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## Chapter 2

### **Emerging Paradigms in Luxury: Understanding Luxury as an Embodied Experience in a Yoga Retreat Holiday**

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#### **Introduction**

Come along on a yoga holiday in Thailand. You are starting the day with energising and dynamic Flow yoga and ending the day with relaxing Yin yoga practice. During the day, there is a possibility of asana-clinic practices and relaxing massage. You can attend the yoga classes as often as you wish. Whether you wish to enjoy the sea, walking on the beach, good food, sunbathing, strengthening yoga practice, or relaxing massage, in this yoga holiday, you are free to do anything as much or as little as you wish. –Advertisement of a Finnish yoga studio, 2016

This chapter investigates the experiential nature of luxury emerging in various practices related to a yoga retreat holiday in luxury hotel premises. In foregrounding the embodied and subjective nature of luxury, we depart from the conventional understanding of luxury defined by the managerial, product- and brand-centric views (Kapferer and Bastien, 2012) towards a notion of luxury grounded in the tourist body and bodily practices. Our perspective complements the growing consumer-centred experiential luxury views. We aim to understand luxury as it appears in the embodied form in tourist practices, understanding of the contemporary world, and luxury in the premises of a yoga retreat holiday. The first author's immersive embodied and affective experience of luxury urged her and the co-authors to wonder what it is that actually creates luxury in her yoga retreat holiday experience in luxury hotel premises and how luxury is constructed from the sensory, embodied perspective.

We reflect the bodily understanding of luxury within the setting of a yoga retreat holiday. In addition to that, we draw attention to the central role of being and doing as a body (Veijola and Jokinen, 1994), bodily moving (Chronis, 2015), and sensible knowing (Strati, 2007) in tourism experience. We demonstrate the co-creation of luxury experience through observational and autoethnographic data in the premises of a luxury boutique hotel in Thailand. Autoethnographic observations support the unwrapping of subtle affectual sensations that build individual luxury in the experience setting (Edensor, 2015; Gherardi, 2017). The yoga retreat holiday experience pertains to a set of daily bodily

exercise and an assortment of entangling embodied practices where the human body engages within the experiential setting of the social, material, and natural tourism environment. The given experience environment encloses encounters with other bodies (fellow yogis and guests, yoga teacher, hotel employees) and human-made (yoga shala' place of yoga', hotel premises and service, other service providers) as well as natural materialities (weather, sea, wind, nature). To understand luxury as an embodied experience, we first need to examine experiential luxury and embodiment concepts.

### **Towards embodied luxury experience**

Luxury is a socio-cultural construct unfolding in diverse forms in various eras and societies (Berry, 1994). Traditionally, luxury is defined as a way of life associated with product/brand-based features of expensiveness, exclusiveness, uniqueness, quality, and heritage (Chevalier and Mazzalovo, 2012; Ko et al., 2019). The rise of experiential luxury and the democratisation of luxury have contributed to shifting consumption from products and brands, from owning and experiencing (e.g., Cristini et al., 2017; Silverstein and Fiske, 2005), towards unique and personalised experiences serving self-interest more than status (Bauer et al., 2011; Yeoman, 2011). The special moments affiliating a luxury feeling in consumers' minds are emerging in luxury research. Today's individual luxury consumption is characterised by having and using luxury brands in creative and personalised manners (Atwal and Williams, 2009; Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2019). Experiencing luxury implies not only featuring the experience as a static state (Cristini et al., 2017), but emerging in performing luxury consumption (Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2019) and further, in various states of doing, being, and becoming (Cristini et al., 2017; Llamas and Thomsen, 2016). Human beings do not solely have a body. They are their living body in experiencing the world and sensorials (Merleau-Ponty, 1992). These considerations set the scene for seeing a human body as inborn in luxury tourism experience, as a foundation of how we perceive and encounter the world. Thereby, the recognised intangible nature of luxury (Bauer et al., 2011) can exist in mundane objects in given contexts (Mortelmans, 2005). The nature of luxury consumption is transformed from something ostentatious towards being something very private yet savoured with distinction.

