

LATFORM TGERICHT ERNEMEN

VOOR

Welkom bij de BUas Campus Safari

Creating Meaningful Experiences

Prinsjesdag, 15 september 2026





Welkom bij PvKO

Creating meaningful experiences

a theoretical and empirical framework for evidence-based experience design

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DISCOVER YOUR WORLD

Introducing myself

Academic path

MSc Theoretical and Experimental Psychology (1995)

PhD Cognitive neuroscience (2000)

Neuroscience of memory, language, and emotions

Switch to Leisure and Tourism field @Buas (2012)

Full professor Leisure and Tourism @Buas and TiU (2021)



What is experience?

William James (1890):

- the flow of feelings and sensations: the 'stream of consciousness'.
- "the immediate flux of life which furnishes the material of our later reflection with its conceptual categories"

Lived vs remembered experience

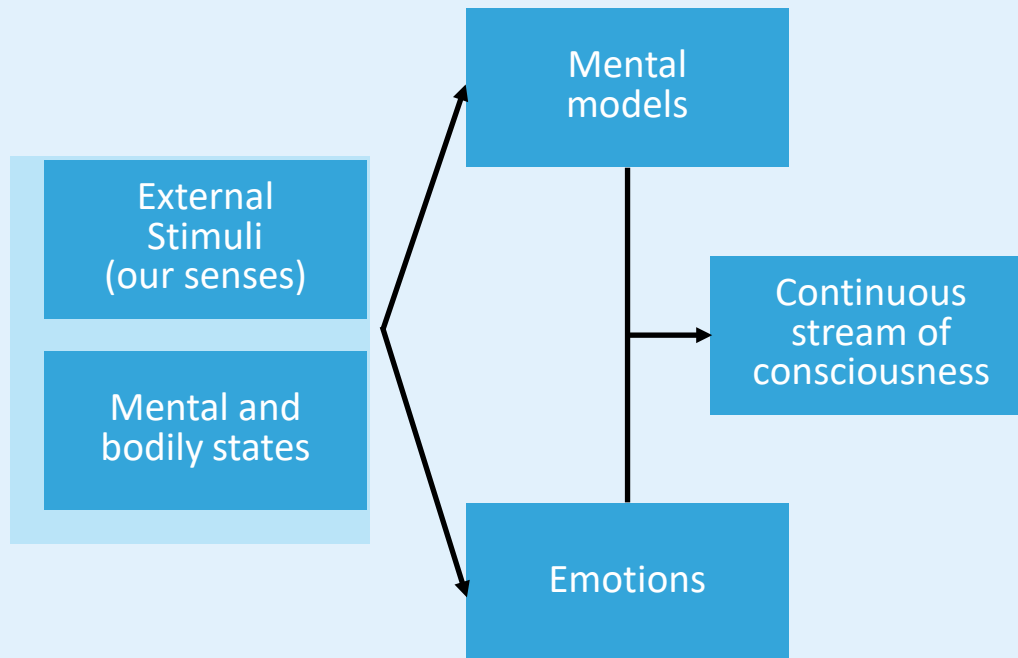
Daniel Kahneman:

lived experience: in-the-moment, experiential (the experiencing self)

remembered experience: after the fact, reflective, based on (episodic) memory (the remembering self)

