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At home with the Missoni family: narratives of domesticity within Hotel Missoni Edinburgh

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Abstract

This article explores the narratives of domesticity present within the spaces, services and discourses of

Hotel Missoni Edinburgh. It is argued that Hotel Missoni Edinburgh employs a series of marketing strategies that evoke the Missonis as simulacra of hosts through references to their home, their domestic practices and their lifestyle to emphasize effects of domesticity with the aim to create a sense of closeness and intimacy between the brand and its consumers. The gastronomic offerings of Hotel Missoni Edinburgh also refer to ideas of family and domesticity, elements that are associated with Italy and its lifestyle but that are also characteristic traits of the Missoni brand identity. Moreover, it is discussed how Hotel Missoni Edinburgh also employs a series of spatial strategies aimed at augmenting the connotations of domesticity of the hotel to recreate the feel of the Missoni household, producing a sort of hybrid space, also in terms of privacy, that is coherent with the Missoni brand ethos and that can appeal to costumers.

Introduction

Hotel Missoni Edinburgh constitutes a case of *luxury fashion flagship hotel*, i.e. a case of brand extension in the hospitality business by a luxury fashion label that holds a very close relationship in terms of brand identity with their parent brand (Dallabona 2015). Hotel Missoni Edinburgh opened in 2009 and was owned and managed by the Rezidor Group, a hospitality management company based in Brussels. The group signed in 2005 a worldwide license agreement with the Italian luxury fashion label Missoni in order to develop and manage a new brand of luxury lifestyle hotels and in 2011 a second Missoni Hotel was opened in Kuwait City (Kuwait). Edinburgh was selected for the first Hotel Missoni by the Rezidor Group and it has been observed that the choice of a city which is similar, in terms of its size and history, to Italy, instead of opting for more showy destinations such as Dubai, which was chosen as the location for the first Armani Hotel, is in line with the brand identity of the Missoni fashion label (Vivaldi 2010).

The Missoni fashion label is an iconic Italian luxury fashion brand founded in 1949 by Ottavio Missoni (who died in 2013) and his wife Rosita (see Casadio 1997, Missoni 2011, Vercelloni 1995). The label

contributed to create the reputation and prestige of Italian fashion in the 20th century and is strictly intertwined with extremely lightweight knitwear and brightly coloured patterns such as zig-zags and stripes. Hotel Missoni Edinburgh holds a very close relationship with the Missoni family, which constitutes the origin of the fashion label and one of its most recognisable traits. The Missonis are an essential part of the Missoni brand identity, i.e. the brand “personality” (Kapferer 2004: 108), and it is argued here that they play the same role also in regard to the Hotel Missoni brand. In this sense the identity of Hotel Missoni Edinburgh is coherent with the one of the Missoni fashion label. Examining the presence of the Missonis within the spaces and the discourses surrounding Hotel Missoni Edinburgh, it is clear that although they are not consistently featured in the former they are assigned a central role in the brand communication. Moreover, they represent a form of authority that sanctions the conformity of Hotel Missoni Edinburgh as an authentic representation of the Missoni lifestyle.

Hotel Missoni Edinburgh was re-branded by the Rezidor Group in 2014 as G&V Royal Mile Hotel after the license agreement with the Missoni fashion label was terminated, but the hotel remains virtually untouched. In the spaces of Hotel Missoni Edinburgh there was and there still is a significant presence of typically Missoni geometric patterns, like stripes, in a variety of elements like linens but also carpets and sofas (figure 1 and 2).



Image 1: Private dining room of Hotel Missoni Edinburgh featuring the distinctive Missoni stripes and monochromatic patterns, and Missoni rolls of fabrics as wall decorations. Copyright Alice Dallabona.

After the Hotel Missoni Edinburgh was re-branded as G&V Royal Mile Hotel, references to the material manifestation of the Missoni label have remained the same. Missoni fabrics are still hung on the wall as decorative pieces, the hotels still features Missoni Home furniture, dinnerware and cutlery, only the Missoni name has been erased from the space, in a sort of *damnatio memoriae*. References to name Missoni have been removed, but the re-branded G&V Royal Mile Hotel also retains the references to the Missonis' personality and a sense of domesticity, as discussed later in more detail, relegating in a sense the Missonis to haunting echos of hosts, unnamed but powerful presences that shape the identity of the space.