Over the years, scholars have elaborated the elements of luxury as well as customers' perceptions of luxury value, which determine, among other aspects, functional, financial, symbolic/sign, hedonic, individual, experiential, and relational value (e.g., Hennigs et al., 2015; Tynan, Mckechnie and Chhuon, 2010; Sundbo and Dixit, 2020; Wiedmann and Hennigs, 2009 ). These typologies provide overlapping customer perceptions of luxury based on the features of a product/brand. Yang and Mattila (2016) observed that the earlier typologies of luxury value cannot be applied as such in

hospitality based on the unique nature and intangible elements of hospitality experiences such as atmosphere, mindful service, and the subtle influence of other customers. Additionally, in consumers' minds, luxury may also exist in a non-commercial context (Banister et al., 2020; Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2019). Still, luxury is bundled with quality and scarcity (Kapferer and Bastien, 2012)—whether these would be related to the enhanced level of a product, service, uniqueness of experience, or lived experience. Experiential luxury defines the quality of life over status and prestige (Yeoman and McMahon-Beattie, 2018). In hectic modern societies, consumers see luxury as a bundle of intangible elements such as time, personal fulfilment, well-being, and activities (see Yeoman and McMahon-Beattie, 2018) like rest, (re)connection with the self, self-development, and seeking resilience in the modern complex world.

Senses and sensuality are recognised to be interwoven in experiences, and they build emotional favour such as pleasure or sensory gratification (Dubois and Laurent, 1994; Holbrooke and Hirschman, 1982; Joy and Sherry, 2003). Luxury experiences are designed in a holistic multisensory manner to appeal to all bodily senses (see Hennings et al., 2012; Wiedmann et al., 2018). In their studies, Wiedmann et al. (2016, 2018) and Yang and Mattila (2016) recognised the meaning of a multisensory, soothing environment, ambience, and attentive service as invisible constituents of luxury in hospitality experiences. Luxury can be felt over our visual and cognitive perceptions. While our visuality, the tourist gaze (Urry and Larsen, 2011), is our predominant sense, the sensorium surpasses ocular perceptions, embracing the totality of human perceptions and the interpretation of it (Merchant, 2011). Indeed, rather than only 'seeing', tourists experience and perform with their whole bodies the multisensory environment, including various odours, tastes, haptics, and movement (Chronis, 2015; Valtonen et al., 2010). Considering the subjective experiencing of the world in multiple manners, luxury can have various interpretations and embrace features out of the product/brand sphere (Sudbury-Riley et al., 2020).

The recent, developing stream of academic discussion alludes to luxury as private and unnoticeable from others and suggests luxury as not being related to a brand/product (Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2019). Hemetsberger et al. (2012) unveiled intrinsic 'moments of luxury' and projects related to the self in studying the nature of everyday luxury through consumer diaries. Bauer et al. (2011) also related luxury consumption to the self and inward experience. Moreover, their study disconnected luxury from conspicuous consumption and showed the private side of consuming 'luxuries'. Scholars (Banister et al., 2020; Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2019) have hinted that luxury may unfold in a lived experience or relation to an activity. Luxurious states can be seized in consumers' mundane luxury

practices even though the objects themselves do not correspond to traditional luxury (Banister et al., 2020; Bauer et al., 2011). The functional/sign values related to luxury product/brand give way to more subjective preferences and emotional and prudential value (Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2019). Recent studies have highlighted the cultural understanding and experiencing luxury in highly private ways in various contexts. Luxury is no longer understood only as features of a product/brand or being a static object. Instead, luxury consumption is comprehended as dynamic co-created construction in practices (Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2019; Tynan et al., 2010). Contemporary luxury has become a highly subjective matter that is relational, context-dependent, embodied in nature, and always on the move (see Holmqvist et al., 2020; Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2019).

