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Exploring Qualia in Service Experience – A Case Study of the Cultural Creative Hotels in Taiwan

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this research is to construct a qualia service experience design model for new-style cultural creative hotels and to explore how new-style cultural creative hotels can establish the qualia service experience. It further analyzes the key factors of creating qualia experience for new-style cultural creative hotels, offering it as a reference for enterprises which expect to enhance their competitiveness using the qualia experience. This research has chosen the HOTELDAY+ Group – the biggest cultural creative design hotel chain store brand in Taiwan to conduct the qualitative case study. The outcomes of the research show that cultural creative hotels with the fusion of the qualia-element service experience design can establish the qualia service experience via six aspects, including conveying living concepts and styles, thematic service experience design and form of the style, design quality and display of the products. There is also the participation aspect in experiencing events and art creation events, design and beauty between the building and the space, as well as the characteristics and interaction of the service personnel. Since HOTELDAY+ features spatial style design, cultural experiences such as local and historical cultural sentiments, brand meaning and strategic positioning of the services, it has excelled brilliantly in the hotel's style conveyance, cultural experience, service experience design, combination of service experience providers and carriers. Thus, it is able to reach out and touch the travelers easily, making HOTELDAY+ to be favored and welcomed by travelers.

Keywords: Service experience design, qualia experience, qualia, experience marketing, cultural creative hotel

INTRODUCTION

In 2009, the Executive Yuan categorized tourism as one of the six major emerging industries in Taiwan. According to data provided by the Tourism Bureau (2014), more than 8.1 million tourists visited Taiwan in 2013, an increase of 9.64% from 2012. Hotel revenue in the same year reached NT46.966 billion, an increase of NT1.845 billion (or 4.09%) over 2012 (NT45.12 billion). The growing number of tourists to Taiwan highlights the importance of the tourism sector, in which the hotel industry plays an essential role (Stutts, 2001). The growth of the tourism sector has stimulated the hotel industry and enhanced its future prospects. International hotels are no longer merely accommodation providers for travelers; rather, they have developed into centralized venues offering a variety of entertainments and sensory experiences. Hotels have grown beyond the boundaries of traditional travel, evolving

into hubs of artistry, knowledge and skill (Ye, 2006).

As a result of these trends, tourists are more conscious of travel resources and hotel experiences (Xie, 2009). Freund de Klumbis & Munsters (2005) stated that planners of new hotels should consider experimental building design. In recent years, emotion has come to be seen as an important determinant of consumer behavior, one which is shaped by the consumption process and service experience (Babin et al., 1994). When purchasing products, customers are not just concerned with quality and usability but also want a pleasurable buying experience (James and Cunningham, 1987). Nobuyuki Idei (2003), former Chairman of the Sony Corporation, believed that modern businesses and product designers must differentiate themselves by creating affective, experiential products, and emphasized the economic value of sensory appeal. How hotels can be designed to capitalize on this sensory or experiential appeal is one of the key motivators of this study.

Consumption in the 21st century has become an experience economy in which consumers demand feelings and experiences. The service industry in China has responded by providing many themed products and experiences (Lin, 2012). As China advances economically, its citizens have more disposable income for travel and can choose experiences based on their personal preferences. Travel and entertainment are developing rapidly in Taiwan as well, with companies creating significant consumer value through service experiences. In order to contend with competing countries such as Thailand, Indonesia, and Vietnam, which offer lower labor and operating costs, the hotel industry in Taiwan must offer greater added value, highlight local culture and style, and create emotionally stimulating travel experiences. How to create and improve customer experiences in order to be more competitive is a pressing issue for the hotel industry in Taiwan.

A number of methodologies for designing new services have already been proposed in previous research, such as the service blueprint of Shostack (1984) and the new service development (NSD) theory expressed of Johnson et al. (2000). However, tourism providers generally plan and design their services around their own attributes and business objectives (Steen, Manschot, & Koning, 2011; Tingvall & Karpaty, 2011), rather than incorporating sensory elements into experiential design and using them to innovate services. The main motivation for this study is to assist the travel and tourism sector designing services that complement qualitative recreational experiences (Harrison & Enz, 2005; Sandvik et al., 2011; Li, 2010; Cheng & Lin, 2008).

This study built a model of sensory service experience for culturally-designed hotels and explored the key factors to creating this type of experience. Our findings can serve as reference for hotels wishing to increase their competitiveness through designing sensory service experience.

Our main objectives are:

- (1) To build a model of sensory service experience for culturally-designed hotels;
- (2) To explore how hotels create sensory service experience;
- (3) To understand the key factors underlying the development of sensory service experience

Most previous studies have focused on researching international hotels, with comparatively fewer studies done on hotels specially designed to feature local culture. For the purposes of our study, we chose four hotels run by the Hotelday+ Group as our subjects: Hotel Day+

Chiayi, Teascape Chiayi, Hotel Day+ Tamsui, and Hotel Day+ Taichung. After referring to various definitions expressed in previous literature (Guo, 2004; Liang & Lu, 2013; Hsu & Chu, 2014 ; Chen & Lin, 2017), we defined culturally-designed hotels as legitimately established venues that combine dining, accommodation, activities, recreation, design, artistry, aesthetics, and local cultural elements, with guests being mainly tourists and travelers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Service Experience

Service can be described as a type of behavior, process, and expression (Zeithaml and Bitner, 1996), as well as a type of action or performance (Haksever, Render, Russell and Murdick, 2003). It is a perishable, intangible commodity provided to customers (Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons, 2005). Experience is the psychological reaction of a participant to his/her environment, including subjective feelings, evaluation, and sense of enjoyment. The intensity of the feelings experienced impacts on the depth of the memory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Holbrook, Chestnut, Oliver, & Greenleaf, 1984; Otto & Ritchie, 1996). Experience has also been described as “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)”. It is the link between initial expectations and subsequent evaluation of services (Chen and Tsai, 2007). Experiences result from the individual feelings of customers, rather than from word of mouth (Li, Song, Tsai, 2012).

Service experience is defined as the subjective sentiments (Otto and Ritchie, 1996) and overall feelings (Mitchell, Ma, & Chuan, 1999) of customers participating in the service process. It is the product of interaction between service providers, systems, staff, and customers (Bitner, William, Amy and Valarie, 1997). Comm and Labay (1996) and Zeithaml et al. (1988) stated that the experience of service experience is intangible and is developed during or after the consumption process, making far more challenging to create or measure the quality of experience as compared to material products. Although it is difficult to measure, service experience is a valuable concept in research (Li, Song, Tsai, 2012). Grace and O’Cass (2004) indicated that customer perception, satisfaction, and brand attitude are all significantly related to service experience. Customers seek out enjoyable, memorable experiences. The three main constructs that affect service experience are core services, staff service, and service venue (Grace and O’Cass, 2004). Core services are the most important services delivered by providers; staff services are the attitudes and performance of staff, and service venue refers to the physical environment in which services are provided (Bitner, 1992) and the surroundings as experienced by customers (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2004).

Tim Brown (2009), CEO and president of IDEO, stated that we are now operating in the experience economy, as described by Pine II and Gilmore. Customers have changed from passive consumers to active participants, demanding not only products or services but also personalized experience of or participation in the delivery process. Pine II and Gilmore (2008) explained that although every economic phase is valuable, regardless of whether the focus is raw materials, services, products, or experiences, the most effective economic model of today is to create appealing experiences for existing or potential consumers, leading them to make purchasing decisions on their own.

In summary of the above, the strengths and weaknesses of the service economy have strongly influenced the economic activity and industrial development of today. Therefore, academics recommend that businesses use differential strategy and customized services to provide customers with unique service experiences (Comm & Labay, 1996; Kyriakou, 1996; Kanellou, 2000; Murphy et al., 2000; Mossberg, 2007), while at the same time managing the quality of experience in order to attract more customers and promote greater satisfaction and loyalty.

Elements and Experience of Qualia

Nobuyuki Idei (2003) defined qualia as the feelings of joy and inspiration generated by what is seen and touched. Qualia is the vehicle through which products stimulate the emotions of individuals, whether through feelings, memories, or experience (Pan and Yang, 2010). Qualia represents meaningfulness and emotional satisfaction, drawing out the passions of consumers using romantic sentiment (Lin, 2011). According to Wright (2008), qualia is a type of physical process that transcends space and time, originating from the environment and culminating in the human brain. Therefore, qualia exists only in a certain place at a certain time. It is also used as a term in arts to express all sensory phenomena (Dong et al., 2012).

Qualia describes psychological phenomena generally perceivable by a majority of people (Lowe, 2008). Qualia can therefore be integrated into product design to trigger memories of joy and well-being that have previously been experienced by consumers and that they experience again through products (Pan and Yang, 2010). According to Lin (2010), the elements of qualia are expressed through attractiveness, beauty, creativity, delicacy, and engineering, enhancing the added value of the product or service and thereby emotionally stimulating customers. Japanese scholar Noriaki Kano stated that creativity and engineering are important processes that transform the wishes of consumers into real products, while attractiveness, beauty, and delicacy enhance the added value and unique style of the product (Kano, 1996). Qualia stimulate feelings of surprise and delight by providing a product, service, or experience of certain quality to consumers (Dong et al., 2012). Traditional industries pursue quantifiable quality, while creative industries strive for qualia, a “joyful tug on the heartstrings” (Xu, 2005).

