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# Transformed landscapes, tourist sentiments: the place making narrative of a luxury heritage hotel in Singapore

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## ABSTRACT

The position of heritage hotels in place making narratives is not secure, given the challenges of new local developments and larger international forces. This research examines Singapore's iconic luxury heritage hotel, Raffles Singapore, against the relatively new hotels, The Fullerton Hotel Singapore and Marina Bay Sands, to identify the nexus between the island city-state's historical and contemporary position in the changing hospitality landscape, specifically addressing the concept of place making as a dynamic narrative. Applying sentiment analysis, 454 hotel guest reviews on internationally recognized travel websites were examined. The findings suggest that the dominance of a luxury heritage hotel in the narratives of place making can shift over time, subject to postmodern architectural developments in the hotel landscape and competition from other luxury heritage hotels with iconic and location histories. A key contribution to the hospitality discipline is the measurement of a luxury heritage hotel's staying power through continuous place making amid global challenges. The significance of the findings should alert hospitality practitioners specializing in marketing to potential shifts arising from continuing new competitive narratives in place making.

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luxury heritage hotel; Marina Bay Sands; place making; Raffles Singapore; sentiment analysis; the Fullerton Hotel

## Introduction

Luxury heritage hotels often stand as icons of history and destination hallmarks, especially when they are classified as high-end and have long been established as part of a national and international destination narrative. Internationally known examples of luxury heritage hotels include The Plaza in New York (United States), Suvretta House in St. Moritz (Switzerland), and Hôtel de Paris in Monte Carlo (Monaco). Contemporary research on luxury heritage hotels has progressed greatly from studying their position in placemaking (Ali & Al-Kodmany, 2012) to repackaging, creativity, and the future (Goh & Yeoman, 2020; Nieuwland & Lavanga, 2020). While tourism literature informs us of the significance and the role luxury heritage hotels play in a destination, research has been sparse on the nature of the challenges posed by larger local and international forces, which often require the hotel to remain relevant to the place making narrative (McNeil, 2018).

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The concepts of ‘placemaking,’ ‘place-making,’ and ‘place making’ have slightly different meanings. Lew (2017) defines placemaking as organized and purposeful branding by governments to the global community. Additionally, place-making is an evolutionary and uncoordinated effort by individuals. Lew further elaborates that place-making and placemaking form a continuum, and since most destinations have both unplanned and organized marketing communication regarding attractions and sites, he proposes the term ‘place making.’

Recent studies of place making in the tourism context have yielded promising results. For example, Rezaei et al.’s (2022) qualitative study in Qazvin (Iran) shows that place making positively influences the image of a city and its popularity for tourists to visit, which in turn suggests that place making could be instrumental in heritage conservation. Moreover, Su et al. (2021) confirms the significance of marketing communication (i.e. use of social media in travel information exchange) in the tourism place-making process of Pingtan Island (China), which is known for its bioluminescent ‘Blue Tears.’ Speake and Kennedy (2019) stress the importance of the cityscape aesthetics of Valetta (Malta) in place making, which results in styled-for-status built environments and streetscapes.

Despite these valuable contributions, place making lenses have rarely been applied to the world’s most visited destinations for both business and tourism. More importantly, while extending Speake and Kennedy’s (2019) ‘styled-for-status built environments’ outcome of place making, urban aesthetics in a rapidly changing destination that is rich in cultural heritage but is future-orientated and hyper-modern at the same time is little understood. Therefore, our study examines luxury heritage hotels in Singapore, a world-renowned destination that attracts millions of tourists every year, through the place making lens. Considering the dynamics of urban aesthetics, this paper investigates whether luxury heritage hotels are favored over contemporary hotels with post-modern architecture and refurbished colonial buildings converted into new heritage hotels, based on our study of Singapore. We use guest reviews to analyze perceptions and sentiments to locate the position of Raffles Singapore (RS) compared with the relatively newer and prominent luxury-class hotels, The Fullerton Hotel Singapore (FH) and Marina Bay Sands (MBS).

Guiding Research Questions (RQs) are as follows:

- (1) To what extent does RS continue to hold its place in Singapore’s dominant and historical place making destination narrative? (Goh, 2010; Henderson, 2001; Heng & Aljunied, 2009).
- (2) How do newer iconic luxury hotels such as FH and MBS feature in the minds and experiences of visitors in Singapore’s destination narrative?
- (3) What is the diverging mark of RS that distinguishes it from other newer luxury hotels in continuing to leave an indelible narrative in place making?
- (4) How does this work contribute to the positioning of luxury heritage hotels and the concept of place making?

This study aims to illustrate the concept of place making as a relevant tool for marketing communications that can be disrupted by new luxury hotel developments. In this case, RS faces competition from FH and MBS, located in the Civic District and Marina Bay.

This study first provides an overview of the setting in Singapore and then presents the key literature on topics beyond the definitions of place making. Thereafter, the applied methods are discussed, followed by findings that identify key characteristics emerging from the sentiments expressed by tourists to illustrate the depth of place making in reference to RS. The significant contribution of this study is underpinned by comparing the three luxury hotels within the context of place making in both the sentiments expressed and the experience that underlies practical outcomes. Finally, the theoretical contributions, managerial implications, study limitations, and potential areas of future research are discussed.

## Contextual background

The cosmopolitan island city–state of Singapore, located in Southeast Asia, is one of the most popular destinations for business, shopping, and tourism. Riding the wave of increased globalization and international tourism, Singapore has experienced growing tourism receipts in the past decade. Singapore's top tourism markets are China, Indonesia, and India in both unique arrivals and the value of visitors' expenditures. Tourism is therefore a major contributor to Singapore's economy. At its peak before the global COVID-19 outbreak, Singapore attracted 19.1 million visitors in 2019 (Singapore Tourism Analytics Network, 2021). In 2010, total tourism receipts were USD 18.3 billion of which USD 3.6 billion was spent on accommodation; while 2019 recorded almost USD 27.7 billion in tourism receipts, including USD 5.5 billion for accommodation. Even in 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic commenced, the total tourism receipts were still USD 4.8 billion, of which USD 1 billion was spent on accommodation (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2022).

Visitors appreciate Singapore's tropical climate, hub status (e.g. as a stopover to other destinations or as part of a multi-destination holiday), availability of high-quality accommodations, safety, ease of getting around, and many leisure activities (e.g. attractions, shopping, and entertainment; Singapore Tourism Board, 2021). Singapore offers a wide range of accommodation. Besides many boutique hotels and hostels, Singapore is known for luxury hotels like the Four Seasons Hotel, the Inter-Continental, and the Ritz-Carlton, Millennia Singapore (Visit Singapore, 2021). For short-term business or leisure travelers, luxury hotels are especially attractive for indulgence and relaxation (Singapore Tourism Board, 2020). Three iconic luxury hotels—RS, FH, and MBS—the hotels in this study, are briefly discussed hereafter.

Singapore's tourism strategies have influenced city planning decisions and vice versa, thus facilitating tourism development and promotion. As the primary destination marketing organization, the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) aligns the public and private sectors and civil society in its long-term tourism plans. Singapore's decision to capitalize on its British heritage and position itself at the crossroads of the East and West supports its tourism and branding efforts (Chang & Teo, 2009). While tourism has been at the heart of economic development plans since the 1960s, the Singapore Tourist Promotion Board's (STPB, predecessor of the present STB) Tourism Product Development Plan of 1986 recommended the preservation of cultural heritage and buildings of architectural significance, and RS's restoration was classified as 'Colonial Heritage' (Chang, 2019). In the quest to build a modern metropolis, Singapore has been said to be losing its 'oriental mystique and charm' (Centre for Liveable Cities, 2015, p. 41). The Centre for Liveable Cities (2015) sees the transition to a more inclusive approach in Singapore, where government efforts at place-making and rejuvenation of historical areas show greater sensitivity and sophistication than in previous decades, reflecting the more discerning preferences of both Singaporeans and tourists for authenticity and local flavor.