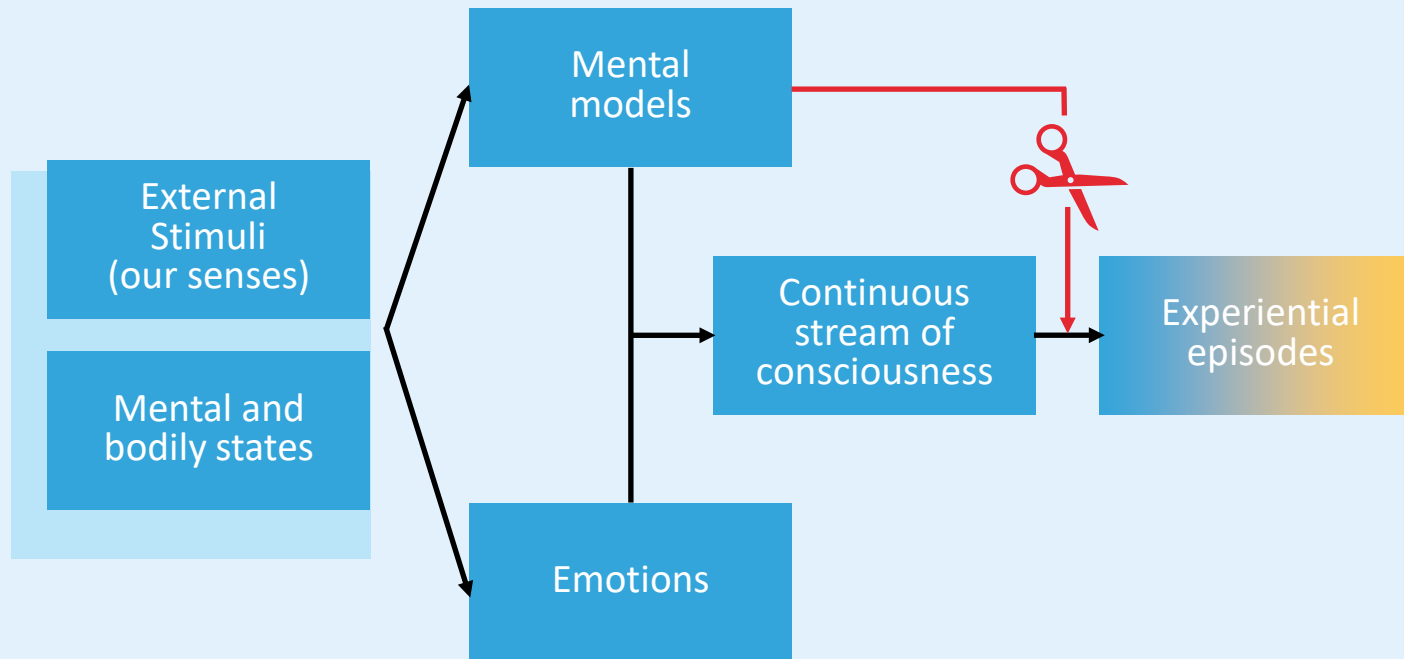


A model of experiencing

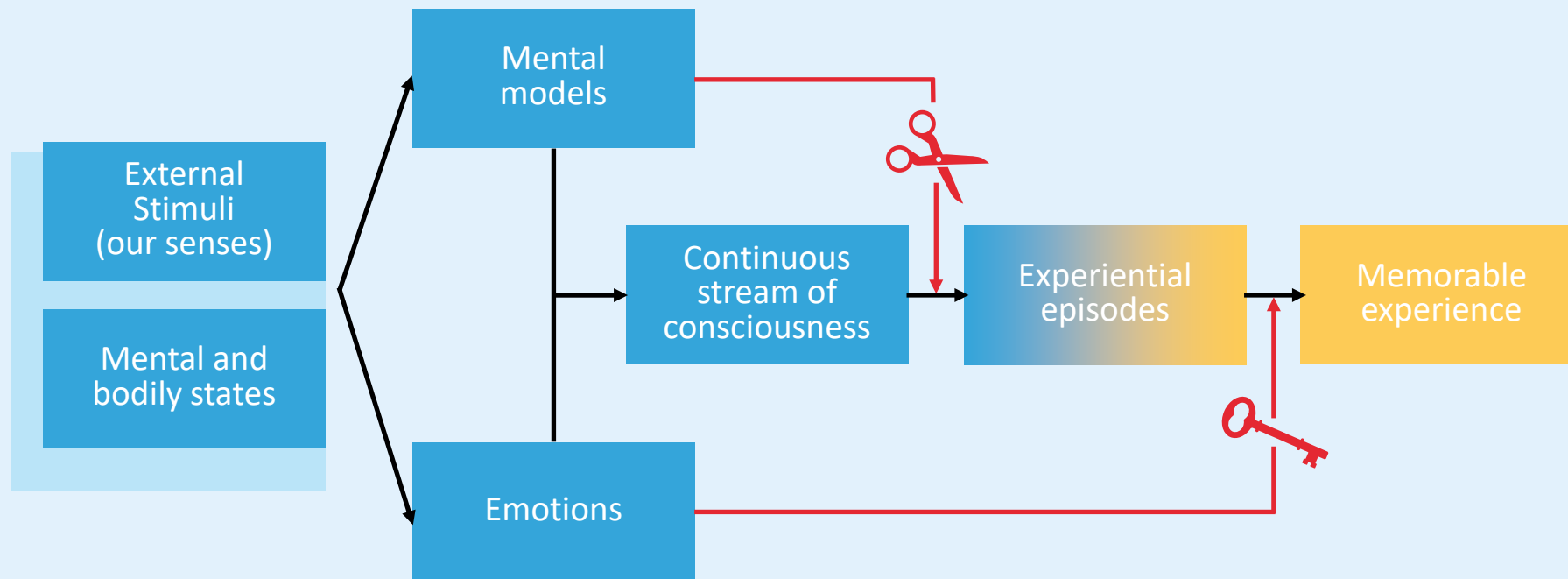


AN Experience?