Conducting a case study of digital cameras, Tsai and Ye (2012) used the five constructs of qualia to explore how experiential marketing and qualia affect brand image, customer satisfaction, and loyalty. Qualia were measured using elements such as emotional bonds, personal style, appearance, design, sensory perception, innovation, novelty, surprise, raw materials, attractive product features, and quality manufacturing. In analyzing the qualitative elements of traditional pastries, Huang (2013) found that how customers feel about a product or service can be conveyed through qualitative elements. According to Lin (2011), research on creative industries must explore sensory experience, cultural significance, participation, and environment, each of which is explained in further detail below:

Sensory experience. Stimulating the senses makes the consumer experience more memorable. Consumers who are engaged through highly sentimental or sensory experiences will leave with stronger memories of the product or service.

Cultural significance: Educational or culturally meaningful experiences enable consumers to learn about tradition, and gain knowledge and skills, achieving the objective of self-learning.

Participation: Once customers are attracted to a service, the key to drawing them into participating lies in the creativity of the experience. In other words, an experience can be designed to grab the attention of consumers and encourage participation.

Emotions: An appealing environment attracts participation from consumers and cultivates a lingering sense of well-being. Businesses can please their consumers by creating an atmosphere in which they feel free to enjoy themselves.

Lin (2012) found that the consumer experience is influenced by their impression of surrounding areas; the uniformity of the environment; themed activities; trigger points; slogans or mottos; interaction between consumers, other parties, and the environment; and elements of surprise and suspense.

In summary, the emphasis on qualitative experience shows that consumers are no longer satisfied with a single product, service, or physiological requirement being met; instead, consumers evaluate emotional appeal. How consumers feel about a product or service can be clearly conveyed through the workings of qualitative elements.

Service Strategy and Design

Services are successfully delivered in three stages: strategic positioning, design, and deployment (Liang & Shi, 2011). Positioning means identifying potential problems and needs from customer expectations and analyzing how to provide customers with added value. The combination of these three stages creates competitive, high quality services; therefore, it has been termed the SDD pyramid. Tang (2006) pointed out that in this knowledge economy, successful businesses must pursue innovative value, differentiation, and low cost, as well as overcome data limitations when executing business strategies. This highlights the importance of integration. Guo (2010) set out the steps to service innovation: (1) Identify potential customer needs: Distinguish trends, research lifestyles, understand the requirements and expectations of consumers, and conceptualize the relationship between customer value and service. (2) Build the service model: Focus on describing the service, and design strategic positioning, operational models, communication flows, and service deployment. (3) Customer management: Focus on planning the service environment, managing staff, and strengthening the service supply chain. (4) Sustainable development strategy: Manage customer relationships, feedback and service recovery; guarantee customer satisfaction, improve productivity and measure performance.

Service design, compared to other service-related areas of research, is a relatively new and popular field. However, because it has only recently been developed, its academic foundation is not yet complete (Larsen, Tonge, & Lewis, 2007; Mager, 2004; Tan, Matzen, McAloone, & Evans, 2010). According to Johnston & Clark (2005), service design highlights the details of organizational structure and integrates operational strategy. Also, new services must be designed in conjunction with the overall process of service development. Designing services means designing an experience that brings people into contact with different service touch points (Lavrans, Chris, & Ben, 2008; Holopainen, 2010). Liu (2005) stated that service design means strategically planning and designing a complete delivery system for products and services, in accordance with the attributes and business objectives of organizations. Xu and Fu (2010) indicated that designing services means determining how to provide specific services to target customers in order to achieve objectives. In other words, businesses must think and plan strategically about service items, staff, processes, environment, style, and

delivery to customers. Tan et al. (2010) advised that service design teams must include the following elements: 1) customer behavior; 2) service delivery process; 3) service touch points; 4) service experience, and 5) service context. Johnston & Clark (2005) believed that the service design process comprises three stages: Front-end operations, back-end operations, and outcomes. Back-end operations include investment of resources, production systems, and logistics, while the front end covers staff, service facilities, equipment, and processes. The outcomes comprise value, emotions, quality, and satisfaction. Pine II and Gilmore (2008) identified five steps to designing experiences: Define the theme, create a positive image, eliminate negative elements, provide keepsakes, and stimulate the five senses (sight, smell, sound, taste, and touch).

Applying the planning processes of previous studies (Johnson & Grayson, 2005; Liu, 2005; Guo, 2010; Xu & Fu, 2010), we categorized the design of service experience into strategic positioning, design, and deployment (Liang & Shi, 2011). We focused on integrating strategic positioning and service communication, and analyzed service deployment, environment, staff management, and supply chain.

Service Experience and Design Style

Service facilities are essential components of hotel accommodation, which in turn is a vital part of the tourism industry. According to Fitzsimmons (2010), the main service elements of a hotel are as follows: (1) Primary services: Products or services offered, such as accommodation; (2) Complementary services: Services that complement the main products, such as dining; (3) Packaged services: Facilities and venue; (4) Service process: Service logistics such as online booking, registration, check-in, and departure; (5) Information services: Providing information relevant to the products or services offered, such as membership information or software updates.

The continuously developing tourism industry is offering an ever wider range of services and facilities, thereby attracting more consumers. It is an integrated, diversified service industry (Harrison & Enz, 2005). Pine II and Gilmore (1998) stated that we are already living in the age of the experience economy. Many providers of traditional products or services have gradually changed their operational models and are striving to create or design memorable consumer experiences. The hotel experience is an important part of travel, and hotels must be closely linked to local tourism resources, highlighting local cultural features and travel experiences. Hotels that emphasize the feelings and perspectives of their customers will also put a premium on cultivating their brand value through hotel experiences. This is particularly true for independent hotels that are not backed by existing brand recognition and must create unique styles and customer experiences in order to compete with established brands (Xie, 2009). Guo (2004) pointed out that there is an important link between hotel style and market positioning. For example, the Lalu Hotel at Sun Moon Lake is designed around an island theme, with historical significance and mysterious color schemes. The Mandarin Oriental's Hotel Group has positioned itself with hotels that emphasize the value of Eastern art, culture, and style. Establishments run by General Hotel Management (GHM) Ltd, on the other hand, are low-key and integrate local culture into their design and style. Also, the corresponding relationship between experiential activities and venue must be considered in the design and style of hotels. For example, the Yilan Hotel Royal Chiao Hsi advertises a Japanese-style experience and offers customers an *ippaku-nishoku* (one night, two meals) deal. Customers can eat Japanese food, wear Japanese bathing outfits, stay in rooms designed with Eastern flair, cycle in the Wuqi Scenic Area, learn about tea ceremonies and flower arranging, enjoy

Japanese gardens, soak in invigorating hot springs, and enjoy the service of friendly staff, de-stressing and experiencing refreshment and relaxation.

In this era of experiential marketing, hotels seek to provide consumers with not just products or services, but more importantly, experiences that they are willing to pay for (Schmitt, 1999). Hotels must design their service experiences in conjunction with local tourism resources, as well as consider the corresponding relationship between activities and venue.

METHODOLOGY

This research is considered an exploratory study. Although we have referred to some research on service experience and qualia, applicable references are still very limited, particularly with regard to integrating qualia into the design of service experience. Also, the new culturally-designed hotels we have chosen as our subjects are in the initial phases of development within the hotel industry. Considering that our research precedes established theory, we opted for a qualitative research design, in which theory is developed along with the research concepts. In other words, research of actual phenomena leads to the gradual development of definite concepts from which theory is formulated (Pan, 2003).

Research Method

We used a qualitative case study and focus group interview as our main research methods, both of which are further explained below.

A case study involves an up-close examination of an example (single or multiple) of a social phenomenon, extracting a large amount of detailed data from a small number of cases (Patton, 1987). A case study has a defined subject, whether it is the state or behavior of an individual, group, or organization, or their interrelationships. The subject is then investigated in-depth, a range of data is compared and analyzed to identify inherent attributes or rules, and solutions are discovered through logical thinking. According to Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007), case studies emphasize that the background of a subject can reveal his/her decision-making context. Researchers can gain significant knowledge of subjects by closely interacting with them, and examining their decision-making and problem solving processes (Gibbert, Ruigrok, & Wicki, 2008).

Case studies involve studying subjects in their natural environment and employing various data collection methods to collate information on one or more subjects of study (individual, group or organization) (Benbasat et al., 1987; Yin, 1994; Yin, 2003). Our aim was to explore how and why culturally-designed hotels are able to create qualitative or sensory service experiences. In light of the issues to be discussed, we considered a multiple-case study to be the appropriate research method (Yin, 2003). Researchers often do not control the environment when studying certain types of organizational phenomena. Most of the time, case studies are seen to increase the rigorousness of research and improve the accuracy, validity, and reliability of findings (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Also, by interviewing subjects in-depth, researchers can obtain detailed information on case development, the relationships among the actors, their decisions, and the incident or event in question, which is meaningful to a study of relevant theory (Langley, 1999).

We conducted focus group interviews to collect data on the sensory service experiences of

hotel customers. The main selection criteria of interviewees were that the informants could represent the hotel main services sections or have sophisticated customer experiences. A total of 15 informants from the Hotelday+, including the directors of administration, marketing staffs and guest from the hotels, participated in two interviews of 90 minutes each. The informants were coded as follows: Hotel administration staff (A1-A2); Hotel Day+ in Chiayi (J1-J3), Hotel Day+ Tamsui (D1-D3), Hotel Day+ Taichung (T1-T3), and Teascape Chiayi (JT1-JT4). Participants in the interviews were asked about their feelings and viewpoints in relation to the hotels; for example, whether they feel nostalgia or sense of belonging to the hotel; whether the hotel has a story; whether they experience feelings of relaxation, sensory enjoyment, novelty, and surprise; whether the hotels show attention to detail, quality raw materials, attentive service processes, good attitude towards service, pleasant atmosphere, comfortable space and lighting, tasteful décor, character and style, professionalism and modishness. Please refer to the appendix for an interview outline. For the sake of completeness, we also interviewed experts about the secondary data in order to filter out and confirm the key factors of sensory service experiences.