The concept of the embodiment provides new lenses to study the dynamic nature of luxury more deeply in focusing on the relationship between the human body and experiential luxury in the contemporary socio-cultural context. Experiencing in tourism settings through embodiment involves bodily being, moving, and sensing the tourism place, space, activities, things, and other bodies. Simultaneously, the body is a subject and an object, as the body is affecting and affected in engaging within the tourism world (Palmer and Andrews, 2020). In their pioneering work, 'The Body in Tourism', Veijola and Jokinen (1994) presented the experiencing and performing tourist body. According to them, the corporeal and embodied performances experienced through the body are foundational parts of the tourism experience. Later, in tourism research, the body has been increasingly recognised as substantial when understanding touristic experiences. There has been a growing body of studies in tourism dealing with the experiencing body for some time. Wang (1999) rethought the authenticity in tourism experiences and recognised the intra-personal layer of existential authenticity, highlighting the body as a primary organ and the inner fountain of feelings and sensual pleasure. Inauthenticity results in the abandonment of both the spiritual and the corporeal body. Since 2000, in tourism studies, the body has been related to gender or sex (Johnston, 2001), identity/self (Elsrud, 2001; Saxena, 2018), or tourism experience (Edensor, 2000; Pritchard et al., 2007; Li, 2000). The shift seems to show a gradual abandonment of the body's objectivity and take inspiration from the greater potential to discuss the body as a physical means. The human body is more and more seen in its corporeal entity as a co-creating actor that interacts with the world mentally, physically, and internally and through the visceral senses and movement. Academics have recognised the meaning of a performing human body, its relation with the surrounding place and space in the creation of experiences (Crouch and Desforges, 2003; Pons, 2003).

Tourism places surround tourists' bodies, and tourism places envelop bodies (Chronis, 2015). The knowing of luxury is essentially emerging in performing luxury consumption (Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2019), the tourism environment, and its practices. Knowing arising in 'practice' foregrounds creative tourists who invent and constitute experience space in their rational minds and through their corporeality, which allows them to form sensible knowledge (Crouch, 2003; Strati, 2007, p. 66). The human body within its environment is recognised as a site of knowledge production also through sensual knowing (Gherardi, 2017).

To advance our understanding of the embodied luxury experience, we investigate bodily practices in a yoga retreat holiday in luxury hotel premises. We study how bodies, things, sayings, and doings are understood in the practice of a yoga retreat holiday experience. Schatzki (2001, p. 2) defined practices as 'embodied, materially mediated arrays of human activity centrally organised around shared practical understanding'. Edensor (2000) observed that it is essential to understand tourism as a constant process of (re) designing praxis. Tourists apply their own imagination (Crouch and Desforges, 2003) in various ways of performing the tourism environment. In exploring the tourist's practices empirically, we concentrate on how practical understanding of luxury arises in yoga retreat holiday everyday practices and foregrounds the knowing body.

## **CASE STUDY START**

### **CASE STUDY 2.1: Yoga retreat holiday**

The tourism setting of this research is yoga retreat holidays. When discussing Yoga, we refer to the modern postural yoga practice as distinct from the original Indian yoga tradition and more profound philosophy. Modern Yoga is characterised as a mix of mental and physical exercise performed to accomplish enhancement in health, self-development, fitness, and esotericism, among other aspects (Hauser, 2013). De Michelis (2008) featured modern Yoga as more private, commodified, and medicalised than pre-modern Yoga. Aligning modern hybrid conceptualisation, the term 'yoga' here refers to a bundle of bodily practices, discourses, and ideas that arose at the end of the nineteenth century in Europe and North America (Hauser, 2013). Smith and Kelly (2017) defined yoga retreats as yoga-based holidays with everyday yoga classes offering diverse Yoga types (ashtanga, hatha, yin, kundalini, etc.). Speier (2020) made a distinction between yoga retreats and yoga holidays. According to Speier (2020, p. 71), yoga retreats denote 'a place for spiritual renewal, detoxing and pure yoga', while yoga holidays are associated with tourism elements and Yoga. Yoga historian Rautaniemi (personal communication, July 15, 2020) stated that even though Yoga is known as a strict and ascetic

practice, today's yoga retreats are oases in which tourists are able to concentrate on yoga practice in the pursuit of feeling well. In contemporary societies, Yoga has become a brand of a good life.

Today many luxury hotel chains—like Mandarin Oriental, Six Senses, and Small Luxury Hotels—offer Yoga or wellness retreat holidays that include Yoga (Fig. 2.1). Modern yoga holidays represent 'unplugging' from the demands of hectic Western life and are seen as luxurious compared to the modern lifestyle (Speier, 2020). Yoga has become a commercialised business. Yoga retreats and getaways are part of a bigger wellness travel trend and market covering 639 billion USD and growing at 8 percent a year, which is twice the growth of tourism globally (Global Wellness Institute, 2018). Koch (2013) found that yoga practitioners taking a yoga holiday were remarkably more affluent than their yogic coequals not attending yoga holidays. Yoga and yoga retreat holidays are especially favoured among the global educated middle class as a way to cope with their everyday life (Altglas, 2008). For modern women, contemporary Yoga serves as an empowerment platform (Newcombe, 2013). Indeed, yoga holidays and getaways are seen as a luxurious form of well-being tourism (Speier, 2020) in providing holistic rest, recovery, and inspiration.

