brand. But if I would name a brand, which I love very much, it’s Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts because I know no matter where I’m traveling to in the world, it has the same quality and the same level of service.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about a recent stay in a luxury hotel room that left you as a positive and memorable experience?

Interviewee: [Long pause.]

Interviewer: Any recent stay that comes to mind where something was quite delightful, that left you as a positive and memorable experience.

Interviewee: The last one very special was Laucala Island in the Fiji. Quite far away. Yes, and what was so special was that every corner of the guest room, as well as in the bathroom, had a very special atmosphere. Very warm, very private. A very residential living atmosphere.

Interviewer: At what aspects staying in the luxury guest room would you consider have contributed towards your memorable experience? Here we like explore physical environment, like space. Or the artifacts or personal interactions whether they be active or passive participation.

Interviewee: It is never the space. It is everything what you feel and you touch. So it’s the furniture – not the furniture and style. It’s the fabric. It’s a fabric or the material of the things, of the sofas, of the linen. It’s a comfort of materials. And secondly, for me very important for me is lighting. Lighting that I have like three different types—for daytime, evening, and for business. And functions or techniques that you don’t have to, I don’t know, look behind your desk and search for a plug for your computer, that everything is wireless. And that you have not too many actions to take to get a comfort Internet line. To call that I have to read in a book how to use the phone because it has so many functions. So everything easy and simple.
Interviewer: Think back to your recent memorable stay experience. What were the interactions that led to your stay being a memorable one? Were you passively or actively engaged in the experience?

Interviewee: Experience for me is on one side the atmosphere and the lifestyle. Yeah, I am then part of. That is the way or the reason why I’ve decided to go to this restaurant or this hotel. So I’m already in a very special mood throughout the environment. But the experience or memories I have, I’m only having with staff or with employees. So for example, last week I was in Montreux, La Montreux Palace and we had a very big function there. And I was sitting next to an ambassador and we had a very serious conversation and the gentleman asked me, the service waiter asked me, if I am drinking distilled or sparkling water. And he only asked me during the whole evening once. And I was so surprised because there were like sixty tables in this whole function room. And afterwards I found out that he turned the spoon around from the dessert cutlery. So I could see exactly that everybody was drinking distilled water had to turn the spoon. So this is what I am remember there, what was special.

Interviewer: How was the guest room when you stayed [at the hotel], did anything strike you in particular?

Interviewee: Yes, the guest room I like bright colors and what I liked very much is that all the sofa area was focused to have a view outside overlooking the lake. But really the areas where you relax, if it is the bed. From the bed out, you could also see the lake. And the sofa area as well, which tells me that they really tried to position every piece of furniture to focus on the outside view. Most Hotels don’t do that. They have them facing inwards.

Interviewer: How important was it being entertained while staying in any particular guest room that you remember?

Interviewee: Being entertained, you mean in general, in the hotel or in the hotel room?

Interviewer: The feeling of being entertained within the guest room, which can be through the view that you mentioned at your most recent stay, or it can be through anything in particular that you felt entertained you?

Interviewee: Yes. For me, it is very important being entertained in a way that I see little details I didn’t expect. So this is something if I have a special salt next to the bathtub or that the bathtub has a special comfort. Is this what you mean?

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: So, as well as if you have a chair, a lounge chair that you have next to it a power point (plug) because I never necessarily sit at the desk to do my emails. Yes, so that you have the flexibility no matter if you open a
drawer, that you find a nice information. Or that the hangers and the storage. You just find things that you didn’t expect. I think that’s very important.

Interviewer: Do you enjoy music being played when you walk into the guest room?

Interviewee: No, this is what I’m hating when I come in and the TV is switched on and there is a special music. I guess what I experienced when I’m traveling a lot that I enjoy that I have a docking station for my own music, that when I spend longer time in a hotel or in a guest room.

Interviewer: Was the experience an indulgent one?

Interviewee: Yeah, not really but I have experiences from . . . to Laucala definitely. When I have the feeling that employees recognize me as a person. That they know what my needs are. That and that they are able to talk to me on eye level. Yeah, where you have a natural conversation.

Interviewer: Did you learn something new thinking of the guest room itself?

Interviewee: Yeah, something new where I’m –something new might be the lighting in the guest rooms. What I learned new was that they had big chandeliers not like in all other grand hotels. They featured little shades - not even one single bulb in the guest room was visible; everything had a cover, creating really unique atmospheres. So, that was new and interesting for me.

Interviewer: Any guest rooms you may recall, where art was explained so you could not only enjoy the art and the artifacts but perhaps, information shared with you about the art itself, gave you a sense of learning something new?

Interviewee: No, I don’t think that this is necessary because at home, I won’t either. Not put any labels or words and pictures. Yeah.

Interviewer: Did you feel you were able to escape in any of your stays?