Research Design And Data Analysis

Our subjects were four branches of the Hotelday+, which is the largest cultural hotel chain in Taiwan (Song, 2014). This meets the requirements of Perry (1998) and Eisenhardt (1989) in relation to the number of subjects required to conduct homogenous (two or four) or heterogeneous comparison (two) in a case study. The history and qualitative service attributes of each subject are described below.

Beginning in September 2014, we studied secondary data on culturally-designed hotels from sources such as graduate and doctorate theses, websites, research reports, not-for-profits, newspaper and magazine articles. The objective was to understand the development of creative industries in Taiwan. In accordance with the data triangulation principle of Yin (2003) and Gibbert et al. (2008), we gathered evidence from multiple sources and built a case study database. Following the literature review, we drafted the interview outline and questions, contacted the subjects by telephone, and began our academic observation. As passive observers and listeners, we identified ourselves but did not become involved in the activities or operations of subjects (Kumar et al., 2000). The secondary data, interview data, and text files were compiled into a database which we used as a basis for our three-step process of data analysis (Yin, 2003): (1) Describe each subject and the key findings; (2) Analyze each subject to identify unique factors; (3) Conduct cross-case analysis to process results and form conclusions and recommendations.

Based on previous research, we identified the design constructs of sensory service experience in the Hotelday+ Group, integrating service strategy, experiential design, service design, and strategic planning (Johnson et al., 2000; Liu, 2005; Pine II and Gilmore, 2008; Guo, 2010; Xu & Fu, 2010; Liang & Shi, 2011), as well as the constructs of sensory experience, cultural significance, participation, environment (Lin, 2011), and qualia (Kano, 1996; Lin, 2010; Tsai & Ye 2012; Lin, 2012). This framework was then used to analyze the design of sensory service experience.

CASE STUDY AND FINDINGS

Overview of the Hotelday+ Group

The Chan-Yee Hotel Day+ Group was established in 2008. Its head office is on Qiming Road, East District, Chiayi City, Taiwan. It is a business in the travel and tourism sector, with NT350 million in capital, nearly 200 staff, and revenue of nearly NT250 million in 2014. To date, Hotelday+ has established four hotels (Hotel Day+ in Chiayi, Teascape Chiayi, Hotel Day+ Tamsui, and Hotel Day+ Taichung) which have a combined total of 350 rooms. Two more hotels, one in Taitung City, and one in Tainan City, are to be completed by the end of 2015, with another by the Renyiyan Dam in Chiayi planned to be completed by the end of 2016. Hotelday+ forecasts that before the end of 2018, they will have at least ten cultural hotels operating in Taiwan, becoming the largest cultural hotel chain in the greater China region. The company also plans to become a publicly traded entity and is open to expanding overseas. Its mission is to integrate local travel experiences, art, and culture with quality hotel services and delicious meals. A differentiating element of Hotelday+ is its focus on local cultural experience and its portrayal of the cultural features of Taiwan through innovative art and visual communications. Overseas guests are encouraged to see Taiwan in a new light, experiencing its charm and beauty through the Hotelday+ establishments.

Through Hotelday+, the Chan Yee Group made its first inroad into the creative and cultural industries. Established in 1995, the Chan Yee Group has built many impressive buildings with original design, high standards of architectural aesthetics, and sophisticated knowledge and skills in construction. Its corporate philosophy is to ensure that all guests are treated with the same courtesy and honesty as old friends, and to bring a deeper meaning and greater sense of belonging to the word “home” through Hotelday+. The target customers of Hotelday+ are representatives of certain ethnic groups aged between 25 and 40 years, which includes tourists, backpackers, free travelers, and lovers of cultural and creative tourism.

Hotelday+ Chiayi. Located on Chueiyang Road in Chiayi City, Hotelday+ Chiayi was the first establishment in the Hotelday+ Group. Formerly home to the Yimei Opera but left vacant for more than a decade, the site was eventually purchased by the Chan Yee Group and developed into the hotel that has since become a new landmark of Chiayi City. Its extensive woodwork highlights the major role of the forestry industry in Chiayi City, and the Alishan cherry blossoms are painted on the silver walls, breaking with traditional patterns but creating a comfortable, unrestrained space. The hotel, featuring the local culture of Chiayi, has 110 rooms, which can be standard rooms or family suites. Designed with simple spatial aesthetics in mind, most of the rooms have white-painted walls adorned with black and white photographs of Chiayi and are furnished with wood furniture in warm tones, creating a relaxed and comfortable style. The lobby is bright and its reception counters and furniture are custom-built using cypress wood. The hotel also provides many facilities such as a restaurant, conference room, VIP rooms, entertainment center, business center, and laundry.

Hotelday+ Tamsui. The second establishment, Hotelday+ Tamsui on Fisherman’s Wharf, was built in 2012. The 106-room hotel is designed to feature local culture and creativity. The lobby is designed to resemble a port, and the reception counter is shaped like a canoe floating on the water. Sunlight streams through the windows and highlights the elegant, free-flowing style. Every part of the hotel, from the lobby to the restaurant, to the communal areas to the guest rooms, presents different creative elements. The hotel offers many facilities, such as the Male Tree Continental Restaurant, a reading room on the fourth floor, a gym and game room on the fifth floor, and a self-service laundromat. In the restaurant, iron bars and mirrors are shaped into the form of mangroves, creating an understated aesthetic style. The walls are adorned with the artwork of two French artists, adding a sense of fun and creating a unique

dining venue. Unlike many hotels in Tamsui, the rooms are artful and brightly colored, and decorated with photographs of Tamsui.

Hotelday+ Taichung. The third establishment, Hotelday+ Taichung, is located on Zhongmind South Road not far from the Jingcheng Business District. The exterior of the hotel is simple and neat, and the interior communal areas are also bright and clean, designed with everyday aesthetics in mind. The cultural and creative design of the hotel offers many small surprises and attractions, delighting the curiosity of guests. For example, the cloud reading room, with its novel shelves and regular artworks on display, is an ideal spot to relax and recharge. Another feature is the skylights, enabling guests to enjoy the warm sunshine. The hallways are also adorned with photographs of Taichung City. Other facilities include the Male Tree Italian restaurant, gaming room, and gym. Another feature is the central open skylight through which the glowing sunshine warms the guests inside.

Teascape Chiayi. Opened in 2014 in the center of Chiayi City, Teascape Chiayi is the fourth hotel in the Hotelday+ chain and is marketed as the first tea-themed hotel in Taiwan. It is close to Chiayi, Beimen, and Taipei railway stations. Each room has tea-inspired décor, tea samples, and areas for guests to enjoy tea time. In addition to the rich Tea Art Gallery, Teascape also boasts Sky Lounge 23.5, the first rooftop bar in Chiayi, and a borderless pool, providing guests with a bird's eye view of the city nightscape. Teascape Chiayi differentiates itself from the stereotypical image of a luxury hotel by providing guests the opportunity to experience local tea cultivation and production processes at its organic tea plantation in Alishan.

Analyzing the Design of Sensory Service Experience at Hotelday+

We analyzed the design of service experience using the interview data and the sensory service experience model, which comprises the following six constructs: Lifestyle expression, design and form of services, design and display of products, participation in creative activities and experiences, architectural and interior design and aesthetics, and interaction with hotel staff. The sensory service experience model of cultural and creative hotels is displayed as Figure 1.

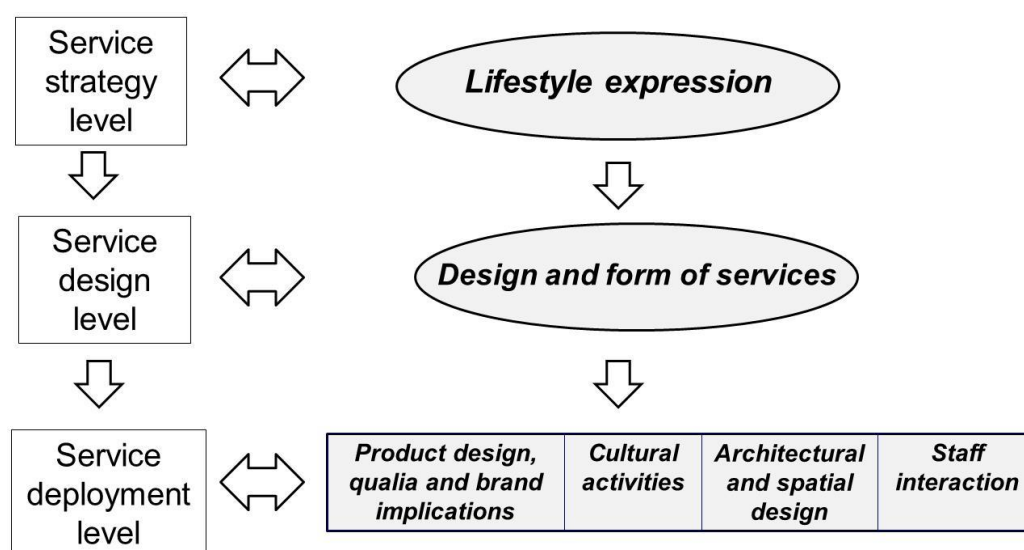


Figure 1: The sensory service experience model of cultural and creative hotels.