**PLEASE PLACE FIGURE 2.1 HERE.**

**Figure 2.1: Flow yoga at the beach**      Source: Retreat participant Aino Salonen

A yoga retreat holiday is an embodied practice in which tourists use their own body as a means to co-create the yogic experience they are seeking. Still, modern yogis are not merely practising Yoga every morning and evening or continuously occupied with related activities. As the opening vignette shows, yogic bodies are invited to enjoy the holistic experience in yoga retreat holiday premises. Relaxing, socialising in the inspiring company, eating healthy, sleeping, having 'me-time', and reconnecting with oneself are common rejuvenating practices in immersing into the yogic Shangri-La. The embodied experience reaches outside the borders of yoga practice. Touristic bodies perform in the holistic tourism environment in entangling practices with social, material, and natural surroundings. The holistic experience in luxury hotel premises sets various expectations for overall high quality, nuances, and service encounters and the bodily and sensory perspective in the creation of a luxury experience.

Smith and Kelly (2017) stated that yoga retreat holidays take place in a suitable setting in their typology of retreats. Lea (2008) drew attention to the retreat environment, nature, healing properties, and retraction. The tired bodies of travelling yogis might be quite sensitive to the qualities of the

material, immaterial, social, and natural environment. Yogis might be suffering from jet-lag symptoms, be tired of yoga practice, or they might usually prefer calmness around them. These conditions require sensitivity regarding the design of the environment to fulfil yogis' dreams of the healing sphere in the retreat holiday. Healing places include four environmental elements: natural, built, symbolic, and social (Gesler, 2003). Merging a natural environment and Yoga provides an extra layer for tourists searching for popular mind-body experiences. Besides providing a purposeful natural environment, the setting of a yoga retreat holiday in luxury hotel premises sets expectations for the built, symbolic, and social environment.

Designed with relaxation in mind amidst the gentle waters of the Gulf of Thailand. The beautiful beach getaway offers just the right blend of relaxation and revitalisation, with stunning tropical surroundings and a choice of tantalising indulgences. While complete tranquillity comes first and foremost, there are also still plenty of invigorating activities to intrigue the mind, awaken the body, and satisfy the soul. –Extract from a luxury hotel website

This and similar excerpts illuminate that many yoga retreat holidays in Asian luxury hotels or resorts are situated in the middle of stunning natural beauty and represent a carefully designed human-made environment. The environment usually stirs the soul and emanates something almost spiritual. As opposed to the marble and gold of traditional luxury hotel decoration, the curative interiors embrace boutique hotel style with the beauty of imperfection in the spirit of wabi-sabi (traditional Japanese aesthetics): beauty, rough natural materials, organic features, and cultural artefacts. The soothing multisensory premises (Wiedmann et al., 2016) welcome drained modern bodies to find inner peace not only through Yoga, mindfulness, nature, healing treatments, and healthy nutrition but moreover with their caring encounters. As Kreuzer et al. (2020) and Sudbury-Riley et al. (2020) have found in their studies, authentic luxury is more about experiencing humanity in encounters than having fawning service. Sustainability is a constituent of quality in luxury (Kapferer and Michaut, 2015), and it materialises in various ways. Responsible service providers contribute to the sustainable development of local culture and espouse sustainable development goals (UN, 2015). This resonates with the multinational clientele, as they see themselves giving importance to health and well-being as well as to environmental and social responsibility to promote a responsible way of living and good for all (Strauss and Mandelbaum, 2013).

**CASE STUDY END**



## **Methodology**

In this chapter, we reflect on luxury through the lenses of embodiment in the context of a yoga retreat holiday experience. The vignettes result from the first author's autoethnographic fieldwork conducted in January 2016–June 2019 during her three yoga retreat holidays in Thailand. The accommodation was provided in a hotel belonging to a luxury boutique chain. During these week-long yoga retreat holidays, she performed tourism practices and experienced luxury in the tourism setting through her body, using her body as an instrument (Longhurst et al., 2008) and applying the methodological rigour of affective autoethnography (Gherardi, 2018; Haanpää, 2017). The first-person narration illustrates the experience of tourism practices affecting the notions of luxury, experiencing luxury through our body and beyond our conscious mind. Therefore, the tourist's—and here the researcher's—body can be considered as a central instrument in participating in the entanglements and practices in the tourism environment (Longhurst et al., 2008). To analyse the experiences, we carefully read the first author's fieldwork diaries and studied the visual material gathered in the yoga retreat holidays. We then discussed and reflected together to elicit the memories of experiencing luxury by the first author.