Interviewee: Yes, yes. Especially – and therefore I think it’s very important that you have this corner management, that you never put the sofa in the middle area. That you have somewhere cozy corner, no matter if that’s near the bed or if it’s the sofa or if it’s the chair in the corner or a little balcony that you have a feeling really you’re private.

Interviewer: What do you value most when experiencing a luxury hotel guest room?

Interviewee: First of all, it’s really the furniture that it’s clean, that it’s new. That it’s not used or dirty. And that the materials are all comfortable and that the colors are harmonic. I don’t care if it’s a blue room or a red room or a brown room. But that you have colors that are comfortable for your eyes
where you can calm down and relax. Yes. Besides of the colors I think you ask me what is important for me in a room. Is of course a bathtub, for me. Like very nice lighting in the bathroom. As well that if I’m enjoying the bathtub or if I have to do my make-up that I have two lights in and a comfortable bed. That is for me as well very important.

Interviewer: And the view you mentioned early, is important too?

Interviewee: Yeah of course, that was spectacular. It was towards the mountains and there’s all forest. In New York, you want to have a high floor and upgrade and you want to look downtown.

Interviewer: The atmosphere, again, refers to the physical dimension made available to guests while staying in the luxury guest room is considered to significantly contribute towards a memorable stay experience. What do you consider a luxury guest room atmosphere to comprise of?

Interviewer: The lighting. And that the room type fits as well to the lifestyle I booked. Yeah so, if I want to stay at a W hotel, I know exactly what the profile is of the guest room. So, if I’m booking the Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten, we can get modern with all updated technics, but we should never totally change the living atmosphere. Living atmosphere is very important. Lighting, furniture, comfort and maxi size. I rather have a nice long chair instead of having a sofa where only one person can sit.

Interviewer: Can you think of a particular hotel brand that gives that lifestyle concept?

Interviewee: Very nice for me is the Rocco Forte collection actually with the guest rooms, from the individuality perspective; they always have colors I would never choose if somebody would show them to me. But I really like staying in these rooms. They are very nice. Of course Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts. Yes, Aman Resorts maybe. Aman Resorts. I like the clear profile.

Interviewer: Let’s focus our attention more towards the future; and I would like to ask you what would you consider would add value to your stay experience in the future luxury guest room?

Interviewee: The bathroom. I would say that they really need to understand the change from washing room towards now, a spa experience what I, as a guest, expect when I’m spending my time there. So, it really needs to be an oasis for relaxation. And I’m now a bathtub person. Other people are more into showering. So, that the shower heads provide power to wash your hair and that it is just comfortable to relax in this area. As well, that the mirrors have different lightings, as I already mentioned. And the lighting itself, as well as the colors of the bathroom, you’re not in a butchery [looking clinical]. Yeah, that you don’t have tilling going all the way up the wall. That you have wallpaper maybe on one side that it
is part of the living room. So, that would be for the bathroom. And for living rooms, it is just very important that everything is wireless, what has to do with Internet that has to do with my music. That the mini bars are really cold. And, I’d rather have 3-4 big bottles than 23 different juices in the selection, and the mini bar’s not cold and that the TV is working and that the channel selection is being made easy.

Interviewer: Feel free to describe both physical and human interactions that you feel could contribute to a positive guest room experience in the future.

Interviewee: What do you mean by human interactions?

Interviewer: Interactions with ‘personnel’ engaging with you or providing additional service offerings whilst staying in the guest room that you would feel could contribute to a positive guest room experience?

Interviewee: Of course, definitely if you have room service. And you get delivered your breakfast or you have some snacks you eat. I would never have a fine dining experience. That’s what I don’t want in a guest room. But I think in privacy and you have a great service, definitely. And as well, in receiving service – that laundry gets picked up. That you have personal interactions throughout, maybe shoe shine service. What you use or housekeeping where you can give certain requests, how you would like to have your pillow or your blanket or how they should leave your stuff.

Interviewer: It is possible to create new services and experience in a virtual environment that can be accessed, customized, and controlled from home or your luxury guest room. How would you feel about this?

Interviewee: So, I could check in my room from my home computer?

Interviewer: Perhaps even customize your amenities in a virtual guest room prior your arrival perhaps?

Interviewee: Yeah, of course. It would be very interesting if I could pick or select in advance that I could say I want to have distilled water and I’d rather have grapes instead of bananas, yeah. So, whatever, if you can select that, and important is you just want to do it once. So, whenever you’re returning to this hotel you want that they keep it in profile. Then it would be a benefit. If I would need every time to find time and select from 30 checks to get my service done, then I’d rather mention this at the reception.

Interviewer: How could a hotel provide a rich, engaging experience unlike any other place?