Lifestyle expression

Unique service strategy and positioning. The planning team for Hotelday+ first came together in 2008 with the vision to build a hotel offering a unique travel experience, innovative services, and cultural aesthetics. The goal of the chairman, Dai Junliang, was to build the hotels into travel destinations that offer guests stimulating sensory experiences. Hotelday+ aims to provide guests with recreational surroundings that they can read about, experience, and feel; an environment that inspires unique feelings. Chairman Dai hoped that Hotelday+ would not just be an accommodation provider but a home away from home to its guests, a place where those away from their homes could momentarily forget their worries. He described how they explored deep into the cultural connotations of each city, discovering hidden gems and delights along with travelers. After the journey, he said, we were no longer merely passerby; instead, we felt a sense of comradeship with travelers who cross land and sea in anticipation of a destination. Chairman Dai explained that Hotelday+ is building an innovative, strategic platform for a new brand type, which the company is continuously working to develop. The Chinese name for Hotelday+ Taichung, for instance, translates literally to “Taichung Birdlife”. This is because, he explains, Taichung is a beautiful, friendly city, more relaxed compared to the rush of Taipei but not as lethargic as the southern cities. Taichung enjoys its own pace of life, living freely as a bird. Teascape Chiayi is advertised as the first Alishan tea-themed hotel in Asia, where every guest can experience tea with all the five senses.

Integrating local culture and customs. The Hotelday+ Group is built around local cultural experience and works to ensure that each hotel features local culture and sentiments. Despite being a hotel chain, the Hotelday+ Group does not apply strictly scalable models, believing that each hotel has a unique story to share with guests and plays a rich role in every city and journey. From Hotelday+ Chiayi and Hotelday+ Tamsui, to Hotelday+ Taichung, to the hotels yet to be constructed, each hotel is developing itself in the footsteps of travelers.

Design and form of services

Core concepts and services. The Hotelday+ Group designs interior surroundings and services around local cultural experience. At the core of each hotel are unique cultural features expressed through form. The term form is used to describe general shape, structure, design, appearance, or type (Saarinen, 1985). For example: (1) The spatial environment of each hotel is designed to feature local cultural or historical concepts. (2) The interiors are decorated with the works of local artists, such as artwork and sculptures. (3) The landscape, streetscape, and scenery of each city are richly represented in photographs on the walls of hallways and guestrooms, showing guests a snapshot of the city’s beauty before they experience it for themselves. (4) The staircases are artistically unique and specially designed to showcase local scenery. The style, theme, and cultural elements of each Hotelday+ establishment are compared in Table 1 below:

Consistency in service experience. Teascape Chiayi, for example, brings guests the full experience of the Alishan tea culture through various media. The eye-catching structure is built to resemble stacked tea chests and is surrounded by beautiful woodwork in the shape of animals. The outdoor area, with its bamboo forests, seating arrangements, and traditional tea equipment, is like a snapshot of a homestead on a traditional tea plantation. The hotel rooms are named after the 24 seasonal cycles, such as grain rain, summer solstice, white dew, and minor snow. A contemporary poem on the wall reads “I dreamt of a pair of purple-grey wings,

on which I flew to and from the Tropic of Cancer and the equator, circling the spring equinox and summer solstice”. Many thoughtful items are provided in the guestrooms. Teaware is artfully arranged in tea baskets, and high-grade Alishan mountain tea is provided for the enjoyment of guests. The snacks are custom-made by the famous Lian De Tang in Tainan City. Teabags are handmade with kraftpaper and imprinted with the image of tea leaf. Even the welcome card on the bed is illustrated with Chiayi scenery.

Hotelday+ Taichung is no exception. It has five different types of rooms. Four types are double rooms: Java Sparrow (Standard), Japanese White-Eye (Deluxe), Chinese Hwamei (Classic), and Mikado pheasant (executive suite). There is also the four-person Peacock family room. The bird theme symbolizes the idea of a lighthearted, carefree life.

Table 1: Style, theme, and cultural elements of Hotelday+ hotels.

	Style, local cultural elements, and form	Theme
Hotelday+ Chiayi	<i>Alishan and cherry blossoms:</i> Architecturally, the remodeling of this old building breaks with tradition and expresses a philosophy of regeneration. Creative and cultural elements are integrated to bring guests a taste of the charm of Chiayi, with each room tastefully portraying the cityscape by day and by night.	It's not a hotel. It's a home.
Hotelday+ Tamsui	<i>Mangroves and multiculturalism:</i> This hotel interweaves fresh, colorful elements to create a feeling of warmth and liveliness. The abundance of greenery and the Tamsui scenery provide a perfect backdrop to the unique elements of local style expressed throughout the hotel.	It's a beautiful day!
Hotelday+ Taichung	<i>The early days of Taichung as an industrial city:</i> The theme of this hotel is the development of industry and arts in Taichung City. The design philosophy metaphorically likens guests to birds, providing a comfortable nest in which to rest. The beautiful calligraphy, sculptures, illustrations, and facades create different atmospheres as light, seasons, and climate change, bringing travelers an individual touch of something special.	Have a nice Day!
Teascape Chiayi	<i>Featuring Alishan tea and local cultural experience:</i> Guests are able to experience the full spectrum of the tea culture through various means. The rooms are filled with scenes of Alishan and mountain ranges, the arrangements are elegant and simple. The hotel provides exquisite teaware and organic loose tea, as well as bath tea bags.	Renewal

Product design, qualia and brand implications

Sensory elements add uniqueness and value to products, and inspire feelings of joy and happiness from consumers. Sensory products tell a story, which is the key to stimulating the emotions of customers (Lin, 2009). The Hotelday+ products are linked to its brand image and design style, and promote feelings of happiness and well-being.

Branded products. Hotelday+ guests can purchase hotel membership cards and document folders illustrated with the hotel mascot, the Daydream Monster, Hanji, (Fig. 2), as well as enjoy hotel-branded, attractively packaged bath items (Fig. 3). The room cards (Fig. 4) and tourist guides in each room are creatively designed. At Hotelday+ Tamsui, the room cards are especially unique with the theme, “It’s a beautiful day!” Even the mirror in the room (Fig. 5) is decorated with a cheerful speech bubble “It’s a beautiful day!” The room cards and

breakfast coupons are similarly designed. “In addition to providing envelopes, paper, and pens, Hotelday+ Taichung also thoughtfully provides food and travel guides” (T2). The motto of the Male Tree Restaurant at Hotelday+ Tamsui reads “simple food, simple drink, simple days”. The bathtowels at Teascape are also imprinted with the Hanji image. The wood-carved cup set also features the mascot, while the name cards and postcards all have images of tea. “The Hanji mascot on the towels is so cute!” (JT3)

Quality and craftsmanship of furniture and household items. Hotelday+ Chiayi features glass-door bar refrigerators (Fig. 6) and unique lavatory signs (Fig. 7). The towels at Hotelday+ Tamsui are thick and soft (D1). Both the towels and the shower slippers are comfortable and good quality. Other bathroom items such as shampoo and shower gel are uniquely designed. The “No Smoking” sign is fashioned from a little wooden block (Fig. 8). The pen holder on the counter at Hotelday+ Taichung is functional while creatively designed to resemble a book wall. Guests use quill pens, held in an attractive pen holder, when registering at reception.

The room slippers at Hotelday+ Taichung are made from enhanced nonwoven fabric, which is simple and comfortable. The shampoo and shower gel are scented with lemon verbena. “After a long day of sightseeing, it’s nice to relax in a steamy bathroom filled with the scent of lemon verbena” (T3). The tea cups and wood-carved signs (informing guests about free Wi-Fi) are attractively designed.

Many fine-looking items are thoughtfully provided to guests at Teascape Chiayi, which is designed around the theme of tea. Teaware is artfully arranged in tea baskets, and high-grade Alishan mountain tea is provided for their enjoyment. Refreshments provided are custom-made by the famous Lian De Tang in Tainan City (Fig. 9). Teabags are handmade from kraftpaper and imprinted with the image of a tea leaf. The lobby is lined with plush leather sofas. “Leather sofas are simple yet tasteful; the traditional and the modern work surprisingly well together” (JT2). “The tea catalogues are exquisite, I very much wanted to buy a few to take home” (J3). “The Italian OLIVA bath gel has a great feel” (JT2). “I remember that when I looked closely at the wooden shelf holding the bath items, I realized it was designed to form a picture! How creative!” (JT1). Many items are creatively fashioned from wood, like the Do Not Disturb sign (Fig. 10) and the Wet Floor sign. Loose leaf tea canisters are decoratively arranged on the reception counter.

Mascot products. Hotelday+ Chiayi sells Hanji cups (NT88 each) that visitors can purchase. The workshop on the first floor of Teascape Chiayi sells tea-related handcrafts and designer works. Quality teaware is provided in guestrooms and can also be purchased directly from the hotel. “The handmade teaware is so exquisite I wanted to buy a set to take home” (JT2).