It is challenging to illustrate luxury from the bodily perspective, as luxury unfolds as an intrinsic, multilayered experience. We all have our inner world inside our physical bodies, which undoubtedly affects our experiences. Words seem not to be enough to unveil the depth of the shadowed experiences. The vignettes in this chapter exemplify some sense of the first author's experience and knowing of luxury as her body remembers them. Wrestling with these methodological challenges opens the search for a suitable approach to scrutinise embodied knowing. Simply listing the practices seems not to open the essence of luxury felt through the body. How can one describe the intrinsic resonance arising from bodily practices? The regular autoethnographic depiction may result in short in providing affective attunement. Therefore, the first author grasps into the affective ethnography. Gherardi (2018, p. 2) depicted affective ethnography as a style of ethnography 'relying on [the] researcher's capacity to affect and be affected to produce an interpretation that may transform the things they interpret'. This style of research practice allows an immerse way to 'be with' the phenomena under study. It recognises that all actors, including materialities, texts, and language, are interweaved in tangled ways and 'should be read in their intra-action...as data that move' (Gherardi, 2018, p. 2). This dynamic style of ethnography allows us to seize the intangible in experiencing and studying the nature of luxury in bodily practices.

According to the postmodern understanding, knowledge can also be gathered through sensory input (Strati, 2007; Valtonen et al., 2010). The first author gave particular focus to the role of her body, bodily movements, and sensorials to explore luxury in the tourist experience in a holistic manner. This kind of approach allows in-depth access and understanding into the inner bodily feelings and sensations of luxury in the tourist experience, which might otherwise be challenging through the use of other methods. The use of different methods, like interviews or observations, in exploring bodily luxury sensations might result in a more superficial level of understanding of luxury in the tourist's experience.

Attending a yoga retreat holiday establishes the motivation for the experience depicted in her field notes. For her, the main reasons to attend yoga holidays were related to the restorative qualities of the experience to renew the body-mind-soul into the formulation of the wellness of being and recover from the demands of the hectic Western life. The situational, spatial, social, and material practices have an important influence on how the meanings of luxury are co-created in a given environment. Luxury hotel premises provide trust and confidence in the form of a high-quality experience with calming surroundings, but they also bring peace of mind for a woman travelling alone and appreciating privacy.

The first author gathered four kinds of documentary material: ethnographic field notes, pictures, video recordings, and hotel brochures. Various materialities are predominant in the production of the meanings attached to the experience (see Haanpää, 2017). When making the field notes, she paid attention to the body (-ies) in the social setting and materialities of places, spaces, senses, affects, movement, and stillness (Lefebvre, 1991; Thrift, 2008). To analyse the nature of luxury and various ways of experiencing luxury, we have closely read the collected material, the first author's personal ethnographic story, through the concept of embodied knowing. In the description of practices, she took careful note of the sense perceptions (seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, tasting) (Roberts, 2013) and affective sensations of her own body (feelings, affects, movement, and stillness) (Jóhannesson and Lund, 2017). The embodied knowing of luxury is critically explored through her sensual body and bodily practices (see Valtonen and Haanpää, 2018). The aim is not to classify practices emitting bodily luxury but to attempt to capture the dynamic and situational nature of luxury (Barnes, 2001; Berry, 1994) to create a collaboratively constructed embodied understanding of contemporary luxury in the context of the yoga retreat experience. The conceptual exploring of tourist practices centralises in the discussions on embodied practices of a tourist towards embodied luxury experience.

