A Glimpse of Push and Pull Factors
Affecting Chinese Luxury Hotel Staying Behavior in the Post-Pandemic Era

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Abstract

In the present day, Chinese consumers have the opportunity to experience stays in up-scale hotels, leading to an increased interest in luxury hotels within this customer group. This research study seeks to examine the various push and pull factors that affect Chinese attitudes towards intentions to stay at luxury hotels. A total of 286 Chinese participants responded to a questionnaire survey, revealing that the push factors of uniqueness seeking, interpersonal experience and the pull factor of site value could affect their attitudes in the context of luxury hospitality services, thereby influencing their behavioral intentions. It is noteworthy that social networking (push) and decoration/ themes (pull) were not significantly affecting the attitudes of Chinese consumers towards the luxury hotel sector. The managerial implications of this research are to provide enriching insight for luxury hotels to design marketing strategies and develop specifically customized products and services.

Keywords: 1) Chinese Consumer 2) Push and Pull Factors 3) Attitude 4) Behavioral Intention 5) Luxury Hotels

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant changes in people's lifestyles, as well as causing severe damage to the economy and leading to a dramatic downturn in travel, tourism, and hospitality, thus affecting luxury hotels. The service sector relies upon face-to-face contact, and therefore hospitality and tourism has encountered numerous difficulties due to the pandemic, incurring a significant loss of income and adverse consequences for staff who were no longer able to work due to the lockdowns and need for social distancing. Cancellations caused many hotels to close, either partially or in full, leaving managers to cope with high fixed costs but minimal income due to the collapse in demand and long-term uncertainty (Wong, et al., 2021, p. 1; Shin, et al., 2021, p. 1). Interestingly, one of the most notable trends in the hospitality industry, luxury services has gradually increased over the past decade. Despite a disproportionate hit during the pandemic, the luxury segment is leading a demand surge as the industry recovers thanks to widespread vaccination (Holmes, 2021). Global Data (2022) indicated that the luxury business is expected to continue as the luxury market is anticipated to be a premiere driver of the revival of hospitality and tourism economics worldwide (Wu, et al., 2023, pp. 1425-1452).

The work of Krungsri Research indicates major economic changes as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, both in the near term and in the more distant future. Businesses which are unable to change their approach and adapt to the new circumstances are unlikely to remain competitive and may cease to operate in some cases (Krungsri Research, 2020). However, few studies have specifically investigated the hotel sector, especially in terms of pandemic response and crisis management. Accordingly, hoteliers must develop strategies to handle crises in order to emerge from the pandemic with their businesses intact. Clearly this is a gap in the research which must be filled. One particular problem is that while studies had developed an understanding of hotel luxury prior to the pandemic (Yang and Mattila, 2016, pp. 1848-1867; Wu and Yang, 2018, pp. 2037-2055; Peng and Chen, 2019, pp. 1348-1366), the post-COVID-19 reality has altered customer perceptions and preferences in a manner which is not yet fully understood, and this leads to a need for further study in the current circumstances (Wu, et al., 2023, pp. 1425-1452; Kim, Kim and Lee, 2022, pp.78-95).

China represents the world's most significant source of tourists, with the country ranked highest for the number of international travelers in recent years, despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (Blazyte, 2023). In particular, China's growing middle class has provided a high proportion of these visitors. Due to the spending power of this demographic, and in particular their desire to travel and spend after the pandemic (Bain and Company, 2021), it is important to understand their preferences in order to profit. Notably, the expanding Chinese middle-classes are interested in luxury goods as a means to project a higher social status, which they perceive to be important, and thus they form a vital group of potential customers for the luxury hotel sector. As the changes in consumer demographics and the industry as

a whole affect the hotel sector, luxury hotel managers have a challenging task ahead (Wu and Yang, 2018, pp. 2037-2055).

Research examining consumers' motivations to make luxury purchases have generally found that luxury consumption meets needs which differ from those addressed by normal consumption (Tynan, McKechnie and Chhuon, 2010, pp. 1156-1163; Wu and Yang, 2018, pp. 2037-2055). The significance of these differences has attracted some interest, but few existing studies have examined consumer motivation in hospitality context in a post pandemic world, despite the importance of the topic in the wider field of customer behavior (Solomon, Bamossy and Askegaard, 1999, p. 264). It remains the case, therefore, that it is crucial to understand such motivations in order to operate a luxury hotel business effectively. Motivation was described by Mook (1996, p. 8) as a key antecedent for human actions. It is a condition or requirement that compels a person to engage in specific behaviors (Moutinho and Vargas-Sanchez, 2018, p. 15). Earlier research has made use of the push-pull theory as a means to better understand consumer motivation, especially in the fields of hospitality, travel, and tourism, with various influential forces identified as underpinning the motivation of hospitality or tourism consumers (Wang, Luo and Tang, 2015, pp. 317-328; Mccartney and Ge, 2016, pp. 41-59; Quadri-Felitti, Su and Day, 2022, pp. 349-361). More importantly, the motivations of Chinese domestic consumers in the context of boutique hotels were examined by Wang, Luo and Tang (2015, pp. 317-328) on the basis of the push