Since the 1980s, during the period of rapid industrialization and redevelopment in Singapore, the government noted a significant decrease in tourist arrivals, which led to a greater effort to conserve and 'integrate past heritage with present developments in Singapore' (Yuen, 2005a, p. 198). Before conservation efforts were emphasized, Singapore's move toward a global modernized city with improved infrastructure and rapid economic development meant that many old and historic buildings were demolished to make way for new developments. Singapore's limited land area has also contributed to the gradual removal of many buildings and areas that were once integral parts of people's lives. As a result, Singapore was at risk of becoming 'faceless, homogeneous, and lacking in indigenous identity' (Yuen, 2005a, p. 199).

Teo and Huang (1995) held that tourist perceptions and desires are the main driving force guiding the conservation policies of government agencies such as the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) and STB, raising concerns that the landscape is becoming manufactured and contrived without preserving the 'lived experiences of the locals.' Their survey revealed that tourists from non-

Asian countries such as Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom (UK), and the United States (US) preferred to visit cultural and historical attractions such as RS and Elizabeth Walk, while tourists from Asian countries preferred shopping and man-made attractions such as Sentosa. Visitors from countries such as Australia and the UK preferred colonial history with which they have an affinity, where High Tea is a key attraction activity (Thirumaran, 2008). On the other hand, Asian visitors find new man-made attractions more appealing as they do not have similar venues in their own countries.

Within the context of Singapore's heritage tourism and contemporary developments, RS, built in 1887, is considered the anchor attraction in the Civic and Cultural District and the Crown Jewel of the tourist industry as 'Singapore's most famous monument and synonymous with Singapore' (Centre for Liveable Cities, 2015, p. 56). Designated a national monument in 1987 under the Preservation of Monuments Board, the government acquired and leased out the land next to the hotel because the government and STPB wanted to enlarge the hotel to increase its commercial viability and help preserve it. Two local banks won the bid for designs closely following 'the architectural style and intensity of use of Raffles Hotel' as a luxury heritage hotel, and 'given the hotel's significance, the URA [Urban Redevelopment Authority] specified guidelines for the project and appointed an architectural design panel to oversee the conservation work' (Centre for Liveable Cities, 2015, p. 57). This shows the government's hands in placemaking. RS closed in 1989 for a massive renovation and emerged in 1991 with a new block on North Bridge Road, but its iconic Beach Road façade was retained. The hotel currently goes by the name 'Raffles Singapore,' although 'Raffles Hotel' still proudly adorns the building façade on Beach Road (Image 1.)

Interestingly, the name 'Raffles' is among the list of national institutions/symbols that require government approval for use in building names in Singapore because the public could be misled into thinking that the building and its operations are state-owned (Urban Redevelopment Authority, 2022). Thus, the privately owned RS is ensconced as a national monument for posterity.

From the late 1990s to the twenty-first century, new developments in Singapore's tourism landscape, such as FH and MBS, have seemingly created a new era of modernity and vibrancy in the tourism industry. MBS is an integrated resort comprising a variety of business, leisure, lifestyle, and tourism attractions, such as a casino and theater, hotel, restaurants, convention and exhibition



**Image 1.** Raffles Singapore. Source: Singapore Tourism Board. Posted by *Raffles Singapore*. <https://tih.stb.gov.sg>



**Image 2.** Marina Bay Sands. Source: Marina Bay Sands, Image Library – Marina Bay Sands Media Centre. <https://www.marinabaysands.com/company-information/media-centre.html>



**Image 3.** The Fullerton Hotel. Source: Singapore Tourism Board. Posted by *The Fullerton Hotel*. <https://tih.stb.gov.sg>

center, shops, museums, and public spaces. The iconic luxury hotel building comprising three tall towers supporting a large, ship-like structure at the top features in many advertisements showcasing the Singaporean landscape. MBS is visually captivating, with thousands of tourists taking photos in front of this iconic landmark. Instagram named it ‘the most Instagrammed hotel in the world’ in 2017 (Marketing-Interactive, 2017) (Image 2.)

Based on observations, FH, like MBS, is a hospitality entity where the standards and quality of service are embodied in the product and presentation display of the service personnel and assets. Postmodernity is exhibited in the world-class hotel as a colonial-era-built building that was repurposed several times before being transformed into a hotel in 2001 and gazetted as a national monument in 2015 (Image 3.)

## Literature review

The meaning of place varies from individual to individual. According to Dodge's (2007) study of Black Rock, a revered place for Zuni Indians in Mexico, a place whether bringing people to the location for interest or anchoring the historical cultural landscape to the people, has to make sense. His definition of placemaking as a compound word is an evolution of multiple claims and reinforcements by people and their lived experiences. In this regard, American Jane Jacobs champions the bottom-up approach rather than depending on government planners and outside experts bearing on a place's urban transformation (Project for Public Spaces, 2010). From the same source (quote from the website), we also learn that:

Placemaking inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community. Strengthening the connection between people and the places they share, placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value.

Places have to continuously nurture and communicate their narrative as spaces experience regeneration. In such endeavors, the staying power of a heritage site is also determined by the roles and contributions of multiple stakeholders. Based on the earlier mentioned Su et al.'s (2021) study of Pingtan Island's (Fujian Province, China) 'Blue Tears' attraction, it is critical to acknowledge the multiple stakeholders' role in place making. Tourists, industry and state actors combined with social media and national development policies all converge into a complex and dynamic interactive order in place making Pingtan Island in the tourists' imagination.

Placemaking (Mansilla & Milano, 2022), place-making (Hultman & Hall, 2012; Sofield et al., 2017), and place making (Al-Kodmany, 2020; Lew, 2017) are keywords with overlapping meanings addressed by many authors (Lew, 2017; Su et al., 2021). We shall briefly review these words as used in the research that informs this paper's investigation of the strength of a luxury heritage hotel in the face of new developments in proximity.

'Placemaking' refers to the creation of a destination or a site's image (Priatmoko et al., 2021). In other words, sites or attractions present a narrative in which they want their guests and visitors to know the context and location of their place. Speake and Kennedy (2022) observe that places are referenced in a meaningful way to tourists through media and commerce, arguing that the aesthetics of a place and messaging by human agency (i.e. the capacity of an individual to act in a given context; Bandura, 1989, 2001, 2006) combine to create placemaking. Strydom et al. (2018) state explicitly that placemaking as a concept is not limited to a single discipline and described it as a collective effort by individuals or groups living within a specific setting to re-imagine their surrounding environments, which may include projects of renovation, upgrade, and/or maintenance of lived spaces. These spaces are often repurposed to create a more attractive function, that is, activities related to places that contribute to the uniqueness of the setting. Instead of focusing on the physical end-product, placemaking focuses on the active involvement of all interested parties, such as community members, facilitators, local authorities, non-governmental groups, and academia.

Conversely, 'place-making' alludes to the idea that tourists imbibe elements of placemaking in which they—as a human agency—co-create the place with meanings they have consumed. Finally, 'place making' focuses primarily on how a place tells a story while embedding the concept of dynamic changes in how landscapes are perceived. It is the combination of the other two approaches that confirms elements within the tourism system where human agency and continuous reinforcement or mediatization confirm a place as an anchor in the destination or intertwined synonymously with the destination that is set in the minds of tourists (Lew, 2017). However, more recently, another term, 'world making', was introduced for efforts to integrate the representation of the tourism activities or places of each destination. Senses and sense making (i.e. the process of giving meaning to collective experiences by individuals; Weick, 1979, 1995; Weick et al., 2005) are deployed through the codification of the messages (Dupre, 2018; Hollinshead, 2007).