## Experiencing luxury through embodiment

*I begin to dress for the first evening yin yoga. Our bodies have been forced to sit in a specific stable position in the aircraft slowing down our metabolism. Therefore, the teacher has chosen a more dynamic yin with short asanas to stretch our bodies from the restraints of the long journey to activate our metabolism and to remove the metabolic waste. From my earlier stays, I remember that there is a complimentary set of a light outfit hanging in the room's wardrobe—ideal for this state. The loose outfit pampers my tired body. As always, I slowly walk along the seashore to the evening yoga. The warm, humid breezes of the wind almost traverse my whole body and mind while the loose outfit is flowing in the wind. My body still remembers these memories from my earlier years' stays. I feel safe even though the night is falling, and I am walking alone as a woman, my feet halfway in the sea. Only some local dogs making acquaintance from time to time. Feels almost like home.*

The above vignette results from the first author's second-year stay in a yoga retreat holiday in luxury hotel premises (Fig. 2.2). She describes the embodied performances related to preparation for the first evening yoga. The vignettes presented in this chapter are written from her experience. Accordingly, the analysis below changes to first-person narration. The collection of the vignettes results from the years 2016–2019.

**PLEASE PLACE FIGURE 2.2 HERE.**

**Figure 2.2: Complimentary loose outfit in the room**

**Source: Author**

The vignette illustrates the experience from the bodily perspective in appreciable ways. First, it spotlights the affect of all bodily senses in tourist practice (Agapito et al., 2013; Veijola and Valtonen, 2007) and sees bodily being-in-the-world as an elementary practice of human beings (Csordas, 1999). Recently, Holmqvist et al. (2020) mentioned the embodied aspect of experience in their study of salsa dancing, dressing up, and the moment of luxury as hedonic escapism and aesthetics. Still, body and experiencing do not merely end at the skin. The vignette demonstrates that bodily being is affected by the natural functioning of the intestines and viscera, which guide the dressing practices and thus affects the experience. My stomach was irritated and swollen because of the long flying experience, so the loose outfit was merciful. Second, the vignette demonstrates how the performance of various actors is attuned to the customer's bodily being-in-the-world for a soothing experience. The model of

the outfit the hotel provided was loose, not tight; it did not force the body to any shape. Rather, the model was approbative, letting the body be in its relaxing natural state.

Moreover, the texture of the outfit was feather-light and of the softest cotton. The professional practice of the yoga teacher is to appraise the style of yin yoga suitable for turgid body-minds suffering from jet-lag. A dynamic practice awakens the bodily fluids, after which the physical-mental-spiritual body feels lively. From the traditional luxury research view, the hotel's complimentary outfit was valuable for many reasons. In offering a complimentary outfit, the hotel provides customers ease and time savings (Danziger, 2005). Packing my luggage back home was a bit easier since I remembered the hotel providing the purposeful loose outfit suitable for many occasions during this retreat.

Moreover, the texture of the fabric is so light and soft that it would not even hurt burned skin. Taking care of the details is one primary element in luxury experiences (Kapferer and Bastien, 2012). In addition, the pace of bodily movement, dogs, weather, and climate as natural materialities influenced the bodily experience (see Rantala et al., 2011). The repetitive rhythm of the slowly walking body and welcoming acquaintances in the familiar environment completed the feeling of being safe.

*I do not open my eyes, but I hear and feel my co-yogis silently roll out their yoga mats at the beach garden. With whispering voice and in our own pace, the yoga teacher advises us to take the child's posture. No need to open our eyes. The child's posture grounds ourselves to the coming practice. She routes us to direct our attention to the roaring sea. Healing theme music and its salt whiff... This evening's restorative yin the asanas last 3–5 minutes. I enjoy staying long in asanas [body posture in Yoga], which allows me the time to concentrate on my body and study my bodily feelings. I am allowed to let go of all other thoughts. ... At the end of the practice, we are lying down on our back in shavasana, resting position. With a soft voice, the yoga teacher is guiding us to put our right hand on the top of our heart and left hand on the top of the lower abdomen. I feel the low beating of my heart. My abdomen goes up and down, following the rhythm of my breathing—calming yin energy circulating around my body. Soon I hear the magical sounds of a koshi chime [a small bell similar to wind chimes]. The yoga teacher walks around us, holding two koshi chimes by their cord. The chimes play faintly with the wind, and their fairylike melody carries us into another world. Koshi chimes melodies are the most grounding sounds. Halfway to good night's sleep. Namaste.*

In experiences, immediate feelings and affectivities of the body happen through embodiment and senses beyond our visual perception. The body knows before the cognitive perception in the form of a pre-reflective knowing in experience setting (Merleau-Ponty, 1992). The practice of respectful silence is part of the ambience that allows yoga participants to settle down in their yogic space. Intangible elements such as ambience are focal in luxury experiences (Bauer et al., 2011; Yang and Mattila, 2016). Nature as well as social and material actors co-produce various affectivities that yield a luxurious atmosphere. The yogic space is co-performed with yoga mats and bodily movements.