and pull theory. Push factors, for instance, included the desire to seek uniqueness, social networks, and interpersonal experiences. Meanwhile, the pull factors included themes, decorations, and site value. Chevalier and Mazzalovo (2008, p. 38) concurred, noting that the unique qualities offered by luxury hotels include premium quality and price, scarcity and exclusivity, and esthetic appeal (Vigneron and Johnson 2004, pp. 484-506). Individuals who seek uniqueness tend to be positively impacted in terms of behavioral intention (Hyun and Park, 2016, pp. 596-623), while Lo and Yeung (2020, pp. 247-267) observed that luxury hotel stays are influenced by the interactions among guests and between guests and staff, while the physical properties of a hotel also staying behavior. Status-seeking behavior was examined by Yang and Mattila (2016, pp. 1848-1867), who determined that luxury hotel consumption offers a means for wealthy individuals to signal their status to others. In addition, Uysal, Li and Sirakaya-Turk (2008, pp. 412-436) reported the importance of the location of a hotel in shaping customer decisions, with proximity to business centers and visitor attractions proving high important. A striking and appealing form of decoration also draws the attention of luxury hotel consumers, affecting purchase intentions (Li, Fu and Huang, 2015, pp. 19-29). This study employs a framework based upon the theoretical approach of Wang, Luo and Tang (2015, pp. 317-328) in order to examine the factors which motivate luxury hotel stays. Furthermore, while luxury value is known to affect attitudes (Hung, et al., 2011, pp. 457-467), Chen and Peng (2014, pp.

53-56) reported that greater quality, and a conspicuous uniqueness are particularly appealing to Asian consumers, whose intention to consume will be increased. Following COVID-19, however, it is now necessary to investigate consumer attitudes to luxury hotel stays in greater depth.

In scenarios where luxury hotel service providers do not fully understand the motivations of Chinese consumers today, mistakes are likely to be made in formulating promotional strategies and in fine-tuning the product on offer. This study therefore set the principal aim to explore the push and pull factors from the Chinese perspective varies according to attitudes toward luxury hotel staying behavior in the post-pandemic. This research will provide useful theoretical and practical implications which might be usefully employed in the luxury hospitality industry. The theoretical framework encompassing push-pull theory will be extended through the specific contribution of this study in the luxury hotel sector, and also in the context of middle-class Chinese consumers, while from a practical standpoint, the research may inform those working in the field through the provision of guidance in product or service design and in marketing communications approaches for the relevant target markets.

Literature Review

The definition of luxury is the first critical consideration for this study. The Free Dictionary (cited in Hung, et al., 2021, pp. 45-60) states that luxury is 'something that is desirable but expensive or hard to obtain or do', while the Oxford Latin Dictionary provided the definition of luxury as 'something that is not essential but provides pleasure and comfort.' In both cases, luxury is described fundamentally as expensive and non-essential (Hung, et al., 2021, pp. 45-60). Cornell (2002, pp. 32-52), however, notes that it can be difficult to arrive at an accurate description of luxury, since the concept contains a personal element in its interpretation (Wiedmann, Hennigs and Siebels, 2009, pp. 625-651). One important component of luxury purchasing is the tendency of buyers to consume conspicuously to gain social status (Eastman, Goldsmith and Flynn, 1999, p. 41). The greater the status-seeking intention, the more likely people are to consume luxury goods and services (Mou, Gao and Yang, 2019, pp. 1050-1060). Five factors were listed by Vigneron and Johnson (2004, pp. 484-506) which guide the decision-making of consumers as they make luxury purchases. These factors are perceived extended-self, perceived hedonism, perceived conspicuousness, perceived quality, and perceived uniqueness. The nature of these factors can imply that luxury goods and services rely upon feelings, emotions, perceptions, and subjective experiences on the part of the luxury consumers (Wiedmann, Hennigs and Siebels, 2009, pp. 625-651). Similar to other luxury goods, luxury hospitality services are expensive, non-essential, and offer excellent quality. Furthermore, they can be unique, authentic, prestigious, and exclusive, while providing symbolic value appealing to the emotions (Tynan, McKechnie and Chhuon, 2010, pp. 1156-1163). It was reported by Cristini, et al.

(2017, pp. 101-107) that creativity, excellence, and exclusivity are the factors cited as crucial by luxury consumers in the hospitality sector, while the attitudes of each individual towards the concepts of luxury and to luxury brands may be quite different (Dubois, 2020, pp. 75-91). The work of Yoelao and Hung (2019, p. 15) examined the facilities, amenities, and services offered by five-star hotels, reporting that such properties had an average daily rate (ADR) of around 210 USD (1,400 CNY) and would typically offer transport services, concierge, spas and restaurants, room service, and business center services.

Luxury hotels would thus be well advised to seek a deeper understanding of customer preferences in order to adapt their services to better meet customer needs (Kim, Kim and Lee, 2022, pp. 78-95). As China rapidly develops as a market for luxury service providers to target (Mou, Gao and Yang, 2019, pp. 1050-1060), it is important for luxury hotels to devise specific strategies which are planned with the specific aim of catering to diverse Chinese demands (Kim, Kim and Lee, 2022, pp. 78-95).