Regarding place making, we find that references or destination linkages are particularly imbued by human agency due to the impressions and shared experiences during travel (Priatmoko et al., 2021; Speake & Kennedy, 2022). Combined with the way travelers interpret impressions, the senses and sense making (Hollinshead, 2007) are further highlighted by the grandeur, high class, and worthiness of a place. Hence, the travelers’ codification of the landscape takes place through an understanding of the information as it is presented in aesthetics.

A review of the literature suggests that place making is a dynamic concept (see Figure 1). Elements of place making have been recognized as a result of or affected by broader global forces. Chang et al. (1996) discuss the influence of global and local influences on the shaping of heritage tourism in Montreal and Singapore to consider how global trends have driven the use of heritage tourism as a core strategy for urban redevelopment, while showing that local influences, such as public participation, still play an important role in the outcomes for destinations (see also Thirumaran & Minh, 2022). According to Law (1993), cities adopt heritage sites to increase revenue from tourism. This is corroborated, in part, by Chang et al. (1996), where the confluence of global and local forces interacts with the outcomes of creating new landscapes and may also lead to the preservation of iconic heritage sites. Chang et al. (1996) further suggest that these trends have led to the homogenization of tourist cities and attractions, where cities imitate each other by adopting similar strategies to attract visitors, such as waterfront parks, downtown shopping centers, and historic tourist districts.

A historic landscape with iconic buildings and increased touristification can simultaneously face pressure from an influx of tourists. Garcia-Hernandez et al.’s (2017) study shows that the place-making of Parte Vieja of Donostia-San Sebastian in Spain had incredibly built pressure on the historic city’s urban landscape so much that it had produced rising rents for accommodation and intensified the city’s tourism. In another study of heritage destinations and, more specifically, UNESCO’s World Heritage Hotels in Georgetown (Penang, Malaysia), Yeo et al. (2019) examine price, quality, value, and authenticity as a measure of intention to stay. One of the outcomes of this study suggests that authenticity is a significant factor in the decision-making of prospective guests. Taylor and DiPietro (2020) approach the ideation of placemaking when meanings are continuously attributed to a heritage site. Their survey and study of microbreweries in Charleston, South Carolina, and Asheville, North Carolina in the US found that by evoking the local histories and place identity of each of the breweries, a sense of place attachment can be created with customers. Accordingly, we posit a significant impact on place making when heritage hotels exude historicity and are connected to the local social narrative when presented to prospective visitors.

The past is brought to glory in the name of preservation through iconographic statements contributing to symbolic capital (Speake & Kennedy, 2022). Similarly, modern architecture is also con-founded with aesthetics. A city skyline at the edge of the waterfront has been a major driver of policymakers in Dubai, Hong Kong, and Singapore, acting as a beacon of global capitalism and

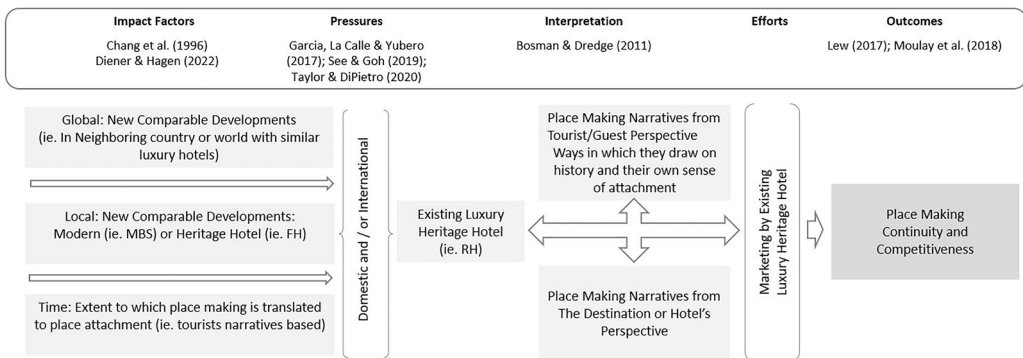


Figure 1. Place making as a dynamic concept.



transnationalism that raises the status of the city's symbolic capitalism. Yuen (2005a) states that for people to make references to a place, it must hold special significance based on their experiences and interactions there. Proshansky et al. (1983) posit place identity as a substructure that consists of cognitions about the physical world that an individual experiences.

Speake and Kennedy (2022) allude to the importance of aesthetics in place-making. In an ever-changing world, with growing competition between cities to attract visitors and hence boost tourism, a country needs to distinguish itself from others with its unique heritage and culture. Apart from attracting visitors, heritage conservation can also play a large part in 'defining identity, generating civic pride, and fostering a sense of empowerment' (Yuen, 2005a, p. 197). Yuen (2005a, p. 198) posits that people identify with 'symbols and landmarks in the built environment' and the culture of the place, leading to a collective memory of place identities. In other words, the unique features of a place give rise to associations with the culture and historical activities in the minds of people, as places and localities serve as a backdrop in which people's everyday lives play out.

As Berger (2011) points out, hotels are more than just places to stay and have meals. Moreover, luxury heritage hotels are rich with the depth of history and often carry cultural symbols of time and space. With new developments negotiating space continuously in various destinations, the marketing of such luxury heritage sites has become even more significant in placemaking narratives (Akkam et al., 2021; Chang et al., 1996). Capturing this dynamic relationship within the concept of place making becomes an essential element for furthering the idea of how luxury heritage hotels stake their claim against competition from newcomers or urbanization. Drawing on these studies, we can allude to the point that a significant impact on place making takes place when heritage hotels exude historicity, and the connected local social narrative is presented to prospective visitors.

Lew (2017) identifies human agency as a way to promote a particular narrative of a place. Similarly, Bosman and Dredge's (2011) study of the Australian Gold Coast emphasizes that place makers continuously create contrived meanings and, through emotions and values, imbibe a sense of attachment over a long period of time to ensure that the place is identifiable by the global community (see also Friedmann, 2010). New developments may supersede existing heritage hotels in sustaining the narrative of placemaking in the imaginaries of prospective travelers. Hence, continuous effort is needed to shape tourists' perceptions and experiences of heritage hotels.

Based on the literature, we further contextualize RS and place attachment as a lead for directional marketing strategies centered on product/manufacturing philosophies of marketing while drawing on place attachment sentiments. In other words, place making can be shaped by place attachment sentiments that can relate to specific target markets and local audiences. Place-making is also dependent on a timeline, especially given the historical and heritage narrative behind the RS; it also includes an element of place attachment (Diener & Hagen, 2022).

While Sir Stamford Raffles is recognized as the founder of Singapore in its modern history, he remains an icon for Singaporeans as much as he is for British travelers to Singapore. Many institutions in Singapore are named after Raffles: Raffles Institution, Raffles Place (business district and a train station name), Raffles Medical Group (a successful group of clinics and hospitals), and the Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research (located at the National University of Singapore); among other examples, his statue stands by the Singapore River (recounting his founding of the island).

The heritage and meaning of Raffles, reflecting place attachment and its significance to Singapore as much as to international visitors, has been aptly described:

He transformed the small island into part of a larger imperial project. An enigma, a schemer, an orientalist, a genius and not particularly sane, Thomas Stamford Raffles is the embodiment of all of Singapore's paradoxes, as well as serving as the European icon of a quintessentially Asian Singapore (Heng & Aljunied, 2009, p. 12).