AN experience = a segment, or episode in the stream of consciousness, which has a clear beginning and ending

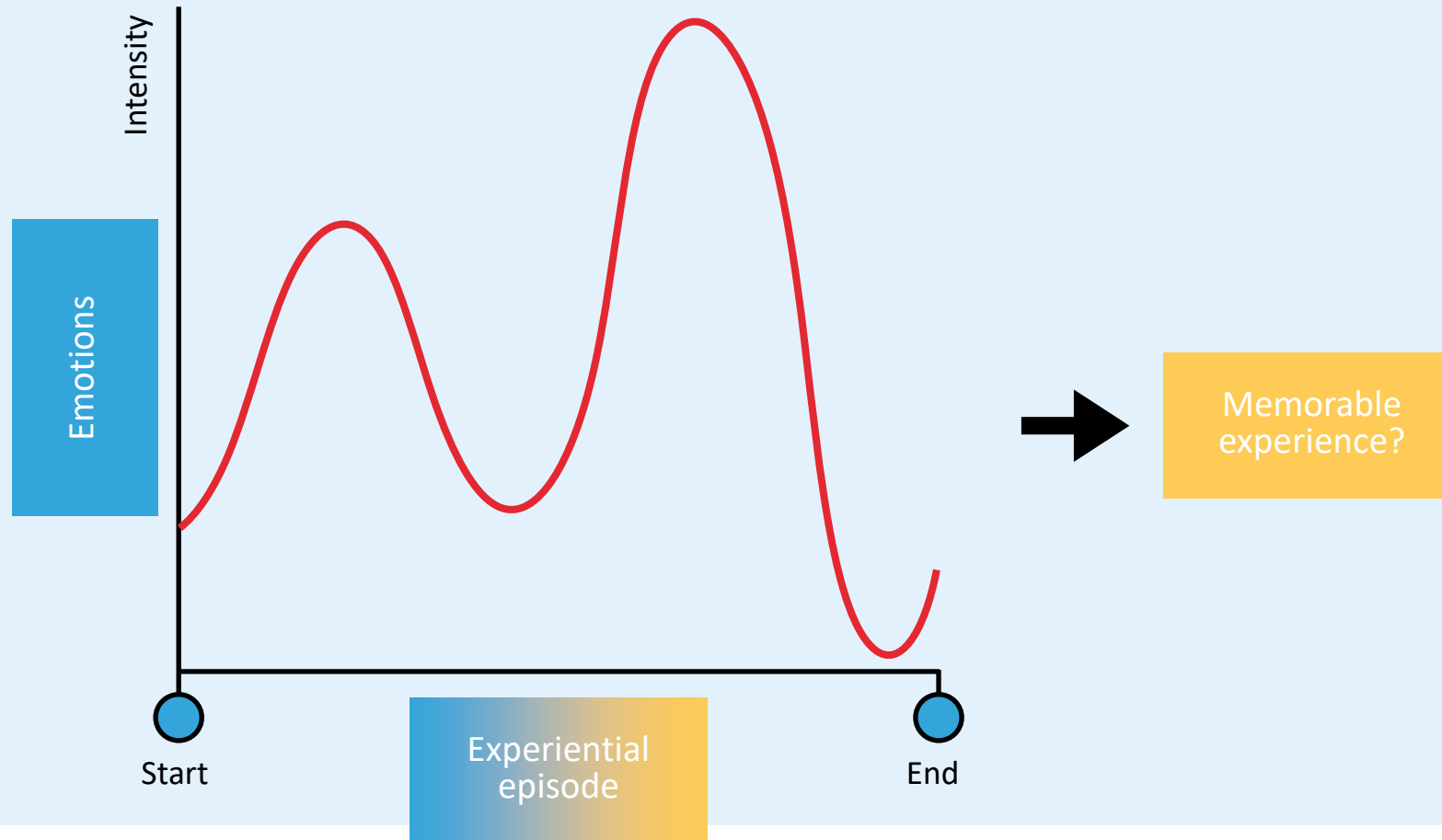


The 'Breda model' of memorable experiences



modified from Bastiaansen et al. 2019; see also Duerden et al., 2018

Time is of the essence



What makes experiences memorable?

Two components:

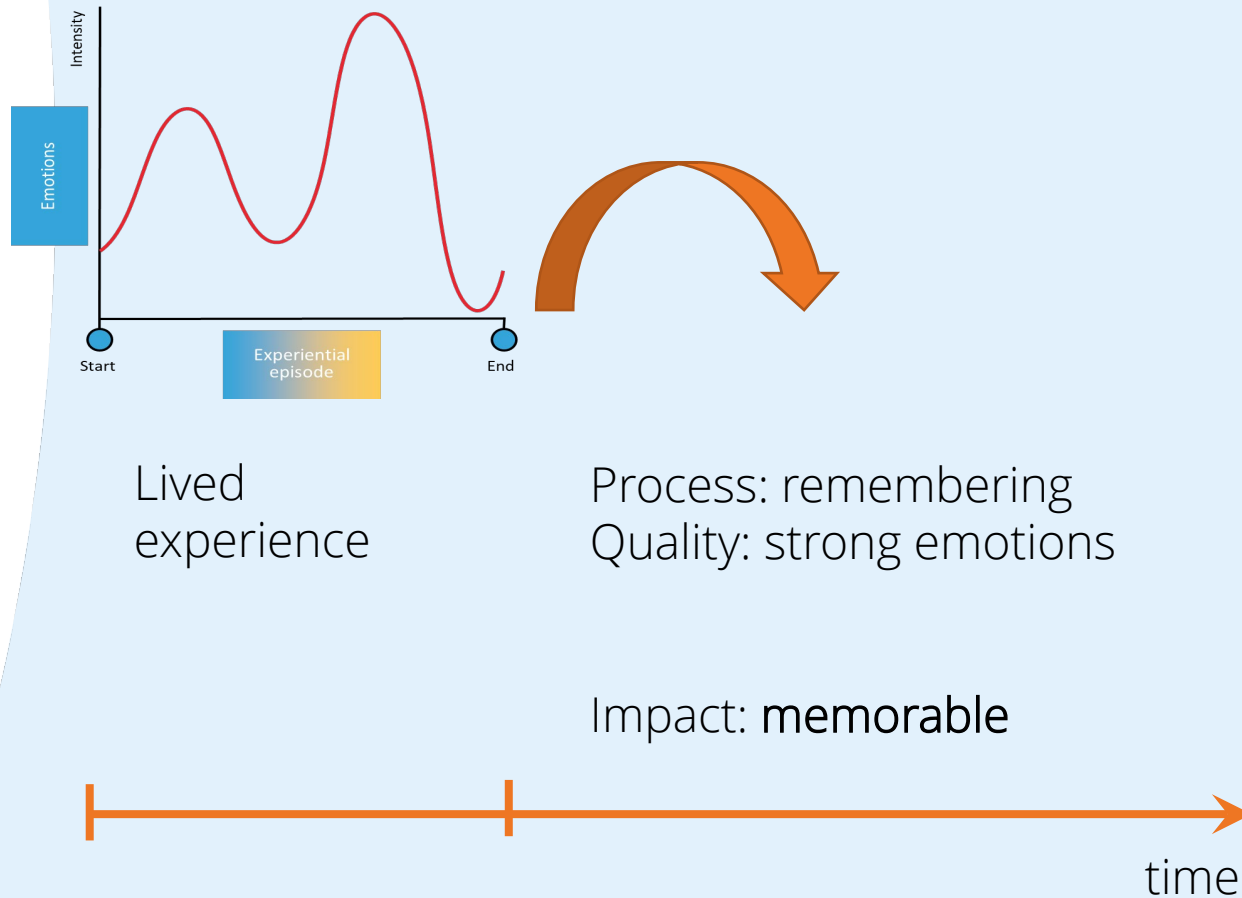
Process:

Experiences have to be remembered in order for them to be memorable

Experiential quality:

If remembering results in recalling / reliving strong emotions, the experience is memorable

What makes experiences memorable?



So what?

Design implications

If your aim is to design for a memorable experience, you should:

- Make sure there are enough emotion triggers in the customer journey
- Carefully balance the ebb and flow of emotions during the experience

Evidence-based experience design

Measuring experiences provides an evidence base for design

BUas' Experience lab

Developing measures of lived experience using tools borrowed from experimental psychology and from neuroscience.

Aims of research program:

- Innovate the quantitative **measurement** of experiences
- Contribute to **evidence-based** experience design
- Understanding how leisure experiences relate to **well-being**

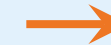
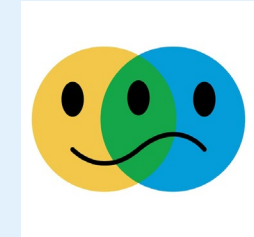
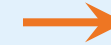