Cultural activities

The Hotelday+ Group fully embraces the concept of collaborative marketing in that it builds closer relationships with customers by inviting them to participate in promotional activities and engage in creative thinking. For example, guests were invited to offer their input in the naming of the mascot, Hanji. In another activity, guests mailed a Hotelday+ postcard to themselves, post-dated to arrive exactly one year from the day it was mailed. The hotels also provide recommendations and guides to local, less known attractions. Beginning with its Taichung branch, the Hotelday+ Group has made local culture its nexis and collaborates with local artists to display their works in the guestrooms or organize exhibits. Culture and

aesthetics are combined to give travelers a taste of the real character of the city. According to General Manager Dai Shuling, Hotelday+ establishments have designated spaces to accommodate art exhibits and host many local cultural and art exhibitions throughout the year. More than 30 touring exhibitions are on display every year and attract nearly 150,000 guests, which is a considerable business opportunity. Also, more than thirty budding artists in Taiwan have exhibited their work at a Hotelday+ establishment.

Creative activities and experiences. Teascape Chiayi offers a 5-star open air pool, night swimming pool (where movies are played), a bar and music lounge named N23.5° Sky Lounge, tea dye experiences, tea baths in the guestrooms, tea ceremony at the Alishan viewing platform, Tsou indigenous dining experience, and specialty food items such as the tea-honey biscuits. “We were so determined to experience the infinity edge pool, we insisted on coming back to Sky Lounge 23.5 in the damp cold. It’s a good thing we did, because the view is amazing” (JT1). “One of our main reasons for coming to Teascape Chiayi was to experience the infinity edge pool! It was so beautiful! Sitting peacefully on the sofas beside the pool enjoying the glow of the setting sun was very romantic” (JT2). “It’s so pretty in the morning, when the sky is dotted with white clouds and the pool a sea of blue” (JT3). The rooms also provide high quality teaware and Alishan loose leaf tea for the enjoyment of guests. Tea baths are another feature of using tea to its fullest. Every morning a pot of tea is provided and guests are instructed to pour the tea into their tubs with a small amount of hot water, let it steep for five minutes, and then add warm water, creating a steaming tea bath. Guests can also enjoy the interesting experience of tea-dyeing cloth. “We wrapped cloth around different stones to achieve the design that we wanted, and then the teacher showed us how to soak these stones in hot black tea overnight. The next morning, the cloth was dyed with unique patterns from the stones” (JT2).

Brand design and creative competitions. During Chinese New Year of 2013, Hotelday+ held a competition to name its mascot. The Painted Dream Monster event was hosted at the cloud reading room at Hotelday+ Taichung, which is sometimes used for presentations. Contestants illustrated the Dream Monster based on the style or aesthetics of each Hotelday+ establishment. The top 20 works were made into 40-cm high 3D mascots, which are rotated on display at each hotel.

Art exhibitions. Example: The “Hotelday+ Tamsui Sasaya Romantic Art Exhibition”, held from 21 March to 9 June 2013.

Dining services. The Breezy Shore Cantonese Restaurant at Hotelday+ Chiayi offers comfortably familiar Chinese dishes and dainty dim sum such as sesame buns, steamed pork chop, prawn dumplings, rice rolls, and Cantonese fried noodles. The Male Tree restaurant at Hotelday+ Tamsui is a casual style restaurant serving a light continental menu and a selection of accompanying beverages. Music and art events are also held on an irregular basis, providing guests with an exotic, relaxed environment. In the lobby is the Mad Hatter Café. “The fried vegetables are plated in a way that is not only practical but also artistic” (D1). “I enjoy a breakfast of borscht and braised pork on rice. The congee is made from green beans instead of the usual white rice” (D3).

Hotelday+ Taichung has a restaurant by the same name (Male Tree), only it offers Italian cuisine. It is elegantly designed and the candlestick arrangements give it a soft, warm feel. The staircase leading to the basement dining area is also decorated. The menu offers both Chinese and Western cuisine, as well as noodles and fried eggs to order.

The Shan Shan Restaurant at Teascape Chiayi offers an array of exquisite dishes, a salad bar, and both Chinese and Western style breakfasts. The restaurant is small in size but artistically designed. “I like eating light congee, so the Nine Grid Chinese Breakfast is a must-try” (JT2). “I love the plating of the Nine Grid Chinese Breakfast, it’s so aesthetically pleasing you have an even greater appetite” (JT3).

Travel packages . Teascape Chiayi offers a seasonal Alishan tour package named *Autumn in Alishan*.

Architectural and spatial design

Post-modernistic architecture, integrating urban aesthetics, innovation, sophistication and art, has become a popular trend in business accommodation. Chairman Dai explains that the Hotelday+ Group seeks to integrate local cultural and creative industries into its design. Hotelday+ Chiayi, for example, is remodeled from a 30-year old theatre. Hotelday+ Taichung was transformed from an old office building on Zhongming South Road, near Park Lane in Taichung City. Its winged design, bright skylight, and art lanes create a relaxing atmosphere for guests.

External architecture and imagery. Hotelday+ Chiayi reforms traditional ideas of architecture, with its stainless steel carvings in non-uniform patterns (Fig. 11). From the outside of the building, the white walls scattered with cherry blossoms are faintly visible, presenting a flowing, minimalist design. The falling sunlight creates various patterns of light and shadow in the hallways and the central restaurant. During daytime, the hotel is filled with natural light, while at night the soft lighting creates a soothing atmosphere. At the front of Hotelday+ Tamsui, one’s attention is immediately drawn to two large red figurines locked in an embrace (Fig. 12), a look both modern and creative. The building that houses Hotelday+ Taichung was originally an office building. Seen from a distance, its gray-white criss-crossed exterior resembles a giant bird’s nest, an example of avant-garde fashion (Fig. 13). At the time of the hotel development, Chiayi was the top tea-exporting city in Taiwan, and Teascape Chiayi is uniquely designed to resemble a stack of wooden tea chests (Fig. 14).

Landscaping and nostalgic decoration. The seats at the entryway of Hotelday+ Chiayi are designed by four different artists. A large figurine of the mascot Hanji is also featured in the doorway, with a flower on its head instead of a bird as in Hotelday+ Taichung. “Hotelday+ Chiayi is like an art gallery, filled with artwork” (J3). “When I returned this time, I noticed some of the arrangements had changed. The mascot Hanji is in the entryway and the lobby shop that used to sell tea and designer products now features various Hanji-themed products” (J2). To one side of the understated entrance at Hotelday+ Tamsui is written the history of the hotel chain, so that walking in feels like opening the first page of a book called Hotelday+ Tamsui. The Hanji mascot at Tamsui is wearing a hat (Fig. 15), while the one in Taichung features a bird on its head and also doubles as a post box. The stone walls and exposed wire fencing at Teascape Chiayi present a unique style in themselves. In one corner is an antique soap stand, used for brewing tea. The minimalist design of the entryway at Teascape and the trees blowing in the breeze create a Zen feel.

Themes and visual design effects of hotel lobbies. Written at the front of Hotelday+ Chiayi, the motto “It’s not a hotel, it’s a home”, is intended to create the impression of a comfortable abode, breaking with the traditional, distant manner of a hotel. The hotel presents a spacious lobby with a simple white color scheme and strategically placed sofas. “Just those two simple

lines touch your heart. Business travelers and tourists alike want to find a comfortable place to lay their heads for the night, as if they are seeking a second home” (J3). “The lobby is more spacious than you expect, and the floors and ceiling form an interesting harmony” (J1). The reception counter is built from irregularly shaped blocks of wood to represent the sacred trees of Alishan, giving it an earthy, unembellished flavor. Behind the counter are blooming cherry blossoms. To the left of the main entrance are school desks and chairs, with school hats placed atop the desks. The carving by the elevators was originally placed by the entrance but moved after the arrival of the mascot Hanji. “The carving of the elderly man by the elevator is so lifelike and eye-catching, it’s hard not to notice it. The expression of the figure is so kind and compassionate, and it is leaning forward as if bowing to guests in welcome” (J1) (Fig. 16). The reading room in the lobby holds many publications on travel and design. Beside the entrance to the lobby is a piece of art fashioned from old doors and window frames. “A special feature of Hotelday+ Chiayi is that artwork is placed everywhere you look, showcasing local culture and customs” (J1).

The reception counter at Hotelday+ Tamsui is shaped to resemble a canoe, gently floating along the estuaries and wetlands. The canoe-shaped counter with the green mangroves as a backdrop, along with the budding plants and water feature in the waiting area, all form a pleasant picture. The concept of mangroves connects the two otherwise disparate spaces. The Hotelday+ name is spelled out on the shelf using books (Fig. 17), and the robot ostrich adds an artistic touch (Fig. 18). “As soon as you walk into the lobby, you are greeted by many creative works all designed by well-known overseas designers, according to hotel staff” (D3). “The lobby is very creatively decorated; as a first-time visitor, I thought it was charming” (D2).