Figure 2: Missoni patterns featured in Hotel Missoni Edinburgh's meeting space, which has not changed since the hotel re-

The present study adopts an 'instrumental' case study approach which, in opposition to an intrinsic one, uses the case study 'to understand something else' and involves 'a research question, a puzzlement, a need for general understanding, and feel that we might get insight into the question by studying a particular case' (Stake 1995: 3). The Missoni fashion label is a family business where three generations of Missonis hold different roles and they have featured regularly in the media to promote their brand, also in cases when the brand has previously collaborated with other companies. In this respect, the present research aimed to investigate whether the brand extension on the Missoni fashion label in to the realm of hospitality was similarly centered around notions of family and domesticity and how those were articulated.

Family matters

The Missoni family is strictly intertwined with the identity of the Missoni fashion label, having featured regularly in the media to promote their brand and having starred in several advertisements, for example the iconic 1992 campaign by Italian photographer Oliviero Toscani. More recently, members of the Missoni family have featured in the fall/winter 2010 campaign by Kenneth Anger and in the spring/summer 2010 and 2011 campaigns by Juergen Teller. The same marketing strategy that emphasizes the association between the Missonis and the fashion label has been employed also when the brand has ventured into brand extension (Margherita Missoni is the face of the company's fragrances) or has collaborated with other companies (Margherita Missoni was the face for the "Missoni for Target" line in 2011). However, within the spaces of Hotel Missoni Edinburgh the references to the Missonis are rather limited and they do not occupy a primary position in the visual identity of the hotel, as the only

explicit references to them is constituted by a series of photographs of the label's founder Ottavio Missoni that were placed in the gym and focus on his sporting career as a runner, with particular references to the 1948 London Olympics (Dallabona 2011).

The choice of limiting the presence of the Missonis might appear in contrast with the communication strategy that the Missoni label has employed over the years. However, although the Missonis are not extensively featured within the spaces of Hotel Missoni Edinburgh they are nonetheless very much present in its marketing strategy. Corporate communication by the Rezidor Group emphasizes the personal involvement of Rosita Missoni in creating the identity of hotel and virtually all of the articles concerning the hotel, and not only in fashion magazines like *Vogue* or *Elle*, mention the Missoni family in this regard. This form of personal involvement by the Missonis was considered to be a very strong selling point for the brand, as emphasized by Mara Begley, who worked on the public relation strategy for the hotel and managed to obtain an editorial in *W* because her “pitch to the magazine highlighted how Hotel Missoni was going to break the mould of fashion-branded hotels because of the personal involvement of fashion house matriarch and design icon Rosita Missoni” (Ward 2009: 20). In this sense, the marketing strategy of Hotel Missoni aims to evoke the Missonis as simulacra of hosts. Moreover, Begley continues, the Missoni family was also a powerful instrument to guarantee media coverage as she declares that “to clinch the story placement” she “also set up a mother-daughter interview with Rosita and Angela Missoni, who is now in charge of Missoni Fashion” (Ward 2009: 20).

However, this strategy is not only specific to the Missoni Hotel, and is also employed by other luxury fashion flagship hotels which are the result of brand extensions of luxury fashion labels that are clearly associated with their founders or designers, like Armani and Versace. They also emphasize the involvement of such individuals to promote the hotel brands and to guarantee a constant flow of media coverage. In the case of Hotel Missoni Edinburgh, the constant emphasis on the role of Rosita Missoni ended up overshadowing the work of the other entities that were involved in the project (like Allan

Murray Architects, the award-winning firm which designed the building that hosts the Edinburgh hotel, and Matteo Thun and Partners, which developed the interior design in collaboration with Rosita Missoni). This is in line with the luxury fashion industry, where the myth of the brand is similarly centred around the figure of the designer or of the founder of the label, 'obliterating' the team work behind it. The involvement of the Missoni family in developing the project also provides a certain form of authority behind it, and in this sense the Missoni family, and in particular Rosita Missoni, acts as a “sender-judge”. In the actantial model theorized by Greimas (1969) the “sender” is the figure that makes the “subject” do something, and in this case they are respectively represented by the Missonis and the Rezidor Group, which was attributed by the former the “mission” of creating Hotel Missoni. After the “mission” has been accomplished (and the hotel completed) by the “subject”, i.e. the Missonis, then also act as “judges” as they sanction the conformity of Rezidor's performance in relation to the values of which Missoni is guarantor, like family, friendliness and informality.