As the vignette reveals, I kept my eyes closed most of the time during the yin practice. As restorative yin is slow in pace, the whole practice is easy to perform without opening my eyes. Keeping my eyes closed most of the time during the practice allows me to fully concentrate on my body and to delve into my bodily feelings and inner world. Aligning these notions, it can be stated that experiencing overlaps our visual (Urry and Larsen, 2011) and cognitive perceptions, and our skin, to the inner world. This understanding widens the understanding of experiencing as being something signalled or communicated to others (Holmqvist et al., 2020).

On the contrary, in setting the human body as a foundational actor in experiencing, the vignette departs from the traditional understanding of luxury. It reveals luxury as something that is utterly private and invisible, an emerging feeling inside of a body affected by yoga postures. Although von Wallpach et al. (2020) noted the sphere of self-transcendence, we point out the living body's dynamic, postural, and moving role through yoga asanas in reaching a self-transcendent state. These hidden luxury moments (Hemetsberger et al., 2012) and feelings of luxury in private and special space (Bauer et al., 2011) are invoked along yoga practice in relation to the surroundings. The teacher's nuanced performance choreographs yoga practice. The purposeful guiding creates a suitable atmosphere for the particular style of Yoga to enable the body-mind to relax and thus allow the participant to reach the sacred space of transcendental experience.

The type of weather and nature-based elements affect yoga practice through the senses. During the first visits, the strong wind typical of the district disturbed me. I felt the movement of the loud sea and swinging palm trees around me. With time, I got used to it. Actually, I began to imagine the wind blowing away all the burdens from my shoulders, providing a positive force to push me through everything. In the vignette, taking a particular body posture and the koshi chimes provide a grounding experience relevant to experiencing intra-personal existential authenticity. This understanding is congruent with Banister et al. (2020), who described the help of various props and how the associated

performances transformed something quite ordinary into something experientially special. However, we here centralise the attention more tightly around the bodily performances and how various bodily postures conjoined with the props create luxury in the experience. Furthermore, the sounds of koshi chimes open an avenue to a good night's sleep, allowing the yin experience to resonate in the body after the actual Yoga practise has ended. All this allowed me to relax and apply imagination to create my own intrinsic luxury space along with the practice.

*The night is falling, and housekeeping knocks carefully at the door. The lady takes off her shoes and makes turnaround service for the room: closes the curtains, sets the evening ambience with indirect soft lighting, opens the bed halfway, sets the slippers beside the bed, makes sure that there are enough water bottles, and inquires if I need anything. Quietly, with a shy smile, she exits the room. I feel I am taken good care of.... While going to bed, I fluff my own pillow, which I have brought from home. I know that the hotel is providing a pillow menu. Still, I prefer my own one. If I sleep with a different kind of pillow than I'm used to, I may get a neck ache, affecting my following day—my mood, doings, and concentration. I do not want to waste a day because of bad sleep.*

The vignette sheds light on the sleeping practices' co-created bodily, social, material, and natural elements (Valtonen and Moisander, 2012). Sleeping is part of the holistic tourism experience and inborn to our bodily being also during holidays (Valtonen and Veijola, 2011). In fact, in the modern 24/7 lifestyle, sleeping well—or at all—has become a luxury. As sleeping preconditions the tourism performance, it is hard to imagine a luxury experience without the luxury of sleeping. In foregrounding the quality of sleeping, the vignette understands experience as surpassing space, embracing also the subconscious state while asleep. As time is considered luxury (Yeoman and McMahon-Beattie, 2018), wasting time is not desirable during precious 'me-time'. We widen the attention to the quality of the time used in the subconscious state of sleeping from the bodily perspective. The subconscious state of sleeping is one layer in our bodily being-in-the-world, which affects the quality of my experience, and how I am able to use my retreat holiday time. Time would be wasted if the body were to ache because of bad sleeping, and I would be compelled to skip a yoga practice because of a headache or neck pain, or I would perform with low energy.