Experience Lab tools to measure emotions during lived experience

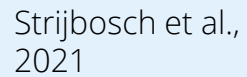
In the lab



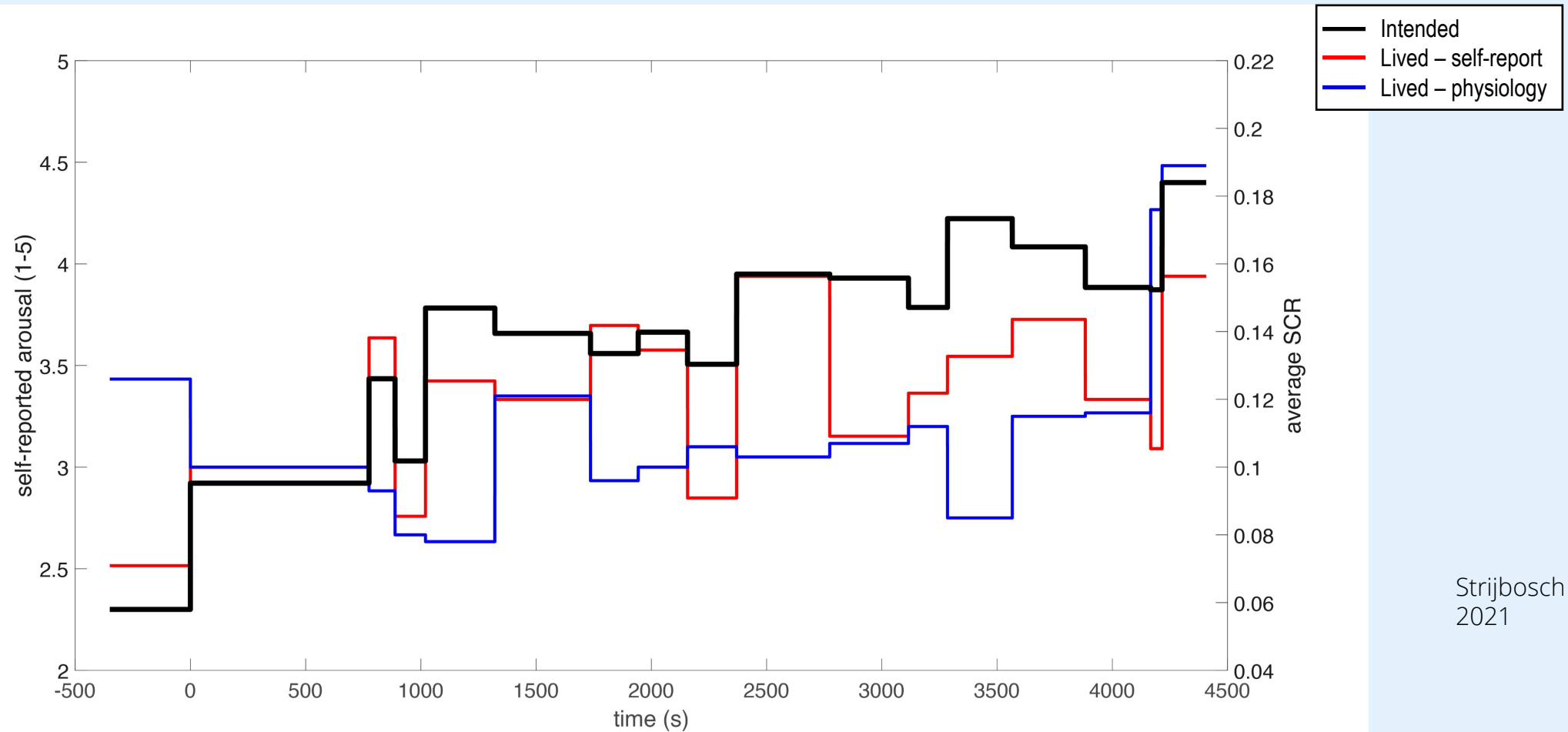
In the field



The intended experience (interviews with creative team)