Interviewee: [Long pause.] Yeah, provide actually throughout atmosphere and service. For me, only the personal service on eye level. If I have not the feeling to – that the employee has to fulfill standards to ask me
something to really give me the feeling I’m being welcome as a friend. And if they become creative, to fulfil my request.

**Interviewer:** What about the location itself? Could a hotel provide a rich, engaging experience based on the location of the hotel and its history in a way, unlike any other place? What do you feel this could be, generating a positive, memorable experience?

**Interviewee:** For me, it is not important where the hotel is. Of course, what I prefer is if I’m in main cities that they’re central. Yeah, that they have a shopping area, they have a train station, or a good connection to the airport. Yeah. So, easy traveling. But, in general, if I think of vacations, it doesn’t matter if it is in the center or if it is on countryside so I would not think that this is important for me, not for leisure.

**Interviewer:** How could a hotel use digital technology to enhance your in-room experience?

**Interviewee:** You mean to check out, a quick check-out or something for bills and clear information for bills would be interesting, maybe?

**Interviewer:** On an experience level, any digital technology that you could think in future, could enhance your in-room experience? For example, you mentioned you value a proper lighting system.

**Interviewee:** If it is not too difficult, . . . and the panel on the wall whatever is easy to use, and where I can just soften the light or dim the light, yeah, with one touch would be wonderful. But if I have to go through many steps to achieve this, then of course not. But not only lighting, I’m refereeing to electronics in general – it got to be easy to use.

**Interviewer:** In what ways, could a hotel provide you with a respite from the world out there, slowing down your sense of time and perhaps even your heartbeat?

**Interviewee:** The room colors, the fabrics and the comfort. The comfort, as well as, maybe for example larger closets that you really could store everything that you don’t have the feeling that you come in the guest room and you see your trolley directly, that your just on a stopover. So that you have a really a home feeling.

**Interviewer:** Outside of any physical environment, how could a hotel create a virtual place that creates value for you?

**Interviewee:** Can you give me an example?

**Interviewer:** We discussed before, perhaps, that a virtual guest room environment would allow you to customize your amenities prior to arrival. Is there anything else that comes to mind that would add value in the future?
Interviewee: Uh-hum, uh-hum. [Pause.] I think I would need to get inspired. I can’t think of anything.

Interviewee: Hmm. But maybe if you have – what I think would be interesting, that at a specific location within the hotel, that you have access to a virtual concierge. That you do not need to stop by the traditional concierge desk. That you have for example, access to this virtual concierge via the iPad and you could choose which section you are interested in. That they have a pre-selection of casual dining restaurants or of Italian so that I can see one section for restaurants, one’s for shopping, one for sightseeing. Yeah. So, whenever I have the free time, I don’t need to stop by and explain myself to staff – or wait to get serviced. I can explore and I have the picture as well as maybe street overview of the location.

Interviewer: You mean, you would value virtually accessed information that allows you to choose activities that are based on your mood or purpose of travel?

Interviewee: Yes, yes I could select myself. That would be interesting for me.

Interviewer: We’re coming to the last question and we invite you to suggest, based on your experience and preferences of a future guest room, what you think the in-room experience would be that you most desire?

Interviewee: Yeah, for me, that is the home away from home and to feel so comfortable and have comfort as well as the ambiance. The profile I select of the hotel and really have the feeling I’m welcomed and part of the lifestyle I booked.

Interviewer: You mentioned, home away from home a few time, which is an interesting analogy. What exactly do you mean by being home away from home?

Interviewee: Yeah, that everything is comfortable and cozy. So that the room really has the same atmosphere that my home has. It doesn’t need to be the same design style. But for example, if I would stay in my apartment, the bathtub is for me important. The lighting is, for me, very important. The materials of furniture are very important for me as I mentioned. And the techniques of wireless Internet without any kind of codes you need to log in so that you get started directly like you would from home.

Interviewer: Do you mean, being instantly familiar with the guest room?

Interviewee: Being familiar, yeah. And, that everything is to be handled very easily with in the room. So, no high-tech technology for opening/closing the curtains or windows, that is impossible to figure out.

Interviewer: Many thanks for your participation. [End of transcript.]
PHASE II: CONSUMER INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT (EXAMPLE NO. 2)

Interview ID15 (Southern Hemisphere, male guest)

Interviewer: Again thanks for participating in this study. May I begin by asking, when you travel for business or leisure, which hotel brands do you typically stay at?

Interviewee: Well, the Hyatt but really particularly Park Hyatt. I’ve been -- I’d usually prefer to stay in boutique hotels. So when I think of London, New York different places I go to; and even Hong Kong. Hong Kong I stay in the Upper House. I’m often looking for boutique experiences rather than a brand. And so if I look at where I go around the world, it’s quite mixed.