RS is a unique place that creates a sense of attachment for both heritage and cultural enthusiasts. The hotel is associated with three primary attachments:

1. High Tea, as part of the British tradition of taking a break in the afternoon, sipping tea with pastries.
2. A traditional historical setting with swaying palm trees and a Sikh host dressed in the maharaja servant style to welcome guests at the entrance of the hotel, whose historical architecture is very much intact and beautified with aesthetic tropical flora and fauna.
3. Many famous visitors, such as Rudyard Kipling (author), Somerset Maugham (author), and Charlie Chaplin (comic actor), have either visited or stayed at the RS. Their heritage continues with the extensive marketing of the RS as a nostalgic establishment. The hotel even has a historical gallery for guests and visitors to experience the heritage and stories associated with the hotel.

Hudson (2009, p. 249) describes RS and Singapore destination marketing organizations' effort to package the romance and nostalgia of Raffles as catering primarily to the Western 'Orientalist fantasy.' Even though Raffles had long since passed away when RS was established in 1887, nevertheless, the hotel's historical position, high-end hospitality service, and iconic role in the representation of Singapore are attractive as being synonymous with Raffles the man himself. For this reason, as evidenced by the data and findings herein, this paper affirms the connection between place making and the sense of attachment through visitors' experiences.

## Methodology

### *Selection of case study hotels*

Three luxury hotels—RS, FH, and MBS—were selected for the following reasons. First, RS was a luxury hotel since the main building was completed in 1899. Owing to its longstanding history, RS is considered a luxury *heritage* hotel and a long-time major tourism icon and attraction representing Singapore in collective tourist imaginaries.

Second, the repurposing of historical buildings resulted in the major conversion of the Fullerton Building, which had been a colonial governor's residential quarters before becoming the General Post Office; eventually, the government designated it a heritage building and repurposed it as a hotel. Hence, FH itself today stands as an iconic structure that tells many stories, given its location on the Singapore River, opposite Empress Place (beside the former Parliament House) and near Raffles Place (i.e. the civic and financial districts). Henderson (2011) discusses the built heritage in Singapore and the government's efforts to preserve it for economic, social, and political reasons. Indeed, in Singapore, in adaptive reuse, several old colonial buildings have been repurposed for commercial or institutional use (e.g. Caldwell House and CHIJMES), while the functions of others have been retained (Azzali & Thirumaran, 2021). Therefore, a comparison of our data analysis of a luxury hotel that is more than a century old (i.e. 'heritage') and a new hotel with historical significance is expected to provide a clear understanding of how tourists or guests view the two historical buildings and to what extent FH matches or overshadows RS.

Third, we wished to study tourists' and guests' sentiments to determine whether RS remains an iconic communication when compared with a postmodern building such as MBS that is an immensely popular attraction for both Singaporeans and foreign visitors, as MBS, as a luxury hotel, is a direct competitor to RS. In this regard, we chose FH and MBS among the various luxury hotels in Singapore due to their proximity to RS. We expect to further elaborate and understand how these recent developments, one a heritage landmark and the other a modern icon, have impacted the continuous place making imaginaries of tourists and guests about RS.

## Data collection

The ideation of this study started just before the global outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, after which we were constrained by preventive health and social distancing measures in collecting primary data in Singapore. Consequently—and with the aim of continuing this study—we applied a cross-sectional, secondary data-based exercise (Hair et al., 2006; Saunders et al., 2009). In line with other studies published in top tourism journals (e.g. Ali et al., 2021; Rita et al., 2022; Taecharungroj & Mathayomchan, 2019), we used tourist reviews on travel comparison websites as our data. Tourist reviews on such travel websites as Tripadvisor (rebranded in 2020) and Expedia, allow us to capture tourist sentiments and perceptions over time, from 2005 to 2020.

Of the world's leading travel sites, Tripadvisor and Expedia were chosen as the main sources for data collection. According to Tripadvisor (2019), 490 million people use it every month, with more than 760 million reviews and comments of 8.3 million available tourism facilities on the site and apps being used by travelers all over the world. It is available in 49 countries and 28 languages, making it a perfect travel search tool. As of February 1, 2022, Tripadvisor had strengthened its claim as 'the world's largest travel guidance platform' with one billion reviews and opinions posted since its founding 22 years ago (Tripadvisor, 2022, quote from website). Similarly, Expedia is accessed by millions of travelers, and the company is well connected to a range of online travel agents and offers an attractive membership package (Expedia, 2022). Through purposive sampling, which is frequently employed in qualitative research to find and choose cases rich in relevant information on the topic under study (Suri, 2011), a minimum of 10 comments for each of the three hotels per year, with a focus on place making themes, were collected. The dates ranged from 2005 to 2020. A total of 454 comments were collected and analyzed.

## Analytical procedures

Based on the nature of the data in this study, we used the Dcipher Analytics online platform to analyze the data. This platform employs natural language processing (NLP) to evaluate text and provide insights.

The analysis was performed in four steps: First was data preparation. Complex and unstructured data were examined in the raw files. Dcipher's replace pattern operation was used to change undesirable formats and regular expressions in this situation. All duplications and URL tags were eliminated using a preparatory wizard. Smart segmentation was used to separate the text into coherent segments by examining the contextual similarity of neighboring sentences and references between sentences.

The second step was tokenization. This method divides the text into smaller bits called tokens. To discover tokens, words are converted to their roots ('lemmatized'); parts of speech are tagged to keep the most important ones, such as nouns, adjectives, and proper nouns; and phrase detection is applied to search for word sequences rather than individual words to better capture meaning.

The third step was topic detection. Based on the tokens produced, text input was examined for 'topics' and sets of words that often co-occur in the text. The topics are groups of tokens that appear together. There are various options for topic detection. In this study, correlation explanation (CorEx) was used, in which topics are seeded and tokens crystallize around a topic. The literature review served as a guide for topic selection. *Destination linkage* (Priatmoko et al., 2021; Speake & Kennedy, 2022), *form*, and *sense making* (Dupre, 2018; Hollinshead, 2007) are the three primary facets of place making that were selected as parent topics. As we gained a deeper understanding of each parent topic, we noted certain subtopics. *Location* and *activity linkages* comprise *destination linkages*. *Built environments* and *cultural heritage* make up *form*. *Character*, *history*, and *symbols* are linked to *sense making*. Using a large list of tokens that Dcipher had successfully extracted from the tokenization stage, we assigned each significant token to a subtopic in accordance with the results of the literature

review on the role of each component in place making. To ensure that all the tokens are correctly assigned to topics and are accurate representatives of the topics, this process involved three rounds of review. Besides understanding what the comments reveal about place making, we also wanted to know how people feel about the place making constructs. Therefore, the final step is sentiment analysis. The lexicon-based method uses lexicons based on polarity values. It is rapid and sufficient for determining the general sentiment and identifying considerably positive and negative text passages.

## Results and discussion

The findings reveal specific relationships between hotels and place making, and to a large extent reflect how guests perceive the three hotels, their position relative to Singapore, and the sentiment value placed on each.

A contextual word cloud is a network in which nodes represent words and linkages between nodes represent the strength of the connections between them. Traditional word clouds are useful for obtaining a fast overview of the content of a document, but they lack semantic elements. A contextual word cloud places words together depending on their frequency of occurrence, revealing how often and how they are used. The size of words, as well as their position, conveys meaning. Looking at how words are commonly used together can help us better understand the text. The size of a word indicates the number of times it appears in the statement. Words that are linked together have a contextual connection, which means they are mentioned in the same or similar comments. Different similarity measures, which indicate how closely two words co-occur in the network, can be used to detect contextual links. This study used a co-occurrence similarity metric, reflecting the total number of times two terms appear together. Dense networks like those observed in this study can be modified using two criteria. The first is the *filtration level*, which helps filter the network based on the strengths of the links. In this study, the filtering threshold was set to 0.5, keeping links with greater than mean strength and discarding the others. The second is the *individualization level*, which helps filter the network based on the size of the nodes. In this study, it was set at 0.8, retaining smaller nodes with reasonable link strength. Nodes with no links were excluded from the analysis. By applying these two criteria, the network showed strong linkages while maintaining a reasonable node size.