Recreating the Missoni household

Hotel Missoni Edinburgh is presented as an authentic representation of the Missoni values and lifestyle through marketing practices that emphasize firstly how the hotel was inspired by Rosita Missoni's family home in Sumirago (Varese, Italy), secondly how the matriarch of the label contributed to the hotel's design in terms of home-making practices and thirdly how the service culture of the hotel is in line with the values of unpretentiousness, friendliness and informality that characterize the identity of the Missoni fashion label and, more broadly, Italy.

One element that is greatly emphasized in the discourses concerning Missoni Hotel Edinburgh is constituted by the fact that its spaces are inspired by the Missoni family home in Sumirago. In fact the

hotel feature the same mix of Missoni textiles and furniture from their Missoni Casa line and designer's pieces. Moreover, Hotel Missoni Edinburgh features the very same furniture that Rosita chose for the Missoni family home, as for example the hotel's restaurant features the same Hans J. Wegner's Wishbone Chairs that Rosita has in her own kitchen. Rosita Missoni said, in regard to those chairs "I have these in all my homes and they are simply the most comfortable for an after-meal chat" (Zargani 2008). In this respect Hotel Missoni Edinburgh constitutes an extension of the Missoni home, replicating its salient characteristics, with the aim to create a sense of closeness and intimacy between the brand and its consumers. This strategy of recreating domestic environments, although staged and 'inauthentic', is established in the retail sector and is used by many luxury fashion labels for their stores, like in the case of Ralph Lauren (Hetzel 2003).

In this sense Hotel Missoni Edinburgh, despite rationing the physical presence of the Missonis within the spaces of the hotel, attributes a central role to them in terms of providing "personality" to the brand (Kapferer 2004), in this respect being coherent with the branding strategies employed by the Missoni fashion label. This, in addition to the profuse use of Missoni patterns, contribute to create a space that represents the brand and its owners, as those patterns are so closely intertwined with Missoni and the processes of identification between them so established that the former can substitute the latter by metonymy (Barthes 1977: 50), working as signs for the fashion label and creating a strong effect of visual presence within the space (Dallabona 2011).

Moreover, Hotel Missoni Edinburgh is presented as coherent with the Missoni values and lifestyle also because Rosita Missoni contributed to the hotel's design in terms of homemaking practices. As observed by Young (1997: 151) "homemaking consists in the activities of endowing things with living meaning, arranging them in space in order to facilitate the life activities of those to whom they belong, and preserving them, along with their meaning". In this perspective, the home is conceptualized as a "process" (Walsh 2006: 126), an entity that is created and maintained through domestic practices such as

decorating, cooking or cleaning (Daniels 2008: 123 but also Miller 2001 and Cieraad 2010). In this respect Hotel Missoni Edinburgh is presented as an authentic representation of the Missoni values and lifestyle because the hotel has been created through the same the domestic practices that Rosita Missoni employs to create and maintain her home, i.e. the one of rearranging the furniture and the one of cleaning.

Whenever Rosita Missoni visited the Missoni Hotel Edinburgh she made small changes in the layout of the furniture or updated the decor a little by rearranging home accessories like she does in her own home. Those might appear like small and almost insignificant practices but, “the meaning of home isn't just constructed through large-scale redecoration projects but also lie in smaller, everyday consumption practices through which we make homes” (Hollows 2008: 83). Moreover, the domestic practices of Rosita Missoni with regard to cleaning had an impact on the interior design concept of the hotel. The first plan for the Edinburgh's hotel featured carpets in every room, an element that Rosita Missoni fiercely opposed to solely on the basis that they are difficult to clean and that she would never have them in her own home, criticism that ultimately led to the decision to have wooden floors instead.