Visitors to the Hotelday+ Taichung are greeted by the motto “Have a nice day+” on the wall, where the “Day+” is fashioned from various tools such as a wrench, pliers, and pickax, representing Taichung’s vibrant iron processing industry. The reception counters in the lobby and restaurant are partly made from concrete, creating a clean, minimalist feel. The clocks on the wall behind the counter are surrounded by white birds in flight, as if telling guests to forget the time and enjoy themselves. “You have to look at the Hotelday+ origami frames from a side angle in order to see the design” (T2). Skylights run across the ceiling of the hotel lobby, from which lights shaped like bird-nests dangle. The skylights let in sunshine during the day, while at night the bird-nest lights softly glow. The cloud reading room has wave-shaped bookshelves offering a variety of reading material. The robot ostrich at the entryway is not just a decoration but also a workstation. The beak is a lamp with some artistic messages. “The warm, inviting feeling of the reading room is very different to the industrial style presented when guests enter the hotel” (T1). A special feature of Hotelday+ Taichung is the skylights, two of which serve as the windows for three guest rooms. The skylights in the lobby brighten it up, and the dangling bird’s nest lights complement the hotel theme of birds. The hotel overall leaves guests with a bright, sunny, cheerful impression. “It’s so comfortable with the warm sunlight shining down from the skylights” (T1). “Sunlight shines freely throughout the hotel, creating a changing pattern of light and shadows at different times of the day. This creates a rich visual effect and promotes positive mood” (T2). The lobby also has many interesting decorations, like the school desks and chairs, which back childhood memories. The dream wall is impressive, decorated with the word “dream” written in various languages. “I think it’s trying to say that, no matter where you’re from, your dreams can come true through travel” (T3).

The tea-themed lobby at Teascape Chiayi has a relaxed atmosphere but is also rich with

cultural elegance. At first glance it seems to commemorate the past, but closer inspection reveals many examples of modern, contemporary design. Tea canisters are placed on the open style wall shelves in the lobby, and to the left is a green theme wall. In another corner are several items such as tea antiques and teaware. Looking closely at the bookshelf, one can see the word “Hotelday+” spelled out using books. “I was a little taken aback by the spacious lobby; I felt like I had just walked into a Taiwanese tea museum” (T2). Compared to the previous two hotels we have discussed, Teascape has a reserved, understated style. The open plan lobby is lit by natural light coming through the large windows and scented with a faint tea fragrance. A Zen-inspired rest area by the window provides the perfect spot for enjoying a cup of tea. Teaware is displayed on the opposite wall, along with various tea-related products and the works of Japanese artist Moe Nakamura. “Every corner is meticulously thought out, it makes me feel as though I’m back home in my lounge room or study” (JT1). “Through conversations with the staff, I came to understand the meaning of this art. Moe Nakamura uses these wood carved figures to express the innermost heart of adults. Every person is born with the pure soul of a child but changes under the influence of the environment, just like we see the figures grow frightening horns and even become thick-skinned” (JT2).

Artistic decoration of hotel corridors. A special feature of Hotelday+ is that every part of its environment is designed to express art, and every corner is filled with local culture and customs, from the photographs on the wall to the theme-designed walls in the walkways.

Every floor of Hotelday+ Chiayi is designed differently. The corridors are spacious and decorated with countless pictures and photographs, displaying the culture, food, and scenery of Chiayi to guests. With five to six pictures in each guest room as well, the hotel displays nearly 600 pictures. The corridor of B1 is fully decorated with images of Chiayi scenery, while the restaurant presents an array of artwork.

The hallways of Hotelday+ Tamsui are also decorated with themes to match the local surroundings and customs, demonstrating the commitment of the Hotelday+ Group to integrating local culture. Some examples are the Tamsui cherry blossom hall and the stray cat hall (Fig. 19). The long corridors are lined on one side with guest rooms and on the other side with images of the Tamsui River. As with Hotelday+ Chiayi, each level shows a different side to Tamsui and its history. For example, the theme of Levels 2 to 10 is “A Journey through Time”, and relevant books are also provided for the information of guests (Fig. 20). As Tamsui was previously colonized by Spain, the corridor is decorated with strong colors to represent the vibrant Spanish style (for example, the iron wrought art on Levels 11 and 12 represents passion and sincerity). Local elements of Tamsui are featured in the hallways; for example, quotes from the diary of Dr George Mackay, help guests to feel closer to the local lifestyle.

Different scenes are shown on each level. Figure 21 is an example of one such illustration of waterfowls in the mangroves. The beautiful Tamsui River can be seen from the hallway windows, soothing and relaxing guests. At the end of the hall is a paper kite (Fig. 22). “The paper kite on the wall looks like it’s flying over this little town. We are all like this paper kite; although we long to fly high, we remain in the places to which we belong, with only brief internals of freedom” (D1).

All the wall hangings in the corridors of Hotelday+ Taichung are urban scenes of Taichung City. The hallways are lined with long wooden tables, and the walls are adorned with old photographs of the city hall. Another interesting decoration is the work of well-known

contemporary poets, written on the lids of old oil drums, signifying the importance of the industrial sector in the history of Taichung. “The lighting in the hallway is very comfortable” (T1). Guests stepping out of any elevator at Teascape Chiayi are greeted by an abundance of natural light from floor to ceiling windows and simple, clean designs.

Elevator area designs. The statue placed at the elevators of Hotelday+ Chiayi wears a sign around his neck proclaiming “Smile, the door is opening”. On the walls of the entrance to the elevators, different objects are used to spell out the words “Have a nice DAY” (Fig. 23). The sixth floor, in particular, boasts a generous spatial design, with natural light flooding through the large skylight in the center.

Excerpts of the diaries of Dr Mackay are on display near the elevators at each level of Hotelday+ Tamsui.

The floor to ceiling windows that greet each guest stepping out the elevators at Hotelday+ Taichung have a winged design that create the impression of flying. There is also a convex mirror on each floor painted with different expressions. “The windows near the skylight look like birds ready to fly. When illuminated by the sunlight, they really do look like they are flying in the sky” (T1). “As soon as I came out of the elevator, I saw a set of wings and a smiling convex mirror. The wings and mirror expressions on each floor are different” (T3). In front of the elevator is a painting of the Taiwan black bear. The bear is holding something in its right hand and a paintbrush in the other. “The staff at the hotel counter explained to me that the bear isn’t happy with its appearance and wants to paint itself to look more glamorous” (T2). The elevators at Teascape Chiayi are also decorated with stacked tea chests.

Guestroom style and design. Every room at Hotelday+ Chiayi is designed with different form. The spatial design is clean and simple, without excessive decoration. The basic color scheme is white, paired with furniture in warm colors. The rooms are furnished with a double bed, sofa, television, and writing desk with teabags, cups, and drinking water, as well as a fridge and a safe. The bathrooms have bathtubs where guests can bathe while watching TV through the clear glass. The bathroom has an open plan design, and the bathtubs are a feature of Hotelday+. The bathroom and bedroom walls are decorated with photographs of Chiayi scenery. “The room is very spacious and all required facilities are provided. All in all, guests are made to feel very comfortable” (J3). “Hotelday+ Chiay is not just a hotel, it’s like a home” (J3). “The rooms are clean and brightly designed. The bathrooms are very large and the facilities are new and modern, with wet and dry areas separated” (J2). “Above the sofa is an old photograph of local Chiayi” (J1). “The bathroom is separated from the room using clear floor to ceiling glass, creating a spacious, open plan feel” (J3).

Every room at Hotelday+ Tamsui features a large photograph of Tamsui, showcasing local culture and customs. There is also a bike rack in each room, making it a cyclist-friendly hotel. The room is thoughtfully laid out with regard to space and lighting, making guests feel comfortable. The photographs on the wall and the idea of cycling in Tamsui create a breezy feeling, like the imagery implied by the Chinese name of the hotel [Tamsui Cuifeng, or *Tamsui Breeze*]. Behind the door is a DAY-branded clothes rack, saving closet space and making the room appear larger. Dual-use shampoo and bath gel are provided in the bathroom in reusable packaging, which is more environment-friendly. The toilet is both ergonomically and aesthetically designed. The two mugs are emblazoned with the mascot Hanji, and the sofa has a retro flavor. “Simple and clean, it feels comfortable” (D1). “The photographs of cycling on the wall made me impulsively want to ride out on a bike and feel the sea breeze”

(D2). “The kite on the glass seemed to be beckoning us to take it outside and let it fly high” (D3). The rooms are designed with multicultural, diverse styles (Fig. 24). The Waterfowl (Standard) Room is elegant and comfortable. The two-person Mangrove Classic Room has an open-plan bath, Spanish style interior design, and an overall more romantic décor. The red theme wall and the large mangrove painting fills the room with an exotic feel. The Japanese-style Collection Room can sleep four people and is suitable for families. “I love the sitting room off to the side, with the black sofas and plush red carpet” (D1).

The rooms at Hotelday+ Taichung are very large, with floor to ceiling glass windows along one side, providing excellent natural light. The rooms have a clean, minimalist design, and the space is cleverly used, with artwork doubling as clothes racks. Beside the bed in each room is a small armchair and side table, as well as a trendy purple sofa and eagle cushions. A large photograph also hangs on the wall. “We stayed in the four-person Peacock family suite. The room is simply and elegantly designed, very spacious, with a small sitting room. It’s perfect for a family or a group of friends” (T1). “The rooms are cleverly and creatively laid out, maximizing the available space. For example, the pictures on the wall appear to be just images at first glance, but seen from a different angle I realized they were clothes racks” (T2).

The simple layout of guestrooms at Teascape Chiayi makes ample use of all available space; for example, the bathroom appears hidden behind the door. There is an open clothes rack in place of a wardrobe. The rooms are bright and contemporary, with a light color scheme and elegant, clean spatial design. The bathroom in particular has a translucent feel, with sunlight flooding in and lighting up the whole room. Rooms appear larger and more spacious due to the open plan style. “We love the bathrooms, the lighting is excellent” (JT3).