Interviewer: Is the choice of a boutique hotel more because of the uniqueness of its design or because staff or interactions with staff members is more personalized?

Interviewee: I often find particularly in the upper-end boutique hotels that they’ve thought through a bit more what a customer’s looking to experience. At least I find when I’m -- for example when I go to the Upper House [Hong Kong], I don’t need the big, massive foyer with bus loads of people coming in, bus loads of stewardesses and stewards from airlines waiting at a counter there. I know that sort of stuff. I find some of the either small or boutique hotels a little more personalized in the way they operate.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about a recent stay in a luxury hotel room that left you with a positive and memorable experience?

Interviewee: Yeah. Well I should talk about the Park Hyatt Sydney. I think because each time I go there I really enjoy it. So my last stay at Park Hyatt in Sydney, they put me in a room that was an upgrade on what I booked. But it just had a beautiful view of the Opera House, the water, and it’s just a beautiful day, beautiful weather. And so once I’d finished my meetings I came back and you sit on a patio at sunset, overlooking the water and with a glass of sparkling water or some wine. And it’s just a nice -- it’s not as good as being at home but it’s not as bad as being in a compact box hotel room.

Interviewer: Was your stay experience from after the renovations in the new Park Hyatt?

Interviewee: Yeah. And now I’m coming up to stay 100 in there, a hundred stays at that hotel but I’m describing my last visit there in a way that I probably could have shown the same enthusiasm for the first. Over a hundred visits, you’re going to have some that are better than others, more
memorable and less memorable but I’m enjoying the 98 stays as much as I would have enjoyed the first stay and that I think is a good thing.

Interviewer: What aspects staying in the luxury guest room would you consider have contributed towards your memorable experience? In this case, think physical environment example, the space, the functions, the artifacts, the interactions.

Interviewee: So in that case the space -- there’s quite a bit of space in the room that I was in there, a little balcony area…

Interviewer: Which is quite unique for any hotel, I guess.

Interviewee: Which is quite unique for any and particularly with a view where you got the Opera House opposite and the water. The room itself is fairly sparsely furnished. It’s not like it’s full of lots of things. But that in itself gives a feeling of space and relaxation. It’s got a very nice big round table, which I can use as a desk and I always do.

Interviewer: Do you prefer this over a formal desk?

Interviewee: That’s right. I can choose where I want to sit and it’s quite flexible that way. And if I order room service I can sit so it becomes the dining table.

Interviewer: The essential’s all there, power and wired Internet connection?

Interviewee: Yes, all that’s very easy actually. And all the connections are easy to reach for. What else can I say about the environment? It’s very nicely combined between wood, glass for the views and white walls so it’s got that kind of fresh, clean, modern lines but classic colors and textures. Trying to think what’s memorable. I could describe the room but I’m trying to think exactly why the room works for me. I think it’s mainly the things that I mentioned.

Interviewer: The view obviously is hard to beat at that particular property. What are some of the other aspects that you find memorable?

Interviewee: You don’t feel like you’re in a big hotel; of course it’s not by the number of rooms a massive hotel, but it’s still reasonably -- you wouldn’t call it a small boutique hotel either. But you feel quite private because you’ve got that balcony area and because you feel like you’re in a special place and the various ways that since the renovation I wouldn’t have said this before the renovation, but since the renovation, they’ve worked out areas that you can relax in the hotel or have business meetings within the hotel or dine or have a glass of wine or whatever with a contact. All those things flow very easily.

Interviewer: You normally stay one or two nights on average?
Interviewee: Just about always one night, sometimes two but mostly I’ve been staying pretty much each Thursday night for the last seven years.

Interviewer: Time is precious in the guest room; you come back reasonably late and you probably leave again early the next morning?

Interviewee: Yes that’s right.

Interviewer: Think back to a recent memorable experience where your interactions have led to your stay being memorable? Were you passively or actively engaged in the experience? And again let’s focus on the actual guest room.

Interviewee: I’ll come back to the core of your question; I just want to mention something for a moment. You mentioned something, before our formal conversation, about the sacrifices we have to make. I thought I’ll just mention a couple of things here.

Interviewer: Absolutely.

Interviewee: One was I had a stay recently where I went to Sydney to that particular hotel and I had checked in 15 minutes earlier and my wife rang and said there’s a family emergency. You need to come home now. And so I went back to reception, I said, I’m really sorry I need to check out right now: and there’d be many hotels that would charge me for that night. That would have -- their thoughts didn’t even go -- that was -- their first reaction was, “I’m so sorry that you got a family emergency. How can we help? Naturally we won’t charge for the room but can we get you to the airport quickly? Can we use the airport car?” And everything was -- seemed to be about me and nothing about them. And I think that’s quite a moment of truth. You can -- there are other stays that might be up or down but you kind of know that when you’re on a spot like that, their motivations are for you so that has nothing to do about the guest room.