Carpets are the dirtiest things in hotels. The maids clean the rooms in 15 minutes
—how can they clean the carpet properly?

(Rosita Missoni quoted in Conti: 2009).

It is significant that Rosita Missoni presents herself as the homemaker and assumes that women should be responsible for cleanliness, relying on culturally constructed images of women as responsible for creating home (Johnson and Lloyd 2005, Hollows 2008, Sparke 1995, Wood 2012) and perpetuating the myth of Italian women as devoted to taking care of their homes and families. The responsibilities of home-making practices are usually allocated to women and domestic life has been generally considered as a site for

gender inequalities (Friedan 1965, Hartmann 1981, Barrett and McIntosh 1982, Giles 2004, Hunt 1995, Williams 2001, Bianchi et al. 2000, Hochschild and Machung 2003, Johnson and Lloyd 2005), oppression and violence (Dobash and Dobash 1980 and 1992, Goldsack 1999 and Stanko 1990), but this does not necessarily mean that women are “intrinsically dissatisfied in the domestic sphere” (Chapman 2001: 144) or that they cannot take pride in their home-making role (Walsh 2006, Pink 2004), as the case of Rosita Missoni demonstrates.

Moreover, Hotel Missoni Edinburgh features services that are inspired by the Missonis' public persona, which revolves around ideas of family and informality, traits that constitute the brand “culture” (Kapferer 2004) and that are also associated with their country of origin and in particular with the myth of the relaxed Italian lifestyle. The close association between Missoni, family and informality is particularly emphasized in the spring/summer 2011 campaign by Juergen Teller. The campaign features three generations of Missonis in the family home of Ottavio and Rosita in Sumirago and achieves an effect of informality through visual techniques. The different photos in fact at first glance look like they could have been taken by non-professionals, as they proudly showcase certain flaws and imperfections, like for example the flash of the camera reflected in shiny surfaces, creating a constructed effect of informality that represents the values that the Missonis and their company stands for. In Angela Missoni's words “we wanted the campaign to be a snapshot of an evening with the Missoni family” (Milligan 2010). However, connotations of family and informality are also present in the staff culture and services of Hotel Missoni Edinburgh.

Hotel Missoni Edinburgh's service culture revolves around ideas of unpretentiousness, friendliness and informality with the aim of making guests feel welcome, in line with the identity of the Missonis and their fashion label. As Rosita Missoni observes “we are considered good hosts - we have a way of welcoming people which is well known throughout the fashion world” (Nayer 2011). The ethos of Hotel Missoni Edinburgh is constituted by friendliness and informality and that is visually represented by the fact that

staff does not wear formal uniforms, unlike in many hotels in the same category. Staff at Hotel Missoni Edinburgh wears instead Missoni clothes, which are associated with an informal and relaxed lifestyle that is, more broadly, also considered as a characteristic trait associated with Italy. From this perspective, staff at Hotel Missoni Edinburgh is seen as “an embodiment of corporate identity” (Solomon 1998: 83). “The clothing worn by workers is part of the performance of an organisation’s brand image, and workers’ bodies are part of how the brand is communicated” (Pettinger 2004: 180), and in this sense the employees of Hotel Missoni Edinburgh, by wearing Missoni clothing and embodying the identity of the brand, are aesthetic labourers (Warhurst and Nickson 2001 and 2007, Warhurst et al. 2000, Witz et al. 2003), like the ones working in the fashion industry (Entwistle 2009, Entwistle and Wissinger 2006, Pettinger 2004). Like shop assistants in a Missoni store, also staff at Hotel Missoni Edinburgh contribute to portraying the image of the company and is effectively “made up” by employers (Du Gay 1997).