Further, the vignette unfolds the practices related to sleeping and highlights the co-creational performances related to a pillow from the bodily perspective. Consumer-defined luxury experiences and consumption practices are conventionally understood as related to traditional and high-priced

luxury items (Bauer et al., 2011; Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2019). Some studies (Banister et al., 2020; Hemetsberger et al., 2012) have shifted this conventional view and connect luxuries with consumers' mundane objects and practices related to them. Similarly, with earlier vignettes here, we bond the everyday objects with embodiment and embodied practices. The pillow, as a material, is of low value and does not carry any luxury status as such. Still, the practices related to the pillow unveil the special luxury meaning hidden in the item. Carrying one's own pillow from home is a practice that ensures the holistic tranquilising experience. One's own pillow has suitable softness, size, and shape to ensure a good night's sleep as well as comfort on the following day.

While turnaround service is considered as a basic component in a luxury hotel's practices, aligning with earlier mentions, it is a caretaking practice with various layers affecting the tourist's bodily being. Moreover, turning to our biological body, dimming the amount of light affects the body by prompting it to produce more melatonin, which is a signal to the body to prepare for going to sleep. Simultaneously in turnaround service, the bodies of the housekeeper and the customer are interacting in a very private place (hotel room). This demands a great deal of discretion of both bodies over discursive expressions. The housekeeper's soft bodily moving, the pace of the steps, the gentle movements, the bodily posture, and the lenient facial expressions affect the quality of the turnaround service, showing how, with several small bodily actions, the service can be considered as not disturbing one's privacy but as a nursing practice.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter posed an alternative approach to analyse consumer-centred experiential luxury from the perspective of a body. Understanding luxury as an embodied experience moves the focus from product/brand features and complements the customer-centred experiential luxury discussions. We reflected on the embodied and sensory nature of luxury in a tourist yoga retreat holiday experience. As a co-created experience, embodied luxury emerges in multiple practices, reinforcing the totality of a multisensory experience and ambience (see Wiedmann et al., 2018; Yang and Mattila, 2016). The yogic bodies are enwrapped with all the sensualities and affectivities in the luxury hotel experience environment in addition to the yoga practice. In tourism, bodies are affected by various actors, social and material, and their quality, such as tone of voice, micro-expressions, haptics, odour, and general caretaking practices, convey humanity. Sensing occurs beyond the five external senses and cognitive perceptions. Human bodies are sensible bodies—being, doing, and moving bodies. Being-in-the-world implies various states of bodily being. A body is not a static object. Rather, the body is a biological, socio-cultural entity, an imaginative co-creative actor in the experience setting.

Indeed, the meanings of luxury are reinterpreted and co-created by contemporary customers rather than defined by the brand (Tynan et al., 2010). The embodied and subjective perspective together allowed a deeper analysis of the sensitivenesses, building luxury in the practices of a contemporary tourist in search of the ideal state of being in a yoga retreat holiday.

Luxury experiences have not previously been analysed through the notion of embodiment. Our findings can be applied in tourism experience design, management, and marketing to understand better how luxury meanings, production, and consumption are shaped. Imaginative tourists redefine luxury meanings arising in contemporary societies. Well-being holidays promoting mental and bodily recovery, such as yoga retreats, are seen as luxurious by contemporary tourists living in hectic modern life. The emergence of luxury in the experience comes into existence in the holistic experience setting and encounters in addition to the yoga practice. Encounters remain with static features of humans and materials and sensitivities of social and material and immaterial practices pertaining to a sensual human body. Sensitivenesses such as a body-gentle outfit, carefully guided yoga practice, a specific way of talking or moving, and gestures in performing, for example, housekeeping practices, affect the understandings of luxury. Natural elements such as wind and seawater create affectivities in the experience setting. Further, experience-related embodied activities, and material items such as Yoga, the magical sound of a koshi chime, and mundane items like the tourist's own, physically suitable pillow, may facilitate the consumption of the experience to emerge beyond cognitive perceptions as in our imagination, in a meditative state, or while asleep. Our five external senses are entangled with the sensory experience of a being—moving and living bodies encountering each other and producing various affectivities and rhythms in tourism space. Finally, as we are corporeal human beings, the existence of embodiment is inherent in various experiences. Therefore, our study is not only applicable in a yoga retreat holiday, the luxury hotel premises of this chapter, but it can be applied further to other tourism, hospitality, and service fields.

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