Interviewer: Certainly, this is hard to prepare for and it’s something the staff would have to respond to quite genuinely in the moment.

Interviewee: The staff in the hotel. So I thought I’d mention that. Second thing is that at that particular hotel because it’s a more expensive hotel than my company would normally pay for, I actually pay the gaps. I personally pay the gaps sometimes at my sacrifice each year in staying there thirty or forty times, each time I’m paying the gap personally between what the company would pay so that shows even though sometimes it’s quite a short stay I value the experience more than the sacrifice I have to make.

Interviewer: Do you mean that you are prepared to pay a premium for this experience?

Interviewee: Yes, I’m prepared to pay a premium.
Interviewer: Is that company policy that you can up to a certain amount stay anywhere you like?

Interviewee: No this is a one-off thing where I say I want to stay in this hotel and I’ll pay the gap and my chief executive will say “I’ll pay for you too, if ever so often that’s what makes life comfortable for you”.

Interviewer: That’s great.

Interviewee: I’m so sorry. Can you go back to your question again?

Interviewer: Think back to a recent memorable experience. What were the interactions that led to your stay being a memorable one? Were you passively or actively engaged in the experience?

Interviewee: I was at the Upper House in Hong Kong. We went there as a family and it was New Year’s Eve and we booked out a family suite. I think they call it penthouse suite; they’ve got quite a few of them. And yes, if you’ve got some sort of follow up things you want me to describe, what was it that made it memorable?

Interviewer: For example, how important was it being entertained in the room? Again we’re looking at ways that you might recall what you remember added to that stay being quite memorable. Was it either because you were actively engaged in an experience or in this case, where you being entertained and how important was this to you? It can be the view. It can be the audio system. It can be the way the room was presented to you, or through the artefacts as well.

Interviewee: Firstly the room was explained in a well kind of way as we walked in and in particular the person who from the hotel they took us into the room and engaged really well with the children. He found a way to explain to our kids how various buttons work and so forth which they had loved and even to the point of “Don’t tell your parents I told you how you turn this remote thing on.” But that’s knowing it is all fun. It’s got a beautiful view there’s no doubt about that. The room again was sort of minimalist in a way but everything there was of high quality. They would give a gift each night of some nature. And not an expensive gift but just something that was thoughtful and yes, memorable.

Interviewer: Was it just chocolate on the pillows?

Interviewee: More practical gifts. On your second night in Hong Kong we thought you might be interested in… This is what we drink or this is what we… Which was very thoughtful in the way did that.

Interviewer: Did they explain the view at all? When you looked out of the window, were there any aids to give you a sense to what you were looking at?
Interviewee: Not a lot although I did say this is the perfect spot to be because fireworks are happening over that direction. But no they didn’t. They didn’t really talk through much on that.

Interviewer: Was the experience an indulgent one?

Interviewee: Yeah I think it was. I think it was and they helped make it feel indulgent by the little sort of things they added into it like the gift and things that you didn’t expect. You’d feel indulgent, yeah.

Interviewer: Did you have a sense of escape or feeling like a sense of being able to escape from daily life?

Interviewee: Yeah I think so. That’s a good description. A sense of escape is probably in both leisure and business what I’m looking for. The description on the balcony of the Park Hyatt in Sydney would be akin to escape; the feeling in the Upper House which doesn’t feel like a hotel.

Interviewer: Did you try to avoid doing work when you come back at the end of the day and just use the guest room to unwind?

Interviewee: Well what I found is if you have a sense of escape it doesn’t matter whether you’re working or not working. You still have that. Escape doesn’t mean you’ve escaped from work because work’s always with you in life. It’s always with you. So yeah it doesn’t-- it’s more that you don’t have a sense of dread that I’ve got to do e-mails.

Interviewer: The way the surroundings help you to see it in a positive light.

Interviewee: I do think so.

Interviewer: What do you value most when experiencing a luxury guest room?

Interviewee: I think the -- for the room itself, I think I value probably the sense of escape and the sense that it’s not just a 1970s hotel room that’s got such and such a dimension and you have everything’s what you expect.

Interviewer: What about the sleep comfort?

Interviewee: I sleep like a log so, I know what others have done, like the Westin and its ‘Heavenly Beds’. But I’m not that guy. I just need a pillow and I’m off.

Interviewer: The atmosphere - we’re referring here to the physical dimensions made available to guests while staying in a luxury guest room, is considered to significantly contribute towards a luxury guest room stay experience. What do you consider a luxury guest room atmosphere to comprise of?
Interviewee: I think it should feel a little indulgent but very well thought through and high quality. And it doesn’t have to be stuff, full of stuff for me. It gives that, as you say, sense of escape and just professionalism about things that are being thought through that are all part of that. I don’t find -- when I think of luxury hotel rooms I don’t choose to go into. They’ve all still got a flat plasma screen. They’ve all still got a bed that’s a bed. And a bathroom that’s a bathroom. So these elements are more about the sort of thought that’s being put into the architecture and the design, and then it comes down to the people that you’re going to interact with after that.