The contextual word clouds for all three hotels are shown in Figure 2. RS shows strong co-occurrence with 'beautiful,' 'old,' 'history,' 'iconic,' 'place,' 'area,' and 'building.' In the FH contextual word cloud, 'location' and 'building' are prominent. The MBS contextual word cloud had fewer place making keywords than the other two hotels. Comments for MBS mainly concern the service and amenities aspects such as 'view,' 'pool,' 'room,' and 'experience.' The words 'building' and 'architecture' as well as their co-occurrence with 'iconic' are highlighted to some extent, demonstrating the significance of this hotel as an icon of Singapore since 2010.

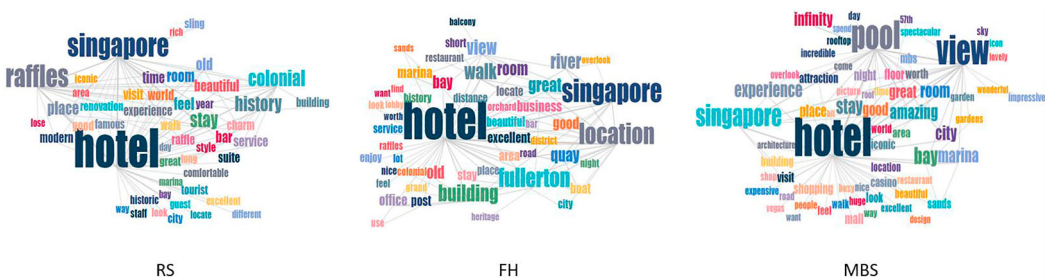
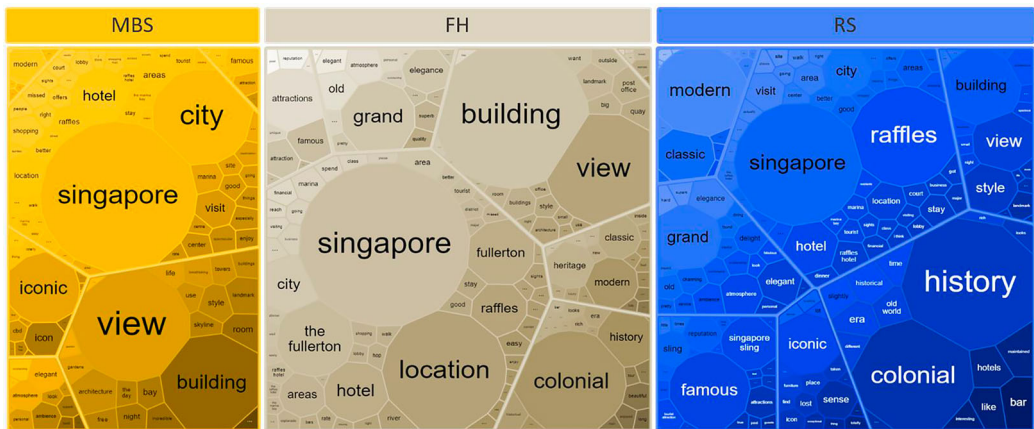


Figure 2. Hotels' contextual word cloud.



**Figure 3.** Parent topics and topics of place making.

A foam chart is used to highlight how place making topics are observed in the three hotels. Two groups and one unit were used to create a foam chart (Figure 3). Each group generates a new surface layer on the foam. There are two groups: ‘hotel (count)’ and ‘topic strengths (sum)’. The last layer of the foam chart has a unit set to ‘topics word relevance (sum)’. There are two surface layers in the foam chart. One layer depicts hotels, which are color-coded as blue for RS, beige for FH, and yellow for MBS. The other surface layer lies within each colored surface layer, indicating the topics within each hotel. Cells exist within each topic block that includes keywords related to the topic. The size of the topics reflects the number of correlated replies, but the size of the words indicates how closely they are related to their topics. As Figure 3 shows, RS received the most comments on place making topics, and MBS the fewest.

Figure 3 shows seven subtopics of place making in each hotel surface layer, grouped under three parent subjects drawn from earlier research: ‘destination linkage,’ ‘form,’ and ‘sense making.’ ‘Activity linkage,’ ‘location linkage,’ ‘built environment,’ ‘heritage,’ ‘character,’ ‘symbol,’ and ‘history’ are among the subtopics. Two subtopics are categorized under the ‘destination linkage’ parent topic of place making. ‘Activity linkage’ refers to remarks about specific activities related to Singapore, as well as celebrities or individuals who have ties to the city. The place itself, as well as mentions of the area and its features, are included in the ‘location linkage.’

‘Built environment’ and ‘heritage’ are categorized under the ‘form’ parent topic. ‘Built environment’ refers to subjects such as design, building, architecture, view, and style. Terms such as heritage, legacy, cultural heritage, and tradition were included under ‘heritage.’ The last parent topic, ‘sense making,’ comprises ‘character,’ ‘history,’ and ‘symbol.’ ‘Character’ reflects the identity and personality that visitors sense from a location. ‘History’ encompasses all historical themes in the comments, while ‘symbol’ focuses on iconic elements of a location, narratives, and nostalgia. Table 1 shows an illustrative sample of text extracted from comments that reflect each topic.

We utilized bump charts to show how parent topics of place making are presented in the comments over time. A bump chart depicts variations in the volume of topics over time and thus, unlike line charts, offers the benefit of presenting both the volume and rank for each period, making it easy to see how numbers and positions change over time. Figure 4 compares the bump charts of the three hotels. In this figure, the three main topics of place making are ‘destination linkage,’ ‘form,’ and ‘sense making,’ with a separate graph for each hotel. The periods (16 years in 4-year periods) are represented on the horizontal axis, whereas the volume of the parent topics is represented on the vertical axis. The RS bump chart shows that place making mentions for hotels have been growing since 2005, with a positive slope until 2016 and then a negative slope until