Restaurant design. The Breezy Shore Cantonese Restaurant at Hotelday+ Chiayi is very elegantly designed. In Tamsui, the Male Tree Continental Restaurant is decorated with reinforced iron to create the shapes of mangroves, which form the inspiration for the restaurant name. The walls are painted with the theme of ‘dancing mangroves’ by two French artists, Christophe Chevance and Olivier Ferrieux. The yellow iron columns downstairs represent the mangrove *Kandelia* roots. The Male Tree Restaurant in Hotelday+ Taichung is open and spacious, with sofas for chairs and a unique interior design (T3). Although the Shan Shan Restaurant at Teascape Chiayi cannot be described as spacious, it is neat and simple, reflecting the sunlight shining through the asymmetrical windows.

Light, shadow, and multimedia design. At Hotelday+ Chiayi, light strips are embedded into the wooden wall of the doorway. Another unique feature is the clock projected onto the wall (Fig. 25), utilizing the Tropic of Cancer concept. In the elevators at Hotelday+ Tamsui, the number for each floor is also projected onto the panel (Fig. 26). The lights reflecting off the wall change color, creating a feeling of partitioned space, despite the fact that the room is not divided. At night, the yellow rays reflecting off the silver fish drifting peacefully in front of the glass window create a more dramatic look (Fig. 27). The lighted buildings and grounds at Teascape Chiayi also produce a strikingly elegant visual effect (Fig. 28). The walkways sparkle like a trail of stars, accompanied by the sound of flowing water and whispering of bamboo. The eyes and mouth of the mascot Hanji also glow in the dark (Fig. 29). “At night, candles are lit in the glass jars by the little bridge, looking very romantic” (JT1). The N23.5 Sky Lounge becomes a lighted pool lounge by night, which feels indescribably luxurious, especially when enjoying a drink on the sofas listening to soft jazz. “The lighting makes the whole evening more romantic” (JT4). Beside the pool is a projector screen used at night.

“The projector cloth screen is so cool” (JT3). “Coming to Teascape is an exotic experience” (JT2).

Staff interaction

Hotelday+ staff explains all the artworks and design elements to guests. They are courteous, cheerful, immaculately attired, and equipped with strong problem solving capability, which is instrumental to the business maintaining competitiveness.

Also, Hotelday+ is pioneering an industry first: Each guest services officer at the reception counter has access to an extra NT\$5,000 to be used in meeting the unexpected personal requirements of guests. This allowance enables staff to surprise guests with personalized, timely service.

Enthusiasm and thoughtfulness of staff. The reception desk staff at Hotelday+ Taichung is friendly and enthusiastic. “They patiently introduced the hotel facilities and provided useful information to guests. If guests were not locals, they also provided recommended local attractions and eating places” (T1). The staff at Hotelday+ Chiayi is similarly accommodating. “The smiles on their faces make you feel at ease” (T2).

Response to incidents. When I recall my stay at Hotelday+ Tamsui, what I remember most clearly is not the beautiful room, the exquisite breakfast, or the attractive interior design. I remember that it felt like home. Why? At around 10pm, I was on my way out the door, heading for the convenient store across the road. Just as I was about to step out, a voice behind me called out, “It’s cold outside, put on a jacket before you go!” Just a simple line, but the kindness is not easily forgotten” (D2).

Young, cheerful, and helpful staff. Staff is extremely careful and detail-oriented in preparing the guestrooms. With the exception of management, the staff at Hotelday+ Taichung all appears relatively young, under 30 years old. It is especially surprising to see young housekeeping staff, as these are generally roles filled by older, more experienced women. “I want to compliment the staff at Male Tree Restaurant. We asked the waiter to heat up the seafood pancake we’d bought the day before. We thought he would just microwave it, but it came back heated, sliced, and nicely plated. Excellent service” (T3). “The whole environment, the atmosphere, the lighting, and the courteous staff make people feel at home and welcome” (JT1). “We were delighted when the staff offered us warm cups of tea as we were checking in” (JT2). “The staff is very friendly. They offered us tea as soon as we sat down. For tea-lovers like us, it’s lovely that we can have tea here wherever we are” (JT4).

Professional (illustrated) guides and commentary. Speaking of Hotelday+ Chiayi: “As soon as we sat down, friendly staff brought us tea, and very carefully described the rooms and explained the hotel facilities” (J1). Another guest commented that Teascape Chiayi provides illustrated guides (JT3) (Fig. 30).

Comparison of Hotels

Differences in buildings. One difference between Teascape Chiayi and the other Hotelday+ establishments is that in contrast to the other branches, which were refurbished from old buildings, Teascape was designed and built entirely by the Hotelday+ Group.

Simple, relatively low key entertainment and dining facilities. Compared to the views of Freund de Klumbis (2002) in her paper, *Seeking the “Ultimate Hotel Experience”*, Hotelday+ is not just an accommodation venue but also provides design context, unique experiences, and entertainment, making the hotels travel destinations in themselves. The experience-economy is blended into an ultimate hotel experience. With the exception of Teascape Chiayi, the entertainment facilities of Hotelday+ are simple and low-key; for example, a gymnasium and game room. Teascape offers more cultural experiences and accompanying activities. Although Teascape does not have a branch of the Male Tree Restaurant like Tamsui and Taichung, it does offer the Shan Shan Restaurant. The Breezy Shore Restaurant at Hotelday+ Chiayi also offers more simple fare.

Strengthening brand recognition. The mascot Hanji for Teascape, one of the most recent additions to the Hotelday+ chain, features the shadow of a flower pot on its head. The mascots at the other hotels also have minor differentiating features. Hanji has a flower on its head at Hotelday+ Chiayi, a bird on its head in Taichung, and a hat on its head in Tamsui. Hotelday+ Chiayi has also relocated the statute of a bowing man, which previously greeted guests at the door, to the elevators in the lobby, replacing him with Hanji at the entrance. The tea and designer products that used to be sold in the small store have also been replaced with Hanji-themed products. The response of consumers is evident from the enthusiastic participation in Hanji-themed design and art competitions. Pictures of or photos taken with Hanji are often extremely popular on Facebook. From a management perspective, Hotelday+ is highlighting the unique features of each hotel while also building consistent brand recognition.

Brand-specific slogans or mottos. The lobby of each hotel displays its own motto, usually tied to the style or theme of the hotel. Tamsui: “It’s a beautiful day!”; Taichung: “Have a nice day!”; Hotelday+ Chiayi: “It’s not a hotel, it’s a home”, and at Teascape the theme is “Renewal”.

Key Factors to Creating Sensory Service Experience

Background and style of operators. The popularity of Hotelday+ can be largely attributed to the insight and design philosophy of Chairman Dai, who explains that although integrating art and culture into hotels was a fairly bold venture, the market has responded well. The average occupancy rate at Hotelday+ Chiayi, he says, is nearly 80%. His success story echoes the viewpoints of Mayer (1979), who believed that style determines how one thinks and solves problems. Style reproduces models, whether through behavior or through creative works. The style of a business operator determines his/her thought processes and approaches to problem-solving (Mayer, 1979). Once a certain style is adopted, it is reproduced in the same form, whether through individual behavior or through products or works created. Hotelday+ combines local culture and aesthetics, attentive service, exquisite food, and courteous staff to create rich journeys for its guests. Style is expressed through different media, such as spatial design, experience, activities, lifestyle products, and the attitude of staff. For example, Hotelday+ staff are not only friendly but able to provide on the spot services customized to the meet the needs of the individual.

Service strategy, design, and deployment. Hotelday+ integrates cultural experience with accommodation services (strategic positioning), designs the hotel layout and services to match (service experience design), and bases its business development on the core features of local culture (deployment). In designing service experience, in particular, the Hotelday+

Group must consider the corresponding relationships and compatibility among the venue, the products, and the experience itself. As an example, Teascape Chiayi is designed around Alishan tea and relevant local customs. Guests are provided with various opportunities to experience the full spectrum of the tea culture. Externally, the building is built to resemble stacked up tea chests, surrounded by driftwood fashioned into the shapes of animals. The courtyard leading to the entrance, with its white chairs, bamboo forests, and an antique stove for brewing tea, provides a glimpse into the environment of a local tea-growing family. The indoor tea gallery enables guests to relax and chat while sampling tea. The rooms are filled with images of Alishan and other mountainous scenery. Even the welcome card on the bed depicts scenes from Chiayi. Teaware is artfully arranged in tea baskets, and high-grade Alishan mountain tea is provided for the enjoyment of guests. The snacks are custom-made by the famous Lian De Tang in Tainan City. Teabags are handmade with kraftpaper and hand-marked with the image of a tea leaf. Tea bath sachets are provided to guests as well. The rooms are named after the 24 seasonal cycles, such as grain rain, summer solstice, white dew, and minor snow, like the poem on the wall, “I dreamt of a pair of purple-grey wings, on which I flew to and from the Tropic of Cancer and the equator, circling the spring equinox and summer solstice”.

Spatial style and design. Building on the processes of the experience economy, Hotelday+ utilizes innovative style and design to create brand-specific service experiences. The design style of Hotelday+ plays an essential role in creating context, building atmosphere, and organizing activities. Clever layout and exquisite décor promotes an air of elegance and comfort, stimulating the senses of guests and encouraging positive memories. For example, the lights, colors, furniture textures, mirrors, and decorations in a room work together to create visual and emotional effects, conveying a sense of well-being. The common areas are designed to promote a warm, comfortable atmosphere. From the perspective of service deployment, notable features of Hotelday+ spatial design include the following: (1) Spaces are designed to feature local cultural or historical concepts. (2) Interiors are decorated with the artwork and sculptures of local artists. (3) Photographs of the local cityscape and scenery fill the hallways and guestrooms, revealing a glimpse of the city before guests experience it for themselves. (4) Staircases are a focal point of spatial design, at each level portraying diverse elements of local culture or attractions.