Interviewer: We’re now going to start looking little a bit more into the future. What would you consider would add value to your stay experience in a future luxury guest room? Again future rooms, we’re looking out five to eight years. Anything that you can think of that has not quite yet satisfied your experiential desires?

Interviewee: I think it will be -- this may not be a guest room comment, but I think one of the places you can feel silliest in a hotel is sort of the alone guy in the dining area kind of feeling. I think in the future that, and probably some places they are already starting to think through that a little bit more so you don’t look and feel so silly. These days there can be more shared spaces and all-round of course you’ve got digital devices and they can plug in. In the room itself -- the thing about consumerism and technology is you need less and less technology provided by the hotel because there’s more and more now going into the hands of the consumers. In the old days it was about could you get -- so long as you can get a wireless connection, life is pretty easy for both recreational -- you can do your banking, you can do whatever. You can look up the Internet and you can stream stuff on TV. Whatever, so long as you’ve got a good working Wi-Fi. In the future, I reckon when I’m 20 years older and if I’ve got a sore hip and all that sort of stuff I think I’ll be more conscious and I think by then beds will go up and down and a lot easier too. There’d be less worry that doors are about to smash into you. You can navigate going to the room and all that.

Interviewer: Considering the statistics of baby boomers coming of age in the years ahead, you think this would have to be on every designer’s mind to really cater for?

Interviewee: Yeah. I think the dining experience will evolve and the sort of trolley that come into the room or the tray that comes into to the room and kind of gets plunked down and I think something will change around that. I’m not sure what.

Interviewer: It is interesting that you mention that there are a lot of guests who expressed how either through a work-related motivation or otherwise, they do spend a great deal of time in their rooms, including dining. And yet from a traveling point of view it’s always been the biggest challenge
to really cater a good in-room dining experience, in time and to a high standard.

Interviewee: Yeah, which is hard to do. They do it reasonably well in the Park Hyatt and you can order off the main menu in Sydney but you can’t do this every week and sort of order off the restaurant menu. It does come sort of fresh and ready but there are many places you can’t do that. But also I think you could spend a lot of money trying to solve the dining experience in the room only to find that having solved not being the alone guy in the dining room people might actually choose to dine downstairs. If you solved it, there might be a good way of solving the in-room dining necessity as well. I don’t know. But I think that’ll involve… the other sorts of things, the sort of sensory things. I know that the bank, looking at [ ], we have a fragrance for our ATMs. You come to the ATM and press something or it might know from your card that you like wild rose. There’s probably something a bit like that. And also think, to use an ATM analogy at [ ], you can plug something in as your favourite ATM transaction so as soon as you put your card in that’s what you’re going to have - to press one button and that’s what happens. I think profiles will change a bit so that if I arrive in that, I pick a Four Seasons hotel in Singapore tonight, I can go to the mini-bar and my favourites are stocked. We all know the array of what’s in there but maybe I’ll be more active in my profile and there’d be more activity in the way it happens. Whenever I turn up at a Four Seasons place, they know I drink sparkling water and know I don’t drink sugary drinks.

Interviewer: Are you thinking of mass-customizing to really cater to your individual preferences?

Interviewee: Yeah I think there’ll be more and more of that as time goes on. Simple of course, hopefully not too complicated. It should allow for a simple set of choices so that when you walk into a room, it feels like it’s a bit orientated towards who you are, rather than being a standard approach to all guests.

Interviewer: Would you foresee hotels having to learn from observing you or would you be willing to share your preferences? Probably in the past you’ve ticked a few boxes unknowingly and that was registered in the guest profile?

Interviewee: Yeah that’s a really good question - well actually yeah. I can’t remember ticking boxes actually in the past but I do know at the Park Hyatt they do know that I prefer Sparking water and there always seems to be plenty off it. Until you tell them to stop. But, I will be willing to share what my preferences are. I think we’re getting trained to share the way that other industries are doing the same thing. I think people are more engaged in their profiles on airlines for example. And maybe they’re in hotels and I haven’t noticed because I don’t tend to stay long enough. It’s not like I could tick something in a Hyatt because I stay in Hyatt hotels or other
places. Personally I’m just not like that. I’m keener on experiencing different places and things.

Interviewer: Have you experienced a consistency when you stayed at another Hyatt outside of the Sydney?

Interviewee: No, I haven’t noticed them talking to each other.

Interviewer: Did you felt in the background there was some alignment, perhaps?