Push Factors

In order to understand the nature of luxury hotel demand, the motivations of consumers must be examined closely. Motivations have often been studied in the context of the push-pull model (Wang, Luo and Tang, 2015, pp. 317-328; Khoo-Lattimore, Prayag and Disegna, 2019, pp. 774-792; Quadri-Felitti, Su and Day, 2022, pp. 349-361). The push factors are considered to be internal elements which are linked to the psychological aspects of

consumer choice which ultimately influence decision-making (Chen and Chen, 2015, pp. 416-425; John and Larke, 2016, pp. 73-90). It is also possible to explain push factors as the qualities which are desired by the consumers; the factors which 'drive an individual to participate in activities' (Wang, Luo and Tang, 2015, p. 319) and accordingly the associated motivations will mainly be intrinsic (Quadri-Felitti, Su and Day, 2022, pp. 349-361). Many studies have focused on specific destinations, revealing that the desire for travel is based on relaxation, escape, social reasons, novelty seeking, prestige, togetherness, and social status or ego enhancement (Karasakal and Dursun, 2018, pp. 23-37).

In earlier work, Gunasekaran and Anankumar (2012, pp. 1127-1132) studied alternative accommodation to determine the push factors. This study of guesthouses and homestays revealed that the key factors included "value for money", "local touch", a "homely atmosphere", and the relationship between guests and hosts. In South Africa, in a study of one specific resort, it was found that visitors primarily sought rest and relaxation, with the chance to encounter learning experiences, recreation, and enrichment (Van Vuuren and Slabbert, 2011, pp. 694-707; McCartney and Ge, 2016, pp. 41-59). In China, a study in Xiamen confirmed that customers were mainly seeking uniqueness, social networking, and interpersonal experiences from their stays in a boutique hotel (Wang, Luo and Tang, 2015, pp. 317-328). Earlier research has shown that consumers use luxury goods or services because they believe in the uniqueness

of their purchase (Hyun and Park, 2015, pp. 596-623), while this view is further supported by Kastanakis and Balabanis (2012, pp. 1399-1407) who found that when consumers wish to convey the image of high social status, they will make use of luxury goods and services to achieve this aim. In addition, Smith and Colgate (2007, pp. 7-23) make the point that hospitality sector businesses often have the goal of delivering enjoyable, exciting, and fun experiences to consumers. Besides, the push factors reported in the work of Hsu and Huang (2012, pp. 390-417) suggested that positive tourist attitudes towards their accommodation and tourist destination were linked to relaxation, knowledge, shopping, and novelty. Salsabila and Alversia (2020, pp. 38-48) also investigated push factors, finding that their influence is both positive and significant in the context of travel. Accordingly, this study sets the following hypothesis for investigation:

H1. Attitude has a significant mediating effect upon the relationship of push factors (uniqueness seeking, interpersonal experience, and social networking) with behavioral intentions toward luxury hotel stays

Pull Factors

Pull factors can be considered as external forces which draw tourists to a destination, and therefore affect their decisions about where to travel (Chen and Chen, 2015, pp. 416-425). Wang, Luo and Tang (2015, p. 319) defined pull factors as those aspects which 'attract an individual to choose a product or service.' Accordingly, these pull factors will have their basis in product- or destination-specific qualities which serve to build customer desires and preferences (Aquino, Schanzel and Hyde, 2019, pp. 177-191). In the hotel sector, pull factors will be related to facilities, attractions, events, entertainment, and services which appeal to guests and address their requirements (McCartney and Ge, 2016, pp. 41-59).

The difficulties faced by hoteliers, as Van Vuuren and Slabbert (2011, pp. 694-707) attest, lie in the need to continually develop unique attractions to draw guests to return despite the tendency of travelers to look for new experiences. Jiang, Scott and Ding (2019, pp. 225-238) argued that Chinese travelers are probably enticed by modern, unique, convenient and friendly destinations, while Wang, Luo and Tang (2015, pp. 317-328) examined motivations of customers who choose to stay in boutique hotels and reported that 'site value' and 'decoration and themes' were the main pull factors involved. For example, 'site value' refers to hotel locations, attractions nearby, and facilities offered (e.g., SPA, rental bicycle), whereas decoration and themes refer to designed layout and themes compatible with the local culture. Previous research by Li, Fu and Huang (2015, pp. 19-29) indicates that decoration style had a critical role in explaining Chinese customers' luxury hotel staying behavior. In Hong Kong, Chu and Choi, (2000, pp. 363-377) investigated six pull factors in the hotel sector which attracted both leisure and business travelers. The results indicated that the appearance of the rooms, security, and service quality were of greatest importance. Furthermore, unique and personalized services were found to be important for hotel guests in the UK (Lim and Endean, 2009, pp. 38-51).