Narratives of family, informality and domesticity, elements that are associated with Italy and its lifestyle (Barthes 1977, Moliterno 2000: 211, Girardelli 2004, Bell and Hollows 2007, Parasecoli 2004) and that are also characteristic traits of the Missoni brand identity, are also present in the gastronomic offerings of Hotel Missoni Edinburgh. The very name of the hotel's restaurant, *Cucina* (the Italian word for kitchen), presents connotations of domesticity and informality and so does the choice to entitle the lunch menu “Missoni a mezzogiorno”, literally meaning “Missoni at midday”, as in Italian the word *mezzogiorno* is used in informal and familiar contexts to refer to lunch. However the connotations of humility and familiarity in those terms, which are in line with the Missoni brand identity, are only recognised by a very specific Model Reader (Eco 1979), i.e. an individual that possess the necessary competence to decipher the references at stake as they were intended to. For those lacking such cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984), on the opposite, the references above might be associated to ideas of refinement or even pretentiousness. In *Cucina* this dimension of familiarity is also emphasized through references to traditional domestic practices, firstly by using recipes and methods that are characteristic of different local

traditions of domestic cooking (see for example *ragù* or *polenta*) and secondly by proposing a series of masterclasses led by executive chef Mattia Camorani.

Let us consider for example the masterclass that focuses on fresh pasta (*pasta fresca*). The use of pasta fresca (in its simple form, like *tagliatelle*, or with filling, like *ravioli* or *tortelli*) is characteristic of the Po Valley (in the Emilia-Romagna region of Italy) and features a very high level of local difference, so that practically every household has its own “family tradition in pasta-making” (Alexander 2000: 556).

Domestic cooking in general, and pasta-making in particular, is a gendered activity. Historically, in Italy men did not generally engage with cooking at all, the only exception being constituted by special festivities where the normal order was inverted (Badii 2004). Such a gendered division of cooking labour is widespread and, despite the “popular impression that patterns of the gender division of labour are changing” (Bell and Valentine 1997: 70), “provisioning and food preparation remain largely the work of women” (Caplan 1997: 9 and also Charles and Kerr 1988, Murcott 1982, 1983 and 1993, Warde and Hetherington 1993 and 1994).

For centuries in Italy “skilled women” (Moliterno 2000: 422) have been making fresh pasta by hand and Cucina's masterclass refers precisely to this gendered domestic tradition that is epitomized in the mythical figure of the Italian “Cooking Woman” (Duruz 2004), the mother that still nowadays remains “at the centre of Italian families, the providers of a constant flow of totalizing care, directed primarily towards their child or children, but also towards their husband, their parents and often their husband's parents as well” (Ginsborg 2001: 77 but also Harper and Faccioli 2010). This figure of the Italian mother (*mamma*) is not only connoted as a care giver, but as the source (and the preserver) of authentic Italian culinary traditions. Especially in regard to pasta-making, “recipes and particular cooking techniques” are “passed from one generation to another” from women, “usually from mother to daughter” (Bell and Valentine 1997: 66). However, that is not always the case anymore as young women reject the traditional girl's education that sees mothers passing on their culinary knowledge to daughters (Giard 1998: 151) and find

themselves looking for culinary tips from a variety of sources like books, magazines and TV shows (Giard 1998: 178), untraditional repositories of cooking knowledge like Cucina's masterclasses are.

Camorani's masterclasses are closely intertwined with ideas of family and domesticity because the chef acts in a certain sense as a surrogate mother who transmits a type of culinary know-how that is associated with domestic traditions. Moreover, Camorani also provides skills that people can use at home, perpetuating the domestic tradition of pasta-making. This is in line with Montanari's (2010: 73) claims that Italian restaurants are nowadays perpetuating domestic traditions that have been progressively abandoned at home. Similar to the Italian mother, chef Camorani acts as a source and guarantor of a 'traditional' and 'authentic' know-how that, from an Italian point of view, is intrinsically related to domestic traditions. If elsewhere pasta-making is primarily connoted as a professional chefs' activity, in an Italian perspective on the other hand that is considered a typically domestic activity.