Interviewee: No I know if I rang them and I said I’m off to Park Hyatt Chicago next week. Can you do something? They probably would but unless I went through that channel, if I just booked straight away into Park Hyatt Chicago, I’m not sure that they would know my preferences.

Interviewer: In other words, your expectation would be a little lower?

Interviewee: That’s right. I’d be quite surprised and in fact quite pleased if I turned up and there was some sparkling water waiting there or here’s a bottle of Pinot Noir from courtesy of Park Hyatt Sydney or something. I’d be surprised.

Interviewer: It is possible to create new services and experiences in a virtual environment that can be accessed, customized and controlled from either home or your luxury guest room. How would you feel about this?

Interviewee: It depends. Generally fine, but it depends what a virtual experience is.

Interviewer: Let’s assume a guest room would be accessible to you online, where you would have access to a virtual representation of the guest room. And to your point earlier of having specific preferences, perhaps, you would like to pre-select or pre-order accordingly? Could you envision a virtual guest room environment that you could configure prior to arriving?

Interviewee: Yeah I can.

Interviewer: And maybe even select your view?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Or the type of room specifically?

Interviewee: Yeah. I think I can imagine doing that. It’d be -- we’re all so time-poor - but also digital devices are giving us back more time. So you could be sitting in an airport lounge about to fly to Singapore and you could think, “Oh I haven’t done such and such yet,” and they could tell you, “Here’s the 12 rooms that are available in your configuration. Which view do you like?”
Interviewer: You mean to take the unknown out of the equation so that when you arrive you know you are somewhat privy to what to expect?

Interviewee: Yeah. I think I’ll respond pretty favorably to that. Whether I take it up each time I don’t know. I couldn’t imagine myself still walking in not having done that.

Interviewer: How could a hotel provide a rich and engaging experience unlike any other place?

Interviewee: Well I think it probably starts the moment you walk in the door. So when we meet each other downstairs you kind of knew who I was, I think I know here at [ ] banking, the concierge actually Google’s ahead people’s faces and they walk in and they say, “Hello, Joe, glad you come today.” And Joe’s thinking “How’d you know my name?” And that kind of thing. So I think it sort of starts at the beginning. I think the way -- and the way people check in and out of the hotel room, I think you normally check in or out of an engagement and experience right from the start. I don’t think -- Unless you stay at the hotel for days. But if I arrive at a hotel and there’s not much interaction and I’ve gone to my room and so forth, I don’t think I would suddenly decide I don’t need to become friends with … I think it’s sort of -- I think a lot of it’s created when you first walk in.

Interviewer: How could a hotel use digital technology to enhance your in-room experience?

Interviewee: Well I think as I said for me I think all I need is Wi-Fi. I’m sure there’s also things people could cook up. And of course digital experience is changing.

Interviewer: Would you stay in a hotel where you know the view may not be the prime motivator, perhaps the location happens to be facing onto a brick wall. Could you see selecting a view being of interest given that digital technology, or display technology is becoming more available?

Interviewee: I don’t think I’d go there. I’m sure even if you mean 20 years and I did and everyone did, but earlier I said some of the rooms that I like are quite minimalist but they’re – I don’t know what words I used but they felt thought through and to me within there they feel sort of authentic and genuine, I think--.

Interviewer: Do you mean that basically, everything has been done meaningfully?

Interviewee: Yeah whereas if I could flick a button whether it be in the room or on an iPad which turns the room into a Caribbean theme or something because that helps me feel better, I don’t know if you can do that already.
Interviewer: At the Mandarin Oriental in Las Vegas, for example, you can choose from a selection of sounds and corresponding lighting moods that are designed to stimulate your senses, how do you feel about this?

Interviewee: Hah.

Interviewer: As well as a smell that obviously matches the experience?

Interviewee: So I would simply say no way but I know enough about how the world’s evolved to say if that was there I’d probably would try it.

Interviewer: It would have to be experienced I guess before you would sort of really feel that this maybe something you could enjoy. In what ways could a hotel provide you with a respite from the world out there slowing down your sense of time and perhaps even your heartbeat?

Interviewee: The sense of escape always slows down time I’d say anything is worth doing that. That’s why Upper House and the Park Hyatt are around the water; the water always helps. But that physical standing… I have no idea what that means for the heartbeat.

Interviewer: It could mean soundproofing, which obviously could help to tune out the noise.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Outside of any physical environment, how could a hotel create a virtual place that creates value for you?

Interviewee: I know you’ve described a couple of things like sunsets and views where there would be wall.

Interviewer: Maybe a virtual currency. Could you see that you would have – perhaps note quite like an avatar life, but where could participate in and create value for yourself? It may be something that is virtually initiated. And you travel a lot to the same destinations. You’ve obviously been rewarded for the loyalty that you create as part of that, but often it does not become transferable to another destination. Let’s say you would have moved to another location. Hyatt was, as an example, would extend your privileges from one property/location to another. Could you see anything where hotels could create value in a virtual place for you?