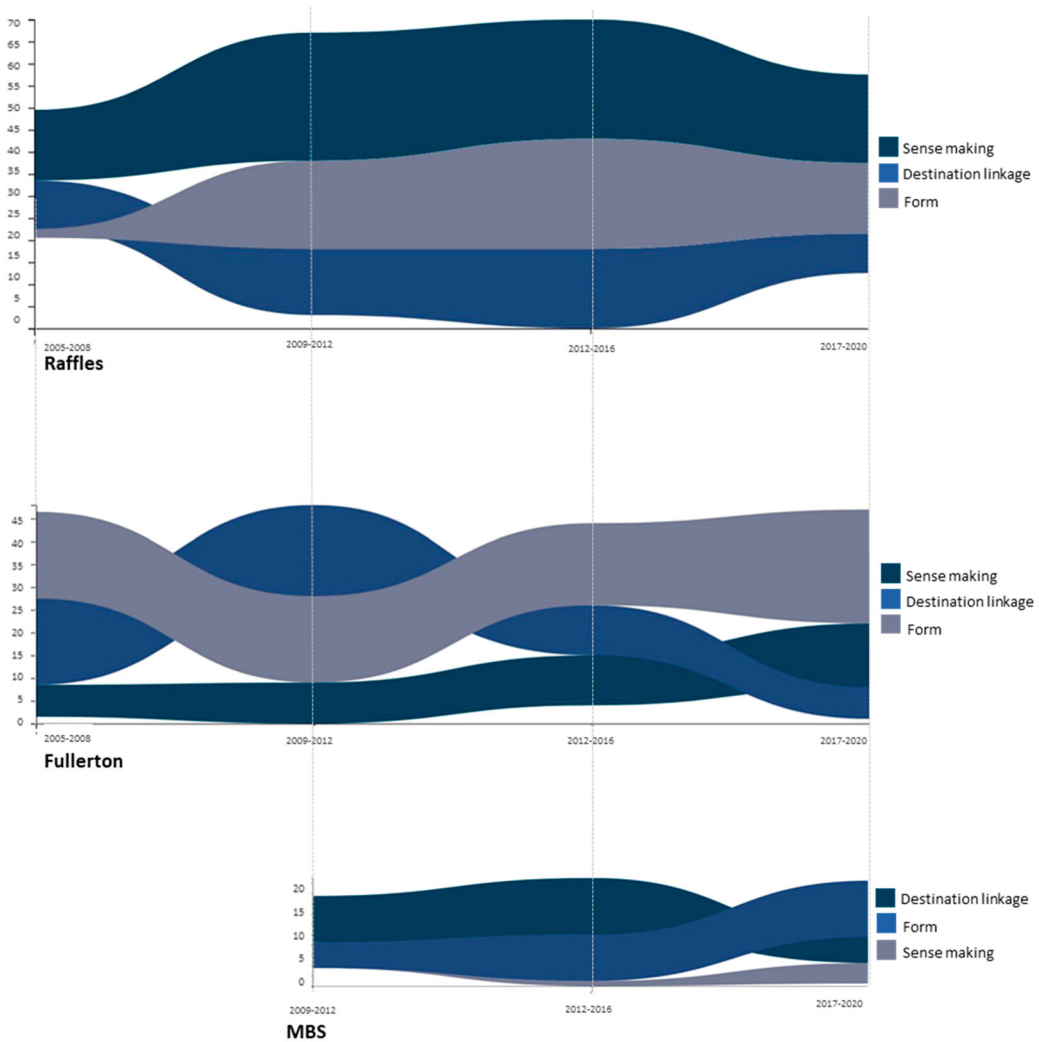
**Table 1.** The samples extracted from tourists' comments.

Parent topics	Topics	Sample quotes		
		RS	FH	MBS
Destination linkage	Activity linkage	<p>'Afternoon high tea in the Tiffin Room at Raffles ... what can you say, a wonderful decadent experience.' (2017)</p> <p>'You cannot help yourself imagining who else in history has sat and done the same.' (2005)</p> <p>'A lot of famous celebrities have lived here, so that makes it quite special ... We drank the famous Singapore Sling, which was born in this hotel and the experience at the bar where it is made, is quite unique too.' (2018)</p>	<p>'A large collection of Singapore Sling type cocktails again a delicious surprise' (2009)</p> <p>'A great way to relax in a Five Star Luxury' (2015)</p> <p>'Old school luxury' (2015)</p>	<p>'Our first impression of this hotel is amazed with the luxuries of the place' (2014)</p> <p>'The swimming pool on the 52nd floor with lovely views over the marina and city. Truly extraordinary experience' (2016)</p>
	Location linkage	<p>'The hotel is set amidst a historic part of Singapore, in walking distance to the old business district, War Memorial and Bugis.' (2020)</p>	<p>'There are many places within reach and possibly walking and strolling.' (2017)</p>	<p>'Location of the hotel is great right in Marina Bay, next to an MRT conveniently connected to a mall and Gardens on the Bay.' (2013)</p>
Form	Built environment	<p>'The Raffles lives up to its fame, and the architecture and service are amazing.' (2014)</p> <p>'Astonishingly Beautiful Buildings – Almost Perfect ... She's a grand dame ... Building Amazing, old fashioned ... and huge high ceilings – definitely felt you stepped into a grand past ... and just enjoying the amazing architecture.' (2009)</p> <p>'... a visit to Singapore would not be complete without visiting this established landmark.' (2014)</p>	<p>'The exterior of the building is far more interesting attractive and historic than many of the other hotels in this category possibly only with Raffles to compete on this score. But I would still give the Fullerton the edge as it is a real landmark. The interior of the building is lovely.' (2007)</p> <p>'The Hotel itself is a beautiful piece of architecture.' (2015)</p> <p>'It is converted from the old GPO and any alterations and additions have been sensitively integrated into the original texture and fabric of the building.' (2009)</p>	<p>'Lofty Expectation! Hailed as Singapore's latest destination hotel and casino. It is architecturally surreal looking like a cruise ship stranded on three high towers.' (2011)</p> <p>'Architectural Treat ... its impressive architectural presence still strikes a chord from arrival through to departure.' (2012)</p> <p>'Great View ... I think this building has an exceptional architecture and it will be the landmark of Singapore.' (2010)</p> <p>'The architecture is unique ... huge, nice, modern.' (2016)</p>
	Heritage	<p>'I was delighted to see that the history, heritage and style of the hotel has been retained ... and the new decor and furniture is a very tasteful combination of the classic colonial, oriental and modern ... it remains a hotel for those who appreciate heritage and history.' (2019)</p>	<p>'You are staying at a national heritage site steeped in history and blessed with great architecture.' (2012)</p> <p>'There are antiques and artwork scattered throughout the property.' (2008)</p> <p>'Great Heritage Location ... ' (2012)</p> <p>'... filled with culture dating to the 1920s.' (2008)</p> <p>'Old world elegance! Highly recommend this stunning and regal property.' (2013)</p>	<p>'Pricey and massive produced ... marvel of modern engineering.' (2019)</p> <p>'Exotic location without actually experiencing any of the local culture.' (2018)</p>
Sense making	Character	<p>'Raffles, truly personal, special, grand old lady of a hotel.' (2011)</p> <p>'Truly impeccable! ... I would say that this is a must-stay hotel ... that makes you feel right at home as if you were part of a family.' (2020)</p>	<p>'As soon as I entered the hotel, I was awed by the grandeur of the place.' (2009)</p> <p>'The hotel is full of character and full of elegance.'</p>	<p>'The hotel has a bit of a Vegas feel about it. It is a huge sprawling resort in itself.' (2018)</p> <p>'Fantastic view of the city can be enjoyed amidst the busy crowded atmosphere.' (2016)</p>

(Continued)

Table 1. Continued.