In addition, hotel location is also a critical factor (McCartney and Ge, 2016, pp. 41-59). Pull factors are also closely linked to consumers' attitudes in selecting their tourism destinations or hotels (Lam and Hsu, 2006, pp. 589-599), while attitude has also been demonstrated to significantly mediate the relationship between pull factors and behavioral intentions (Pratiwi, Novani and Suryana, 2022, p. 706). Accordingly, the hypothesis can be set as follows:

H2. Attitude can significantly mediate the relationship between pull factors (site value and decoration and theme) and behavioral intention toward luxury hotel stays

Attitude toward behavioral intentions

Attitude can be described as a tendency which is formed through experience which will lead to a consistent response to a particular stimulant, whether positively or negatively. Within the tourism context, attitude explains consumers' feelings about different destinations and their respective attributes. The attitude will be linked to perceptions about the products and services available at the destination (Bresciani, Thrassou and Vrontis, 2015, pp. 19-34). Furthermore, the 'theory of planned behavior' (Ajzen, 1991, pp. 179-211) can be considered in the context of tourist attitudes, which describe their tendencies in the light of their positive or negative feelings towards certain behavioral actions. Accordingly, Ajzen (1991, pp. 179-211) addresses the essence of behavior by examining the factors which are able to predict behavior in certain situations, it is possible to use perceived behavioral control along with behavioral intention as predictors of behavioral achievement (Pereira, Gupta and Hussain, 2022, pp. 946-971). Earlier studies have confirmed the links between attitudes and behavioral intentions in various situations, including the case of dining in restaurants in travel destinations (Chen and Peng, 2018, pp. 59-67), and as the antecedent of purchase intentions towards luxury brands (Hung, et al., 2011, pp. 457-467) and the intentions of tourists while the COVID-19 pandemic was ongoing (Pratiwi, Novani and Suryana, 2022, p. 701). The current research serves to expand the literature through the study of attitude and its effect upon more narrowly specified purchasing intentions in the case of luxury hotel stays. This leads to the development of the hypothesis given below:

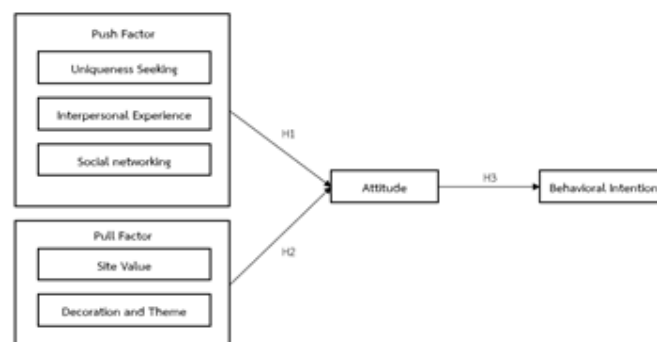**H3.** Attitude positively affects Chinese consumer behavior with regard to luxury hotel stays

Figure 1 Research Framework.

Research Methodology

Sampling and Data collection methods

The conceptual framework of the study was examined via questionnaire. The luxury goods and services market in China is very strong, and the hospitality sector is still expanding steadily as the spending power of the middle classes continues to grow, supported by other trends including market repatriation and digitalization. Given the increasing prominence of the middle classes in China, this study sought to investigate middle class Chinese consumers. According to the government of China, the middle class comprises those whose earning fall within the annual range of 60,000 CNY to 500,000 CNY (7,250 USD to 62,500 USD) (China Power, 2021). For the organization of the study, the approach follows Hair, et al. (2010, p. 112) who argued that "the minimum is to have at least five times as many observations as the number of variables to be analyzed". The sample size, according to MacCallum and Hong (1997, pp. 193-210), depends on how many variables are measured per latent variable, while Piriyakul (2021, pp. 2697-5548) claims that SEM requires a sample size of 200, although a figure slightly below or exceeding 200 may be acceptable based on the complexity of the model and the size of the population. A widely accepted ratio is 10 cases per indicator variable (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1967 quoted by Wang and Wang, 2012 as cite in Kyriazos, 2018, p. 2207). Thus, the sample size of N = 280 was considered the minimum acceptable value. In this study, a total of 286 valid responses were collected.

In earlier research, surveys designed to assess push and pull factors also evaluated be-havioral intentions and attitudes. In this case, the survey was created in English before undergoing translation to Chinese by a pair of experienced bilingual researchers via back-to-back translation to minimize errors. Three experts have checked the validity of the questionnaire by assessing the items. The result showed that the Index of Item - objective Congruence: IOC, with range from 0.71 to 1.00. It was shown to be acceptable (Rovinelli and Hambleton, 1976, p. 11). Furthermore, a pilot test was then conducted using 30 participants before proceeding to collect data for the study. From the pilot test study, all variables were shown to be reliable, reported Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0.64 to 0.82. The results were acceptable (Taber, 2018, pp. 1273-1269). Finally, the questionnaire comprised three parts. The first addressed previous luxury hotel stays, the second covered motivations, attitudes and behavioral intentions toward luxury hotel stays, and the third encompassed demographic data which included gender and age, income and education level.

Data were gathered in the tier-one cities of Shanghai and Beijing in October 2023 by Credamo, a well-known Chinese company specializing in online research company. The locations were selected since they represent large luxury travel markets in comparison to other parts of China (Chen and Peng, 2014, p. 54). The survey respondents first underwent screening to ensure that they were sufficiently wealthy to provide relevant travel data and preferences. They were required to answer a screening question which asked if they had previous experience of luxury service consumption, such as five-star hotel stays, during

the past 12 months. To improve the accuracy and honesty of these responses they were also required to name the hotel, with names then checked against the luxury hotel chain scale provided by STR (2023). For example, Mandarin Oriental hotel, The Ritz-Carlton hotel, Shangri-La hotel etc.