At home with the Missonis

As observed earlier Hotel Missoni Edinburgh employs a series of marketing strategies that evoke the Missonis as simulacra of hosts through references to their home, their domestic practices and their lifestyle. However, in this respect Hotel Missoni Edinburgh also employs a series of spatial strategies aimed at augmenting the connotations of domesticity of the hotel to recreate the feel of the Missoni household in terms of privacy and intimacy, producing a sort of hybrid space that is coherent with Missoni brand values with the aim to enhance once again the sense of closeness and intimacy between the brand and its consumers. In the case of Hotel Missoni Edinburgh the references to the private sphere are created in the public areas through the emphasis of the horizontal dimension in spaces that are intrinsically at a human scale.

Domestic spaces are traditionally associated with certain spatial characteristics in regard to the specific

dimensions and proportions of the rooms, which typically involve a smaller scale than public places (Caballero and Tsukamoto 2006: 306). Those elements are present in the topological articulation of the spaces of Hotel Missoni Edinburgh, which are designed in keeping with consideration of human scale and present a strong horizontality. Those traits are particularly relevant because they feature in the public areas. In this respect, references to the notion of private are considered here to be far more significant when present in a space that is characterized by its public use, like in the lobby area of the hotel, than in the case of spaces that are already conceptualized, to a certain extent, as private, like the hotel bedrooms. This is in line with conceptualisations of domestic environments, where is possible to distinguish between more private areas like the bedroom and less private areas like for example the living room (Januarius 2009: 51, Hurdley 2006: 718, Mallett 2004: 72 and Hepworth 1999: 18).

Private and public do not exist *per se* but are the result of strategies of privatisation, that is semiotically defined as a modal structure that involves not merely space and people, but also time (Hammad 2003: 298). In this respect, hotel bedrooms can be considered as a private space, in opposition to the public areas of the lobby, but only for the limited time between check-in and check-out. Moreover, bedrooms also allow access to other people besides guests, let us think for example of room service or cleaners. They in a sense 'invade' the privacy of guests, which often employ different strategies to cope with the occasional intrusion (for example by putting everything back in their suitcase or tidying up their room).

The interior of the lobby area of Hotel Missoni Edinburgh is characterized by a strong horizontality, although the space features also some references to verticality. For example the lobby features some columns and two very tall vases (products of a collaboration between Missoni and Italian mosaic firm Trend) that almost reach the level of the flooring of the mezzanine where Cucina Restaurant is located. However, both the columns and the vases are decorated with horizontal stripy patterns that work as dampers which tone down the connotation of verticality of the space. The lobby itself is not characterized by a strong verticality, as references to that dimension are counterbalanced also by the presence of many

horizontal elements, like the mezzanine and the lower ceilings, that emphasize the dimensions of intimacy. Furthermore, the contrast between the marked verticality of the façade of the Missoni Hotel emphasizes even more the horizontality of the lobby area, creating a space that is intrinsically at the human scale and therefore associated with the spheres of the private and the domestic (Caballero and Tsukamoto 2006:136). The outer shell of the Missoni Hotel building, with its grand proportions echoed in the two very tall mosaic vases mentioned above, seems to create expectations about the inside, expectations that are unfulfilled as the lobby area does not present such characteristics. The predominance of verticality in the outer shell of the building is one of its most distinctive characteristics also in relation to the diachronic dimension. From a diachronic point of view, the hotel is located where the demolished Lothian Region Council Headquarters used to be, building was characterised by a strong horizontality. The marked verticality of the new Hotel Missoni Edinburgh development presents an opposition, in absentia, with the horizontality of the previous building and in this sense is in line with the historical buildings that surround it.

Another feature usually associated with the sphere of domesticity that is appropriated by Hotel Missoni Edinburgh is a specific regime of visibility, the one of privacy, that involves the possibility of being protected from the gaze of bystanders, at least when desired. As observed by Caballero and Tsukamoto (2006: 304), public spaces that employ such a regime of visibility can create “a more intimate and less public atmosphere”, and therefore benefit from the positive connotations associated with domestic environments. In the spaces of Hotel Missoni Edinburgh, the private regime of visibility is achieved through manipulations of the topological dimension concerning the categories continuous/discontinuous. The lobby of Hotel Missoni Edinburgh consists of an open space where the reception, the bar and the restaurant are located, so that in terms of the dichotomy continuous/discontinuous this area belongs to the former element of this opposition. The areas are in fact separated not through physical limits such as walls but through thresholds, i.e. flexible boundaries that enhance the conjunction of elements and not their

disjunction (Zilberberg 2001).