Parent topics	Topics	Sample quotes		
		RS	FH	MBS
		<p>'Stay for the ambience ... The hotel is still an oasis of colonial old-world charm in the bustling center of Singapore.' (2011)</p> <p>'Raffles, unlike so many hotels have the true character, elegance and class.' (2012)</p> <p>'The timeless elegance ... a sense of being at the center of some of history's most famous moments in the East.' (2013)</p>	<p>(2019)</p> <p>'Nostalgic atmosphere in the ever-distinctive architecture of Fullerton hotel.' (2020)</p> <p>'... I still find all aspects of the Fullerton superb great ambience.' (2010)</p> <p>'It is a splendid wonderfully situated property.' (2009)</p> <p>'The stately columns give it a distinguished feel and the lighting adds to a rather majestic feel.' (2008)</p>	<p>'Outstanding! The Marina Bay Sands is an incredible hotel. ... Things were made very easy for us during our stay.' (2012)</p> <p>'Way too big! This Hotel is enormous, way too impersonal for me.' (2017)</p> <p>'Huge yet efficient and pleasant MBS.' (2012)</p> <p>'Big impressive!' (2016)</p>
	Symbol	<p>'Beautiful colonial icon steeped in history that is almost exemplary.' (2015)</p> <p>'This is one of the most iconic hotels in the world, and rightly so.' (2016)</p> <p>'an iconic Raffles Doorman in all his finery.' (2018)</p>	<p>'An Iconic hotel not to be missed. Enchanted by her charm sitting by the Singapore River ... The building itself has a lot of stories.' (2017)</p> <p>'Seems like everywhere within Fullerton there is a story to be told from the graphics lined along the lobby walls to its own museum ... (2018)'</p>	<p>'We decided at last minute to switch from a traditional hotel to this one as it is truly iconic symbol of Singapore.' (2018)</p> <p>'What a view! This is the iconic view of Singapore!' (2013)</p>
	History	<p>'Colonial majesty ... historical legacy ... I think you are paying more than anything for the history here, as well as the privilege of staying at one of the most famous historic hotels in the world.' (2009)</p> <p>'Raffles in Singapore is steeped in history ... It's an old-world hotel reminiscing colonialism.' (2014)</p> <p>'... this is like walking through a history book.' (2013)</p> <p>'Colonial luxury in the heart of Singapore. ... This is one of the most luxurious hotels in the world set amidst a legacy of tales and history that is unrivalled.' (2014)</p>	<p>'History awoken! Simply rich the history.' (2018)</p> <p>'First what strikes you when you come in is that it is a part of Singapore's history.' (2012)</p> <p>'A definite must stay ... Historic ... I suppose the historic nature and attention to small things could be the reason why it is rated 6 stars.' (2008)</p> <p>'A classic in the making! The Fullerton is about to become a classic hotel in a matter of years ... probably 100 years old ... It actually feels as if it had been a hotel all the way back to colonial times with high ceilings a nice and light inner courtyard.' (2012)</p>	<p>No comment was found</p>

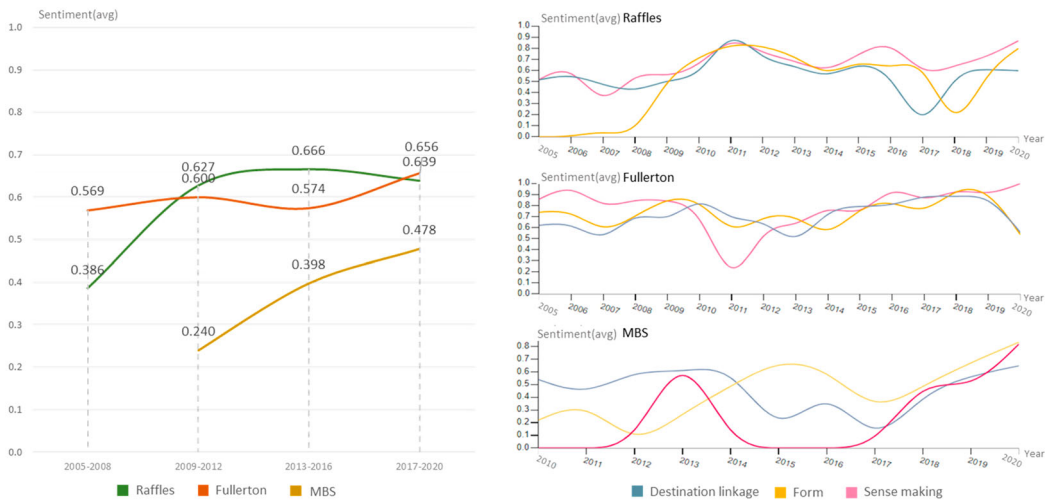


**Figure 4.** Parent topic changes of RS, FH, and MBS over time.

2020, which may reflect the property’s closure for renovation. Although there are some highs and lows for the parent topics, notably between ‘form’ and ‘destination linkage,’ comments on FH demonstrate continuous and steady mentions of place making topics throughout these 16 years. Since its opening in 2010, MBS has received fewer remarks with place making comments than the other two hotels. Over the past 10 years, there have been essentially no noteworthy changes in volume.

The dynamism of the place making idea was assessed via sentiment analysis. Figure 4 illustrates the place making trends for the three hotels. This graph depicts the evolution of sentiments over time and topics. The average sentiment varies on a scale from  $-1$  (extremely negative) to  $+1$  (strongly positive). Each text was assigned a sentiment label: neutral for sentiment scores of 0, positive for positive sentiment scores, and negative for negative sentiment scores. Since 2005, the average sentiment of place making subjects for RS, FH, and MBS hotels has been positive. The mean sentiment of parent topics (‘destination linkage,’ ‘form,’ and ‘character’) during each four years was used to derive the overall sentiment. The mean sentiments of all three hotels rose with varying positive slopes except for RS, which has been on a gentle declining trend since 2016, possibly





**Figure 5.** Place making topics' average sentiment by year.

because of the hotel's refurbishment from 2017 to 2019. FH began reasonably high, creating mean sentiment in the first period and maintaining a consistent sentiment over time, with mean sentiment scores of 0.57, 0.60, 0.57, and 0.66. RS started with a score of 0.39 in the first period, which quickly increased with increasing slope, reaching a mean sentiment score of 0.63 in the second period. Since then, RS's place making sentiment has been rather stable, with minor fluctuations (see Figure 5.)

While the parent topic of sense making remained the most positive for RS and FH hotels, it showed the least positive response at the MBS. Although the sentiment score of MBS places is substantially lower than for the other two hotels, the sentiment trend reveals that place-making sentiment for this hotel has been steadily increasing. MBS was more effective in terms of destination linkage and form playing a role in place making for the destination.

The data gathered, analyzed, and presented in different formats point to the quintessentially grand RS still holding its own against relative newcomers like FH (just over 20 years old but clad in a beautifully restored colonial property) and MBS, a 12-year-old edifice dominating the Marina Bay skyline. This poses some interesting marketing and communication choices for the long-established 'grand dame,' as RS is sometimes termed in guest and media reviews: whether it should leverage and reinforce its distinct and unique singularity by harking back to its regal splendor of yesteryear or catch up with the whirl of the twenty-first century, forgoing the place making attribute built up over more than a century.

For the newer FH, straddling a business-centered location with vestiges of a colonial past, the study findings strongly suggest that from a marketing perspective, it could tap both business and leisure segments that appreciate old-world charm and luxurious settings, whereas RS is primarily a luxury leisure abode. Indeed, this was apparent in the guest comments posted on Tripadvisor. A German guest referred to FS as 'one of the classic hotels of the world,' adding: 'I have been staying at the Marina Bay Sands before and I also know the Raffles from inside, but I would always prefer the Fullerton. The location is unbeaten, absolutely in the center of it all' (2014). An Australian guest wrote on Tripadvisor: 'The Fullerton Hotel is a grand old building on a thin strip of land between Marina Bay and the Boat Key (*sic*). It has an elegant, old school service that competes with hotels like Raffles' (2015).