Following 4 weeks of data collections, the study included 286 respondents, of whom females comprised 68.5%, married 49.5%, while 80.5% were educated to college level or beyond. The age group of 21-30 had 52.7% of the respondents, and 81% were in full-time employment. The income of 53.3% was in the range of 250,000 RMB to 500,000 RMB per year. It can thus be stated that the sample respondents are educated middle-class consumers who have experience of luxury hotels, in line with the requirements for the study.

Questionnaire Design

The wording of each measurement item was adjusted for suitability in the luxury hotel environment, with 9 pull and 11 push items used following validation in previous research (Wang, Luo and Tang, 2015, pp. 317-328). A 7-point Likert scale was used for the responses (e.g. 'I would prefer individualized services,' 'Luxury hotels are reasonably priced

for the quality of the experience,', 1 = strongly disagree while 7 = strongly agree). Five items originally created by Peng, Chen and Hung (2014, pp. 69-84) were used to measure attitudes toward luxury hotel stays, with responses given on a 7-point Likert scale (e.g. 'I find luxury hotel stays enjoyable,', 1 = strongly disagree while 7 = strongly agree). Measurements of behavioral intentions used three items drawn from Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1996, pp. 31-46). The 7-point Likert scale was used for responses (e.g. 'I would consider a luxury hotel stay in the future,' 1 = strongly disagree while 7 = strongly agree). All variable was shown to be reliable, with Cronbach's alphas that ranged from 0.632 to 0.818. The Cronbach Alpha value exceeds 0.60 which concludes that items have a good internal stability and consistency (Creswell, 2003, p. 137; Pallant, 2020, p. 102; George and Mallery, 2019, p. 18; Hair, Bush and Ortinau, 2003, p. 374). The value of the Kaiser-Meteyer-Olkin (KMO) measure was .601 to .782, and the result of Barlett's Sphericity test was 6,215.25 (p<0.001), demonstrating a satisfactory measure of sampling accuracy (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994, pp. 303-305). Table 1. Presents the items for each variable.

Table 1 Measurement items

Statements	Factor loading	Cronbach's alpha
Uniqueness Seeking (US) adapted from Wang, Luo, and Tang (2015)		
I would like to share wonderful moment with someone(s)	.455	.744
I would like to stay in unique building and places	.793	
I would like to stay in a hotel that would impress my friends and family	.813	
I would like to stay in a hotel in which every room has a distinct feature	.470	
Interpersonal Experience (IE) adapted from Wang, Luo, and Tang (2015)		

Statements	Factor loading	Cronbach's alpha
I would like to get proactive service offered by the staff with passion	.815	.632
I would like to enjoy individualized service	.757	
I would like to enhance relationship with friend and relatives	.570	
Social Networking (SN) adapted from Wang, Luo, and Tang (2015)		
I would like to participate special event or activities	.845	.772
I would like to have a greater chance to meet with others with same interests	.792	
I would like to increase my social status	.681	
Site Value (SV) adapted from Wang, Luo, and Tang (2015)		
Plentiful experience with reasonable cost	.479	.600
Certain usage of facility is free of charge (e.g. SPA, rental bicycle, waterbed)	.731	
Relatively lower price	.573	
Easy to access and close to tourism sites	.538	
Various options of location	.648	
Decoration (DT) adapted from Wang, Luo, and Tang (2015)		
Designed layout and details without duplication	.682	.698
Decorated differently in every corner	.801	
Wide range of themes in luxury hotels	.813	
Themes compatible with city features	.497	
Attitude (AT) adapted from Peng at al., (2014)		
In my view, staying in luxury hotel is good	.735	.668
In my view, staying in luxury hotels is pleasant	.813	
In my view, staying in luxury hotels is desirable	.513	
In my view, staying in luxury hotels is positive	.563	
In my view, staying in luxury hotels is enjoyable	.720	
Behavioral Intention (BI) adapted from Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1996)		
I would like to stay at luxury hotels in the future	.722	.712
I plan to stay at luxury hotels in the future	.753	
I would recommend luxury hotels to my friend and others	.763	

Data Analysis and Results

Model Measurement

Data analysis was carried out using IBM SPSS AMOS 26, while the structural equation modeling (SEM) was conducted via a two-step approach following Anderson and Gerbing (1988, p. 411). All factor loading is significant and higher than .50 (Hair, et al., 2021, p. 6), except for four items with a loading lower than 0.5, (Hair, et al., 2019, p. 582; Natalya

and Purwanto, 2018, pp. 29-42) suggest that factor loading of 0.40 or higher is acceptable. The measurement model was reliable as composite reliability (CR) coefficients ranged from 0.737 to 0.805, indicating an acceptable reliability for each construct (Nunnally, 1978, p. 47). Squared multiple correlations confirmed the reliability of the items used for measurement. Average variance extracted (AVE) and factor loading were used to assess convergent validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981,