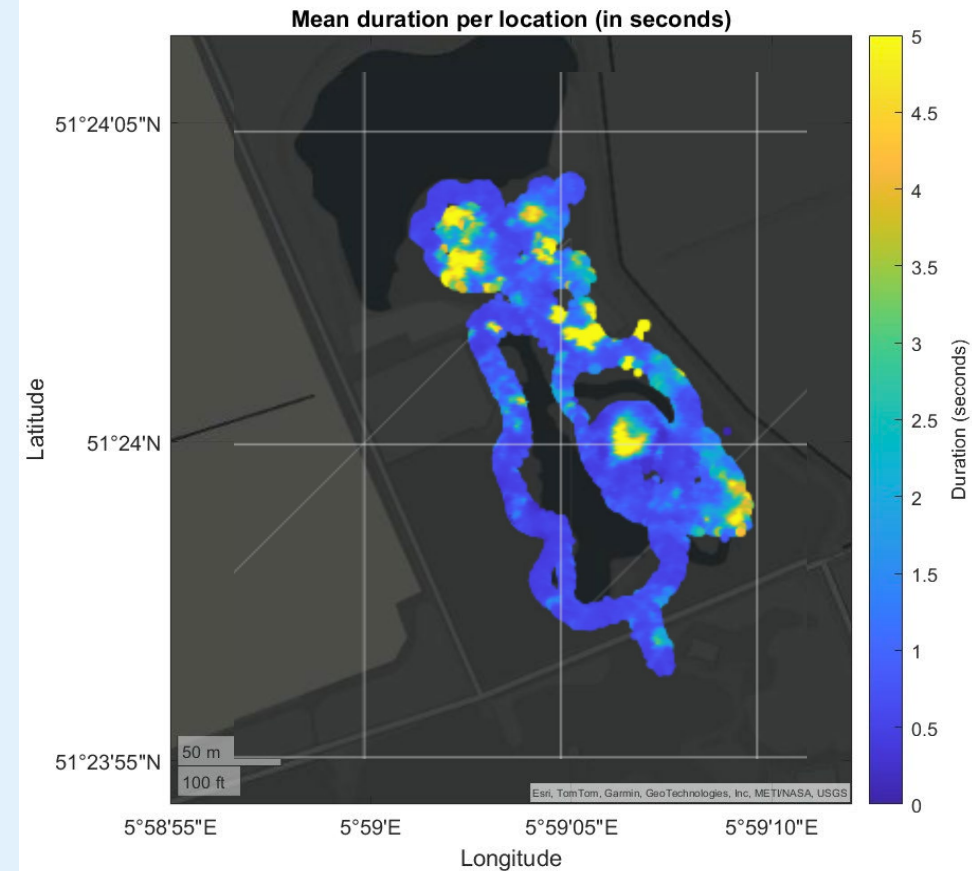
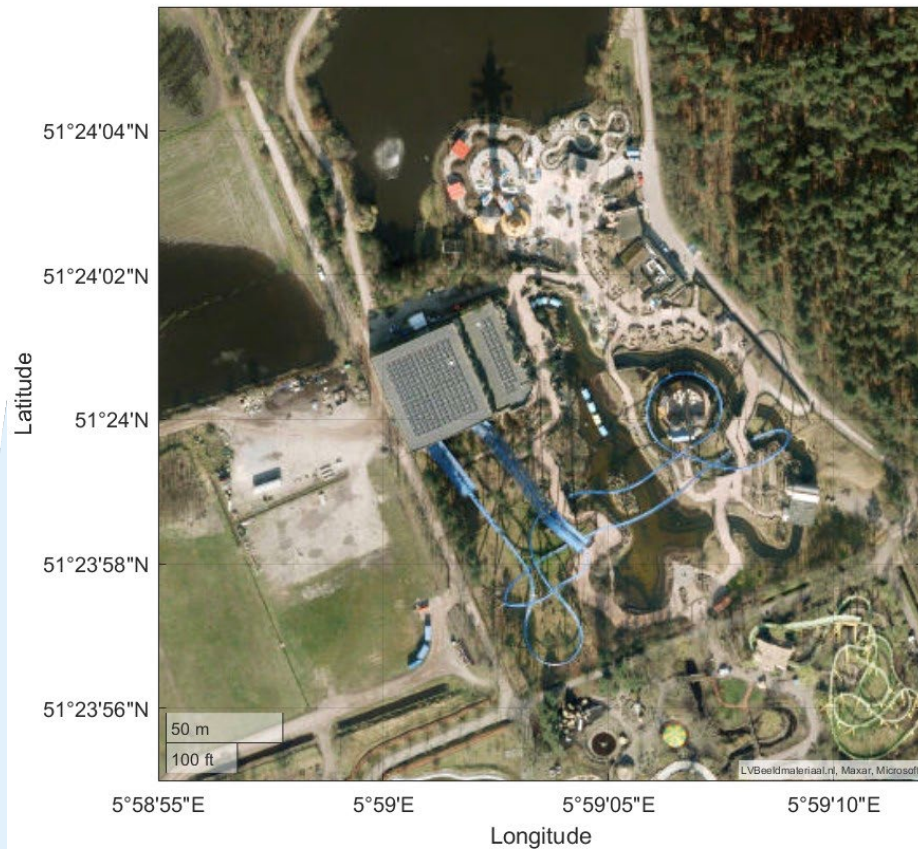