From the study findings, MBS interestingly stands apart in terms of size, scale, and iconographic significance, giving a new twist to the concept of place making: an integrated resort amid the development of the 'new downtown' in the Marina Bay precinct that leans toward the concept of

placemaking, being engineered by government design rather than organic growth. The comments on Tripadvisor for the MBS primarily focused on its location for shopping and dining amenities:

Amazing architecture, iconic hotel. My room was at the end of Tower 1, overlooking the Singapore straits and the city. This is definitely a must-visit hotel when in Singapore. (2010)

If you were to visit Singapore just once, this would be a place to stay in. The hotel is near Orchard Road by cab, but its location is excellent for walking around and shopping. (2011)

However, comments for all three hotels mentioned their iconic representation of and association with Singapore. Even the contemporary Fullerton Hotel was described on Tripadvisor as the ‘beautiful grande dame of Singapore’ (2016). In terms of capturing the place making narrative, RS appears resilient in its place attachment too, as demonstrated by the following comments on Tripadvisor:

Legendary hotel Colonial elegant hotel, famous the world over, fantastic suites, beautiful grounds, wide selection of bars and restaurants, but a must is to have a Singapore sling in the Long Bar ... (2016)

Our stay at the grand dame of singapore was special. the hotel’s collective ambience along with architecture and furnishings wrapped us with its comfortable elegance. (2020)

In their comments, guests also term RS the ‘grand dame,’ recognizing its heritage, but there emerges a sense of Singapore being connected to its popularity (‘famous the world over’) and its place attachment (‘Singapore Sling’) are just some examples that exemplify how despite the emergence of Marina Bay Sands (‘Amazing architecture, iconic hotel’) and the newer FH (heritage hotel), RS remains a larger part of Singapore’s place making imaginaries.

## Conclusion

### *Theoretical discussion*

The findings suggest that the dominance of a luxury heritage hotel in the narratives of place making can shift over time subject to new developments in the hotel landscape and competition from other heritage hotels with iconic and location histories. Three researchers, Chang (1997), Henderson (2000, 2001), and Yuen (2005b), collectively outline the use of heritage sites to create a sense of place and acknowledge that tourism is a driving force of urban development. For instance, this is shown by Bangkok’s iconic luxury heritage Oriental Hotel (Bloomberg, 2020), since the 1970s known as the ‘Mandarin Oriental’ and one of the historical twins in Asia (the other hotel is located in Hong Kong) (Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group Limited, 2022).

To sustain the narrative of place making in the imaginaries of prospective travelers, continuous effort is needed to shape tourists’ perceptions and experiences. Luxury hotels, either with heritage characteristics or postmodern architecture, can easily dwarf a destination’s existing hotel icons. Heritage sites will not decline if they can continuously locate themselves in a fast-changing and urbanizing landscape, such as the Raffles Grand Hotel d’Angkor in the rapidly developing Siem Reap, Cambodia (cf. popular press articles: Al Jazeera, 2022; The Straits Times, 2022).

As surveyed in the earlier literature review section, place making as a concept depends on the influential forces at the local and international levels that exert pressure on luxury heritage hotels (e.g. force majeure like COVID-19; see Financial Times’ [2022] story on Hong Kong, addressing its iconic Mandarin Oriental hotel [opened in 1963 as ‘The Mandarin’], and CNN’s (2020) article on the closure of the Roosevelt Hotel in New York). Although new developments may appear potentially overwhelming (as seen not only in Singapore but for instance also in Monaco, see: d’Hautesserre, 2001), this study suggests that luxury heritage hotels such as RS can circumvent competition and continue to remain in the imaginaries of tourists and guests. For a luxury heritage hotel like RS to enjoy continuity and remain an indelible part of

place making, its form, sense making, and destination linkages must be strong. In addition, adding the psychological aspect of place attachment to the place making process could help add value to heritage hotels (Moulay et al., 2018). The power and location of the property facilitate place attachment. According to Diener and Hagen (2022), attachment views place as location-specific objects of psychological connections shaped by quantifiable traits, such as age, social status, physical attributes, and time spent. Hence, inductively, the place making narrative is not independent but dynamic and intricately linked to the destination and world of travel imaginaries. This point is significant, and this study elicits further questions ‘where to from here’ for practitioners seeking to imprint their luxury heritage hotel as a place making destination and choice. Hoteliers should nurture and re-state the historical and heritage value in branding and marketing communications. This will be helpful in the narrative’s continuity and place making process.

### ***Managerial implications***

Since place making encompasses context and continuity, where new developments can affect imaginaries or messaging, it would be useful for general managers and marketing directors in the luxury heritage hotel business to pursue continuous effort in their place making narrative. Our findings suggest that further enhancements to heritage conservation must include a marketing aspect of ‘place making’ to inculcate a controlled narrative and create the heritage experience as an indelible mark. While luxury heritage hotels may provide aesthetic awe for luxury travelers like the experiences of a postmodern hotel, the findings indicate that over time, there will be competition with a strong emphasis on whether guests desire traditional heritage luxury or postmodern luxury, with location, aesthetics, and iconic representations and interpretations as additional considerations.

A luxury heritage hotel such as RS should continue to position itself as such so long as it maintains its original charms, given that heritage is as important a draw as synonymy with the destination (linkage). RS has a rich history, and, although privately owned, it enjoys the status of a national monument. The latter offers compelling support for directional marketing strategies centered on the product/manufacturing philosophies of marketing while drawing on place attachment sentiments. In other words, place making can be shaped by place attachment sentiments that can relate to specific target markets and local audiences.

The competition from a repurposed luxury hotel, FH, suggests that luxury heritage hotels can rival such postmodern-style hotels as MBS. Hospitality marketers can leverage heritage as a staying power in their marketing collaterals to ensure that the form and sense-making of the place remain strong in guests’ consciousness.

Our findings depict a rather successful story of Singapore’s luxury heritage hotels such as RS. Similarly, iconic luxury heritage hotels in other places of the world are often run by experienced and adept management fully aware of their hotel’s place making. Therefore, businesses may close down, but only temporarily and for reasons of renovation and improvement, so that the hotel will rise again to resume its heritage and place making role, as with the billion-dollar refurbished Okura Tokyo in Japan (Bloomberg, 2019), 280-million-dollar facelifted Hôtel de Paris in Monaco (CNN, 2019), and Fairmont Peace Hotel, Shanghai (Ferber, 2017). In alternative scenarios, however, once iconic luxury heritage hotels may suffer from changing management, new political governance in society, and competition from contemporary hotels, as exemplified by the demolished Hotel des Indes in Jakarta, Indonesia (this site currently is the ‘Duta Merlin’ shopping mall).

If the aim is heritage conservation, the major lesson of the Hotel des Indes is that management should embrace the hotel’s history and place making role in all its shapes and forms. Luxury heritage hotels have witnessed trivial and tragic events, such as the Gstaad Palace (Switzerland)’s attraction of extravaganza Hollywood stars (The Hollywood Reporter, 2017) and the 2008 terror attacks

on the Taj Mahal Palace in Mumbai (The Guardian, 2008). Whether positive or negative, these events contribute to the heritage and placemaking role of a hotel. The management of such hotels should embrace history by educating tourists and the local community through books, social media, and marketing communications about the hotel's history to create a stronger and more meaningful position of a luxury heritage hotel embedded in the broader environment, which may spur a positive spiral for both the commercial and non-profit purposes of the hotel (e.g. higher revenues, better tourist reviews) and the surroundings (e.g. higher appreciation by the community expressed in cash and kind).

### **Limitations and recommendations for future studies**

Tripadvisor and Expedia, the main data sources sampled in this research study, cater largely to an English-speaking audience that contributes reviews and opinions. This generally ties in with the customer profile of both RS and FH, evident in the numerous reviews by guests from Australia, the UK, and the US, and hotels' brand positioning and marketing communications in conventional and digital media that were viewed for this study but excluded from empirical analysis. Future studies of luxury heritage hotels and place making may consider other significant Asian tourist markets such as China, India, Indonesia, and Japan for either a separate comparative study or aggregated with the English-language data.

Closely attuning future research to a broader definition of place making that incorporates 'place-making' and 'placemaking' and their implications for marketing may better reveal luxury heritage hotels' place narrative efforts and their effectiveness in the face of rapidly changing, competitive external hospitality environments. In this regard, this study indicates significant directions methodologically and theoretically for a prescriptive approach to marketing.

### **Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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