pp. 39-50). AVE was found to range from 0.600 to 0.786 (Table 2), thus confirming the convergent validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981, pp. 39-50). Discriminant validity can be established through the comparison of each AVE for individual constructs with the shared variances between individual constructs and the other constructs. Since the AVE value exceeded the squared correlation between the constructs, the discriminant validity can be confirmed, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Correlations and Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	SD	CrA	CR	AVE	US	IE	SN	SV	DT	AT	BI
US	5.287	0.796	0.744	0.737	0.632	0.794						
IE	5.567	0.752	0.632	0.764	0.786	0.246	0.886					
SN	4.772	1.343	0.772	0.890	0.772	0.375	0.148	0.878				
SV	5.305	0.710	0.600	0.740	0.600	0.245	0.123	0.288	0.774			
DT	5.184	0.852	0.698	0.797	0.698	0.535	0.215	0.373	0.288	0.835		
AT	5.852	0.600	0.668	0.805	0.668	0.197	0.197	0.120	0.204	0.270	0.817	
BI	5.793	0.733	0.712	0.790	0.746	0.123	0.114	0.097	0.122	0.084	0.389	0.863

Bold number on the diagonal parentheses are square root of each construct's AVE; CrA= Cronbach's Alphas; CR = Composite reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted; Uniqueness seeking = US; Interpersonal Experience = IE; Social Networking = SN; Site Value = SV; Decoration and Theme = DT; Attitude = AT; Behavioral Intention = BI

Structural Model

Having accepted the overall measurement model, the structural model was evaluated by statistic values of goodness of fit (Browne and Cudeck, 1992, pp. 230-258; Hair, et al., 2021, p. 604; Hu and Bentler, 1999, pp. 1-55). The model fit was shown to be good ($\chi2$=413.688; df=268; $\chi2$/df=1.544; RMSEA=0.055; CFI=0.919), and the hypothesis test results are shown as follows: Hypothesis H1, push factors of luxury hotel staying behavior, uniqueness seeking (t = 1.070; β = .88**; p < 0.001), and interpersonal experience found support (t = 1.310; β = .27**; p < 0.001), while

Social networking did not support (t = -1.910; β = -.50; p > 0.1). Thus, the push factor of uniqueness seeking and interpersonal experience positively impacts customer attitudes toward luxury hotel stays. Hypothesis H2 Pull factors of luxury hotel staying behavior, site value found support (t = 2.14933; β = .71**; p < 0.001), while decoration and theme did not support (t = -.814; β = -.67; p > 0.1). Thus, only site value positively impacts consumer attitudes toward luxury hotel stays. Hypothesis H3, consumers' attitude toward luxury hotels found support (t = 7.380; β = .80**; p < 0.001), so consumer attitudes attitude toward luxury

hotels positively impact their behavior with regard to luxury hotel stays. The R^2 explained that 45% of push and pull factors contributed to attitude, while 64% of attitude contributed to behavioral intention.

Regarding the push factor H1, the indirect effects of 'uniqueness seeking' is strongest predictor, followed by 'interpersonal experience' on behavioral intention were significant, and pull factor H2 'site value' on behavioral intentions was also significant, suggesting that attitude has a complementary mediating effect. Furthermore, the indirect of 'social networking' and 'decoration and theme' were insignificant. H3, the direct effect of attitude on behavioral intentions was significant. Table 4 presents the hypotheses testing.

Table 3 The thresholds used for model validity

Fit indices	Acceptable level	Measurement model
χ^2		413.688
df		268
CMIN (χ^2/df)	<5	1.544
RMSEA	< 0.08	0.055
CFI	≥ 0.90	0.919
TLI	≥ 0.90	0.902
CFI	≥ 0.90	0.919

Table 4 Results of research hypotheses testing

Variable	AT			BI			Result of Research Hypotheses
	TE	DE	IE	TE	DE	IE	
AT	-	-	-	0.801**	0.801**	-	Supported
US	0.880**	0880**	-	0.700**	-	0.700**	Supported
IE	0.272**	0.272**	-	0.222**	-	0.222**	Supported
SN	-0.500	-0.500	-	-0.400	-	-0.400	Not Supported
SV	0.701**	0.701**	-	0.562**	-	0.562**	Supported
DT	-0.677	-0.677	-	-0.545	-	-0.545	Not Supported

Total Effect = TE; Direct Effect = DE; Indirect Effect = IE; Uniqueness seeking = US; Interpersonal Experience = IE; Social Networking = SN; Site Value = SV; Decoration and Theme = DT; Attitude = AT; Behavioral Intention = BI
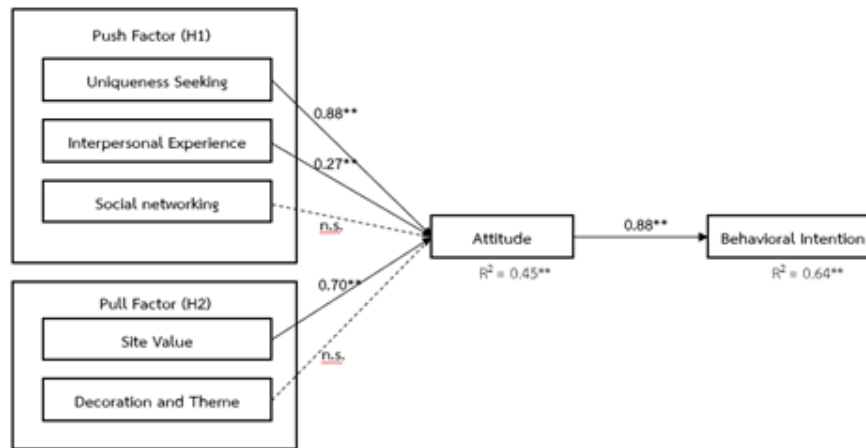
Figure 2 results of the conceptual model