Intended, self-reported and physiological emotional arousal

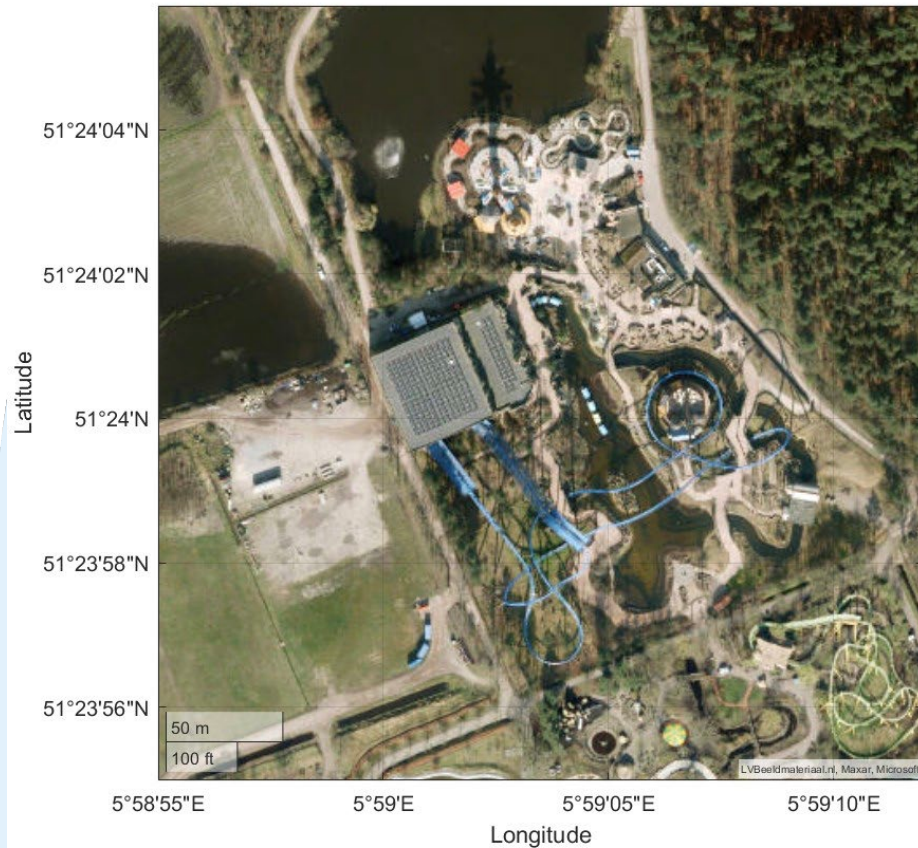


Strijbosch et al.,
2021

GPS-based duration map in a theme park



GPS-based emotion map in a theme park



The Phenix - an emotional roller coaster



Courtesy from
Sander Mazeland
& Stefan Valentijn,
MSc theses 2025

Interim wrap-up

- Memorable experiences require emotional peaks and troughs
- Measuring emotions during experiences allow for evidence-based experience design

And now about meaningful experiences...

Transformative
experiences

Meaningful
experiences

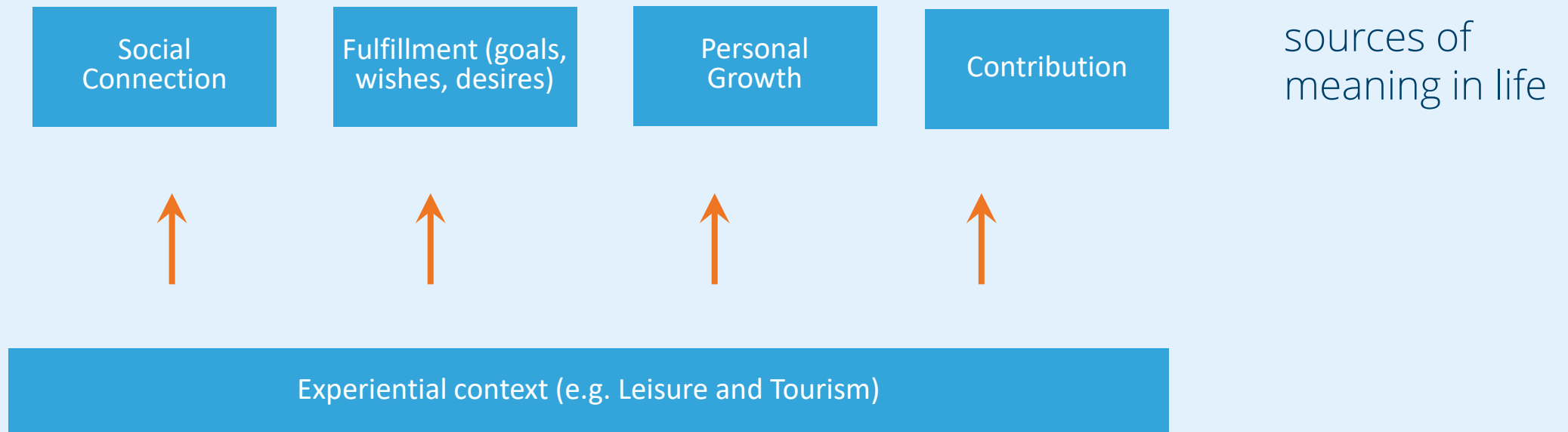
An experience where the objective experience elements attract and hold an individual's attention and produce subjective reactions involving strong emotions **and the discovery of significant and personally relevant insights.**

Memorable
experiences

An experience where the objective experience elements attract and hold an individual's attention and produce subjective reactions exhibited by **strong emotions.**

Duerden et al., 2018

What makes memorable experiences meaningful?



Bastiaansen & Duerden, 2025

What are the mechanisms that make memorable experiences meaningful?