Figure 3:

Oversize reel of thread in the typical Missoni stripes featuring in the lobby as a flexible boundary between the entrance and the bar. Copyright Alice Dallabona.

The presence of flexible boundaries between the different zones of the lobby enhance the continuity and the internal coherence of the space but also the constant references to the world of Missoni (figure 3). In this respect, the lobby comprises different areas that remain distinct at least in function, identifying a situation of partitive totality (Giannitrapani 2004: 3) where the emphasis is not on the wholeness of the space but on the parts it comprises, i.e the reception on the left, the bar in the centre and the restaurant upstairs (figure 4).



Figure 4: Detail of

Cucina restaurant, located in the mezzanine level just above the bar. Copyright Alice Dallabona.

As examined in Dallabona (2011), the internal topology of the lobby area demonstrates that it is one open space that represents the sum of different elements, and is not an integral totality where the parts lose their individuality, as the parts are dedicated to different functions and retain a certain degree of privacy and intimacy. Considering the regime of visibility and of the points of view of the lobby area (Marrone 2001: 291), there are areas that are not visible to localized subjects, as the complete view of the space is precluded both from inside and outside. This is particularly evident in the case of the hotel's restaurant, that is protected from bystanders' glances as it cannot be seen from the lobby downstairs, nor from outside the hotel despite the glass walls, because a parapet protects it. Moreover, the tall mosaic vases located in the entrance and the columns also protect the bar and reception area, that are only partially visible. In this sense, it can be seen that the specific topological structure of Hotel Missoni Edinburgh and related visibility regime has the effect of turning public space into private ones, so that they can represent characteristics that are usually associated with the latter despite belonging to the realm of the former.

The spaces of Hotel Missoni Edinburgh guarantee also a certain degree of auditive privacy (Hammad

2003: 299) due to the presence, in the public areas, both of background music and materials that are sound-absorbing, like upholstery, textiles and wood. Moreover, the spaces of Hotel Missoni Edinburgh also refer to ideas of homeliness in terms of comfort. Comfort is one of the key attributes of the home and that can be achieved, as observed by Sparke (1995: 27), “by cushioning, soft textures and surfaces” and “by gentle curved forms”. The public areas of Missoni Hotel Edinburgh are characterized by a widespread use of textiles and upholstery, in the form of soft furnishing that emphasizes the curved dimension over straightness, and through artworks in the typical Missoni fabrics, contributing “to increase the sense of privacy and soften the environment, both visually and to the touch” (Sparke 1995: 39).

The narratives of domesticity present within the spaces, services and discourses of Hotel Missoni Edinburgh are in this sense in line with the identity and ethos of the Missoni fashion label. Hotel Missoni Edinburgh simulates a domestic environment through a series of strategies aimed at blurring the distinction between private and public, a distinction that is similarly blurred in the real Missoni household, that is used both as a private space by the family and as a space to promote the fashion label. Besides having featured in the spring/summer 2011 advertising campaign, the Missoni family home in Sumirago (Italy) has provided the backdrop for countless photo shoots and interviews, like the homes of other members of the Missoni family. As observed earlier, this strategy is functional to create a sense of closeness between the brand and its customers and is widespread in the luxury fashion retail sector, but to blur the distinction between private and public is also a productive strategy to attract customers in other types of businesses.

In the contemporary hospitality industry it is not unusual for businesses to leverage elements of domesticity and comfort to create hybrid spaces that might be more appealing for customers, a phenomenon epitomized in the case of Starbucks. The coffee chain has created “a homely ambience using stripped wood floors and 'comfy' brown leather sofas” with the aim of associating themselves with “more personalised forms of hospitality associated with domestic cultures” (Hollows 2008: 119). This

phenomenon of hybridisation is not the exclusive domain of the Western world, as demonstrated by the study of Caballero and Tsukamoto (2006). They focused on spatial entities that characterize the contemporary Japanese culture, such as the karaoke box, love hotels and Manga Kissa, i.e. small cubicles where one or two persons can perform “a wide scope of activities such as reading comic books and magazines, browsing the internet, playing video games, or watching movies, drinking and eating” (Caballero and Tsukamoto 2006: 303). Another term used to describe architectural hybridization forms of private and public space is “being space” (Trendwatching 2006), defined as a “commercial living-room-like settings in the public space, where catering and entertainment aren't just the main attraction, but are there to facilitate out-of-home, out-of-office activities like watching a movie, reading a book, meeting friends and colleagues, and so on”.