Conclusions

The current research serves to extend the literature through its examination of a topic which is of growing interest and relevance as Chinese consumers travel and purchase luxury hotel stays in growing numbers following the pandemic. The results support and refine the previous theoretical framework which explains the intentions of consumers to make luxury purchases, although the current work applies this perspective to a specific market environment. In addition, this work also considers the effects upon consumer attitudes generated by the consumption of luxury hotel services. The following section describes the importance of these findings from the theoretical standpoint, and considers the similarities and differences to earlier studies.

Theoretical Implications

The literature on luxury consumption has one significant drawback in that it focuses primarily on physical goods while services are less widely studied. Services are both intangible and perishable, which are factors causing differences in the way they can be sold and consumed. This study therefore provides in-sights into whether the theories which apply to goods can also be applied to services, or whether adjustments are necessary due to the inherent differences involved (Chen and Peng, 2018, pp. 59-67). As the market for luxury hotel stays grows, it is necessary to better understand customer motivations with regard to luxury hotels. The application of the push-pull theory in the context of Chinese consumers following COVID-19 has shown that among the key factors predicting luxury hotel motivation are site value, uniqueness, and the interpersonal experience provided. However, themes and decoration and social networking do not exert a significant influence. Push factors motivate by appealing to the socio-psychological requirements of the individual, and the most important of these is the desire for uniqueness, which most strongly predicts attitudes toward luxury hotel stays. Uniqueness is understood to play a critical role in affecting staying behavior in luxury hotels (Hyun and Park, 2016, pp. 596-623; Kang, 2018, pp. 2984-3003). Furthermore, uniqueness is linked to the improvement of self-image, and therefore motivates individuals who wish to convey a

certain image to others (Tian, Bearden and Hunter, 2001, pp. 50-66; Abosag, et al., 2020, pp. 862-872). However, there are differences between luxury hospitality and other luxury goods due to the intangible nature of services (Yang and Mattila, 2016, pp. 1848-1867), and therefore the intangible service aspects of staff and atmosphere must be considered along with the tangible factors of rooms and facilities in determining the value of the uniqueness of a luxury hotel visit (Kang, 2018, pp. 2984-3003). Meanwhile, interpersonal experiences serve as vital push factors for Chinese customers. Furthermore, luxury consumers often wish to treat themselves by obtaining pleasure, enjoyment, and excitement from their special luxury purchase (Wiedmann, Hennigs and Siebels, 2009, pp. 625-651). However, the pull factors are associated with destinations' attractiveness (Uysal, Li and Sirakaya-Turk, 2008, pp. 412-439; Wang, Luo and Tang, 2015, pp. 317-328) noted that which hotels should prioritize is site value, the factor of site value concerns the convenience and security of the location, which appeals to the customers' need for safety. Surprisingly, social networking and decoration and theme do not positively influence customer attitudes toward luxury hotel staying behavior. Social networking is closely linked to social status, which in turn is connected to the visibility of luxury status symbols which consumers often prefer for the symbolic value offered (Yang, Mattila and Hou, 2013, pp. 113-120). One problem is that luxury hospitality may not be as conspicuous as luxury goods, and does not act so effectively as an indicator of wealth and status. Customers who purchase

luxury goods as status symbols may therefore feel less inclined to feel the need to stay in luxury hotels (Yang and Mattila, 2016, pp. 1848-1867). Finally, this study showed that decoration and themes have an insignificant influence upon consumer attitudes toward luxury hospitality. Thus, it is necessary to take a careful approach to the application of theoretical frameworks in the light of the differences which are specific to the luxury hotel industry.

This study also contributes to the existing body of knowledge through considering the influence of attitude. Having examined push and pull factors in the context of behavioral intentions, it was argued by Chen and Peng (2014, pp. 53-56) that customers will develop a broad evaluation, taking attitude into account, prior to taking the decision to go ahead with a purchase. This study shows that the relationship between push and pull factors and behavioral intention is mediated comprehensively by attitude, thus confirming the original findings of Chen and Peng (2014, pp. 53-56) who studied hotel stays in the context of luxury value, revealing that luxury value, as a concept ordinarily applied to physical goods, has a strong influence upon customers' attitudes towards luxury hotel stays. Chen and Peng (2018, pp. 59-67) also examined luxury restaurants during travel, finding that for customers whose perception of a destination's food quality is positive, their attitude towards luxury restaurants will strongly influence their intentions to visit such restaurants when they visit the destination. However, the perception of the destination's food must be positive for this relationship to apply. The results extend

the understanding of push and pull factors through the confirmation of motivational factors of Chinese consumers who select hotels by seeking location, uniqueness, and luxury experiences when they consume luxury hospitality services.