Appealing to the emotions of consumers through creative writing. Words and slogans can have a powerful emotional effect on consumers. Just as authors or poets are skilled in creating word pictures of a person or environment, Hotelday+ focuses on integrating text with spatial design to create service experience. For example, the welcome card at Hotelday+ Chiayi says:

*Thank you for coming,
To our charming city beneath Alishan mountain.
We hope that the beautiful scenery and the smiles of our staff
Will wash away all the weariness of your journey.
Traveling shows us that even though the spirit is willing,
the flesh may be weak,
and that's why Hotelday+ Chiayi makes your travels better,
because a sound night of sleep means a wonderful tomorrow.*

Hotelday+ Taichung: In our busy lives, we are empowered by small but tangible pleasures, whether it be a lovely meal, an engaging journey, or an enjoyable travel lodge. The unique [Chinese] name of Hotelday+ Taichung, which is literally translated as *Birdlife*, creates a

lighthearted, happy feeling, conjuring up images of birds flying happily in the skies. Perhaps simple blessings, rather than luxury, are all we need to be happy (excerpt from Hotelday+ Taichung website).

Integrating local culture into services. Teascape Chiayi, which has been described as a trademark Hotelday+ establishment, has developed tea into more than just a commodity; rather, it is the essence of its environment. This is an example of transforming local culture into substantiated outcomes. In the list below, we analyze the design of sensory service experience in Hotelday+, from a perspective of cultural and creative value: (1) Visual transmission and design: Examples include the floor numbers projected onto the elevator wall, the clock projected onto the marble wall, the lighted exterior of the buildings at night, the visual effects of the hotel lobbies, and the night scene at the rooftop pool. (2) Sculpture and artistic design: Examples include the metal sculptures, art installations, and landscaping of the hotel grounds. (3) Craft: Examples include the artisan works in the hotel lobbies, the creative design of keepsakes and experiential products, and the harmonious yet ingenious room arrangements. (4) Multimedia application: Examples include the multimedia audiovisual experience provided at the skypool, and the MAC photo software provided to guests in the lobby. (5) Graphics: Examples include the design and branding of the mascot Hanji and Hanji-themed products, styled name cards and stationery, and the creative illustrations on the household items provided in guestrooms. (6) Artistic design: Examples include the large paintings and photographs in rooms and along corridors, as well as the color schemes and illustrations on restaurant walls.

As discussed above, sensory service experience is the combined outcome of many elements such as environment, activities, products and services, text and graphics.

Exceed customer expectations. Hotelday+ strategically designs service experiences to demonstrate its capabilities and strengthen its competitive edge. For example, the staff are young, cheerful, and attentive to guests. Each hotel provides guests with memorable experiences that exceed their expectations and create a sense of anticipation and amazement. For example, the bird habitat in the skylight at Hotelday+ Taichung, the winged designs on each floor, the carved bear holding a paintbrush with which to repaint itself...the effects of these pieces of art are dramatic. Each hotel also has a blog through which it can share its vision, features, and posts from Hanji. The architecture of Teascape Chiayi breaks the traditional mold, resembling a stack of tea chests.

In summary, important factors that affect sensory service experience are the background and style of operators, strategic design and deployment of services, innovative venue design, poignant text, culture-integrated services, and consumer emotions with regard to a sense of anticipation and amazement.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Our objectives were to build a design model of sensory service experience and explore the key factors to creating such experiences in culturally-designed hotels. Our findings can serve as reference for organizations seeking to increase their competitiveness through sensory experience. In this chapter we outline our findings, make recommendations for how hotels can improve their sensory service experience, and suggest approaches to further research.

Conclusion

We found that culturally designed hotels create sensory service experience through the following six constructs: Lifestyle expression, design and form of services, design and display of products, participation in creative activities and experiences, architectural and interior design and aesthetics, and the qualities of hotel staff. The Hotelday+ Group utilizes spatial design, culturally rich experiences, and strategic positioning to deliver services in a manner that impresses its unique style on guests. As a result, Hotelday+ establishments have become popular travel destinations.

At the core of Hotelday+ is the experience of local culture and customs (strategic positioning), and this shapes its physical surroundings and services (design). Each Hotelday+ establishment has been developed to showcase local cultural features (deployment). We conclude that the most important element of designing service experience is expressing lifestyle. After identifying their style and strategically positioning their services, hotels must then link service media through the process and design of service experiences. This echoes the findings of Lin (2011), who wrote that culture is really a type of lifestyle, formed from the preferences and beliefs of a group of people.

The key factors underlying how the Hotelday+ Group creates sensory service experience are as follows: (1) Background and style of business operators; (2) strategic positioning, design, and deployment of services; (3) innovative venue design; (4) emotionally descriptive or poignant text; (5) culture-integrated services; (6) stimulation of consumers emotions, particularly eliciting feelings of anticipation and amazement. Words and slogans can appeal to the emotions of consumers and become service touchpoints. With its focus on spatial design, coupled with word pictures and cultural activities, the Hotelday+ Group transforms folk influences into tangible products and services. As a result, the hotels have become more than merely accommodation venues; to guests, they are emotionally uplifting environments. The key explanation for this is that the Hotelday+ service experience is the sum of many different types of value, which culminate in a rewarding guest experience.

Implications for Management and Recommendations

Culturally designed hotels integrate local history and customs into their planning and development so that their products and services are linked to local culture, enabling guests to experience the local lifestyle. In addition to creating an appealing environment and cultural experiences, hotels must also endeavor to satisfy the requirements of their guests with regard to entertainment. Teascape Chiayi strongly emphasizes experiential marketing, which is evident in the superior quality of its activities and service experience. From a commercial perspective, this highlights the importance of developing an experience economy, as well as demonstrates that hotels seeking to provide more creative and cultural value should ensure that they have a sound commercial base from which to showcase their cultural features. Words can have a powerful influence on young consumers. Hotels should thoroughly research the ideals and dreams of young consumers, and design service experience and prepare marketing material that resonates with their imaginings.

Due to limited staff, resources, and time, this study only researched guests of the Hotelday+ Group. Our results may not be applicable to service experiences in all culturally-designed hotels in Taiwan. Therefore, we recommend that future researchers explore more case studies of service experience in order to build an evaluation model for the quality of service

experience in cultural and creative hotels. There is an interactive relationship between the design of service experience and customer service requirements. Through the former, companies can effectively guide customer requirements and manage their standards for service experience. We suggest that future studies, utilizing quantitative analysis, sample guests who have stayed two or more days at culturally designed hotels, research their feelings and requirements with regard to customer experience, and provide accurate recommendations for sensory service experience based on the results. Also, interview data showed that among the five main constructs of qualia, subjects reacted most strongly to the construct of cuteness, which is a topic that future studies can explore to a more in-depth level.

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Figure: 2 Hanji Membership Card.



Figure: 3 Hotelday+ Guestroom Items.



Figure: 4 Room Card and Document Folder.



Figure: 5 Mirror Decoration.



Figure: 6 Glass Refrigerator.



Figure: 7 Bathroom Sign.



Figure: 8 No Smoking Sign.



Figure: 9 Customized Sweets.



Figure: 10 Do Not Disturb Sign.



Figure: 11 Hotelday+ Chiayi.



Figure: 12 Hotelday+ Tamsui.



Figure: 13 Hotelday+ Taichung.



Figure: 14 Teascape Chiayi.



Figure: 15 Mascot Hanji.



Figure: 16 Statute of Bowing Man.



Figure: 17 “Hotelday+” Spelled using Books.



Figure: 18 Robotic Ostrich.



Figure: 19 Cat-designed Corridor.

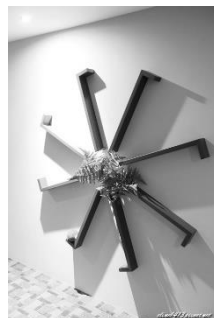


Figure: 20 Time Wheel.



Figure: 21 Hallway Painted with Mangroves and Waterfowl.



Figure: 22 Flying Kite.

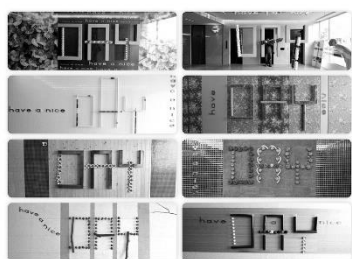


Figure: 23 Decorative Text.

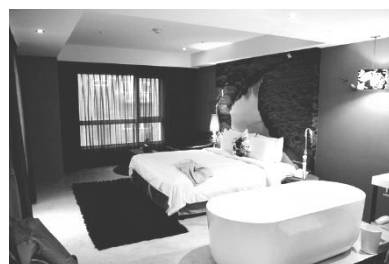


Figure: 24 Exotic Guestroom.



Figure: 25 Projected Clock.

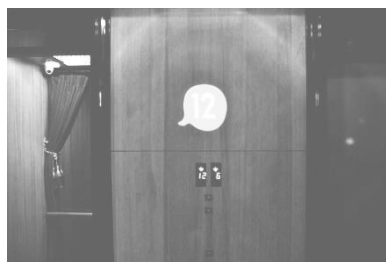


Figure: 26 Projected Floor Number.



Figure: 27 Lighted fish at Night.



Figure: 28 Teascape after Dark.



Figure: 29 Glow in the Dark Hanji.



Figure: 30 Illustrated Explanation.