Bastiaansen & Duerden (2025)

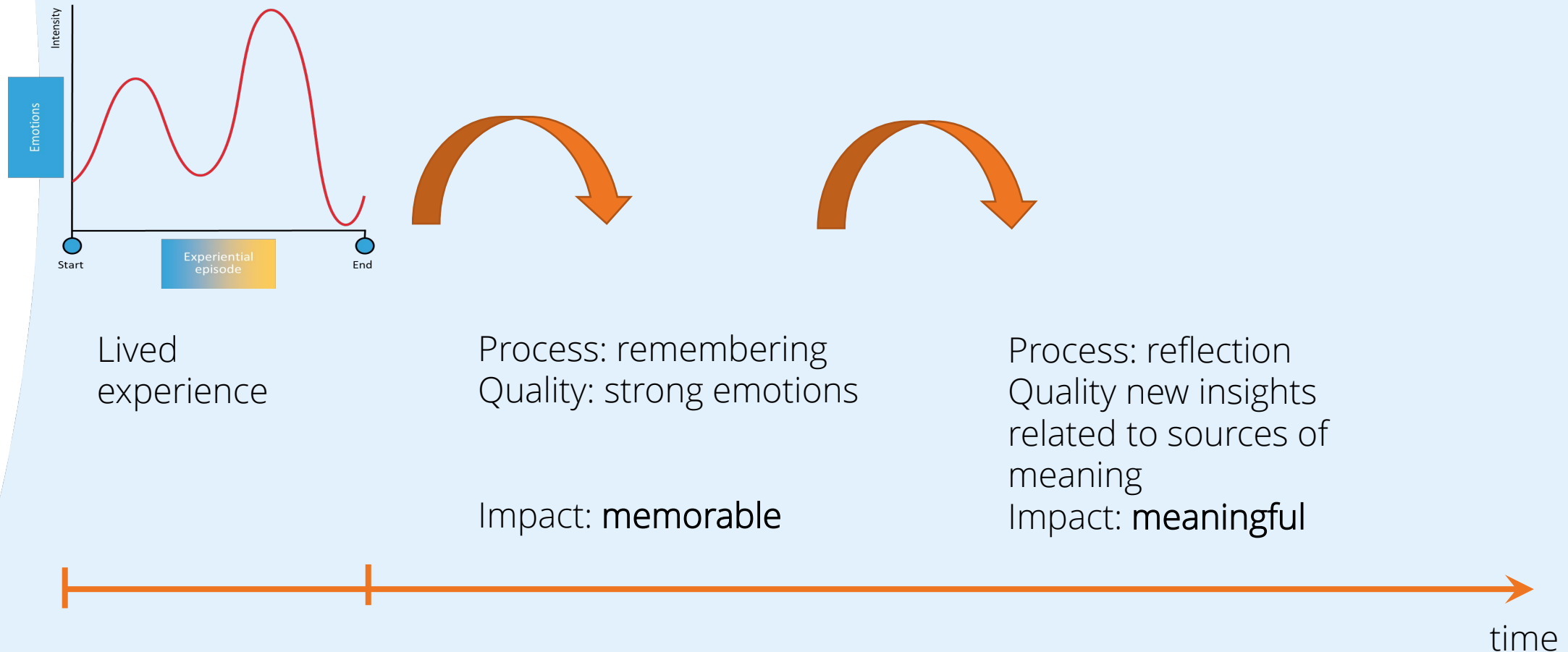
Process:

One gets new insights about memorable experiences through a process of reflection

Experiential quality:

If these insights relate to one or several of the sources of meaning, the experience becomes meaningful

What are the mechanisms that make memorable experiences meaningful?



So what?

Design implications

If your aim is to design for a meaningful experience, you should:

- Establish whether your experiences touches on sources of meaning
- Make sure there is enough opportunity for reflection

Strategies for meaningful experience design

Targeted Strategies for Designing Meaningful Experiences

Reflection strategy	Before	During	After
Social Connection	Shared Anticipation	Shared Savouring – joint experience	Shared Narrative Construction
Goals & Fulfilment	Value aligned priming cues and mastery goal formation	Goal related feedback, Goal sequencing	Goal feedback, value connection, storytelling and sharing
Contribution	Value Informed Interpretation Materials	Social Development Model Strategies	Contribution Narratives
Growth	Self-Efficacy – intake assessment	Flow states – self-efficacy – task competence development	Self- evaluation/assessment ?

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Final wrap-up

- Memorable experiences require emotional peaks and troughs
- Measuring emotions during experiences allow for evidence-based experience design
- Meaningful experiences require insights into (one or several) sources of meaning
- Design strategies for meaningful experiences involve staging reflection on those sources



Creating meaningful experiences

a theoretical and empirical framework for evidence-based experience design

Want to chat or collaborate? - bastiaansen4.m@buas.nl

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