Managerial Implications

Moving beyond the theory, this study sets out a number of points for managers in the hospitality sector to take into account. These points might support luxury hotels to draw additional customers through developing their appeal and novel experiences by better understanding their target market. Key factors for luxury hotels include the motivations of Chinese consumers to seek out uniqueness and novelty in the themes and features presented to them (Salsabila and Alversia, 2020, pp. 38-48) since novelty-seeking is the strongest of the push factors. For instance, in Shanghai, the Fairmont Peace Hotel has recreated a historic site to provide modern luxury, while Rosewood Bangkok makes use of its architecture to create a unique feeling which invokes the idea of the Thai greeting known as the "wai". These hotels are delivering uniqueness through design.

Furthermore, the site value factor is also critical for luxury hotels as consumers demand the best location at a reasonable price. McCartney and Ge (2016, pp. 41-59) listed the most important pull factors as transport and accessibility, followed by the information provided and convenience of the facilities on offer, concurring with Lim and Endean (2009, pp. 38-51) who also emphasized the location of a hotel in strongly influencing selection

decisions. This finding is significant for hotel developers. It is also notable that the functional qualities of luxury hotels are not sufficient in themselves to draw customers because they cannot distinguish themselves from rivals; with sustainability important, the visiting experience must be developed to offer a superior interpersonal experience to gain an advantage over competitors (Zhang, Xiong and Lee, 2020, pp. 399-409). This will imply that staff must be better trained to deliver a superior guest experience, through helpfulness, refinement, and respect. Staff must also become cognizant of individual customer needs in order to better provide service on a personalized level. Such service might be delivered on-site when the guest is present, or can be delivered before and after the stay through the use of various communicative technologies. The use of technology can also be applied in building stronger connections with customers, better understanding their individual preferences, and subsequently tailoring the product to their whims.

Also important among pull factors was the idea of themes and decoration, indicating that luxury hotels should ensure that they have a consistent theme and scheme of decoration which are synonymous with their brand image. Examples would include the traditional properties such as the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Bangkok, Raffles Hotel in Singapore, or the Savoy in London, while more modern examples include the COMO Metropolitan Hotel Bangkok, followed by the cutting edge of modernity in Rosewood Hotels or Edition Hotels. The target market will be crucial in determin-

ing the marketing approach to fit the chosen theme.

The growing interest in luxury services has arisen partly because middle class consumers now have greater access to luxury goods than was previously the case (Silverstein and Fiske, 2003, pp. 48-59; Chen and Peng, 2014, pp. 53-56; Wu and Yang, 2018, pp. 2037-2055). It was reported by Wu and Yang (2018, pp. 2037-2055) that luxury hotels have seen a drop-in demand as a result of an economic downturn, but Chinese consumers, especially in the upper middle classes, remain a key part of the target market today for luxury hotels. Social networking, however, is not a major factor in the context of these Chinese customers, despite the fact that social networking can be linked directly to social status (Wu and Yang, 2018, pp. 3027-2055). According to Berthon, et al. (2009, pp. 45-66), the symbolism of luxury conveyed by a luxury hotel will confer social status upon the customer, thus signaling information to others about the wealth of the customer. It has thus been found that this symbolic value might not play a significant role in motivating consumers to make luxury hotel stays. In contrast, Chen and Peng (2014, pp. 53-56) found that attitudes towards luxury hotels are improved when customers believe that their status will be enhanced in the eyes of others due to the image of luxury hotels having wealthy customers (Chen and Peng, 2018, pp. 59-67).

On the basis of these findings, it is necessary for luxury hotels to target those consumers who believe that luxury is desirable. To do this, Wong, et al. (2014, pp. 325-328)

advocated public trade show visits as a means of gathering consumer data in the context of the Chinese market (Chen and Peng, 2014, p. 55). Furthermore, Chen and Peng (2014, p. 55) added that marketing should involve luxury hotels focusing upon the unique attributes of their offering, including superior quality and conspicuous status. That is, hotels must place emphasis upon their symbolic value when promoting luxury services since this can directly influence customers' intentions to stay through the initial effect upon customer attitudes. In addition, advertising should focus on publications which specifically target consumers of, whereby the symbolic meaning of the hotel can be accurately conveyed to those to whom it will appeal (Chen and Peng, 2014, p. 55).

Limitations and Future Recommendations

This research has certain limitations. The data were obtained from Chinese customers based in just two cities: Beijing and Shanghai. Accordingly, the findings might be generalized to other locations. China is relatively diverse, so future works might examine push-pull factors in the context of regional differences, such as northern and southern China, or might consider the differences between Chinese tier one and tier two cities. Furthermore, while this research made use of 11 push and 9 push items drawn from the existing literature (Wang, Luo and Tang, 2015, pp. 317-328), future work might employ additional items. Such work might also make use alternative theoretical frameworks, such as the drive theory of motivation, instead of the push-pull approach, in order to study customer motivations toward luxury from a different perspective.

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