Interviewee: Yeah they could in that sense. Like example a moment ago, if I turned up to the Park Hyatt in Chicago and they said here’s a bottle of wine courtesy of… it’s interesting how I expressed it that way courtesy of Park Hyatt Sydney doesn’t need to do that. But you kind of - in this case, they’re describing my kind of home hotel. I think when you were talking, what I was thinking was how far removed I am from a hotel. I have no idea what the Park Hyatt platinum loyalty card gives me because when I
think of the memorable things they do, they probably are written on that list, and if I look at that list, there’s probably a number of things that I don’t really engage in so I can’t imagine if there is a more -- there’d be things in the space you’re talking about that could be more engaging.

Interviewer: You mean, this would present you options that you can then choose from?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: We are coming to our last question. Let’s use this opportunity to describe anything that you may feel would add value to your future experiential stay experiences. In other words, you have an opportunity to share your experience preferences of a future luxury guest room. What future in-room stay experience would you most desire?

Interviewee: It’s interesting. There are two things I already thought of. One is I’d love to have some fitness equipment that you can call on. If a treadmill kind of could came out of nowhere or there was a cross-trainer or something, which I guess in a virtual environment, you’re probably going to do a whole bunch of that stuff some time soon. Or else something like a musical instrument. I play the piano so I’ve never been in a hotel room with a piano but then that sounds like it would be fun. At least those quite portable things that go around and so forth. Hotel rooms have transformed quite a lot already in the last 20 years and I’m sure they’re going to transform a lot in the next 20. I’m probably coming more from a couple of other angles. I see where you’re heading on the virtual side for me it’s the -- I don’t know whether they have to be big-ticket items or expensive things. I think it’s just anything that where you don’t want to feel like just a number, so to speak. And you find yourself responding to anything that is above your expectations and then suddenly here’s where your expectations are low. I think in hotel rooms generally expectations are often low. [pause]

Interviewer: Let me expand on this; something we touched on earlier where we talked about sacrifice. We’ve become so accustomed that it’s about fit for purpose, at any level. Luxury hotels or even at a budget hotel level, you’ve formed a mental image on what you expect and what is being delivered. And, you may even have a sense of when you know what gives you fair value. But the idea, going forward, where consumers do become a bit more aware of the non-material, the intangible things – in particular post the GFC [Global Financial Crisis], may suggest that it is about the smaller things that we may have taken for granted. Could this sense of value be resurfacing? Perhaps something that really needs to engage us far more actively, educationally, and anticipatorily?

Interviewee: Well I was going to give you an example of that; on the educational side. So when you go to Apple, to an Apple store, if you’ve got an Apple product you can book time at a Genius bar. So even if you take the iPad
example, say 90% of people that walk into a hotel with an iPad, they’re probably not very good at using their iPad. I know I’m not. So even that is a silly example, if there were more opportunities for -- do you want to book half an hour with someone, like we have Tuesday iPad night, … I don’t know. Yeah I don’t think that hotels, apart from going to a concierge and saying where should I go for dinner or what are the sights to see, can you get me tickets to Broadway or something, you don’t really look to get educated much. But there might be some more experiences in this and to connect you with the environment outside.

Interviewer: And many properties do really have phenomenal locations. It wouldn’t be far-fetched to think that knowing what you’re looking at that will change. New building / landmarks will be added to the skyline. A new tower might be built but the curiosity that you have looking out the window and wondering about the architecture in particular. No one really seems to give it a great deal of thought to how could you educate the consumer, in this example, the guest, into what it is he is actually looking at.

Interviewee: Yeah that’s true. And I imagine there’s some virtual things you could do around that too without needing to have someone come into your room and say here’s this and here’s that. It’s intriguing. That’s good news for me as a consumer. I think there’s either things that you’re talking about. It sounds like it’s really interesting space, and if it is going in that direction, it’s either things I’ve got a glimpse of to that I could imagine would be great or things I’ve got a glimpse of that I can’t see myself using it but I’m pretty sure in 20 years time I’ll find I’ll do.

Interviewer: Many thanks for your time and the conversation this afternoon.

Interviewee: My pleasure. [End of transcript.]
APPENDIX: 7.A

PUBLICATIONS

Several aspects of this thesis have been peer reviewed and published as follows:

Refereed Conference Papers;


Jukka M. Laitamaki, (acknowledged for their contributions: Jörn H Bühring and Barry O’Mahony), ‘Virtuality versus Reality Based Learning Experiences: Is There an Education Effect on Student Preferences?’; paper presented at Network-Based Education 2011 (NBE 2011 Conference) 4th International conference in Salla, Finland 2011