These phenomena of hybridization are not merely a contemporary trend, as there has not always been a clear distinction between the private and public realm. Modern ideas of home and domesticity based on the opposition between the private and public sphere (McDowell 2007: 131, Waghorn 2009: 270) are a recent acquisition, having become particularly relevant in the Victorian era (Hollows 2008: 15). It has been claimed that a shift towards the private in the domestic environment can be traced back to the medieval period (LeZotte 2009: 7 but also Rybczynski 1987) but others have argued that still in the pre-industrial era the private life and public activities, i.e. the work activities, of the family were not kept clearly separated and “there was little distinction between public and private spaces within the home” (Hollows 2008: 16), so that the household continued to be characterized as a place of “*sociability* rather than *privacy*” (Hareven 2002: 34).

The home is seen as a place associated with the notions of intimacy and privacy (Waghorn 2009: 267, McDowell 2007: 131, LeZotte 2009: 7, Hollows 2008) but also comfort (Botticello 2007: 9), elements that are greatly emphasized in the spaces of Hotel Missoni Edinburgh. The private sphere and the realm of home are also strictly intertwined with issues of gender as they are associated with femininity, while

the public sphere is usually associated with masculinity (Hollows 2008: 3 and also Sparke 1995 and Matthews 1987), situation reflected in the emphasis on Rosita Missoni's role in the narratives concerning Hotel Missoni Edinburgh.

However, the very notions of private and public are highly problematic, as many scholars have argued that they are not fixed but mobile entities that change over time (Weintraub and Kumar 1997, Sheller and Urry 2003, Sheller 2004 and Hollows 2008).

This is because public spaces are not purely and self-evidently public; they are, like every other cultural space, characterized by particular configurations of public and private. Indeed what makes the public/private division such a major category of social power is the fact that it is dynamic and flexible, varying from place to place.

(McCarthy 2001: 121)

The categories of private and public are conceptualized in different ways in different cultures (Daniels 2008: 116 Caballero and Tsukamoto 2006: 308 and Helliwell 1996) and moreover the notions of private and public cannot be completely separated as they seem to rely on each other for their very own definition, so that “the domestic is created through the extra-domestic and vice-versa” (Blunt and Dowling 2006: 27).

Conclusions

This article examined the narratives of domesticity present within the spaces, services and discourses of

Hotel Missoni Edinburgh, arguing that they are used strategically with the aim to create a sense of closeness and intimacy between the brand and its consumers. It was observed how the hotel employed a series of spatial strategies aimed at augmenting the connotations of domesticity of the hotel to recreate the feel of the Missoni household but also how references to the Missonis home and their domestic practices and their lifestyle contributed to create a sort of hybrid space, also in terms of privacy, that is in line with the brand identity of the Missoni fashion label.

Although references to domesticity are not always present in the hospitality business, 'elements of what constitutes a home can be found outside of that sphere, through particular social and spatial negotiations of public spaces' (Botticello 2007: 7). Many studies have recognized that the idea of home can operate on different scales from regional to transnational (Hollows 2008: 4, Waghorn 2009: 269 but see also Das et al. 2008: 352, McDowell 2007: 134, Blunt and Dowling 2006 and Morley 2000). Concepts of home, domesticity and privacy resonate beyond the space of the home and can be found in other spaces such as cafés, pubs or market stalls (Hollows 2008: 4, Botticello 2007, Caballero and Tsukamoto 2006 and Oldenburg and Brissett 1982) but also hotels, as the case of Hotel Missoni Edinburgh examined here demonstrates.

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